



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Mamdani takes oath as the youngest Mayor of New York

Detailed News On Page-08

Ahsan Iqbal urges data-driven growth

Detailed News On Page-04



Naqvi okays cricket stadium in Islamabad

Detailed News On Page-03



Briefs

2025 proved to be 'year of failures for India

DNA

NEW DELHI: The past year proved to be a "year of crisis" for India, marked by a historic military setback against Pakistan, a weakening currency, and growing economic uncertainty. The Financial Times reported in its 2025 annual review.

Due to failed strategic autonomy, India was compelled to simultaneously maintain relations with the United States (US), China, and Russia, read the report. The report adds that the US-India trade agreement was postponed several times, while the imposition of American tariffs placed additional economic pressure on New Delhi.

Similarly, the limited implementation of GST reforms also hindered economic growth. It further said that the Indian rupee continued to depreciate against the US dollar during 2025.

Earlier this year, Pakistan and Indian engaged in a military showdown, the worst between the old foes in decades, which was sparked by an attack on tourists in IIOJK's Pahalgam area, which New Delhi alleged was backed by Pakistan. Islamabad denied involvement in the Pahalgam attack, which killed 26 men and offered to participate in a neutral probe into the deadly incident. During the clashes, Pakistan downed seven Indian fighter jets, including three Rafale, and dozens of drones.

446 MPs do not submit statement with ECP

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The ECP on Thursday said 446 lawmakers – including 125 members of the National Assembly – failed to submit their statements of assets and liabilities with the ECP by the due date – set at December 31. In a press release issued today, ECP notified the lawmakers who had missed the earlier deadline to submit their statements by January 15, and said that "as many as 446 lawmakers failed to submit their statements of assets and liabilities" with the ECP by the due date. Out of these, 125 lawmakers are members of the National Assembly, 26 Senators, 159 members of the Punjab Assembly, 62 members of the Sindh Assembly, 48 members of KP Assembly and 26 members of Balochistan Assembly.

Israel says it 'will enforce' ban on 37 NGOs in Gaza

DNA

TELV AVIV: Israel said that 37 international NGOs operating in Gaza had not complied with a deadline to meet "security and transparency standards," in particular disclosing information on their Palestinian staff, and that it "will enforce" a ban on their activities. The groups will now be required to cease their operations by March 1, which the United Nations has warned will exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory. "Organisations that have failed to meet required security and transparency standards will have their licenses suspended," the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism said in a statement on Thursday.

Pak, India share lists of nuclear installations

List of nuclear facilities in Pakistan officially handed over to representative of Indian HC, says FO spokesperson

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi on Thursday said that Pakistan and India exchanged the lists of their nuclear installations under a special agreement prohibiting them from attacking each other's nuclear facilities. "Pakistan and India exchanged the lists of their respective nuclear installations pursuant to the agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India signed on 31st December 1988," Andrabi told during a weekly media briefing in Islamabad. "The list of nuclear installations and facilities was officially handed over to the representative of the Indian High Commission in the Foreign Office today (Thursday). I understand that the Indian government is also sharing the list of Indian nuclear installations with our High Commission in New Delhi," he added. The spokesperson said that both countries also exchanged the lists of prisoners in each other's custody through diplomatic channels. Commenting on the regional situation, the Foreign Office spokesperson

expressed concern over the ongoing developments in Yemen. He said that Islamabad emphasised that the Yemen crisis should be resolved through dialogue and diplomatic means and reiterated its full solidarity with Saudi Arabia. Andrabi added that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had a telephonic conversation with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during which both leaders discussed bilateral relations and regional matters. According to the spokesperson, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in various fields. Andrabi said that Pakistan has reiterated its support for China's position on Taiwan. The spokesperson said that National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq represented Pakistan at the funeral prayers of former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. "The speaker also conveyed condolences to the son and daughter of the late leader on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan." The Foreign Office spokesperson stated that Pakistan has rejected Israel's move to recognise Somaliland as an independent

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PTI seeks disqualification of Senator Saifullah Abro

The reference, moved by Zafar, invoked Article 63-A of the Constitution, which deals with disqualification on grounds of defection



FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The PTI submitted a reference to the Senate chairperson on Thursday, seeking the disqualification of Senator Saifullah Abro for defecting from party line and voting in favour of the 27th Constitutional Amendment. PTI Senator Ali Zafar posted about the development on his X account, saying: "Saifullah Abro went against party line by voting in favour of the 27th Constitutional Amendment, for which a reference for his disqualification has been filed."

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CM Sohail Afridi says he will visit Karachi on Jan 9

BUREAU REPROT

KARACHI: Days after concluding a three-day visit to Lahore to launch PTI's street movement, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi announced on Thursday that he will visit Karachi on January 9. "Friday, January 9!" the chief minister said on social media platform X. "Karachi, Sindh, are you ready?" Afridi said he would be coming to Karachi "bearing Imran Khan's message", adding that he would be meeting "all friends of the party". Afridi had previously announced that Karachi was his next destination for galvanising party supporters. During his visit to Lahore, the KP CM had attempted to

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high-level meeting, in Islamabad. – DNA

One killed in grenade attack

NEWS DESK

SIBI: An explosion near Chenak Chowk in Balochistan's Sibi district on Thursday killed one person and injured five others, according to a police official. Station House Officer (SHO) Ghulam Ali Abro, posted in Sibi, told Dawn that the incident was a grenade attack which occurred at 7:05pm. "One person expired and five others were injured," the SHO said. "Security forces and Edhi ambulances arrived on the scene as soon as they received reports about the incident." He further told reporters at the site of the attack that six injured people were transported to a hospital, with one of them succumbing to their injuries on the way.

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Member of Iranian security forces killed

Iranian president calls on govt to take action to improve economic situation

DNA

TEHRAN: A member of Iran's security forces was killed during protests that erupted last week, state television reported on Thursday, citing a regional official. "A 21-year-old member of the Basij from the city of Kouhdasht was killed last night [Wednesday] by rioters while defending public order," the channel said, citing Said Pourali, the deputy governor of Lorestan Province.

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PM Shehbaz Sharif calls for proposals to strengthen economy

He viewed that coordination among all ministries and cooperation between federal and provincial governments had a crucial role in effective economic reforms and overall economic growth

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday calling the implementation of the government's policies on economic governance inevitable, sought proposals from all relevant ministries suggesting practical measures and a comprehensive strategy involving minimal duration. The prime minister, chairing a review meeting on economic reforms, increasing investment, and progress on proposed developmental projects, on the first day of the new year, also sought recommendations aimed at further facilitation of foreign and domestic investors. He viewed that coordination among all ministries and cooperation between federal and provincial governments had a crucial role in effective economic reforms and overall economic growth. Calling the institutional and administrative

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PSX opens 2026 higher

DNA

KARACHI" The equity market rose on Thursday, opening 2026 on a firm footing and crossing the 176,000 mark for the first time ever, after an upbeat Ministry of Finance (MoF) monthly outlook, fresh new-year fund allocations, and ongoing privatisation momentum improved risk appetite. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 176,355.49 points, up 2,301.17 points, or 1.32%, from 174,054.32. During the session, the index touched a new all-time intraday high of 176,658.38, up 2,604.06 points, or 1.5%, from the previous

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Around 40 killed in explosion at Swiss bar

Some of the victims are from other countries, said Stephane Ganzer, head of security for the Valais canton. The canton's head of police, Frederic Gisler, said a helpline had been opened for relatives

NEWS DESK

BERN: Around 40 people have been killed and 100 injured, most of them seriously, after an explosion tore through a crowded bar during a New Year's Eve party in the upscale ski resort of Crans-Montana, Swiss officials said on Thursday. A fire broke out at 6.30 a.m. PKT in a bar called "Le Constellation" in the resort in southwestern Switzerland. The cause of the blast

remains unclear but authorities said it appeared to be an accident. "At the moment we are considering this a fire and we are not considering the possibility of an attack," prosecutor Beatrice Pilloud told a press conference, adding that authorities had opened a full investigation. Some of the victims are from other countries, said Stephane Ganzer, head of security for the Valais canton. The canton's head of police,

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Pitfalls of controlling militancy by force

ABDUL WAHEED WAHEED

PESHAWAR: Pakistan's internal security situation has continued to deteriorate despite the closure of crossing points along the Durand Line nearly three months ago and the use of air power against targets inside Afghanistan. These measures have not yielded the intended security outcomes nor led to alignment with Pakistan's stated objectives. Instead, they have coincided with civilian harm, including women, children, and athletes, highlighting the limitations of unilateral, militarized approaches and underscoring the importance of coordinated regional and international efforts to promote stability. Experience from nearly five decades of conflict in Afghanistan suggests that neglecting the root causes of radicalization and prioritizing coercive responses over structural reforms, systematic inclusivity, equitable distribution of opportunities, and credible political processes has contributed to the persistence and evolution of extremism rather than its reduction. Efforts to externalize responsibility have further compounded regional instability. Non-state armed groups reportedly operating in the region appear to have evolved from rigid hierarchical structures into decentralized, adaptive networks capable of operating across areas of fragile security and limited stability. Their activities are often rooted in local grievances and influenced by surrounding political and social conflicts. While these groups have gained operational flexibility, their ideological narratives, propaganda, and recruitment mechanisms frequently remain tied to centralized leadership.

This adaptability enables them to withstand sustained military campaigns, exploit governance gaps, and persist despite external pressure. Historical experience shows that even legitimate and justified militarized responses to militancy often produce unintended and destabilizing consequences rather than lasting solutions. Afghanistan's anti-Soviet armed struggle, for instance, strategically facilitated the emergence of al-Qaeda as a transnational network backed by external actors, while the so-called global war on terror contributed to the rise of ISIS. Subsequent military operations against ISIS fragmented the organization, accelerating the proliferation of splinter groups and affiliated cells across multiple regions. The ongoing operations and escalating attacks by armed groups in the region underscore that these are far from isolated security incidents. Rather, they reflect deeper strategic miscalculations and structural challenges, compounded by longstanding policy failures and historical grievances. These groups exploit gaps in coordination and protracted political tensions, drawing strength from civilian casualties during operations and embedding themselves within local conflict dynamics. The challenges Afghanistan and its neighbors face today cannot be separated from the regional and international policies pursued during the Cold War and its aftermath. During that period, financial, military, and logistical support was provided to various armed actors for strategic purposes, creating militant infrastructures that have endured for decades. Many of those who enabled and benefited from these networks have largely evaded accountability, leaving Afghanistan and the wider region to bear

the long-term consequences. The result is a cycle of instability, weakened governance, and persistent insecurity, demonstrating that external interventions, even when framed as strategic necessities, can leave deep and lasting scars when local governance structures are ignored or undermined. Today, these historical legacies continue to shape security dynamics, constrain development, and complicate regional cooperation, underscoring the urgent need for policies that prioritize local stability, accountability, and inclusive governance. Traditional social institutions, including tribal jirgas, religious leaders, media, and civil society activists, retain significant potential for mediation, community engagement, and the promotion of non-violent narratives, provided they operate with genuine neutrality. Tribal elders, religious scholars, and community representatives have historically played key roles in resolving disputes, maintaining social cohesion, and bridging divides in times of crisis. Today, however, their capacity is often compromised. Political actors, both state and non-state, frequently instrumentalize these figures to advance narrow agendas, while coercion and pressure further weaken their independence. The result is an erosion of public trust and legitimacy, leaving communities more vulnerable to polarization, radicalization, and social fragmentation. Strengthening these institutions' autonomy and ensuring their voices are respected could transform them into powerful anchors for peace, stability, and civic resilience in Afghanistan and the wider region. Long-term stability will depend on moving beyond cycles of militarization

toward structural approaches that prioritize political inclusion, accountable governance, social cohesion, and sustained dialogue. Recent trends reveal sustained violence, declining trust, and largely reactive security coordination along the Durand Line. Despite heavy securitization, the gates on Durand Line lacks predictable, mutually accepted management mechanisms, creating risks for regional stability, economic connectivity, investment, and international security. Addressing these challenges requires policies grounded in historical lessons and empirical realities. Key steps include preventing sovereignty violations, minimizing civilian harm, restoring trade and transit, finalizing bilateral agreements, and establishing a joint bilateral mechanism to regulate the opening and closure of Durand Line gates, supported by strengthened intelligence coordination. The disruption of trade and restricted movement along the Durand Line further underscores the broader economic risks tied to these security and management failures. Exporters, traders, and revenue authorities face both immediate and long-term losses, while markets and supply chains adapt to alternative routes, often bypassing traditional corridors. These patterns demonstrate that militarized responses alone cannot resolve the region's complex security challenges. Without addressing underlying governance failures, political exclusion, and socioeconomic grievances, each operation risks fueling the very extremism it seeks to suppress. Sustainable security will require integrated strategies that combine political solutions, social inclusion, and local engagement, otherwise, cycles of violence and instability are destined to persist.

KP to provide Rs 3.9b for northern bypass project

PESHAWAR :An important development took place on Thursday in a meeting regarding the Peshawar Northern Bypass project, chaired by the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi. It was decided in the meeting that the Chief Minister would provide Rs. 3.9 billion as bridge financing for the completion of the under-construction Northern Bypass project. It was also decided that the provincial government would provide Rs. 1 billion required for the construction of two underpasses and one bridge on the Northern Bypass. During the meeting, officials of the

National Highway Authority (NHA) assured that the project would be completed by June 2026. Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi said that due to insufficient funding, the Peshawar Northern Bypass could not be completed since 2010, which has caused delays in development projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that this is a project of public interest, and the provincial government will provide full cooperation for its early completion. CM KP added that the project will promote commercial activities along

with improving travel facilities. The meeting was given a detailed briefing on the progress made so far. According to the briefing, Rs. 23.5 billion has been spent on the project to date, with overall financial progress at 85.6 percent. Physical progress is 100 percent on package-1, 64 percent on package-2, 86.6 percent on package-3, and 69 percent on package Three-A. Advisor to the Chief Minister on Finance Muzammil Aslam, a Member of National Highways, the Commissioner Peshawar, and officials from relevant provincial departments attended the meeting—APP

Chinese Company visits UoS to strengthen agri collaboration

SARGODHA: Luan Xiufeng, Manager of Chinese company Chengdu Yihe, on Thursday visited the University of Sargodha (UoS) and met Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Qaisar Abbas to discuss collaboration in the agricultural sector, with a particular focus on drone technology. According to the spokesperson for UOS here, during the meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed to initiate hands-on training programs for faculty members and students. Director ORIC Prof Dr Ahmad Raza Bilal and Chairman, Department of Agronomy, College of Agriculture, Prof Dr Athar Na-deem were also present on the occasion. Speaking at the meeting, Luan Xiufeng stated that Pakistan is an agricultural country where per-acre productivity can be significantly enhanced through modern agricultural technologies, especially drone technology. He appreciated the new agricultural projects, modern equipment, and patents introduced at the College of Agriculture, noting that these initiatives have given a new identity to agriculture in the region.—APP

Murree admin tightens enforcement of one-dish policy

RAWALPINDI, Jan 01 (APP): The district administration in Murree has further tightened enforcement of the one-dish policy, carrying out surprise inspections of wedding halls at well-known and branded hotels to prevent violations of government directives. Acting on the special instructions of deputy commissioner Murree, teams of the district administration had intensified monitoring of marriage functions across the city to ensure strict compliance with the policy, an administration spokesman said on Thursday. As part of the crackdown, Magistrate Usman Aslam conducted an unannounced inspection of a wedding hall at a prominent local hotel where a marriage ceremony was under way.—APP

People in KP hail centre for reduction of petroleum products

PESHAWAR: People across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) have welcomed the recent reduction in prices of petroleum products by the Federal Govt, describing it as a much-needed relief amid rising inflation and economic pressures. The experts appreciated Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz and his team for providing massive relief in petroleum products in Pakistan and termed it a gift of the new year. The cut in fuel prices has eased transportation costs and brought comfort to households and businesses struggling with high living expenses. Riazul Haq, former PST teacher told APP on Thursday that the substantial decrease in petrol and diesel prices by Federal Govt has already begun to reflect positively in daily life. Public transport fares, which had surged following repeated fuel hikes in KP, are expected to stabilize, offering relief to commuters who rely on buses, rickshaws, and taxis for their daily travel. He said many drivers have expressed hope that the reduction will help them recover from months of financial strain caused by soaring fuel costs. “This reduction has come as a great blessing,” said a

local transport worker Haji Ehsanullah Khan in Peshawar. “Fuel prices directly affect our income. Even a small decrease helps us save money and reduces pressure on passengers.” Shopkeepers and traders have also reacted positively, adding that fuel prices play a crucial role in determining the cost of goods. Zakirullah, a vegetable and fruit seller told APP at Pabbi bazaar that high transportation charges had previously forced vendors to increase prices, burdening consumers further. With fuel becoming comparatively cheaper, traders anticipate a slowdown in price hikes of essential commodities. Economists believe the reduction could help control inflation if sustained over time. Petroleum products are a key input in transportation, agriculture, and industry, and any price adjustment has a ripple effect across the economy. Professor Dr Zilakat Malik, former Chairman of Economics Department at University of Peshawar said that lower fuel costs may also encourage business activity and improve market confidence in the province.

He stressed that the relief should be long-term rather than temporary. “We have seen prices go down before, only to rise again within weeks,” he said. “The government should ensure stability so people can plan their expenses better.” Social media platforms were also flooded with reactions from the public, many praising the move while urging authorities to pass on the full benefit to consumers. Users highlighted that any relief in fuel prices should translate into reduced fares and lower prices of essential goods. Experts emphasize that while the reduction is a positive step, broader economic reforms are necessary to ensure sustainable relief for the public. They suggest improving energy policies, reducing taxes on fuel, and strengthening local production to minimize dependence on imports. For now, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are hopeful that the decrease in petroleum prices marks the beginning of economic stability. As inflation continues to challenge households, even modest relief measures are being embraced as a sign of responsiveness to public concerns.—APP



LARKANA: A gypsy young boy naps inside a bank's ATM booth to escape the cold on Railway Station Road.

Spanish delegation celebrates New Year at Moen Jo Daro

LARKANA: A delegation of foreign tourists from Spain arrived at the ancient site of Moenjo Daro in Larkana to celebrate the New Year of 2026 on Thursday. The Spanish delegation enjoyed themselves dancing at the Rest House of Moen Jo Daro. The foreign delegation toured and saw the ancient remains, including the Stupa, Great Bath, DK Area, and the museum. Meanwhile, speaking to the media, the foreign Spanish delegation said they had come to celebrate the New Year 2026 at Moen Jo Daro. They said, “We had a wish to come to Pakistan and celebrate the New Year at Moen Jo Daro, which has now been fulfilled.” They further said that the planning of the ancient long walls and streets built by the people of the site is remarkable. The people five thousand years ago laid the foundation of a great civilization with great skill, which is nothing short of amazing. They added that during the observation, the early development phase of the ancient site is nothing short of astonishing. They said that in the ancient world, there were few people who laid the foundations of civilizations with great wisdom. They said that Moen Jo Daro is the best example of a civilized era. The people here today are loving. We will inform others in Spain about such information. Local guide Irshad Ali Solangi of Sindh Tourism gave a briefing to the foreign delegation about Moen Jo Daro, Curator Ehsan Abbasi welcomed the foreign delegation. Meanwhile, strict security was in place for the foreign delegation.—APP

No rail tracks closed in KPK, Balochistan in last 2 years

ISLAMABAD :Pakistan Railways has not closed any railway track in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) or Balochistan during the past two years, with all tracks in both provinces remaining fully operational “Despite severe financial constraints, the railways continue to ensure safe operations, even as nearly 95 percent of its expenditure is consumed by pay, pensions, fuel and utilities, leaving only five percent for maintenance of aging infrastructure and rolling stock,” an official in the Ministry told APP. The officials said the limited maintenance budget is being used strictly for essential safety-related works. To bridge funding gaps, Pakistan Railways has mobilized alternative financing sources, particularly in KPK and Balochistan. Under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), the Rohri-Sibi railway track is being upgraded at a cost of Rs5.49 billion,

while an additional \$390 million will be spent on upgrading the Rohri-Spezand and Spezand-Nokundi sections in Balochistan, he added. Moreover, the official said a 33-kilometre stretch from Sariab to Kuchlak is being upgraded through Balochistan’s provincial PSDP. He said that several stations have also been upgraded. In KPK, Attock Khurd and the Washing Line at Peshawar Cantonment Station have been improved. In Balochistan, stations at Sariab, Quetta, Sheikh Manda, Balesli and Kuchlak are proposed for upgradation under the provincial PSDP. The official said that infrastructure safety has been strengthened through the rehabilitation of weak bridges, with four bridges reinforced in KPK and 21 in Balochistan. On passenger services, he said that Pakistan Railways has not discontinued any train in KPK or Balochistan during

the last two years. In KPK, major trains included Khyber Mail, Rehman Baba Express, Awam Express which is planned for upgradation and Khushal Khan Khattak Express. In Balochistan, Bolan Mail continues to operate between Quetta and Karachi, while Jaffar Express links Quetta with Punjab and KP. These services provide affordable long-distance travel for daily commuters, students, labourers and small farmers. The official said the freight and parcel services have also been expanded. A modern dry port has been established at Azakhel in the Peshawar division to facilitate bulk transportation. He said the brake and luggage vans attached to major passenger trains enable small traders and farmers to transport produce economically. Regular freight services from Balochistan are supporting the movement of minerals.—APP

State minister calls Deca-Archic Model a landmark in phygital edu

LAHORE: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training Wajihah Qamar has formally acknowledged and appreciated the scholarly contribution of Prof Dr Aurangzeb Hafi, author of the Deca-Archic Model of Phygital Literacy, describing it as a comprehensive and future-oriented framework for integrating ‘In Real Life’ (IRL) and ‘In Virtual Life’ (IVL) education systems. In a message on the launching event of the model, the minister noted that the model responds directly to the accelerating convergence of physical and digital learning environ-

ments. She said her recent engagement with Prof Hafi involved an in-depth discussion on the conceptual rigor, policy relevance, and global applicability of the framework, particularly at a time when education systems are grappling with the cognitive, ethical, and societal implications of rapid digitalisation. Wajihah Qamar observed that while scholars and institutions such as Complutense University of Madrid, Bocconi University, Columbia University, Stanford University, and the University of Florida have contributed to the evolving discourse on phygital edu-

cation, Pakistan’s Deca-Archic Phygital Literacy Model significantly advances the field through its depth, integration, and policy orientation. She added that the framework positions Pakistan at a pioneering edge in modern education reform. She said that the model is well-met with the standards of UNESCO, the National Post-doctoral Academia (NPA, US), the Asia & Oceania Post-Doctoral Academia (AOPDA), SAIRI, and other international platforms dedicated to education, science, research, and technology.—APP

CDA chief reviews progress on key development projects

ISLAMABAD: An meeting to review the progress of ongoing and proposed development projects in Islamabad was held under the chairmanship of Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa. The meeting was attended by the Member Administration Talat Mahmood, Member Engineering Nafasat Raza, Member Planning Dr. Khalid Hafiz, Director General Procurement & Contract, other senior officers, and Project Directors of the relevant projects. The meeting reviewed the progress on various development projects. During the meeting, matters related to the construction of the Electric Bus Depot and charging stations were discussed. The briefing informed that the under-construction Electric Bus Depot consists of two sites. It was informed that construction work at the project has been completed 97 percent. It was further stated that construction work at Site A of the bus depot has been fully completed. The meeting was informed that all 21 routes of the electric bus service have been made fully functional. It was further informed that the electric bus service is receiving an overwhelming response from citizens, with daily ridership consistently increasing. In this regard, on December 31, 2025, a total of 102,000 citizens benefited from this facility. Progress on the project to connect Margalla Avenue with the M-1 Motorway was also reviewed. Similarly, detailed deliberations were held on the construction of the Convention, Expo and Exhibition Center, as well as a luxury hotel project in Islamabad. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that the authority aims to promote the hospitality industry in Islamabad in order to develop the capital into a modern city in line with international standards. He directed that the designs of all development projects should be state-of-the-art and emphasized further strengthening the architecture and design wing of the CDA. Reiterating his commitment, Chairman CDA stated that providing the best travel facilities to the citizens of Islamabad, developing modern infrastructure, and enhancing the city’s overall beauty and functionality remain among CDA’s top priorities.—DNA

CDA

CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

URAA

PAKISTAN

11th Floor, G-7/4

#HumCDA

Procurement & Contracts Agreement-I

INVITATION TO e-BID

1. The Capital Development Authority invites electronic bids on Single Stage - Two Envelope basis as per PPRA Rule 36 (b) from firms who are well reputed, registered with Pakistan Engineering Council having valid Registration Certificate in **Category C-B with Project Codes CE-01, CE-02, CE-09, CE-10 & EE-11** for the year 2025-26 who can prove their eligibility and qualification as mentioned in the Bidding Documents for the following project.

NAME OF WORK	NITCOST	BIDSECURITY	REMARKS
Extension of Margalla Avenue From N-5 to M-1 (ICT Limits), Islamabad.	Rs.3,514,992,921/-	Rs.36.000 million	Detail of work is available in the bidding documents.

2. Electronic Bidding Documents, containing detailed requirements, terms and conditions is available for the registered bidders on EPADS at www.eprocure.gov.pk and www.ppra.org.pk.

3. Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of Pay order/CDR in favor of DDO (Procurement & Contract), CDA. The prospective bidders shall upload scanned copy of Bid Security on E-PADS in PDF and original will be provided on or before opening of bids in the office of Director (P&CA-I), CDA.

4. The prospective bidders are required to submit their Bids online through E-PADS at <http://eprocure.gov.pk> and as per instructions contained in Bidding Documents on or before **January 21, 2026, at 1130 hrs. Manual Bids will not be entertained.**

5. The electronic technical Bids will be opened by using EPADS publicly on the **same day at 1200 hrs**, in the presence of the procurement committee & Bidders' authorized Representatives who choose to attend the opening session to be held at the office of Director (P&CA-I), Room No 29, Block III, P&C Wing, CDA Secretariat, Sector G-7/4, Islamabad.

6. Notification of the GRC constituted in terms of Rule-48 of Public Procurement Rules, 2004 is provided on EPADS at www.eprocure.gov.pk.

7. Project related information may be sought from the office of Dy. Director (Roads-III), Old Naval HQ, G-6 Islamabad. (051-9212719).

ABID FAROOQ

PID(I)5438/25

Deputy Director-II(P&CA-I), CDA

P&C Wing, Block No III, Room No.28

CDA Secretariat, Sector G 7/4 Islamabad

Ph# 051-9252029

National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA
Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Palestine
Palestine Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Sudan
National Day

Jan 04 / Myanmar
Independence Day

Jan 06 / Iraq
Armed Forces Day

Jan 12 / Tanzania
Armed Forces Day

Jan 14 / Uzbekistan
Armed Forces Day

Jan 15 / Nigeria
Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Mali
Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Laos
Armed Forces Day

Jan 25 / Thailand
Armed Forces Day

Jan 26 / Australia
National Day

Jan 26 / India
Republic Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



[@turkishairlines](#)

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Emergency Ambulance.1122


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Motorway Police.9270601-20

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MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQT.....5556311-4


RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43


CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: A vendor arranging and displaying flower bouquets to attract the customers at Flower Market in Federal Capital.

FIA takes action against 16 officers in orderly room

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency(FIA) on Thursday held an Orderly Room at its headquarters, where disciplinary action was taken against 16 officers and officials, including penalties awarded to 10 personnel and warnings issued to 6 others, for misconduct, corruption, abuse of authority, poor investigation and absence from duty and training. An FIA official told APP that the Orderly Room proceedings resulted in punishments for 10 officers and officials, while 6 personnel were issued formal warnings, taking the total number of officials proceeded against to 16 as part of the agency's internal accountability drive During the proceedings, Inspector Muhammad Iqbal was demoted to the rank of Sub-Inspector for one year for failing to verify a driving licence during the recruitment of a constable driver. Technical Assistant Nazish Akmal was dismissed from service on charges of unauthorised absence. Inspector Asad Iftikhar Awan was awarded a penalty of reduction of two pay scales for two years due to poor investigation, while Constable Kamran Saleem was punished with stoppage of promotion for one year for

remaining absent from duty. Head Constable Muhammad Ali was also dismissed from service on similar charges. Similarly, Constable Muhammad Hamza was penalised with stoppage of increments for three years for remaining absent from training at the National Highway and Motorway Police Training College, Sheikhupura, whereas Constable Muhammad Waqar received stoppage of increments for one year for absence from the same training course. Meanwhile, six officials – Head Constable Muhammad Adnan, ASI Aasim Gulzar, Head Constable Shoaib Muhammad Khan, Constable Inder Kumar, Constable Rubia Sajid and Constable Tahir Hussain – were issued warnings for absence from duty and training courses. Speaking on the occasion, Riffat Mukhtar Raja said that departmental accountability aimed to ensure strict compliance with legal and professional standards within the organisation. He said that corruption, negligence, poor investigation and misuse of authority would not be tolerated, adding that there was no place in FIA for officers involved in corruption and professional misconduct. The DG FIA further said that a strict

accountability process was underway to rid the institution of corruption and black sheep, stressing that only through sustained accountability could human smuggling and corruption be effectively eliminated. He warned that officials showing negligence would be punished in accordance with the law. Meanwhile,The Federal Investigation Agency's Anti-Corruption Circle (ACC) Islamabad Zone recorded major progress against corruption during 2025, finalising hundreds of inquiries, securing dozens of convictions and recovering more than Rs110 million from corrupt practices. An official told APP on Thursday that the FIA ACC Islamabad finalised 485 inquiries against various federal departments during the year, while 389 new inquiries were registered on the basis of complaints received from the public and government institutions. During the same period, the circle registered 122 criminal cases against accused individuals from different federal departments and successfully finalised 67 cases, with challans submitted before the relevant courts, he said. The official added that 132 accused persons were arrested in connection with corruption

cases during 2025, while the agency also managed to recover Rs110.25 million through its enforcement and investigation efforts. Highlighting major convictions secured during the year, the official said that Imran Ahmed Niazi, former prime minister of Pakistan, and Bushra Imran were sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment each and fined Rs16,425,650 each in the Toshakhana-II case on December 20, 2025. He said Qamer Zaman was sentenced to 27 years' imprisonment along with a Rs2 million fine in FIR No. 46/2020 on April 16, 2025, while Hamid Jalil received a 29-year sentence and a Rs20 million fine in FIR No. 45/2022. According to the official, Nasim Masih was sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment and fined Rs100 million in FIR No. 30/2024 on July 10, 2025. Overall, the FIA ACC Islamabad Zone convicted 64 accused persons in 20 different cases during the year, reflecting a strong conviction ratio and effective prosecution, he said. The official said the performance of Federal Investigation Agency Anti-Corruption Circle Islamabad during 2025 demonstrated its commitment, professionalism and resolve to combat corruption.—APP

Advanced bio-monitoring initiative launched

ISLAMABAD: The vast mountain landscapes of northern Pakistan represent one of the world's most unique and ecologically significant ecosystems, harbouring an extraordinary assemblage of globally important wildlife species. Despite their global importance, empirical data on species ecology, population dynamics, and survival requirements remain limited, posing a major challenge for evidence-based conservation planning. This data gap is largely driven by the extreme terrain, harsh climatic conditions, and the inherent difficulty of monitoring elusive wildlife species. Limited technical capacity and access to advanced monitoring tools have further constrained ecological research in the region For more than a decade, the Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF) has been at the forefront of pioneering innovative research approaches to address these challenges. Through extensive camera-trapping efforts across northern Pakistan, SLF has generated one of the most comprehensive datasets on some of the world's least-studied moun-

tain species. Building on this foundation, SLF has now launched a next-generation bio-monitoring framework that integrates multiple advanced techniques, including double-observer surveys, environmental DNA (eDNA), non-invasive genetics, and camera trapping. This holistic approach moves beyond single-species monitoring toward comprehensive biodiversity profiling, enabling a deeper understanding of ecosystem structure, species interactions, and ecological resilience. By mapping ecological networks and biological interactions, this cutting-edge approach will help identify ecosystem vulnerabilities and guide targeted, science-based conservation interventions across the Karakoram-Himalayan landscape. As part of this initiative, SLF organized a two-day training workshop in Skardu, bringing together students from Baltistan University and field staff from the Gilgit-Baltistan Wildlife Department. The training was led by Dr. Muhammad Ali Nawaz and Dr. Hussain Ali, who served as resource persons. The workshop was

attended by 46 participants and included interactive classroom sessions covering the fundamentals of wildlife monitoring and advanced methodologies such as eDNA sampling, double-observer surveys, and camera trapping. The second day featured intensive field-based training in the Karakoram Mountains, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience with modern wildlife monitoring tools in real-world conditions. The Conservator of Forest, Parks and Wildlife Baltistan region, Mr. Khadim Abbas, appreciated the initiative and noted that the adoption of such advanced methods would significantly enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of wildlife management in Gilgit-Baltistan. Similarly, Dr. Muhammad Ali, Head of the Department of Zoology at Baltistan University, highlighted that the training provided a rare and valuable opportunity for students, strengthening their technical capacity and motivating the next generation of wildlife researchers.—DNA

Naqvi greenlights cricket stadium, smart underpass

ISLAMABAD: A special meeting was held at CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Interior, Mohsin Naqvi. During the extensive meeting, a detailed review of various public welfare projects was conducted. It was decided to initiate further projects for the convenience of citizens During the meeting, it was decided that a state-of-the-art cricket stadium will be constructed in Islamabad. Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi has requested the final design of the stadium within 10 days. A specific area has been allocated for the National Park. Additionally, it was decided to expand the scope of the modern Safe City Project in Islamabad. To improve traffic flow at Kashmir Chowk, a "Smart Underpass" will be constructed, with the final design to be submitted within 10 days. It was also decided to hire renowned companies for the construction of a five-star hotel in Islamabad. Details of long-vacant commercial plots have been requested. A special team will be formed to hire a Solid Waste Management company. Land has also been allocated for the headquarters of law enforcement agencies. Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi stated that operations against encroachments will continue with full force, and the released land will be used in the public interest. Various proposals for the construction of a new convention center in the federal capital were discussed.—DNA

Pakistan, A land of opportunities: unveiling the riches of a nation

RANA MUHAMMAD WASEEM

Pakistan, a country nestled in South Asia, has often been overshadowed by its tumultuous history and the challenges it has faced. However, beneath the surface lies a land brimming with immense potential and countless opportunities waiting to be explored. From its ancient civilisations to its modern-day advancements, Pakistan has a rich history that has shaped its present and promises a bright future. To truly understand the opportunities that Pakistan offers, it is essential to delve into its historical tapestry. The region that now constitutes Pakistan has been home to some of the world's oldest civilisations, including the Indus Valley Civilisation, which thrived over 4,000 years ago. This ancient civilisation, known for its advanced urban planning, intricate drainage systems, and sophisticated trade networks, serves as a testament to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the people who inhabited this land. Throughout history, Pakistan has been a crossroads of cultures, attracting traders, conquerors, and scholars from various parts of the world. The region witnessed the rise and fall of mighty empires, such as the Mauryas, the Mughals, and the British Raj. Each of these periods left an indelible mark on the land, contributing to its

diverse cultural heritage and fostering an environment conducive to growth and innovation. In the modern era, Pakistan has faced numerous challenges, including political instability, economic disparities, and security concerns. However, it is important to recognise that these challenges do not define the nation. Pakistan has made significant strides in various sectors, demonstrating its potential as a land of opportunities. One such sector is agriculture. Pakistan's fertile lands and favourable climate have made it an agricultural powerhouse. The country is among the world's largest producers of cotton, rice, and wheat. With a growing population and increasing demand for food, Pakistan has the potential to become a major player in global food security. Moreover, the government has initiated various programs to modernise the agricultural sector, promoting sustainable practices and enhancing productivity. Another area of immense potential lies in Pakistan's youth population. With over 60% of its population under the age of 30, Pakistan possesses a demographic dividend that can be harnessed to drive economic growth and innovation. The country has a vibrant startup ecosystem, with young entrepreneurs venturing into diverse fields such as technology, e-commerce, and social entrepreneurship. Initiatives like the National Incubation Centres and

the Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Program and Prime Minister's LAPTOP scheme are nurturing this entrepreneurial spirit, providing mentorship, funding, and support to young innovators. Pakistan's strategic location at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East offers immense opportunities for trade and connectivity. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, has the potential to transform Pakistan into a regional economic hub. The development of infrastructure, energy projects, and special economic zones under CPEC is attracting foreign investment and opening new avenues for trade and investment. In lieu of above discussed facts and figures it is summarised that Pakistan is a land of opportunities that transcends its historical challenges. Its rich history, cultural diversity, and strategic location provide a solid foundation for growth and development. By capitalising on its agricultural potential, harnessing the energy and creativity of its youth, and leveraging its strategic position, Pakistan can unlock its true potential and emerge as a thriving nation on the global stage. It is time to shed the preconceived notions and embrace the untapped opportunities that Pakistan has to offer.

Puppet show concludes at PNCA

ISLAMABAD: A two-day awareness programme featuring an interactive puppet show concluded at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), as Secours Islamique France (SIF) wrapped up its annual event aimed at promoting child protection, good parenting and mental health. Blending entertainment with powerful social messaging, the performances sought to sensitize children and families to issues of safety, emotional well-being and responsible caregiving. The event opened with welcome remarks by Dr Altaf Abro, Head of Mission, Secours Islamique France (SIF), who highlighted the organization's 31 years of global humanitarian work and its operations in Pakistan since 2010. He noted that SIF's orphan sponsorship programme, launched three decades ago in Gaza, now supports more than 10,000 orphan students worldwide by ensuring access to education and socio-economic stability. He also shared that SIF continues to implement skills development initiatives to empower vulnerable communities. Speaking on child-related challenges in Pakistan, Dr Abro stressed that education remains the most pressing issue. He drew attention to grave concerns, including around 1,000 annual deaths of children under five linked to parental issues, alongside widespread child labour, early marriages, violence and other child protection violations. He further pointed out that nearly 26 million children are out of school and that rising malnutrition has prompted SIF to introduce a school meal programme A panel discussion, moderated by Mr Habib Ahmad Laghari, brought together representatives from law enforcement, international organizations and civil society to share insights and practical perspectives. Ms Nargis Raza, Deputy Director at the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), said cases involving children are treated on a priority basis with strict confidentiality.—APP

MNA Bhandara extends new year greetings

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Member of the National Assembly Ishphanyar M. Bhandara on Thursday extended New Year greetings to the people of Pakistan, with prayers for the country's advancement, peace, and prosperity. In a statement, Bhandara said that Pakistan celebrates all religious festivals, including Christmas, Easter, Holi, and Baisakhi, reflecting the nation's inclusive and pluralistic culture. Emphasizing equal citizenship, he said that every Pakistani enjoys equal rights irrespective of religious affiliation He commended Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for her initiatives aimed at empowering minority communities, particularly the distribution of Minority Cards. Bhandara said that minority religious festivals are now being celebrated freely and without fear, noting that cities were adorned with 'Merry Christmas' banners during the Christmas festivities. Highlighting the contributions of minorities, he praised their services in the judiciary, education, healthcare, the armed forces, and other sectors, adding that the achievements of prominent minority figures are etched in golden letters in history. Expressing concern over reports of persecution of minorities in India, he referred to incidents of vandalism ahead of Christmas as deeply troubling.—APP

AIOU concludes five-week research capacity-building workshop

ISLAMABAD: A closing ceremony was held at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) for a five-week capacity-building workshop on research methodology aimed at promoting a research culture and enhancing the professional skills of the faculty The ceremony was presided over by Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Nasir Mahmood. Whereas, the workshop was organized by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and attended by 70 faculty members from the Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies. In his presidential address, Dr Nasir emphasized the importance of high-quality research and highlighted the need to improve research standards through interdisciplinary collaboration. He further stated that regular training sessions are essential to enhance researchers' capabilities, keeping them up-to-date with new trends and modern methods, thereby promoting quality and utility in research. Dr Nasir specifically stressed the importance of interdisciplinary research, noting that collaboration among experts from different fields not only allows for comprehensive solutions to problems but also makes research outcomes more effective and actionable.—APP

Briefs

**New Year:
CJP reaffirms
judiciary's
commitment
to accessible,
timely justice**

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi has said that the judiciary remains firmly committed to safeguarding fundamental rights, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring that justice is delivered fairly, impartially, and without delay. In his New Year message, the Chief Justice extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Pakistan, members of the judiciary, the legal fraternity, and all those who look to the courts for justice and reassurance. He said the Constitution entrusts the judiciary with a solemn responsibility to ensure that justice is not only done but is also seen to be done, adding that this duty gains deeper meaning when viewed through the experiences of ordinary citizens who approach the courts with hope, trust, and vulnerability. Emphasizing a citizen-centric justice system, the Chief Justice said the year ahead calls for reflection, reform, and renewal of commitment to placing citizens at the centre of judicial processes. He stressed that justice must be accessible in practice rather than merely in principle, dignified in procedure, and responsive to the needs of women, children, marginalized segments of society, and people living in remote and underserved regions. Outlining priorities for the coming year, he said the judiciary would pursue meaningful reforms aimed at improving access to justice, reducing delays, strengthening transparency, and responsibly leveraging technology to improve judicial efficiency.—APP

**NEPRA
concludes
hearing into
FCA for Nov**

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) concluded a public hearing into a petition filed by the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPAG) on behalf of all power distribution companies (DISCOs) in power decrease under monthly fuel cost adjustment (FCA) for November. The public hearing was presided over by the Chairman NEPRA and was attended by officials of CPPAG, representatives of the business community, officials of the Ministry of Energy, journalists and general public, according to a NEPRA statement. The CPPAG has sought 72 paise per unit education in the power tariff for November. If approved, this adjustment will only apply for one month. The adjustment would be applicable to all DISCOs' consumers including K-Electric, except lifeline users, protected consumers, prepaid users, and electric vehicle charging stations. The Authority will issue a detailed decision after reviewing all statistics.—APP

**Pakistan, United
States enter
new strategic
partnership era**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the eve of the New Year 2026, I bring season's greetings from the Embassy of Pakistan, Washington, D.C 2025 was a year that carried transformative tenor for Pak-US relations. We saw, witnessed and lived with a positive momentum in our bilateral relationship spanning over almost eight decades. Not only that we continued with our cooperation in the existing domains of counter terrorism, health, education, etc., but we identified new areas of transforming our longstanding relationship into a strategic, long-term partnership entrenched in economic ties. We identified IT, minerals, energy, hospitality and tourism and other avenues as new areas of mutually rewarding, beneficial engagement for both countries that should survive the test of time. Our leadership met frequently in this year. In the New Year 2026 this identity of views with regard to good relations, strategic relations between two densely populated mega countries of today and tomorrow, Pakistan. — APP

Islamabad under-construction Danish School enters final phase

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif likely to inaugurate the project in January

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The under-construction Danish School located on Kuri Road in the federal capital has entered the final stages of completion ahead of schedule, with construction work progressing rapidly. There is a strong likelihood that Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif will formally inaugurate this important educational project later this month in January. According to details, the Danish School project reflects Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's vision of promoting uniform, high-quality, and modern education across the country. Under this vision, Danish Schools are being established in various cities and underdeveloped areas of Pakistan to provide children from low-income families with access to quality educational facilities. The Danish School on Kuri Road, Islamabad, is a significant addition to this initiative and is being completed at an accelerated pace, even ahead of the stipulated timeline. Once completed, the school is expected to open a new chapter of educational development in the area. Education experts note that Danish Schools not only offer modern curricula and state-



of-the-art facilities but also provide equal opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress and excel.

Public and educational circles have termed the Danish School initiative a milestone for Pakistan's education system, expressing

hope that such projects will play a vital role in promoting education and contributing to national development in the future.

Ahsan urges data-driven growth as HIES signals economic turnaround

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday highlighted the centrality of credible data for evidence-based policy-making, saying the Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024-25 marked a major milestone for informed planning and sustainable development in the country. Addressing the launch ceremony of HIES 2024-25, the minister congratulated the team behind the survey and the SDGs framework, stressing that "data is the foundation on which accurate and scientific planning is built." He said the Ministry of Planning had assumed ownership of clearing long-pending statistical backlogs and had completed surveys that remained stalled for six to seven years. "Alhamdulillah, all pending work has been completed and approved for the nation," he added. Ahsan Iqbal said the availability of updated data would strengthen government policymaking while enabling researchers, businesses and

youth to undertake better research, business planning and national analysis. "This survey is a milestone for the country," he remarked. Referring to the findings of HIES, the minister said Pakistan had faced a series of economic shocks over the past six to seven years, beginning with policy disruptions after 2018 that derailed the growth momentum built between 2013 and 2018. He said mismanagement, particularly the surge in imports in 2022 to around \$80 billion, resulted in a massive current account deficit and depletion of foreign exchange reserves, causing currency instability and prolonged inflation. "There was no economic plan or direction; only reactive measures, and retaliatory measures do not run an economy," he said, adding that the situation was exacerbated by COVID-19 and subsequent global commodity and supply shocks. The minister said the survey showed the lower middle class had been the most affected, with sharp changes in income and consumption patterns. "Food inflation and rising utility prices consumed most of their income,

leaving little room for other expenses," he said. Despite the turbulence, Ahsan Iqbal said the economy had now moved past the worst phase and was on a recovery path. He cited GDP growth of 3.71 percent in the first quarter as "very encouraging" and expressed optimism that growth could reach four percent or higher if the current trajectory was maintained. However, he cautioned against artificial, consumption-led growth driven by excessive imports. "We do not want short-lived growth that crashes due to foreign exchange shortages," he said, stressing the need to align growth with export earnings, remittances, foreign direct investment and other inflows. He said the government was pursuing a prudent growth policy alongside reforms under the IMF programme to ensure stability and sustained high growth in coming years. On social indicators, the minister acknowledged relative improvements in literacy, health and infant mortality but said progress remained insufficient. He pointed out that literacy

had risen only from around 60 to 63 percent, far short of global benchmarks. "Under an education emergency, we must raise literacy to 90 percent in the next five to six years," he said, calling for joint efforts by governments, civil society and individuals. Highlighting the Uraan Pakistan agenda, Ahsan Iqbal said the survey reinforced the urgency of accelerating socio-economic development while ensuring peace and stability. He urged a shift in national discourse from political confrontation to issues shaping the country's future, such as child stunting, literacy and universal primary enrolment. "The future belongs to nations that prioritise their economy and socio-economic development," he said, adding that strong socio-economic foundations were essential for political stability. The minister called upon media, opposition, private sector and civil society to use the survey as a basis for constructive debate and collaboration. "We can only achieve our goals through cooperation as Team Pakistan," he said.

No rail tracks closed in KPK, Balochistan in last two years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has not closed any railway track in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) or Balochistan during the past two years, with all tracks in both provinces remaining fully operational "Despite severe financial constraints, the railways continue to ensure safe operations, even as nearly 95 percent of its expenditure is consumed by pay, pensions, fuel and utilities, leaving only five percent for maintenance of aging infrastructure and rolling stock," an official in the Ministry told APP. The officials said the limited maintenance budget is being used strictly for essential safety-related works. To bridge funding gaps, Pakistan Railways has mobilized alternative financing sources, particularly in KPK and Balochistan. Under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), the Rohri-Sibi railway track is being upgraded at a cost of Rs5.49 billion, while an additional \$390 million will be spent on upgrading the Rohri-Spezand and Spezand-Nokundi sections in Balochistan, he added. Moreover, the official said a 33-kilometre stretch from Sariab to Kuchlak is being upgraded through Balochistan's provincial PSDP. He said that several stations have also been upgraded. In KPK, Attock Khurd and the Washing Line at Peshawar Cantonment Station have been improved. In Balochistan, stations at Sariab, Quetta, Sheikh Manda, Baleli and Kuchlak are proposed for upgradation under the provincial PSDP. The official said that infrastructure safety has been strengthened through the rehabilitation of weak bridges, with four bridges reinforced in KPK and 21 in Balochistan On passenger services, he said that Pakistan Railways has not discontinued any train in KPK or Balochistan during the last two years. In KPK, major trains included Khyber Mail, Rehman Baba Express, Awam Express which is planned for upgradation and Khushal Khan Khattak Express. In Balochistan, Bolan Mail continues to operate between Quetta and Karachi, while Jaffar Express links Quetta with Punjab and KP. These services provide affordable long-distance travel for daily commuters, students, labourers and small farmers. The official said the freight and parcel services have also been expanded. A modern dry port has been established at Azakhel in the Peshawar division to facilitate bulk transportation. He said the brake and luggage vans attached to major passenger trains enable small traders and farmers to transport produce economically. Regular freight services from Balochistan are supporting the movement of minerals, livestock feed and agricultural products to Karachi and other up-country markets.—APP

**94-member
delegation
from Air
university visits
Parliament
House**

ISLAMABAD: A 94-member delegation of students from Air University, H-11 Campus, accompanied by a faculty member, visited the Parliament House on an educational study tour. Upon arrival, senior officials of the Upper House warmly welcomed the delegation. During the visit, the students were taken to the Senate Museum, where they were provided with a comprehensive briefing on Pakistan's parliamentary history, the legislative process, the role of the Senate in national affairs, its working procedures, Senate elections, and other parliamentary matters. On the occasion, a special documentary highlighting the history of the Senate and key parliamentary milestones was also screened, which the students watched with keen interest. The delegation was also given a detailed orientation in the Senate Hall regarding the procedures of Senate sessions, various stages of legislation, and the functioning of parliamentary committees. The briefing emphasized the effective role of the parliamentary structure and highlighted the significance of committees in the law-making process.—APP

**Tarar extends
heartfelt
New Year's
greetings to
people**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law & Justice and Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday extended heartfelt New Year's greetings to the people. In a message, he said this is a time to reflect on our shared journey, honor the sacrifices that have shaped our nation and renew our commitment to progress, justice and national unity. The law minister said the year ahead calls upon us to strengthen our institutions, uphold the values of integrity and inclusivity and work together with resolve and dedication for a prosperous and harmonious Pakistan. "Let us embrace the New Year with courage, optimism and a steadfast commitment to the welfare of every citizen," he maintained. He expressed hope that May 2026 be a year of peace, progress and opportunity for all, inspiring each of us to contribute with sincerity and purpose to the growth and dignity of our beloved homeland.—APP

Rawalpindi courts convicted 359 in heinous crimes during 2025

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi's courts convicted 359 accused persons in various crimes including murder, rape and illicit drug trafficking cases throughout 2025. The yearly performance report shows that the judiciary disposed of dozens of high-profile and routine cases resulting in 48 death sentences, dozens of life imprisonments and millions of rupees in fines. The majority came in murder trials. Across 61 cases, courts convicted 89 individuals including 48 were handed the death penalty, 34 received life imprisonment and seven were ordered to pay diyat or compensation. The total fines imposed in these cases exceeded Rs 29.9 million. In 21 rape cases matters, 25 convicts faced punishment. One was sentenced to death, 18 were given life imprisonment, 4 received 14 years' rigorous imprisonment each and 2 were jailed for 10 years. Fines in these cases amounted to Rs 6.8 million. The largest volume of convictions 245 which occurred in narcotics cases. Fines in these cases surpassed Rs 27.3 million. Among the sen-

tences were 3 terms of 20 years' imprisonment with Rs 1.68 million fine each, 01 got 15-year imprisonment, 7 were convicted for 14-year, 26 ten-year and 192 nine-year imprisonment. Smaller sentences included 01 seven-year term, 05 five-year terms, 01 two-year term and 09 one-year terms, each accompanied by fines ranging from Rs 25,000 to several lakhs. Police officials termed the figures as evidence of improved case-building, faster forensic support and better coordination between investigators, prosecutors and the judiciary.

"When serious crimes are met with swift and severe punishment, it sends a strong signal to potential offenders," a senior police officer said. With public safety remaining a top priority for law-enforcement agencies in the garrison city, authorities indicated that similar momentum would continue into the new year to further reduce the incidence of murder, sexual violence and drug peddling in Rawalpindi.

Burnout, lifestyle diseases and suicide killing doctors young

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Doctors and physicians in Pakistan are dying at a young age due to lifestyle related diseases, extreme burnout and, in some cases, suicide, as they neglect their own health while caring for others, senior cardiologists and mental health experts warned on Thursday. Speakers shared data showing that nearly six out of ten physicians experience significant burnout, while suicide rates among doctors are almost double those of the general population. Despite this, only about one third ever seek professional help. The warning came at Life in a Metro, a nationwide academic forum organised under Mediverse, an initiative of Hudson Pharma, where specialists described doctors as the most neglected patients in the healthcare system. Delivering the keynote address, Dr M

Rehan Omer Siddiqi, an interventional cardiologist and internal medicine specialist, said physician burnout had quietly reached crisis levels in Pakistan Drawing on international and regional evidence, he noted that long working hours, chronic sleep deprivation, poor diet, physical inactivity and constant psychological pressure were pushing doctors towards early heart disease, diabetes, depression and substance misuse. "We talk endlessly about 'do no harm' yet many doctors are quietly harming themselves," he said, adding that self diagnosis, self prescribing and delaying proper medical care were common among physicians. Dr Siddiqi said a deeply embedded culture of endurance and guilt prevents doctors from prioritising their own wellbeing. Many believe that taking time off is a sign of weakness or a betrayal of patients and colleagues. Using the airline oxygen mask anal-

ogy, he stressed that doctors must secure their own health before they can care effectively for others. "A healthy doctor delivers safer and better care. Staying healthy is not a luxury. It is a professional responsibility," he said, urging institutions to promote teamwork, delegation and realistic workloads. He warned that prolonged stress is not just an emotional issue but a direct cardiac risk. Data shared during the session linked chronic stress and burnout with hypertension, metabolic disorders and a higher risk of sudden cardiac events among physicians, particularly those working in high pressure urban settings. Dr Kulsoom Haider, consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist, focused on the mind body connection and emotional resilience, explaining that depression and anxiety are among the most common mental health conditions globally and often present through physical symptoms when left unaddressed.

UK still counting the cost 10 years on from Brexit vot

MOHAMED CHEBARO

REGARDLESS of how hard some in the UK try to pretend Brexit was a necessary step toward sovereignty, territorial integrity and the curbing of toxic freedom of movement and freeloading on its generous benefits system, as well as offering dividends for people, society and the economy, the figures are unfortunately showing the opposite on all fronts. During 2026, the 10th anniversary of the Brexit referendum will pass. Leaving the EU was drummed up as a lifeline for the British people, giving them independence, even though it was only approved by a slim and unconvincing majority. Five years since Britain abandoned the single market and customs union, ending freedom of movement in the EU for its citizens, the country is still suffering from the reverberations and aftershocks of that self-inflicted, avoidable earthquake. Those that still believe in Brexit continue to defend it, claiming that it was merely unfortunately timed, as it has coincided with calamities such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the increase in the cost of living and the disruption of trade and commerce due to the changes witnessed in the US. Brexiteers also continue to claim that the withdrawal agreement was badly negotiated by a shamolic Conservative government that, after years of austerity, decided to swiftly break with EU rules and standards, destroying institutional due processes and preventing a smooth transition. This led to disruptions, shortages and new administrative cycles that broke with norms, increased costs for producers and consumers alike and damaged the country's resilience and prosperity. A lost decade has passed since that vote and the verdict is clearly written everywhere. The Brexit doomsday is still being felt as people live through economic and political near-paralysis. The country is still grappling with the tough new trade barriers that were insisted on by the London-based architects of that bitter divorce deal and all its consequential blows to trade, investment, economic growth and living standards. Above all, Brexit has created a climate of uncertainty that has plagued the UK's services and industries ever since. The stark figures show losses to the economy in the billions, with state revenues suffering similarly. And it seems the big political freeze that dominated the morning after the vote – the idleness and lack of leadership – persists regarding the means to turn the corner. There is a lack of will due to a fear that any rapprochement with Europe could create more division in what is already

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a highly polarized society. Labour's landslide election victory 18 months ago gave Prime Minister Keir Starmer a huge majority that he has been slow to capitalize on in terms of channeling it to make a difference with a real UK-EU reset. Though the two sides have taken major steps on youth mobility, energy and defense and security cooperation, this falls short and does not register on the scale of Brexit's impact on society or the economy. From the start, leaving the EU was forecast to hit the UK's economy by 4 percent, according to the Office for Budget Responsibility. The stark figures show losses to the economy in the billions, with state revenues suffering similarly. The red lines Labour drew for itself in its election manifesto may have been relevant when the party was preparing itself for the vote but, since then, more water has gone under the bridge in terms of challenges and adversities facing the UK. Not least, there is the rise of an ultra-right that has made enmity to the EU and to foreigners generally two essential tenets of its rhetoric. This is despite the fact Brexit caused the UK to recover from the pandemic more slowly than other G7 nations, while it has also slipped to sixth place in the list of the world's leading economies. In December, a YouGov poll revealed that large sections of the British public have shifted toward wanting to rejoin the EU's customs union, largely due to economic concerns and a desire for a closer relationship with the bloc. Eighty percent of those who voted Labour in July 2024 believe the prime minister should open negotiations for joining the union. The survey also revealed that 70 percent of Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green voters would support a future PM opening talks on rejoining the EU. Even among Conservative voters, 25 percent of those questioned said a new leader should start negotiations for rejoining, something Starmer once said is unlikely to happen during his lifetime. Meanwhile, a Savanta poll found that 67 percent of 2024 Labour voters would prefer the government to rejoin the customs union rather than increase taxes. This is in addition to a November survey that revealed that three-quarters of voters who felt that Brexit was harmful favored joining the single market and customs union to lower taxes in the UK. Also, Brexit cost UK business £37 billion (\$49 billion) in the 12 months to September 2024, according to a report published by The Independent, leading ministers to pledge to tear down trade barriers with the EU. The report stated that Britain's total trade with the bloc was 5 percent lower than before Brexit. One does not need to look far in the UK to find evidence of low morale, the high cost of living, the sluggish economy, poor productivity and dwindling social services, which have been made worse by the Brexit conundrum the country entered 10 years ago due to that fateful vote. Breaking the downward spiral that some call the "doom loop" is in the hands of Starmer and his government, backed by the vast majority Labour commands in Parliament. The government's lack of direction should end by making saving the economy its way to regain balance and reverse its waning popularity. Starmer should choose boldness and rejoin the customs union if it is the way to redress the damage suffered as a result of the bad deal agreed by the previous Conservative government.

Will 2026 be better – or worse?

Qamar Bashir



Russia condemned these US actions as akin to piracy, accusing Washington of reviving historical aggression and undermining maritime law. Moscow's foreign ministry also reaffirmed support for Venezuelan sovereignty and called for peaceful resolution, intensifying the geopolitical stakes in the region. The United States also saw rising diplomatic tensions with Canada. What began as trade disputes – including punitive tariffs on key Canadian industries – has occasionally strained relations with Ottawa. While both sides expressed hope...

THE year 2025 will be remembered as one of the most turbulent in recent history. Global diplomacy struggled under the weight of escalating violence, unpredictable political shifts, and competing visions of world order. From nuclear-armed neighbours in South Asia to Middle Eastern confrontations, from renewed clashes in Eastern Europe to growing tension in the Western Hemisphere, humanity faced a litany of conflicts that reshaped geopolitics. As the calendar turns to 2026, the central question is whether the world will break the cycle of violence or simply perpetuate it. One of the most dangerous confrontations occurred between Pakistan and India, two nuclear-armed neighbours in a region that is home to more than two billion people. What began with provocative military moves quickly escalated into a brief but intense confrontation, raising fears of catastrophe. Pakistan responded with disciplined strategic coordination across land, sea, and cyber domains, demonstrating its modern military capability. The frightening reality was that both states possess significant nuclear arsenals and delivery systems capable of wide-ranging destruction. Had the conflict continued, millions of lives might have been lost. Fortunately, it ended before reaching that threshold, but the episode highlighted the fragility of peace in South Asia. The confrontation also had wider geopolitical consequences. Pakistan emerged with renewed international recognition and expanding defence partnerships. Its defence industries – from drones to aircraft – are now finding export markets, reshaping its economic trajectory and regional influence. Whether this alignment ultimately proves advantageous or risky remains to be seen, but it has already altered the strategic balance in the region. Across the Middle East, another defining crisis unfolded as Israel and Iran engaged in direct and sustained hostilities. Iranian missile and drone strikes deep inside Israeli territory tested Israel's military resilience and strategic partnerships. Even with extensive U.S. logistical and missile-defence support, Israel suffered strain on its forces and infrastructure. Iran – already burdened by economic hardship – saw its currency weaken further amid internal dissent. Although a ceasefire now holds, rivalries remain deep, and 2026 may witness renewed confrontation unless diplomacy prevails. In Europe, the war in Ukraine continued with devastating human and economic cost. Efforts by U.S. and allied diplomats to negotiate a ceasefire generated dialogue but yielded limited progress. Both Kyiv and Moscow continue to view military advantage as attainable, and both remain deeply reliant on external support. Even if negotiations take root in 2026, rebuilding trust and infrastructure will take years, perhaps decades.

The Gaza Strip saw another tragic cycle as humanitarian suffering mounted amid continued bombardment and displacement. A fragile ceasefire, often violated, has yet to translate into sustainable peace. Proposed multinational stabilisation forces face near-impossible odds unless underlying political causes that fuel conflict are addressed. Beyond these headline wars, a series of lesser-known clashes also shaped the year. Border violence between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus, though subject to diplomatic agreements, remains fragile on the ground. Renewed skirmishes between Cambodia and Thailand over long-contested border areas saw temporary ceasefires that reduced bloodshed without resolving underlying grievances. Amid these global tensions, a new flashpoint emerged – the Western Hemisphere. Throughout 2025, the United States dramatically intensified pressure on Venezuela. A campaign labelled Operation Southern Spear saw U.S. naval quarantines of sanctioned oil tankers, repeated strikes on alleged drug trafficking infrastructure, and the formal declaration by U.S. officials that the nation was in a "non-international armed conflict" with organised groups tied to Caracas. These actions, including recent bombardments of coastal facilities, represent the most significant escalation yet between the United States and Venezuela, with critics warning the Caribbean could become a theatre of full-blown conflict in 2026. Russia condemned these U.S. actions as akin to piracy, accusing Washington of reviving historical aggression and undermining maritime law. Moscow's foreign ministry also reaffirmed support for Venezuelan sovereignty and called for peaceful resolution, intensifying the geopolitical stakes in the region. The United States also saw rising diplomatic tensions with Canada. What began as trade disputes – including punitive tariffs on key Canadian industries – has occasionally strained relations with Ottawa. While both sides expressed hope to ease trade friction, the rhetoric and economic pressure hint at deeper ideological divergence. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump repeatedly raised controversial territorial ambitions, including discussions of acquiring Greenland – a self-governing Danish territory. Trump described the Arctic island as "essential to U.S. national security", a pronouncement that was met with strong opposition from Greenland's leaders and Denmark, who rejected any notion of ceding sovereignty. Such statements have fueled concern among European capitals about Washington's approach to traditional alliances. Throughout 2025, Trump also made claims about brokering peace or ceasefires in various global conflicts,

asserting success in ending or pausing up to eight wars – including disputes involving Pakistan and India, Cambodia and Thailand, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and others. Critics note that many of these claims refer to temporary armistices or negotiations rather than enduring peace, and in several cases fighting resumed shortly after declarations were made. These political narratives became part of the year's global discourse, illustrating the complex intersection of diplomacy, rhetoric, and reality. Amid these crises, scientific and technological progress marched forward. Advances in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, robotics, and space technology marked 2025 as a transformative year. Competing global powers – particularly the United States, China, and India – deepened their race to harness computing power that could revolutionise fields from medicine to climate science. Ambitious plans to deploy data centres into space to leverage uninterrupted solar energy and orbital connectivity underscored a new frontier for technological infrastructure. Quantum computing moved closer to practical application, offering the potential to solve complex problems long out of reach. Robotics advanced toward intelligent systems capable of complex cognitive tasks. These developments hold transformative promise – but also risk disrupting labour markets, magnifying inequality, and concentrating power in the hands of a few. So, will 2026 be better – or worse?. The honest answer is that it depends on whether the world learns from 2025 or repeats its mistakes. War has shown, yet again, that force alone cannot guarantee peace. Symbolic diplomatic gestures without shared political understanding are fragile. Military escalation, whether in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, or the Caribbean, comes with unacceptable human cost. What the world needs most in 2026 is restraint, humility, and honest diplomacy. True strength lies not in destruction but in the ability to preserve life, foster cooperation, and build institutions that protect dignity. Technology must be guided by ethics and shared responsibility, not domination. As we step into 2026, let us hope it becomes a year when nations choose negotiation over escalation, understanding over animosity, and shared destiny over discord. May it be a time when humanity consciously abandons war as policy and embraces peace as strategy.

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Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
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Former MD, SRBC
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Dhaka: An Unexpected Diplomatic Opening in Pakistan-India Relations

Dr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan

Political and diplomatic analysts describe this interaction as an instance of "unexpected proximity." The official narratives of both countries stood at their hardest extremes, the media climate was intensely bitter yet amidst the stillness of Dhaka, the smiling handshake of the two leaders pointed toward a quiet chapter of diplomacy. History repeatedly tells us that major breakthroughs are not always born at formal negotiating tables; rather, they often emerge from such unassuming, informal exchanges initially...

IN the quiet air of Dhaka, a moment unfolded that gently tapped on the long-standing political inertia of the subcontinent. On one side lay the chill of strained relations, memories of border tensions, and the bitter echoes of a recent war; on the other, in the same backdrop, stood the gesture of Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar who walked up to the Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, greeted him warmly, and exchanged pleasant remarks. This was no ordinary social encounter; it came at a time when both states were passing through an almost complete diplomatic silence. That is why political observers viewed this brief moment as symbolic like a faint crack appearing within a thick sheet of ice. The meeting took place during the funeral of former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, attended by political and state dignitaries from various countries. As Sardar Ayaz Sadiq stood there to offer condolences, Jaishankar approached him, introduced himself, and remarked that he was familiar with the Speaker's personality and political profile. Despite the solemn nature of the occasion, the courteous tone and refined exchange between the two leaders reflected something deeper that beyond the pressures of politics, human-level dialogue can still persist. In the world of diplomacy, such informal bridges often plant the earliest seeds of future engagement. This interaction gained particular significance because, after the war in May, both countries had gradually drifted apart diplomatically, and almost all formal communication channels had fallen silent. The rhetoric in capital cities was harsh, the atmosphere tense, and psychological distances between the two nations had deepened. Against this backdrop, Jaishankar's gesture of stepping forward did not appear as a mere social courtesy; it seemed like a quiet diplomatic signal a reminder that broken conversations never fully

die, and sooner or later, they begin to breathe again. Equally interesting is the fact that, after the war, India had even advised its cricket players not to shake hands with Pakistani cricketers as if the tension of diplomacy had seeped into the sports arena. Yet in other sporting events across the region, athletes continued to greet one another. Within this contrast, the handshake in Dhaka was more than the meeting of two hands; it became a symbolic act underscoring that no matter how strained relations may become, the doors of dialogue are never entirely closed. During his visit, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also met Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus and went to Begum Khaleda Zia's residence to offer condolences to her family, conveying sorrow on behalf of the Government, Parliament, and people of Pakistan. This gesture served as a reminder that South Asian politics still bears traces of shared history, emotional ties, and collective experiences of grief and solidarity. Moments of mourning and condolence often create a softer environment one in which hearts can be reached even when political distances remain intact. Political and diplomatic analysts describe this interaction as an instance of "unexpected proximity." The official narratives of both countries stood at their hardest extremes, the media climate was intensely bitter yet amidst the stillness of Dhaka, the smiling handshake of the two leaders pointed toward a quiet chapter of diplomacy. History repeatedly tells us that major breakthroughs are not always born at formal negotiating tables; rather, they often emerge from such unassuming, informal exchanges initially perceived as mere social etiquette. It is also noteworthy that Jaishankar had earlier visited Pakistan to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit, where he met Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Thus, this was not the first inter-

action between senior officials of both states within an international setting however, the tense post-war environment lent this brief meeting a deeper and more symbolic significance. It suggested that, despite the suspension of official channels, the geopolitical realities of the region do not allow the parties to completely disengage from one another. The question, however, remains: can this handshake evolve into a structured diplomatic dialogue or a meaningful channel of engagement in the future? For now, any definite answer would be premature yet the enduring truth is that the thawing of ice always begins with a symbolic moment. Sometimes it is a smile, sometimes a gentle sentence, and sometimes a condolence-meeting small bridges that become the first step toward closing wide distances. The history of Pakistan-India relations has always been a tapestry of contradictions tension alongside dialogue, distance alongside proximity, conflict alongside diplomacy. At different points in time, faint rays of conversation have emerged even in the midst of hostility. The meeting in Dhaka appears to be yet another quiet installment in that long narrative. Perhaps, with time, it will be remembered merely as an incidental episode or perhaps it may prove to be the moment that laid the foundation for a new chapter. History, after all, delivers its verdict much later. For now, it is fair to say that the people of this region yearn not for conflict, but for dialogue, stability, and cooperation. If political leaderships are able to recognize the subtle signals embedded in such moments, then one day this handshake may well be recalled as the beginning of a larger and more meaningful diplomatic opening. In global politics, hope often appears fragile and yet, at times, it is this very fragile line that transforms into the strongest of foundations. Perhaps the moment in Dhaka has, once again, rekindled that possibility.

Briefs

Pak, India share lists of nuclear installations

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state, terming it a violation of international law. Pakistan reaffirmed its full support for Somalia's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, he added. The spokesperson said Pakistan remains committed to promoting peace, stability, and diplomacy at both regional and international levels.

PTI seeks disqualification of...

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The reference, moved by Zafar, invoked Article 63-A of the Constitution, which deals with disqualification on grounds of defection. "The declaration is being submitted for onward reference to the chief election commissioner for laying the same before the election commission in accordance with the said Article 63-A," the reference, dated January 1 and seen by Dawn, said. It added that a meeting of the PTI was convened before voting on the 27th Amendment, in which it was "explicitly decided and communicated to all PTI senators in writing" that they were to oppose and not vote in favour of any legislative measure or bill relating to the said amendment. The direction to oppose and not vote in favour of any legislative measure relating to the 27th Amendment was also issued by Zafar to all PTI senators, including Abro, the reference stated, adding: "The record confirms that this direction was properly conveyed to him and that he was fully aware of it." The direction was also widely published in the media, the reference said.

CM Sohail Afridi says he will visit...

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deliver a speech to supporters at Liberty Chowk but was unable to do so as a heavy contingent of police had blocked all roads leading to the area by setting up pickets. He had also addressed PTI lawmakers at the Punjab Assembly, a visit that was marred by altercations between members of his entourage and security officials, while several heated exchanges between PTI leaders and journalists were also witnessed. He was also barred from visiting the cantonment to meet party leaders, as well as the food street that had been shut down ahead of his visit. He also went to Zaman Park amid heavy police deployment, while the detention of party supporters during the tour was also reported. On Monday, he wrote to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to complain about the treatment meted out to him during his visit. He maintained that the Punjab government's adoption of an extraordinary and excessive security posture — including sweeping detentions and visible enforcement theatrics — was "a message of intimidation rather than cooperation". He complained that "such measures were neither proportionate nor warranted and conveyed an intent that went well beyond legitimate security considerations".

Around 40 killed in explosion...

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Frederic Gisler, said a helpline had been opened for relatives. "I can't hide from you that we are all shaken by what happened overnight in Crans," Gisler told the press conference. "Our count is about 100 injured, most seriously, and unfortunately tens of people are presumed dead," he said, adding that patients had been dispatched to hospitals in Sion, Lausanne, Geneva and Zurich.

Mohsin Naqvi, Approves Major Islamabad Development Projects

Islamabad to Get State-of-the-Art Cricket Stadium, Smart Underpass, Expanded Safe City Project as Interior Minister Reviews Major Public Welfare Initiatives at CDA Headquarters

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A special meeting was held at CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Interior, Mo-

hsin Naqvi. During the extensive meeting, a detailed review of various public welfare projects was conducted. It was decided to initiate further projects for the convenience of citizens. During the meeting, it was decided that a state-of-the-art cricket stadium will be constructed in Islamabad. Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi has requested the final design of the stadium within 10 days. A specific area has been allocated for the National



Park. Additionally, it was decided to expand the scope of the modern Safe City Project in Islamabad. To improve traffic flow at Kashmir Chowk, a "Smart Underpass" will be constructed, with the final design to be submitted within 10 days. It was also decided to hire renowned companies for the construction of a five-star hotel in Islamabad. Details of long-vacant commercial plots have been requested. A special team will be formed to hire a Solid Waste Man-

agement company. Land has also been allocated for the headquarters of law enforcement agencies. Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi stated that operations against encroachments will continue with full force, and the released land will be used in the public interest. Various proposals for the construction of a new convention center in the federal capital were discussed. Proposals for allocating land for the headquarters of the Federal Constabulary, Rangers, and Islamabad Traffic Police were also reviewed. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa gave a briefing. The meeting was attended by IG Islamabad Police, Ali Nasir Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner General, CTO, SSP Operations, CDA members, and other senior officials.

Sudan lose to Burkina Faso as Algeria win again at Cup of Nations

Sudan Set Senegal Clash as Burkina Faso Win, Algeria Perfect Group Record After Equatorial Guinea Victory in AFCON Last-16 Picture Takes Shape with drama, penalties missed, and heavy squad rotation

CASABLANCA: Sudan must face 2022 champions Senegal in the last 16 of the Africa Cup of Nations after losing 2-0 to Burkina Faso in their final group game on Wednesday, while Algeria beat Equatorial Guinea 3-1 at the same time. Lassina Traore's early strike put Burkina Faso ahead at the Mohammed V Stadium in Casablanca, before Algezoli Nooh missed a penalty for Sudan. Arsene Kouassi, of French Ligue 1 side Lorient, sealed

Burkina Faso's win late on. Both teams had already qualified for the knockout stage from Group E behind Algeria. Burkina Faso simply needed to avoid defeat to advance in second place. The 2013 runners-up will go to Marrakesh for a last-16 tie against the winners of Group F, which concludes later Wednesday with reigning champions Ivory Coast vying for top spot alongside Cameroon and Mozambique. It was Sudan's second de-

feat in three outings, but a 1-0 victory against Equatorial Guinea was enough for them to advance as a best third-placed side. "Burkina has a very good team. Most of their players are playing in top European sides so automatically when you play against them it is not going to be an easy ride," said Sudan coach Kwesi Appiah. Ranked 117th in the world, Sudan have won just two of 19 matches across six appearances at the Cup of Nations since lifting the

trophy in 1970. This is just their second appearance in the knockout stages since then and it would be a huge surprise if they defeated Sadio Mane's Senegal in Tanger on Saturday. However, getting so far is a major achievement for a country which has been ravaged by war since fighting broke out between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces in April 2023. "It is good for everyone in Sudan and it is also good for the players as it is up to them to prove that they can play against a team like Senegal," added Appiah. "Senegal is a big football country and we will be sure to play a very good game." Shakhtar Donetsk forward Traore headed in from Stephane Aziz Ki's chipped cross on 16 minutes to open the scoring for a Burkina Faso side showing seven changes from their last match. Sudan were awarded a penalty midway through the first half to the delight of their fans, who made up the majority of the 10,084 crowd. Burkina Faso goalkeeper Herve Koffi, who was struggling with an injury, clumsily rushed out and brought down Algezoli. — Agencies



Shai leads Thunder to dominant victory over Blazers in NBA thriller

Gilgeous-Alexander Shines With 30 Points as Thunder Rout Trail Blazers, Extend NBA-Best Home Record and Clinch Season Series in Dominant Oklahoma City Victory

OKLAHOMA CITY: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander delivered a spectacular 30-point performance to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a dominant 124-95 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers in an NBA thriller here at the Paycom Centre on Wednesday. Gilgeous-Alexander's all-around play was crucial in the Thunder maintaining control throughout the game. He finished with an efficient 11-of-15 shooting, added six assists, and collected four steals, all while keeping a clean sheet with no turnovers. The star guard's impressive display helped Oklahoma City extend its home record to an NBA-best 17-1 and secure a third consecutive win, rounding off a successful four-game homestand. The Thunder seized control early, going on a 16-4 run in the first quarter, sparked by Gilgeous-Alexander's two assists, four points, and overall hustle. By halftime, Oklahoma City had built a comfortable 18-point lead, with Gilgeous-Alexander contributing 18 of his 30 points. Oklahoma City's defence was stifling, forcing 15 steals and outscoring the Blazers 28-17 off turnovers, 52-34 in the paint, and 52-33 off the bench. Ajay Mitchell added 17 points, Isaiah Joe nailed five three-pointers to finish with 15 points, and Chet Holmgren contributed 12 points, 10 rebounds, and a season-high six blocks. — APP

Christian Kofane nets winner as Cameroon beat Mozambique in AFCON

AGADIR: Teenage star Christian Kofane made a memorable debut, scoring the winning goal as Cameroon came from behind to defeat Mozambique 2-1 on Wednesday, securing second place in Group F in the Africa Cup of Nations here at Adrar Stadium. Cameroon's 19-year-old striker from Bayer Leverkusen, making only his second appearance for the national team, was the match-winner in their 2-1 victory over Mozambique in the Africa Cup of Nations group stage. After earlier wasting several chances, Kofane scored a powerful shot from the edge of the box in the 55th minute to seal the win. Mozambique had taken the lead in the 23rd minute, with a strong strike from Sporting Lisbon's Geny Catamo. — APP

N. Korea's Kim hails 'invincible alliance' with Russia in New Year's letter

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has praised his troops fighting abroad as forging an "invincible alliance" with Russia in a new year's message, state media said Thursday. Pyongyang has sent thousands of troops to support Russia's nearly four-year invasion of Ukraine, according to South Korean and Western intelligence agencies. At least 600 have died and thousands more have sustained injuries, according to South Korean estimates. Analysts say North Korea is receiving financial aid, military technology and food and energy supplies from Russia in return. On Thursday Kim praised his men fighting in an "alien land", congratulating their "heroic" defence of the nation's honour and instructing them to "be brave", the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. "As the whole country is enveloped in a festive atmosphere of greeting the new year, I all the more miss you, who are fighting bravely on the battlefields in the alien land even at this moment," he said, according to KCNA. "Behind you are Pyongyang and Moscow," Kim said. The North Korean leader praised soldiers for strengthening the "invincible alliance" with Russia, calling on them to fight "for the fraternal

Russian people". And Kim hinted that more overseas action would take place this year, highlighting "remarkable feats you will perform on the overseas battlefields". Analysts say that North Korea's deepening alliance with Russia has offered an economic lifeline to Kim's regime and allowed him to rebuff US and South Korean overtures for dialogue. "Deployments to Russia, as well as overseas military operations or cooperation more broadly, are no longer exceptional but have become embedded as part of official defence policy," Lim Eul-chul, a professor at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at Kyungnam University, told AFP. And Thursday's state media coverage shows that Kim can also "frame the economic and military gains" from the troop deployments in nationalist appeals to his domestic audience, he added. On-the-ground accounts, however, paint a grim picture for North Korean troops embedded in Europe's bloodiest war in decades. Pyongyang's soldiers have been ordered to kill themselves rather than be taken prisoner, according to South Korea's intelligence service and accounts by two North Koreans captured by Ukraine. — APP

Arshad shares moment with UFC great Khabib

Arshad Nadeem Shares Golden Moment With Khabib, Meets Infantino, Receives Global Breakthrough Athlete Award After Historic Olympic Gold at World Sports Summit in Dubai

DUBAI: Ace Javelin thrower and Olympic gold medalist Arshad Nadeem shared a 'golden moment' after meeting former UFC lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov on the sidelines of the World Sports Summit. The two-day summit took place on December 29-30, bringing together over 1,500 athletes, sports leaders, and policymakers to discuss the future of the industry under the theme "Uniting the World Through Sport." Nadeem shared the update on his social media account. "Meeting Khabib at the World Sports Summit," he wrote. Earlier in the day, he also met FIFA President Gianni Infantino, who inquired about the distance of the record throw. "It was a 92-metre throw, and now I want to break that record," Nadeem told the football chief. During the event, Arshad Nadeem was conferred with the 'Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Sports Award' in the Global Breakthrough Athlete category here at the World Sports Summit.

Nadeem was honoured with the award on the back of his landmark triumph at the Paris Olympics, where he ended up with a gold medal after a record-breaking throw of 92.97 metres. With that throw, Arshad broke Pakistan's gold medal jinx at the Olympics, marking the country's first in 40 years.



Following the accolade, Nadeem expressed pride in the achievement, noting that the award would encourage emerging athletes in nurturing the sport in Pakistan. "Alhamdulillah. Honored to receive the Global Breakthrough Athlete Award at the World Sports Summit in Dubai. This prestigious award was presented by His Highness Sheikh Mansoor bin Muhammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum," Arshad wrote on his Instagram handle. "Sincere thanks to the Dubai Sports Council for the kind invitation and warm hospitality. Thankful for the unwavering support, prayers, and encouragement from everyone who stood by me throughout this journey," Arshad added. "Proud to represent Pakistan on the global stage," he concluded with gratitude. It is pertinent to mention that the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Sports Award recognises exceptional sporting achievements and contributions worldwide. — Agencies

One killed in grenade attack

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Meanwhile, Sibi region Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Barkat Khosa told Dawn that the injured were moved to Teaching Hospital, while the body of the deceased was handed over to his heirs. "Police have tightened security in the area and further investigation is under way," DIG Khosa said. Last month, an eight-year-old child was killed and five other members of a family, including two women, were injured when a grenade exploded inside a house in the Wadh area of Balochistan's Khuzdar district.

PSX opens 2026 higher

FROM PAGE 01
close of 174,054.32. It witnessed a low of 174,437.70, still up 383.38 points, or 0.22%. "Yesterday, the Ministry of Finance presented a monthly economic outlook, which was optimistic towards the LSM [large-scale manufacturing] and inflation numbers," said Huzaifa Riaz, Director, Mayari Securities (Pvt) Limited. "Also, fresh fund allocations by institutions for the new year have also resulted in a positive trend at the PSX," he added. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday touted progress on taxes, inflation and external buffers. He said revenues rose 26% in 2025, more than one million new taxpayers were added, the tax-to-GDP ratio moved from "around 8% to over 10%," and the current account swung to a \$1.9 billion surplus from a \$3.3 billion deficit.

Member of Iranian security...

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This is the first officially confirmed death since the start of the protests on Sunday, which began peacefully in the capital Tehran. The Basij are a volunteer paramilitary force linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of the Islamic Republic. Pourali said that "during the demonstrations in Koudasht, 13 police officers and Basij members were injured by stone throwing". The protests began in Tehran, where shopkeepers went on strike over the high cost of living and economic stagnation. They then spread to other cities, after students at least 10 universities joined in on Tuesday. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called on the government on Thursday to take action to improve the economic situation.

PM Shehbaz calls for proposals...

FROM PAGE 01
facilitation of investors part of the government's priorities, the prime minister directed all the ministries to promptly prepare recommendations related to external and internal investment and development projects in their respective sectors. He said that in order to increase investment, special attention should be given to promoting exports and executing the relevant projects. Prime Minister Shehbaz also instructed the relevant ministries to extend cooperation through Pakistani embassies worldwide for facilitating foreign investors. He also directed that the initial orientation on the facilities for investors and other relevant information on investment should be made available at Pakistani embassies. He also asked all the ministries to give equal attention to industrial production, agriculture, and all other important sectors with a view to attracting investment. During the meeting, the representatives from different ministries briefed the prime minister on the progress of ongoing developmental projects and work on economic, institutional, and administrative reforms. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Attaullah Tarar, Ali Pervaiz Malik, and Ahmad Khan Cheema, Advisor to PM Rana Sanaullah, Special Assistant to PM Haroon Akhtar, chief secretaries of all provinces, National Coordinator of SIFC, and other relevant government officials.

Briefs

PSX gains 2,301 points to close at 176,355 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday closed bullish, gaining 2,301.17 points, a positive change of 1.32 percent, to settle at 176,355.49 points compared to 174,054.32 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market witnessed a trading volume of 1,402.650 million shares with a traded value of Rs 48.424 billion, against 957,239 million shares valuing Rs 44.231 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization surged to Rs 19.968 trillion from Rs 19.690 trillion a day earlier. Out of 485 active companies in the ready market, 337 advanced, 116 declined, while 32 remained unchanged. K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 372.705 million shares, followed by Pak International Bulk with 139.941 million shares and Bank of Punjab with 55.418 million shares. The top gainers included PIA Holding Company Limited, which rose by Rs 1,954.06 to close at Rs 21,494.64, and Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited, increasing by Rs 57.08 to settle at Rs 1,598.76. On the losing side, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited declined by Rs 138.95 to close at Rs 28,850.05, while Service Industries Limited fell by Rs 27.53 to close at Rs 1,547.47. In the futures market, turnover stood at 307.047 million shares with a traded value of Rs 12.024 billion, compared to 206.329 million shares worth Rs 11.811 billion in the previous session.—APP

Qatar museums honors Patrons who have helped shape nation's collections

DOHA: Qatar Museums honored the many patrons whose generosity has enriched its collections and played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's cultural landscape. From families sharing treasured heirlooms and artists donating unparalleled works, to corporations and diplomatic missions contributing historical documents and defining artworks, these acts of giving reflect a shared commitment to placing objects of meaning into public trust. Together, these gifts have been essential to the institution's development over the past 20 years and the preservation of Qatar's national heritage. This year, Qatar Museums is marking its 20th anniversary with the launch of Evolution Nation, honoring the establishment of the National Museum of Qatar 50 years ago and highlighting the nation's cultural milestones and its aspirations for the future. As Qatar Museums looks ahead, it continues to welcome those who wish to contribute to this shared cultural legacy, ensuring that the collections entrusted to the nation today will inform, inspire, and belong to generations to come.—APP

UAE leaders receive New Year greetings

ABU DHABI: President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has received messages of congratulations from presidents, kings and princes of world countries on the occasion of the New Year 2026. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, and His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Presidential Court, received similar messages on the occasion.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal officially launches the Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024-25.

Israel to ban 37 aid groups from Gaza

JERUSALEM: Israel plans to ban 37 aid organizations from operating in Gaza from Thursday unless they hand over detailed information on their Palestinian staff, despite mounting criticism from the United Nations and the European Union. Several NGOs have told MEDIA the new rules will have a major impact on food and medical shipments to Gaza, and humanitarian groups warn there is already not enough aid to cover the devastated territory's needs. Israel's deadline for NGOs to provide the details expires at midnight on Wednesday. "They refuse to provide lists of their Palestinian employees because they know, just as we know, that some of them are involved in terrorism or linked to Hamas," spokesman for the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, Gilad Zwick, told MEDIA, naming 37 NGOs that had so far failed to meet the new requirements. "I highly doubt that what they haven't done for 10 months, they will suddenly do in less than 12 hours," Zwick said. "We certainly won't accept any co-operation that is just for show, simply to get an extension." For its part, Hamas, the armed Palestinian group which still controls part of Gaza, branded the Israeli decision "criminal

behavior" and urged the United Nations and broader international community to condemn it. Israel says the new regulation aims to prevent bodies it accuses of supporting terrorism from operating in the Palestinian territories. A fragile ceasefire has been in place in Gaza since October, following a deadly war waged by Israel in response to Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israeli territory on October 7, 2023. On Tuesday, Israel specified that "acts of delegitimising Israel" or denial of events surrounding Hamas's October 7 attack would be "grounds for license withdrawal." Israel has singled out international medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF), alleging that it had two employees who were members of Palestinian militant groups Islamic Jihad and Hamas. "We continue to seek reassurances and clarity over a concerning request to share a staff list, which may be in violation of Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law and of our humanitarian principles," MSF said, urging Israel to allow it to operate. "We will be exploring all possible avenues to alter the outcomes of this decision." Apart from MSF, some of the 37 NGOs to be hit with the ban are the Norwegian Refugee Council, World

Vision International, CARE and Oxfam, according to the list given by Zwick. On Wednesday, United Nations rights chief Volker Turk described Israel's decision as "outrageous," calling on states to urgently insist Israel shift course. "Such arbitrary suspensions make an already intolerable situation even worse for the people of Gaza," he said. The European Union warned that Israel's decision would block "life-saving" assistance from reaching Gazans. "The EU has been clear: the NGO registration law cannot be implemented in its current form," EU humanitarian chief Hadja Lahbib posted on X. UN Palestinian refugee agency chief Philippe Lazzarini said the move sets a "dangerous precedent." "Failing to push back against attempts to control the work of aid organizations will further undermine the basic humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, impartiality and humanity underpinning aid work across the world," he said on X. UNRWA itself has faced the ire of Israeli authorities since last year, with Lazzarini declared persona non grata by Israel. Israel had accused UNRWA of providing cover for Hamas militants, claiming that some of the agency's employees took part in the

October 7, 2023 attack. A series of investigations found some "neutrality-related issues" at UNRWA, the agency says, but insists Israel had not provided evidence for its headline allegation. On Tuesday, the foreign ministers of 10 countries, including France and the United Kingdom, had already urged Israel to "guarantee access" to aid in the Gaza Strip, where they said the humanitarian situation remains "catastrophic." In a territory with 2.2 million inhabitants, "1.3 million people still require urgent shelter support," the ministers of Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland said. While a deal for a ceasefire that started on October 10 stipulated the entry of 600 trucks per day, only 100 to 300 are carrying humanitarian aid, aid groups say. COGAT, the Israeli defense ministry body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs, said last week that on average 4,200 aid trucks enter Gaza weekly, which corresponds to around 600 daily. Israel's ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg, Idit Rosenzweig-Abu, said that 104 aid organizations had filed for registration according to the new guidelines.—Agencies

OGDC announces major oil and gas discovery in Kohat

ISLAMABAD: As a New Year gift for the nation, Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC), the operator of the Nashpa Exploration Licence with a 65 percent working interest along with joint venture partners, on Thursday announced a major oil and gas discovery over the Datta Formation at its exploratory well Baragzai X-01 (Slant) located in Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The joint venture partners include Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) with 30 percent working interest and Government Holding (Private) Limited (GHPL) with five percent carried interest. The discovery is the result of OGDC's focused exploration campaign in the Nashpa Block. The Baragzai X-01 (Slant) well was spudded on December 30, 2024, and drilled to a total depth of 5,170 metres into the Kingriali Formation. Based on the interpretation of open-hole wireline log data, a Cased Hole Drill Stem Test (DST-02) was conducted in the Datta Formation. The well is currently producing 4,100 Barrels per Day (BPD) of oil and 10.5 Million Standard Cubic Feet per Day (MMSCFD) of gas. The production was achieved through a 32/64-inch choke at a wellhead flowing pressure of 3,880 pounds per square inch (PSI), confirming the commercial potential of the reservoir. This discovery will make a positive contribution towards reducing the country's energy demand and supply gap by adding indigenous oil and gas resources. It will also strengthen OGDC's hydrocarbon reserves base and support Pakistan's energy security objectives. OGDC reaffirmed its commitment to sustained exploration activities aimed at unlocking the country's hydrocarbon potential and contributing to economic stability through reliable domestic energy supplies, as the nation steps into the New Year with renewed optimism.—DNA

Mobile phone imports increases 40.51% touches to \$801m

ISLAMABAD: The import of mobile phones into the country has witnessed an increase of 40.51 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the corresponding months of last year. Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$ 801.139 million during July-November (2025-26) as compared to the imports of US \$ 570.184 million during July-November (2024-25), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile, on a year-to-year basis, the import of mobile phones also rose by 4.81 percent during the month of November 2025 when compared to the same month of last year. The import of mobiles into the country during November 2025 was recorded at \$ 156.565 million against the exports of \$ 149.378 million in November 2024. On a month-on-month basis, the imports of mobile phones witnessed an increase of 8.30 percent during November 2025—APP

Hoping for better year ahead, Gazans bid farewell to 'nightmare'

"We will bid farewell to 2025, leaving behind its pain, and we hope that 2026 will be a year of hope, prayer, determination and success stories"

GAZA CITY: As 2025 draws to a close, Palestinians in Gaza are marking the new year not with celebration, but with exhaustion, grief and a fragile hope that their "endless nightmare" might finally end. For residents of the battered territory, daily life is a struggle for survival. Much of Gaza's infrastructure lies in ruins, electricity remains scarce and hundreds of thousands of people live in makeshift tents after being repeatedly displaced by the two years of fighting that began with Hamas's attack on Israel in October 2023. "We in the Gaza Strip are living in an endless nightmare," said Hanan Abu Amra, a displaced woman in her thirties living in Gaza City. "We hope that this nightmare will end in 2026 ... The least we can ask for is a normal life — to see electricity restored, the streets return to normal and to walk without tents lining the roads," she said. Across Gaza, a territory of more than 2 million people, scenes of hardship are commonplace. The outgoing year brought relentless loss and fear, said Shireen Al-Kayali. "We bid farewell to 2025 with deep sorrow and grief," she said. "We lost a lot of people and our possessions. We lived a difficult and harsh life, displaced from one city to another, under bombardment and in terror." Her experience reflects that of countless Gazans who have been forced to flee repeatedly, often with little warning, taking with them only what they could carry. Entire families have been uprooted, livelihoods destroyed, and communities fragmented as the war dragged on for two years. Despite the devastation, some residents cling to the belief that the new year might bring an end to the fighting and a chance to rebuild. For many Gazans, hope has become an act of resilience, particularly after the truce that came into effect on October 10 and has largely halted the fighting. "We still hope for a better life in the new year, and I call on the free world to help our oppressed people so we can regain our lives," said Khaled Abdel Majid, 50, who lives in a tent in Jabalia camp. Faten Al-Hindawi hoped the truce would finally end the war. "We will bid farewell to 2025, leaving behind its pain, and we hope that 2026 will be a year of hope, prayer, determination and success stories.—APP

ICCI President optimistic for economic turnaround in new year

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has expressed strong optimism that the New Year will usher in economic revival, stability and sustainable growth for Pakistan, in line with the vision and reform agenda of Prime Minister. Talking to various visiting delegations at the ICCI Chamber House here on Thursday, Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that Pakistan is entering a critical yet promising phase, where prudent economic policies, continuity of reforms and confidence of the business

community can steer the country towards progress. He emphasized that strengthening industry, exports and investment remains vital for achieving long-term economic resilience. The ICCI President also paid glowing tribute to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and other Services Chiefs, acknowledging their unwavering commitment and strategic leadership in making Pakistan's defence impregnable. He stated that a strong and secure Pakistan provides the foundation for economic growth, investor confidence and national stability. Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed ICCI's commitment to continue playing its proactive role as a bridge

between government and the business community, facilitating policy advocacy, promoting trade and investment, and supporting initiatives that contribute to economic uplift. He added that ICCI will remain at the forefront of efforts aimed at empowering entrepreneurs, supporting SMEs, encouraging youth participation in business, and strengthening public-private partnerships, to help realize Pakistan's economic potential. The visiting delegations appreciated ICCI's leadership and expressed confidence that the Chamber would continue to serve as a driving force for economic development and business-friendly reforms in the country.

128 journalists killed worldwide in 2025: press group

BRUSSELS, Belgium: A total of 128 journalists were killed around the world in 2025, more than half of them in the Middle East, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said Thursday. The grim toll, up from 2024, "is not just a statistic, it's a global red alert for our colleagues," IFJ general secretary Anthony Bellanger told MEDIA. The press group voiced particular alarm over the situation in the Palestinian territories, where it recorded 56 media professionals killed in 2025 as Israel's war with Hamas ground on in Gaza. "We've never seen anything like this: so many deaths in such a short time, in such a small area," Bellanger said. Journalists were also killed in Yemen, Ukraine, Sudan, Peru, India and elsewhere. Bellanger condemned what he called "impunity" for those behind the attacks. "Without justice, it allows the killers of journalists to thrive," he warned. Meanwhile, the IFJ said that across the globe 533 journalists were currently in prison — a figure that has more than doubled over the past half-decade. China once again topped the list as the worst jailer of reporters with 143 behind bars, including in Hong Kong, where authorities have been criticized by Western nations for imposing national security laws quashing dissent. The IFJ's count for the number of journalists killed is typically far higher than that of Reporters Without Borders, due to different counting methods.—APP

EU warns Yemen developments risk Gulf stability

The European Union said on Wednesday that recent developments in the Yemeni provinces of Hadramout and Al Mahra threaten to bring new risks to the Gulf region. "The EU calls for de-escalation and avoiding steps that further threaten stability of Yemen and the region," an EU spokesperson said in a statement. The EU reiterates its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen, as well as its support for the Presidential Leadership Council and the Government of Yemen," the spokesperson added.—APP

Turkish foreign minister engaged counterparts from 89 countries in 2025

ISTANBUL: Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan carried out intensive diplomatic engagements in 2025, holding 241 meetings with his counterparts from 89 countries, according to Foreign Ministry figures. In a video shared on the ministry's Nsosyal account, Fidan's yearlong diplomacy was highlighted. The Turkish foreign minister made 73 overseas visits to 50 countries, including 22 trips accompanying President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Fidan also hosted 22 multilateral meetings and took part in 31 such gatherings overall, 10 of them alongside President Erdogan. In addition, Türkiye welcomed foreign ministers from 96 countries as part of bilateral visits and multilateral events.—APP

Doha Named 2026 "GCC Tourism Capital"

DOHA: The committee responsible for the GCC Tourism Capital has officially announced Doha, the capital of State of Qatar, as the GCC Tourism Capital for 2026, within the framework of strengthening joint tourism cooperation among GCC member states. This decision has been approved by Their Excellencies the Ministers responsible for tourism across the Gulf Cooperation Council. The selection follows a comprehensive strategic bid submitted by Qatar Tourism, which outlined the State of Qatar's long-term vision for tourism and showcased Doha's strengths as a destination that balances cultural authenticity, urban innovation, sustainability and quality of life. The bid aligns closely with national priorities focused on economic diversification and positions tourism as a key driver of sustainable growth. Commenting on the announcement, HE Saad bin Ali Al Kharji, Chairman of Qatar Tourism and Chair of the Board of Directors of Visit Qatar, said: "The selection of Doha as the GCC Tourism Capital for 2026 marks an important milestone that underscores the success of our leadership's strategic vision in establishing tourism as a central pillar of the National Development Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030. "This recognition reflects the qualitative progress achieved in building an integrated and sustainable tourism ecosystem that is competitive at both regional and global levels, supported by world-class infrastructure, strong connectivity, and an exceptional visitor experience." He added: "Looking ahead to 2026, this title provides a strategic platform to further strengthen Gulf tourism cooperation, stimulate investment, create new economic opportunities and deliver a lasting legacy that reinforces Doha's position as a leading regional tourism hub; particularly in business events, major festivals, large-scale activations and family-friendly destination." Doha's selection was underpinned by a set of strategic pillars, including its advanced transport and mobility infrastructure. This encompasses Hamad International Airport, internationally recognized for operational excellence; Qatar Airways' global network connecting Doha to more than 170 destinations worldwide; and integrated metro and tram systems designed to enable seamless visitor movement across the city.—APP

Briefs

Taiwan vows to defend sovereignty after China's military drill

TAIPEI: Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said on Thursday the island is determined to defend its sovereignty and boost its defence in the face of China's increasing expansion, after Beijing fired rockets towards the island as part of military drills. The international community is watching to see whether the Taiwanese people possess the resolve to defend themselves, Lai said in a New Year's speech broadcast live from the presidential office in Taipei.

"As president, my stance has always been clear: to resolutely defend national sovereignty and strengthen national defence," Lai said, noting China had targeted Taiwan's newly added combat capabilities as a "hypothetical adversary" in their drills this week. He said that demonstrated the need for increasing defence procurement, urging opposition parties to support his plan to boost Taiwan's defence spending by \$40 billion, a proposal currently stuck alongside other issues in a political deadlock in the opposition-controlled parliament. "Whether China can achieve its goals on schedule is one thing," Lai said when asked about a US report saying China was preparing to have the capability to win a fight for Taiwan by 2027. "The coming year, 2026, will be a crucial one for Taiwan," he said, adding Taiwan must "make plans for the worst, but hope for the best." – Agencies

Ethanol blending policy discussed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar (@Mishaq-Dar50) chaired a meeting to review a proposal for blending ethanol with locally produced petrol by refineries. The Chairman of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) presented the proposal, outlining potential benefits and challenges. After detailed deliberations, the committee recommended that ethanol blending should remain voluntary, given that current ethanol prices are higher than petrol prices. The policy would therefore be subject to financial viability for both refineries and ethanol manufacturers. To ensure transparency and economic feasibility, OGRA was directed to conduct quarterly reviews comparing the financial outcomes of ethanol exports versus local blending. These findings will be submitted through the Petroleum Division for consideration by the Prime Minister's Office. The meeting was attended by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Mr. Tariq Bajwa, the Secretaries of Petroleum and Industries & Production, the Chairman of OGRA, and representatives from the Pakistan Ethanol Manufacturers Association and the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association.

Leftist Mamdani takes over as New York mayor

The Republican, himself a New Yorker, has repeatedly criticized Mamdani, but the pair held surprisingly cordial talks at the White House in November

NEW YORK: Zohran Mamdani, the young upstart of the US left, was sworn in Thursday to take over as New York mayor for a term sure to see him cross swords with President Donald Trump. After the clocks struck midnight, bringing in 2026, Mamdani took his oath of office at an abandoned subway stop to begin managing the United States' largest city. He is New York's first Muslim mayor.

His office said the understated venue beneath City Hall reflected his commitment to working people, after the



34-year-old Democrat campaigned on promises to address the soaring cost of living.

"This is truly the honor and the privilege of a lifetime," Mamdani told reporters after taking his oath.

But it remains to be seen if Mamdani – virtually unknown a year ago – can deliver on his ambitious agenda, which envisions rent freezes, universal childcare and free public buses. Once an election is over, "symbolism only goes so far with voters. Results begin to matter a whole lot more," New York University lecturer John Kane said.

How Trump behaves could be a decisive factor. The Republican, himself a New Yorker, has repeatedly criticized Mamdani, but the pair held surprisingly cordial talks at the White House in November.

Lincoln Mitchell, a political analyst and professor at Columbia University, said the meeting "couldn't have gone better from Mamdani's perspective." But he warned their relationship could quickly sour. One flashpoint might be immigration raids as Trump wages an expanding crackdown on migrants across the United States. Mamdani has vowed to protect immigrant communities. – Agencies

Indonesian President reaffirms Yemen's territorial integrity

DNA

JAKARTA: Indonesia has called for respect for Yemen's territorial integrity and commended efforts to maintain stability in the region, a day after Saudi Arabia bombed a weapons shipment from the UAE at a Yemeni port city that Riyadh said was intended for separatist forces.

Saudi Arabia carried out a "limited airstrike" at Yemen's port city of Al-Mukalla in the southern province of Hadramout on Tuesday, following the arrival of an Emirati shipment that came amid heightened tensions linked to advances by the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council in the war-torn country. In a statement issued late on Wednesday, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it "appreciates further efforts by concerned parties to maintain stability and security," particularly in the provinces of Hadramout and Al-Mahara.

"Indonesia reaffirms the importance of peaceful settlement through an inclusive and comprehensive political dialogue under the coordination of the United Nations and respecting Yemen's legitimate government and territorial

integrity," Indonesia's foreign affairs ministry said.

The latest statement comes after Jakarta said last week that it "appreciates the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as other relevant countries, working together with Yemeni stakeholders to de-escalate tensions and restore stability." Saudi Arabia leads the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen, which includes the UAE and was established in 2015 to combat the Houthi rebels, who control most of northern Yemen.

Riyadh has been calling on the STC, which initially supported Yemen's internationally recognized government against the Houthi rebels, to withdraw after it launched an offensive against the Saudi-backed government troops last month, seeking an independent state in the south. Indonesia has also urged for "all parties to exercise restraint and avoid unilateral action that could impact security conditions," and has previously said that the rising tensions in Yemen could "further deteriorate the security situation and exacerbate the suffering" of the Yemeni people. Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim-majority country, maintains close ties with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which are its main trade and investment partners in the Middle East.



Bulgaria adopts the euro

Successive governments in the country of 6.4 million people have advocated joining the euro, hoping that it will boost the economy of the European Union's poorest member, reinforce ties to the West and protect against Russia's influence

SOFIA: Bulgaria became the 21st country to switch to the euro as it entered the New Year on Thursday, a milestone met with both cheers and fears, nearly 20 years after the Balkan nation joined the European Union. At midnight (2200 GMT Wednesday), Bulgaria gave up the lev currency, which has been in use since the late 19th century, and Bulgarian euro coins were projected onto the central bank's building. Successive governments in the country of 6.4 million people have advocated joining the euro, hoping that it will boost the economy of the European Union's poorest member, reinforce ties to the West and protect against Russia's influence. But Bulgarians have long been divided over the switch, with many worrying the introduction could usher in higher prices and add to the political instability rattling the country. In a speech broadcast shortly before midnight, President Rumen Radev hailed the euro adoption as the "final step" in Bulgaria's EU integration, as thousands of people braved sub-zero temperatures in the capital Sofia to celebrate the New Year. Radev however voiced regret that Bulgarians had not been consulted by referendum on the adoption. "This refusal was one of the dramatic symptoms of the deep divide between the political class and the people, confirmed by mass demonstrations across the country." Anti-corruption protests swept a conservative-led government from office in mid-December, leaving a country anxious about inflation on the verge of its eighth election in five years. "People are afraid that prices will rise, while salaries will remain the same," a woman in her 40s who declined to give her name told AFP in Sofia. – Agencies

Transformed US-Pak ties to make 'further strides' in 2026

"We identified IT, minerals, energy, hospitality and tourism and other avenues as new areas of mutually rewarding, beneficial engagement for both countries that should survive the test of time

WASHINGTON: In a New Year message, Pakistani Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh highlighted the "transformative" change in Pakistan-US relations in 2025, hoping that the ties between the two countries would be further strengthened in 2026. "I wish the Pakistani-Americans, the entire American nation, a happy new year 2026," Ambassador Sheikh said, adding that bilateral relations will make "further strides". "2025 was a year that carried transformative tenor for Pak-US relations; We saw, witnessed and lived with a positive momentum in our bilateral relationship spanning over almost eight decades," he said. "Not only that we continued with our cooperation in the existing domains of counter terrorism, health, education, etc., but we identified new areas of transforming our longstanding relationship into a strategic, long-term partnership entrenched in economic ties," Ambassador Sheikh noted. "We identified IT, minerals, energy, hospitality and tourism and other avenues as new areas of mutually rewarding, beneficial engagement for both countries that should survive the test of time. "Our leadership met frequently in this year." Pakistan and the United States, he said, need more people-to-people contacts and more enduring business relationships. – Agencies

Fire ravages Amsterdam church

NEWS DESK

THE HAGUE: The Hague: A huge inferno gutted a 19th century Amsterdam church Thursday, as the Netherlands endured an unsettled New Year's Eve with two dead from fireworks and "unprecedented" violence against police.

The blaze broke out in the early hours at the Vondelkerk, a tourist attraction that has overlooked one of the city's top parks since 1872. The 50-meter-high (164-foot) tower collapsed and the roof was badly damaged but the structure was expected to remain intact, Amsterdam authorities said. The cause of the blaze was not immediately clear.

The head of the Dutch Police Union, Nine Kooiman, reported an "unprecedented amount of violence against police and emergency services" over New Year's Eve. She said she herself had been pelted three times by fireworks and other explosives as she worked a shift in Amsterdam. Shortly after midnight, authorities released a rare country-wide alert on mobile phones warning people not to call overwhelmed emergency services unless lives were at risk.

Reports of attacks against police and firefighters were widespread across the country. In the southern city of Breda, people threw petrol bombs at police.

Two people, a 17-year-old boy and a 38-year-old man, were killed in fireworks accidents. Three others were seriously injured. The eye hospital in Rotterdam said it had treated 14 patients, including 10 minors, for eye injuries. Two received surgery.

Near record number of small boat migrants reach UK in 2025

DNA

LONDON: The second-highest annual number of migrants arrived on UK shores in small boats since records were started in 2018, the government was to confirm Thursday.

The tally comes as Brexit firebrand Nigel Farage's anti-immigration party Reform UK surges in popularity ahead of bellwether local elections in May. With Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer increasingly under pressure over the thorny issue, his interior minister Shabana Mahmood has proposed a drastic reduction in protections for refugees and the ending of automatic benefits for asylum seekers.

Home Office data as of midday on Wednesday showed a total of 41,472 migrants landed on England's southern coast in 2025 after making the perilous Channel crossing from northern France. The record of 45,774 arrivals was recorded in 2022 under the last Conservative government.

The Home Office is due to confirm the final figure for 2025 later Thursday. Former Tory prime minister Rishi Sunak vowed to "stop the boats" when he was in power. Ousted by Starmer in July 2024, he later said he regretted the slogan because it was too "stark" and "binary" and lacked sufficient context "for exactly how challenging" the goal was.

At UN Pakistan warns against risks from uncontrolled satellite

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan called for legally-binding international instruments that ensure accountability and rule of law in outer space at a UN Security Council meeting devoted to discussing the risks of uncontrolled Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites, highlighting issues like digital divides, disinformation, militarization, sovereignty threats, and space debris. "The unregulated expansion of commercial activities in LEO is resulting in the concentration of orbital slots, spectrum, space situational awareness (SSA) capabilities, and economic benefits among a limited number of actors," Pakistani delegate Gul Qaiser Sarwani told the 15-member Council meeting held under Arria-Formula format named after a former Venezuelan Ambassador to the UN, Diego Arria. "Without corrective measures, developing and space-emerging countries risk long-term marginalization," said Sarwani, counsellor/political coordinator at the Pakistan Mission to the UN.

Arria-Formula meetings are informal that enable Security Council members to have a frank and private exchange of views on relevant subjects. The meeting was convened by the Russian Federation. In his remarks, Sarwani reaffirmed Pakistan's stand that outer space, including LEO, is the province of all humankind, not subject to national appropriation or de facto control. "Technological or commercial dominance must not translate into exclusive access or regulatory advantage," he said.

Pointing out that unregulated expansion of LEO's commercial activities is resulting in the concentration of orbital slots, spectrum, space situational awareness (SSA) capabilities, and economic benefits among a limited number of actors, the Pakistani delegate said, "Without corrective measures, developing and space-emerging countries risk long-term marginalization." At the same time, he said, the rapid growth of mega-constellations has intensified congestion, competition for spectrum, and the risk of space debris. "If left unchecked, this trend threatens the long-term sustainability of LEO and undermines equitable access for future entrants." Also, he added that the growing integration of commercial LEO systems into military and intelligence operations is blurring the distinction of civilian-military uses, raising the risks of misperception, escalation, and unintended conflict, particularly during times of crises. Referring to expanding role of private actors, the Pakistani delegate said that under international law, States remain responsible for national activities in outer space, including those conducted by non-governmental entities. "These LEO-related risks cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider outer space security environment, including: the arms race in outer space; development of ASAT capabilities; and integration of space assets into nuclear, cyber, and conventional military strategies," he said. – Agencies

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