



Islamabad POST

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Dar for peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute

Detailed News On Page-08

KP CM Afridi wants lawyers to stand up

Detailed News On Page-08



Shaza talks about role young girls

Detailed News On Page-03



Briefs

Palestine embassy in UK opened

DNA

LONDON: The embassy of Palestine was officially inaugurated in London in a short ceremony on Monday, hailed by its ambassador as a "profound milestone" in British-Palestinian relations. "We gather today to mark a historic moment – the inauguration of the embassy of the State of Palestine to the United Kingdom, with full diplomatic status and privileges," said Ambassador Husam Zomlot in a speech outside what was previously known as the Palestinian Mission to the UK in west London. The official upgrading of the mission to embassy status came after the UK announced it would recognise the State of Palestine in September 2025, along with several other countries, including Australia and Canada, at a time of major international concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Kamal meets Pak envoy to Russia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal held an important meeting on Monday with Pakistan Ambassador to Russia, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, focusing on strengthening Pak-Russia cooperation in the health sector. During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on potential partnerships in medical technology, vaccine production, pharmaceutical trade and medical education. The two dignitaries emphasised the need to help improve public health systems and promote joint initiatives at the international level.

DPM Dar, Indonesian FM Sugiono review relations

DNA

ISLAMABAD, DPM/FM Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday held a telephone conversation, upon arrival in Islamabad, with the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Sugiono. The two leaders reviewed the state of Pakistan-Indonesia relations and exchanged views on cooperation at multilateral fora, including the OIC, a DPM's Office news release said. They also discussed the current global developments, including developments in Somalia and efforts for lasting peace in Gaza, and agreed to maintain close contact on these issues.

Crackdown against Afghan Nationals

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI, Senior Superintendent of Police SSP Operations Rawalpindi, Malik Tariq Mehboob, Monday directed police officials to intensify action against Afghan nationals and other foreign residents found involved in illegal activities, stressing strict enforcement of the law to maintain peace and order in the district. He issued these directives while chairing a meeting at the Police Lines Headquarters to review the performance of police station staff.

Security success

Major terror plot averted in Karachi

DIG Azfar Mahesar says more than thirty large drums, five cylinders in Raees Goth raid; three BLA-linked terrorists arrested

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A major terror plot has been averted as the law enforcement agencies recovered over two tonnes of explosives in an operation in Karachi's Raees Goth, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Deputy Inspector General Ghulam Azfar Mahesar said on Monday. "One truck, more than thirty large drums, five cylinders have been seized," said the CTD officer while briefing the media alongside CTD AIG Zulfiqar Larik. Providing details of the operation, DIG Mahesar noted that more than 2,000 kilograms of explosives have been recovered and three terrorists have been arrested. Noting that the explosives had been defused, the police officer said that the suspects had planned a major terrorist attack in Karachi. On the identity of the terrorists, the DIG said that they are associated with Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) commander Bashir. Pointing out that commercial-grade explosives were also recovered, he said that the explosives were being transported via various routes and consolidated at the location concerned. Apprising of those behind the terror plot, DIG Mahesar said that the planning was carried out abroad. The action comes against the

backdrop of ongoing nationwide counterterrorist efforts in the country, which has witnessed an increase in terror incidents since the Afghan Taliban's takeover of Kabul. The country, however, has experienced an almost 17% drop in terrorist attacks in December 2025 and a 9% decline in November, according to a Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) annual security report. Pakistan had closed the Torkham and Chaman borders with Afghanistan on October 12 after the Afghan Taliban, in association with their affiliated militants, attacked multiple Pakistan Armed Forces posts along the border. However, the report highlights that the 2025 witnessed a 34% surge in overall violence making it the most violent year for the country in a decade where it has "suffered a sustained escalation in violence for five consecutive years since 2021, coinciding with the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan; with almost 38% in 2021, over 15% in 2022, 56% in 2023, nearly 67% in 2024, and 34% in 2025". Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which has faced the brunt of terrorist attacks and accounted for over 96% of all fatalities and almost 93% of violent incidents recorded during the entire 2025.

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Handshake with Indian FM Jaishankar was 'surprising', Sadiq to PM

NA speaker recounts rare moment when FM Jaishankar approached him, introduced himself, and shook his hand

PTI reiterates demand for Achakzai's appointment as opposition leader



FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chief Whip Aamir Dogar on Monday reiterated the party's demand for the immediate appointment of Mahmood Khan Achakzai as Leader of the Opposition in

Continued on Page 06

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has described his recent handshake with India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar as "surprising", while briefing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on his recent visit to Dhaka. The interaction, which took place in Dhaka ahead of the last rites of former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, marked a rare direct contact with an Indian minister since the conflict in May 2025. The NA speaker met PM Shehbaz at the National Assembly on Monday to provide a detailed account of his diplomatic trip to Bangladesh. He described the visit as "extremely constructive and positive," noting that his meetings with Bangladeshi leaders, including the chief adviser, senior ministers, and other officials, had been "highly pleasant and productive." Sadiq also briefed the premier on his meetings with Khaleda Zia's family,

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Pakistan, China agree to build upgraded version of CPEC 2.0

The two sides will also take the year-round opening of the Khunjerab Pass as an opportunity to deepen two-way trade and people-to-people exchanges

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan and China on Monday agreed to further align their development plans and priorities, and build an upgraded version 2.0 of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) - a pioneering project of Belt and Road Initiative. The two sides agreed to focus on the three key sectors of industry, agriculture and mining, promote the building and operation of the Gwadar Port, ensure the smooth passage of the Karakoram Highway, and enhance Pakistan's capacity for sustainable development. According to a joint press communiqué of the Seventh Round of China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue, the two sides will deepen cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, information technology, science and technology, cybersecurity, technical and vocational training and education, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges. The two sides will also take the year-round opening of the Khunjerab Pass as an op-

portunity to deepen two-way trade and people-to-people exchanges. They also welcomed third-party participation in CPEC cooperation that conforms with the modalities set by China and Pakistan. The two sides also agreed to further strengthen cooperation in the financial and banking sectors, including extending mutual support at regional and international multilateral financial forums. Pakistan appreciated China for providing support for its fiscal and financial sectors. At the invitation of Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Foreign Minister of China, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, visited China from January 3 to January 5, 2026. On January 4, 2026, Wang Yi and Mohammad Ishaq Dar co-chaired the Seventh Round of China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue in Beijing. During the dialogue, Pakistan and China agreed to enhance strategic

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PM visits Bangladesh HC for condolences

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday visited the Bangladesh High Commission here to express his condolences on the passing away of Begum Khaleda Zia, former Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. The prime minister conveyed his condolences to the Charge d'Affaires of Bangladesh, recorded a message in the condolence book, and also offered Fateha for the departed soul. In his condolence message, he paid rich tribute to Begum Khaleda Zia, describing her as a visionary leader and an eminent political figure who devoted her life to public service.

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One killed, nine injured in IED attack

Explosion hits vehicle near Nawarkhel Mor; injured also include two women

BUREAU REPORT

LAKKI MARWAT: At least one person was killed and nine others, including two women, were injured in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast targeting a vehicle of a cement factory in Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), police said on Monday. The explosion occurred on Begukhel Road near the Nawarkhel Mor, said police, adding that the deceased was identified as Fareedullah, while the injured included Abdul Malik, Umar Khan, Masal Khan, Mir Ahmad and Syed Jan.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits Bangladesh High Commission to offer Condolences on the passing of Begum Khaleda Zia, former Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. – DNA

Columbia, Mexico also on the wish list

After Venezuela Trump insists 'we need Greenland'

Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen called Miller's flag post "disrespectful"

AGENCIES

COPENHAGEN: President Donald Trump doubled down Sunday on his claim that Greenland should become part of the United States, despite calls by Denmark's prime minister to stop "threatening" the territory. Washington's military intervention in Venezuela has reignited fears for Greenland, which Trump has repeatedly said he wants to annex, given its strategic location in the Arctic. While aboard Air Force One en route to Washington, Trump reiterated the goal. "We need Greenland from the standpoint of national security, and Denmark is not going to be able to do it," he said. Over the weekend, Katie Miller, the wife of Trump's most influential aide, posted an image of the flag of Greenland in the colours of the US flag, captioning it "SOON". Denmark and the European Union have responded with ire to Trump's Greenland agenda. "I have to say this very clearly to the United States: it is absolutely absurd to say that the United States should take

Continued on Page 06

Maduro presented before court

APP

NEW YORK: Deposed Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro appeared in a New York court on Monday, just days after being seized in Caracas in a shock US military operation that paved the path for Washington's plans to dominate the oil-rich country. Leftist strongman Maduro, 63, faces narcotics trafficking charges along with his wife, Cilia Flores, who was forcibly taken out of Caracas in the US assault Saturday, which involved commandos, bombing by jet planes, and a massive naval force. All eyes were on Venezuela's response to the swiftly moving events, and late Sunday, interim leader Delcy Rodriguez, in a potential win for Washington, stepped back from her initial defiance by offering to work with Trump.

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Afridi announces three new motorways for KP

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi has announced that the province will receive three new motorways to improve connectivity and promote development in remote areas. According to details, the Swat Motorway Phase-II will extend from Chakdara Interchange to Fatehpur, covering a distance of 80 kilometers. The project will include nine interchanges and seven bridges, and construction is expected to commence soon. The Peshawar-Dera Ismail Khan Motorway, spanning 365 kilometers, will feature 19 interchanges and two tunnels. This project will be constructed under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. Meanwhile, the Dir Motorway will be fully funded by the provincial government. The Chief Minister directed the concerned departments to immediately resolve all legal and technical matters related to these projects. He emphasized the transparent utilization of resources to ensure development and prosperity in the far-flung areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.—APP

Fog disrupts flights at Bacha Khan International Airport

PESHAWAR: Flight operations at Bacha Khan International Airport have been affected due to dense fog in Peshawar. According to the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) on Monday, poor weather conditions and low visibility are causing significant difficulties for flight movements. The PAA stated that due to reduced visibility, a Qatar Airways flight was diverted to Islamabad. Similarly, SalamAir's flight arriving from Muscat was unable to land and diverted to Sialkot because of adverse weather conditions. Flyadeal's flight from Riyadh was also diverted to Karachi due to the same reason. In addition, SalamAir and Air Arabia flights are facing delays because of the fog. The Pakistan Airports Authority reported that visibility has dropped to between 300 and 360 meters, which continues to disrupt flight operations at Bacha Khan International Airport.—APP

Kissan Card transforming Punjab agriculture: CM

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the Kissan Card initiative has brought about a fundamental shift in the direction of agriculture in the province, expressing confidence that a bumper wheat crop would be harvested this year. According to official figures, loans amounting to Rs100 billion have been disbursed to farmers through the Kissan Card, enabling them to purchase agricultural inputs without financial difficulty. The improved access to credit has resulted in record wheat cultivation across Punjab's fertile farmlands.—APP

KSrelief launches large-scale winterization initiative in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) has announced the launch of a major humanitarian initiative to distribute 22,000 Winter Kits across Pakistan as part of its annual winter support program for vulnerable communities. Under this initiative, KSrelief will provide 22,000 Winter Kits to residents of 26 of the coldest and snow-bound districts in the country. The distribution will be carried out in regions severely affected by harsh winter conditions, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as selected areas of Punjab

Philippine firm opens Islamabad office, signals growing bilateral investment

Philippine Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez said the company's entry into Pakistan reflected growing confidence in the country's market and highlighted expanding economic engagement between the two countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan took another step toward attracting foreign investment as 2 World Traders Pakistan, a subsidiary of a Philippine pharmaceutical company, formally inaugurated its office in the federal capital, a move aimed at strengthening cooperation between Pakistan and the Philippines in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors. Speaking at the ceremony, Philippine Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez said the company's entry into Pakistan reflected growing confidence in the country's market and highlighted expanding economic engagement between the two countries. He noted that the establishment of a Philippine-registered pharmaceutical firm in Pakistan opened new opportunities for collaboration in healthcare delivery, supply chains and bilateral trade. The ambassador underscored the importance of vaccines and biological products in building resilient health systems, adding that private-sector initiatives such as 2World Traders could play a constructive role in advancing public health while reinforcing economic ties between Pakistan and the Philippines. The Islamabad office was inaugurated by Abdul Razzaq Siddiq, Owner of 2World Traders Pakistan and President of Philippines-based 2World Traders Inc. The event was attended by Dr. Imran Yusuf, Honorary Consul General of the Philippines in Karachi; Dr. Obaid Ullah, Chief Executive Officer of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP); representatives from Shifa International Hospital, the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) and the Dow Institute of Life Sciences (DILS), along with senior business and industry figures. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Obaid Ullah emphasized the need for regulatory cooperation and harmonization to facilitate pharmaceutical trade while ensuring adherence to international quality and safety standards. Speaking on the occasion, Abdul Razzaq Siddiq said the company aimed to support Pakistan's healthcare sector by improving access to essential vaccines and biological products, promoting technology transfer and encouraging local manufacturing. He announced plans to import key vaccines, including Tetanus Toxoid, with an initial shipment of 10 million doses to help ease supply shortages. He added that future initiatives include the local production of anti-rabies serum in collaboration with DILS, as well as the development of anti-cancer medicines and anti-snake



Islamabad: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan inaugurates the local office of a Philippine pharmaceutical company, alongside Ambassador of the Philippines to Pakistan Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez and Abdul Razzaq Siddiq, President of 2World Traders Inc.

venom serum, particularly to serve underserved areas of Sindh and Balochistan. Founded in 1988, 2World Traders Inc. is a distributor of vaccines and biological products in the Philippines, with operations across Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America, supported

by cold-chain facilities and manufacturing collaborations in India and China. The opening of the Islamabad office is expected to contribute to deeper Pakistan-Philippines trade ties, greater healthcare collaboration and expanded bilateral investment.

Kundi rules out Governor's Rule in KP- calls for dialogue without conditions

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday said that while PTI leaders talk about negotiations, the party's founder is pushing the country towards instability. Addressing a press conference here at his residence, Kundi Model Farm, he stressed that political issues can only be resolved through dialogue, but talks cannot be held on preconditions. The governor said that even the prime minister has expressed willingness to engage in talks with PTI. However, he maintained that meaningful negotiations require seriousness and responsibility from all sides. Governor Kundi said that Afghan nationals were found to be involved in attacks on the Police Training School (PTC) in Dera Ismail Khan and FC Headquarters in Peshawar. He said the repatriation of Af-

ghan nationals is a firm government decision, adding that Afghans are welcome to return legally by obtaining proper visas for business or employment. He reiterated that the government's stance on illegal immigrants is final. Commenting on inter-provincial matters, the governor said that the recent visit of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi to Punjab was wrongly portrayed by both sides. He added that during the chief minister's visit to Sindh, the Sindh Chief Minister offered security arrangements, and the Sindh government remains in contact with the KP government to ensure no unrest occurs during the visit. He expressed confidence that the KP chief minister would uphold the dignity of his office. Governor Kundi said the law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is de-

teriorating and there is a need for an operation to restore peace. He praised the KP Police, particularly Dera Police, for their sacrifices, stating that security forces have rendered exemplary services for peace in the province. He clarified that although the constitution provides the option of governor's rule, there is currently no possibility of imposing it in the province. He said that the provincial government is ready to engage with the federation on issues concerning Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Expressing gratitude to the Sindh government and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, he announced the approval of establishing a Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) hospital in Dera Ismail Khan. The land for the project will be finalized in consultation with the provincial government.—DNA

Qurat ul Ain congrats ANF on IHRO recognition for anti drug efforts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Qurat ul Ain Ali Khawaja, Chairperson of the All Pakistan Media Council and former Ambassador ANF, extended heartfelt congratulations to Deputy Director Malik Wajid Yousaf of the Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) following his reception of the Human Rights Observer Appreciation Award at the 25th Annual National Human Rights Conference 2025, organized by the International Human Rights Observer (IHRO) on International Human Rights Day. In her remarks, Ms. Qurat ul Ain highlighted ANF's significant role in Pakistan's ongoing fight against narcotics, noting that drug abuse remains one of the country's most pressing public health and security challenges. According to recent national estimates, Pakistan has seen a rise in narcotics seizures and anti drug enforcement actions, with law enforcement agencies confiscating over 1,000 metric tons of illegal drugs across multiple operations in recent years. In operations led and supported by ANF, authorities have seized substantial quantities of methamphetamine, heroin, hashish, and psychotropic substances, while hundreds of suspected traffickers have been apprehended. Drawing on her experience as a former Ambassador and human rights advocate, Ms. Qurat ul Ain underscored the importance of public awareness, preventive education, and rehabilitation initiatives

alongside enforcement actions, stating that "a comprehensive anti drug strategy must prioritize both law enforcement and community centred rehabilitation to protect our youth and strengthen societal resilience." She praised ANF's deployment of drug demand reduction campaigns, institutional partnerships with educational institutions, and com-

munity outreach programs that have reached tens of thousands of young Pakistanis with awareness messaging and support resources. Ms. Qurat ul Ain also expressed appreciation for International Human Rights Observer's (IHRO) insightful decision to recognize ANF's humanitarian work.



Pakistan set to export 143,000 tons of "Halal Meat" to Tajikistan

ISLAMABAD: Leadership of Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Chambers of Commerce's on Monday hailed the efforts of Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan, Yusuf Sharifzoda Toir for increasing exports in the potential area of "Halal Meat". Meanwhile talking to APP here, President, Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Atif Ikram Sheikh said that vast opportunities in the "Halal Meat" sector, noting Pakistan's planned export of 143,000 tons worth \$14.5 million to Tajikistan, which would expand trade in halal products and also increase over all trade between both regional countries. President FPCCI said that bilateral trade could reach \$500 million in the coming years, with the business communities of both countries playing a pivotal role in linking potential sectors. Meanwhile, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that Tajikistan is an important trading partner of Pakistan and has

huge potential in different sectors including "Halal trade and agri-Products. Current Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan, Yusuf Sharifzoda Toir has played a role in increasing bilateral trade and providing a future vision for increasing the bilateral economic ties between both sides, he said. The export focuses on Halal meat, primarily to meet Tajikistan's demand, which had earlier expressed interest in around 100,000 tons, he said. The President ICCI said that it is part of broader efforts to increase Pakistan-Tajikistan bilateral trade to up to 500 million, through better trade facilitation, logistics, and potential preferential trade agreements. Alongside trade, the countries are advancing educational cooperation via a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for student and teacher exchanges, especially on medical education. President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Faheem ur Rehman Saigol said that Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between Pakistan and Tajikistan is the need of the hour

to promote trade liberalization between both sides and emphasizing trade liberalization's role in fostering regional economic integration. President LCCI said that resumption of the direct air flight between both of the countries will play a significant role in not enhancing the economic and trade ties but cultural relations between both countries. He said that resuming these flights would boost economic and trade activities while promoting mutual tourism in Pakistan and Tajikistan. Talking to APP, President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Usman Shaukat said that Tajikistan remains a key trade partner for Pakistan, essential to regional economic integration and the Central Asian nations like Tajikistan are vital for Pakistan, with both ready to deepen future economic and trade connections. Appreciating the Tajikistan's robust 8 percent annual GDP growth, he said that business communities of the both sides need to exchange the business delegation for enhancing the bilateral economic relations.—DNA

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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



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Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank	
Islamabad.....	0321-5744480

Facial recognition for senior citizens coming soon:NADRA

The pilot, approved under relevant NADRA regulations, will have a designated officer at each location to ensure smooth operations, with services offered at NADRA's prescribed fees plus a PKR 100 service charge for e-Sahulat

ISLAMABAD :NADRA spokesperson Syed Shababat Ali announced that NADRA is set to roll out a live facial recognition facility for senior citizens at banks and other offices soon, while simultaneously launching a pilot program for CNIC renewal and reprint services at 18 e-Sahulat franchises in major cities and encouraged the public to use the Pak-ID mobile application. While speaking to a local news channel, NADRA spokesperson Syed Shababat Ali stated that the government, in collaboration with multiple departments, is set to introduce a live facial recognition facility for citizens facing verification challenges, including pensioners, widows and other senior

citizens. The initiative aims to simplify identity verification for those who struggle with traditional methods and ensure faster, more accessible services at banks and government offices, he added. He further added that the government will soon launch a comprehensive project to implement this facility nationwide, demonstrating its commitment to enhancing citizen convenience and promoting digital solutions. The spokesperson also encouraged the public to make use of the Pak-ID mobile application and highlighted that pilot CNIC renewal and reprint services are now available at selected e-Sahulat franchises in major cities. He stressed

the importance of public awareness, highlighting that the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has taken a groundbreaking step toward digital transformation in Pakistan with the launch of the Pak-ID mobile application. This innovative platform has significantly revolutionized how citizens obtain, manage and verify their identity documents, making the process faster, more convenient, and more secure, he added. As Pakistan steadily moves toward e-governance, the Pak-ID app has emerged as a key symbol of efficiency, accessibility and public trust, he said, adding, with integrating modern technology into everyday civic services,

NADRA has not only simplified identity management but also reinforced the government's commitment to streamlined digital solutions for all citizens. Responding a query, he said that NADRA has launched a pilot project at 18 selected e-Sahulat franchises in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi to provide CNIC reprint and renewal services, as part of its efforts to enhance accessibility and outreach. The pilot, approved under relevant NADRA regulations, will have a designated officer at each location to ensure smooth operations, with services offered at NADRA's prescribed fees plus a PKR 100 service charge for e-Sahulat.—APP



ISLAMABAD:Ambassador of UAE to Pakistan, Salem Mohammed Salem Al Bawab Al Zaabi called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

CDA Mazdoor union holds promotion letters distribute ceremony

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Under the auspices of the CDA Mazdoor Union (CBA) a ceremony was held at the Central Union Office for the distribution of promotion letters to 93 CDA employees. These employees, serving as Junior Assistants, Inquiry Clerks, Store Clerks, and Cement Clerks (BPS-11) have been promoted to the post of Sub Assistant (BPS-14). The promotion letters were distributed by the General Secretary of the CDA Mazdoor Union Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen. The ceremony was attended by CDA Mazdoor Union President Aurangzeb Khan, Supreme Head Mirza Saeed Akhtar, Raja Shakir Zaman Kiyani, Sufi Mahmood Ali, Muhammad Asim Malik, Izhar Abbasi, Asad Mahmood, Muhammad Sarfaraz

Malik, Chaudhry Zahid Ahmed, Wajid Gujjar, Safdar Abbasi, Shafullah Khan, Chaudhry Abrar, Qari Umar Daraz, Sajid Rashid, Syed Irshad Shah, Chaudhry Anwar, Malik Aslam, Raja Ayaz, Waqar Khan, Nadeem Satti, Sardar Asif, Chaudhry Abid, Kaleem Abbasi, Malik Sajjad, other union office-bearers, representatives of CBA committees and a large number of CDA employees. On the occasion, the promoted employees expressed their gratitude to the leadership of the CDA Mazdoor Union, stating that the union is the true representative organization of CDA employees and is serving them without discrimination. They expressed confidence that the union will continue to resolve employees' issues on a priority basis. Addressing the gathering, General Secretary

Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen said that the commitments made during the referendum are being fulfilled. He stated that more than 7,000 field staff have been promoted so far, an achievement unprecedented in CDA's history. He further said that the union successfully removed the educational qualification requirement for the promotion of financial staff, beldars, valve men and other field staff who previously retired in the same scale enabling hundreds of employees to be promoted to the next scale. He added that despite challenging economic conditions, the CDA Mazdoor Union secured a 20 percent inflation allowance for employees and ensured an increase of 50 to 100 percent in various allowances. He assured that all remaining issues of employees will also be resolved on a priority basis.

Pakistan reaffirms support for Kashmiris' Right to Self-Determination

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Monday reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to supporting the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in their just struggle for the right to self-determination. In a message on the occasion of Right to Self-Determination Day, observed on January 5, the minister said the right to self-determination is a fundamental and inalienable right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, as guaranteed by a resolution adopted on January 5, 1949, by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP). He said self-determination is a core principle of international law, adding that despite the Kashmiri people being granted the right to a free and fair plebiscite, India has pursued policies aimed at altering the demographic character of the occupied territory, including the illegal revocation of Articles 370 and 35A while continuing human rights violations and restrictions on media freedom. Abdul Aleem Khan said that the international community, particularly the United Nations, must move beyond rhetoric and ensure the implementation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. He said that Pakistan will continue to extend its full moral, political and diplomatic support to the just struggle of the people of Jammu and Kashmir until they are able to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.—APP

Shaza highlights role of youth in space innovation

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Monday emphasized that Pakistan's future global competitiveness in science, technology and innovation depends on a skilled, creative and ethically driven youth. She was addressing the closing ceremony of the 19th Buraq Space Camp at the OIC-COMSTECH Secretariat. Speaking as the chief guest, the minister highlighted the importance of COMSTECH in projecting Pakistan's leadership at the global level in science, technology and innovation. She encouraged students to pursue innovation, critical thinking and responsible use of emerging technologies, noting that youth empowerment is central to national development. The well-attended ceremony, held at the COMSTECH Auditorium, brought together policymakers, scientists, educators, diplomats and young participants to celebrate youth engagement and

capacity building in space science and technology. The programme began with recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by welcome remarks by Prof. Dr. Shahid Mahmud, Chairman Buraq Society and Senior Honorary Advisor to OIC-COMSTECH. He highlighted the Buraq Society's longstanding role in nurturing young talent in space sciences and stressed the need for sustained mentorship and hands-on learning opportunities. In his address, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH, underscored the growing relevance of space science in modern development, including communication, climate monitoring, disaster management and agriculture. He said that initiatives like the Buraq Space Camp represent an investment in future scientific leadership, particularly for developing countries. Brief remarks were also delivered by Ms. Haadiya Usman, Base Commander 2025, Buraq Society, who shared

reflections on camp activities and praised the enthusiasm and creativity of the participants. Vice Chairman Buraq Society Mr. Usman Yousuf emphasized the importance of continuity and collaboration in creating pathways for students to pursue careers in space science and related fields. The guest of honour, Ambassador Aftab Ahmad Khokher, Assistant Secretary General (Science and Technology), OIC General Secretariat, appreciated the efforts of OIC-COMSTECH and the Buraq Society in promoting space science education and reaffirmed the OIC's commitment to strengthening cooperation in science and technology among member states. The ceremony concluded with a farewell video and prize distribution. The 19th Buraq Space Camp served as a significant platform for inspiring young minds, fostering collaboration and strengthening engagement in space science education across Pakistan and OIC member states.—DNA

Sherry pays tribute to ZAB on his 98th birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Vice President of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Senator Sherry Rehman has paid rich tribute to Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) on his 98th birth anniversary, acknowledging his historic services, vision and sacrifices for the country and the people. In her message, Sherry Rehman said that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a wise, farsighted, intelligent and people-centric political leader who carried the pain of the masses in his heart. She said Bhutto's exceptional leadership, political insight and wisdom helped steer Pakistan out of severe internal and external crises and raised the country's stature on the global stage. Sherry Rehman highlighted that the 1973 Constitution stands as a landmark achievement of Bhutto's political foresight and commitment to safeguarding the fundamental rights of the people. Under his leadership, Pakistan launched its nuclear programme, strengthened key industries and introduced people-friendly development initiatives, she added. Sherry Rehman said that Bhutto carried out historic agrarian reforms, introduced affordable public transport, expanded basic health units, ensured free treatment facilities and allocated 43 per cent of the national budget to education. She said he empowered citizens by involving them in decision-making processes and providing them with a formal identity through the national identity card system. Recalling his execution, she said Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was subjected to a "judicial murder" on April 4, 1979, an injustice that was later acknowledged at judicial and historical levels. She said that his execution plunged the country into prolonged political instability and deep public disillusionment. Sherry Rehman said that Bhutto united Muslim countries on a single platform and raised the Kashmir issue effectively at the international level. She said the people-oriented political philosophy of PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto remains a guiding destination for the party's national struggle. She expressed confidence that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will continue to carry forward the mission of the party by keeping alive the power of the people and the philosophy of Quaid-e-Awam. Under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, she said, the PPP will continue Bhutto's mission and play its role in steering the country out of prevailing challenges. "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto lives on in the hearts of the people, and his struggle and sacrifices will always be remembered in the history of Pakistan," Sherry Rehman said.—DNA

Mr. Usman Shah, CEO of Niftysphere Institute of Arts & Design, presents an award during the Fashion Show Season Four - Culture Color.

The prestigious ceremony was graced by the presence of Mr. Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Federal Minister for the Ministry of National Heritage & Culture, who attended the event as the Chief Guest.

The event celebrated creativity, cultural expression, and artistic excellence, highlighting the Institute's commitment to promoting fashion and cultural heritage at a national level.

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The NIFTYSPHERE, Institute of Arts & Design, will be organizing a large-scale Pop Art Show and Display Exhibition in February 2026. This prestigious event will feature interdisciplinary creative works by students from the Graphic Designing Department, Photography Department, Interior Designing Department, and Fine Arts Department.

As part of the exhibition, students will produce Pop Art-inspired short films, followed by curated visual displays, art installations, and poster presentations. The event will also include screenings of student-produced movies, showcasing innovative interpretations of Pop Art across multiple artistic disciplines.

This exhibition aims to promote contemporary artistic expression, encourage creative collaboration among departments, and provide a professional platform for emerging artists and designers to present their work to a wider audience.

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IHC approves Practice, Procedure Rules

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday approved the Practice and Procedure Rules 2025 and Establishment Rules 2025 of the IHC and subordinate courts. Registrar of the Islamabad High Court Muhammad Yar Walana issued separate notifications approving the rules approved by the Chief Justice and judges. According to the notification issued regarding the Practice and Procedure Rules 2025, the new rules were approved under the powers vested in them under Article 202 of the Constitution. On February 18, 2025, the Practice and Procedure Rules were published in the Gazette of Pakistan. The Practice and Procedure Rules will come into effect from February 4, 2025. According to the notification issued regarding the approval of the Establishment Rules 2025 of the Islamabad High Court, the gazette notification approving the rules of appointment and employment was issued on April 10. The new rules were approved under the powers vested in them under Article 208 of the Constitution.—APP

Services exports increase by 16.77% to \$3.833b

ISLAMABAD: The exports of services during the first five months of the current fiscal year increased by 16.77 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During July-November 2025-26, exports of services were recorded at \$3.833 billion as against the exports of \$3.283 billion during the same period of last year, according to the latest PBS data. During the period under review, the services imports into the country grew by 12.78 percent and it was registered at \$5.146 billion as compared to the import of \$4.563 billion in the same period last year. Based on the figures, the services trade deficit was recorded at \$1.312 billion against the deficit of 1.279 billion last year, showing a growth of 2.55 percent. On a year-on-year basis, the services exports from the country grew by 22.26 percent in November 2025 as compared to the exports of the same month of last year. —APP

Briefs

Arid university signs MoU with Chinese partner

ISLAMABAD: PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi has signed a memorandum of understanding with China's Chengdu Yihe Technology to expand cooperation in precision agriculture and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technologies, the university said. The agreement was signed on Saturday at the China-Pakistan Research and Development Center for Modern Agriculture and Efficient Water Technologies on the university campus. The ceremony was attended by key stakeholders, including the Director External Linkages, Incharge, Faculty of Agricultural Engineering and Technology, Arid Agriculture Univ., international industrial collaborators (Xinjiang Tianye) for Modern Agriculture, and international students. The agreement aims to introduce drone-based crop monitoring, data-driven farming tools and other smart agricultural technologies to improve productivity, water efficiency and sustainable food production in Pakistan. "The partnership will also support research collaboration and capacity-building for local farmers and researchers," as per the university's statement. PMAS-AAUR already works with several Chinese universities and research institutes.—APP

ITP rolls out facilitation vans schedule for public services

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has announced the schedule of its facilitation vans to provide on-the-spot public services at different locations of the federal capital from January 5 to January 11. An ITP official told media on Monday that the facilitation vans will operate daily from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, offering services including driving licence renewal, duplicate licences, learner permits, character certificates and missing documents reports. The official said the initiative aims to facilitate citizens at their doorsteps and reduce congestion at traffic offices.—APP

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Court Notice

In the Court of Syeda hubabib Akhtar, Civil Judge 1st Class Jhelum Suit for deceleration

Case title: Rukhsana Shaheen etc. vs Zulfiqar Ahmed etc. Against: No. 5- Muhammad Niaz son of Muhammad Akram, husband (Noreen Kausar), resident of Bahlula Tehsil and District Jhelum (Currently Residence Abroad). As there is not possible to call the defendant through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 06.01.2026 at 09:00 AM, otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of 45TH Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC), National Institute Of Management (NIM) visit Senate Museum At Parliament House.

Maktab launch signals national resolve for digital transformation

Highlighting the strategic importance of higher education, Ahsan Iqbal said that in the 21st century, the real strength of nations lay in strong institutions and a well-trained human resource base

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD (DNA):Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday said the launch of Maktab, an integrated digital platform introduced under the Higher Education Commission (HEC), was a clear message of Pakistan's national resolve to transform higher education through digital governance, transparency and performance-based systems. Addressing the online launching ceremony of Maktab, the minister said Pakistan's universities were moving away from cumbersome paper-based processes towards modern, efficient and data-driven performance management systems. "From now on, decisions in higher education institutions will not be based

on assumptions but on data, evidence and measurable outcomes," he remarked. Highlighting the strategic importance of higher education, Ahsan Iqbal said that in the 21st century, the real strength of nations lay in strong institutions and a well-trained human resource base. "World-class universities are not built merely through impressive buildings; they are shaped by transparent governance, effective management and accountability," he added. The minister said that nations do not progress accidentally. "Development is the result of planning, discipline, continuity and sustained reforms," he said, stressing that knowledge, technology and innovation formed the backbone of Pakistan's economic resilience and future competitiveness. Referring to the government's long-term development roadmap, he said innovation and competitiveness played

a central role across all five pillars of the Uraan Pakistan vision. "Human resource development was declared a national priority as early as Vision 2010, laying the foundation for reforms in higher education," he recalled. Under successive national visions, the minister said, concrete steps were taken to strengthen research and talent development. He said the landmark 10,000 PhD programme had been launched to produce globally competitive scholars, while Vision 2025 focused on establishing modern research and innovation centres across the country. "Now, under Uraan Pakistan, universities, research and the economy are being integrated into a single ecosystem to drive sustainable growth," he said, adding that Pakistan's top 10 premium universities would be prepared to compete at the global level. He informed the participants that a

dedicated committee had been formed to identify premium universities and propose comprehensive reform measures. "The committee will submit its recommendations within one month, which will serve as the basis for transforming selected institutions into globally competitive centres of excellence," he said. The minister further said that a seven-point University Quality Framework was being implemented to enhance academic standards, governance and research output. Under this framework, public funding for higher education would be linked to performance, outcomes and measurable impact rather than routine allocations. "Competition and merit will now be the guiding principles in our universities," he said, adding that the era of complacency and inefficiency was coming to an end.

Chinese envoy greets govt, people of Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "At the dawn of 2026, on behalf of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, I would like to extend our most sincere and best wishes to the Government and people of Pakistan." Ambassador Jiang Zandong conveyed this in his New Year Message when the two nations are also celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the establishment of their Diplomatic Relations. The message said, "The year 2025 was extraordinary. China's 14th Five-Year Plan has concluded with a full success. Despite pressures, the economy has forged ahead and advanced toward a more innovative and high-quality direction, with continued progress in building a modern industrial system. The journey of Chinese modernization has taken steady strides forward. The total economic output has reached a new milestone, reaching an estimated 140 trillion yuan. Large AI models are racing neck and neck, humanoid robots have showcased their kung fu kicks, the Tianwen-2 probe began its star-chasing journey to explore asteroids and comets, and the production and sales of new energy vehicles both exceed ten million units. In the face of accelerating changes unseen in a century, China has always stood firm on the right side of history, joining hands with nations around the world to promote peace and development, and advanced the building of a community with a shared future for humanity. The SCO Summit in Tianjin and the Global Leaders' Meeting on Women have been successfully hosted, the newly proposed Global Governance Initiative has got support from over 150 countries and international organizations, the International Organization for Mediation has been established, and the island-wide special customs operations in the Hainan Free Trade Port have been launched. The grand commemoration marking the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist

War was held with great solemnity, together with Pakistan and other peace-loving countries around the world, China has delivered a powerful message of our times: "The noble cause of human peace and development will surely prevail." We are also delighted to note that the Pakistani government has demonstrated proactive and effective governance, with its economy showing stable growth with progress, reforms have been steadily advanced, counter-terrorism efforts have yielded significant results, and national unity has been further strengthened. Particularly in the diplomatic arena, Pakistan has actively pursued engagement on multiple fronts, opening up new prospects, expanding circle of friends, and significantly enhancing international voice and influence. As iron-clad friends and all-weather strategic cooperative partners, we sincerely rejoice in these achievements. The positive development trajectories of both countries have injected strong momentum into the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. High-level mutual visits have been frequent and cordial. President Xi Jinping has held talks and meetings with President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, reaching important consensus that have charted the blueprint and provided guidance for the advancement of bilateral relations. The two sides have issued an Action Plan to foster an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era. Practical cooperation has yielded abundant results: the Karakoram Highway Phase II realignment project is progressing steadily; the new Gwadar International Airport has been put into operation; the "Training 1,000 young Pakistani agricultural professionals in China" project has been successfully implemented; the Lahore Orange Line Metro has carried over 270 million passengers; and high-quality Pakistani products such as rice, sesame, and seafood have accelerate Entry into the Chinese Market. Highlights in the social livelihood cooperation are abundant. 50,000 "health kits" have benefited the people of Balochistan Province; Chinese medical teams have brought hope to families of children with congenital heart disease.

Gwadar garment factory true success of women empowerment

When asked about this, Gwadar Garment Factory Assistant Manager Zaitoon Abdullah said that manufacturing jobs like tailoring is a rewarding career choice for creative women professionals in Gwadar who like working with fabrics

GWADAR: Gwadar Women Garment Factory, also known as Gwadar Women's Development Employment Center, completed all stitching orders from public as well as private enterprises following its 5-years successful operation in the heart of Gwadar Port from 20202 till 2025. Since its establishment in collaboration with the Chinese Consulate General in Karachi and China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC), the women workers of Gwadar Garment Factory earned substantial income by finalizing orders of tailor-made uniforms for the workforce of national and multinational companies. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Gwadar Women Garment Factory supervisor Ms. Zaitoon Abdullah said that factory female workers are now skilled

enough to perform up to the mark. She said that from 20220 till 2025, Gwadar Garment Factory has become at least so efficient that it has been stitching almost all uniforms of workers of Chinese companies in Gwadar Port. "Our women tailors are also stitching Pakistan's traditional men's clothing as souvenirs for Chinese high-ups, which they wear on Pakistan special days," she added. She further noted that as women are talented, efforts are being devoted in making embroidery work to scale up revenue. She said that Gwadar Garment Factory is a true success story for creating spiral ripples in women empowerment. When asked about this, Gwadar Garment Factory Assistant Manager Zaitoon Abdullah said that

manufacturing jobs like tailoring is a rewarding career choice for creative women professionals in Gwadar who like working with fabrics. "With their skills and knowledge to create garments that meet clients' expectations, all women working in Gwadar Garment Factory have a bright professional path in various upscale garment industries in Pakistan," she added. Equipped with relevant sewing apparatus, an airy and lighted ambience, management room and store, Gwadar Women Garment Factory has become the talk of the town—it is not only a new window of opportunity to train unskilled women but also a platform to let semi-skilled female tailors to hone their stitching acumen as per modern demands.—DNA

IRSA releases 29,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD:Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 29,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 41,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1490.82 feet which was 88.82 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 17,800 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1200.05 feet, which was 150.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 6,700 cusecs and 5,000 cusecs, respectively.—APP

IESCO slaps Rs 554m fines, 3,185 power thieves arrested

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has imposed fines amounting to over Rs 554 million on consumers involved in electricity theft across six operational circles, as part of its intensified anti-power theft campaign. According to IESCO's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Ch. Khalid Mahmood, police arrested 3,185 offenders during the drive. He said more than 230,000 running and dead defaulters were targeted, leading to recoveries exceeding Rs 7 billion. The crackdown, he added, is being carried out in line with the federal government and Ministry of Energy's zero-tolerance policy against electricity theft, with measures tightened around defaulters and pilferers. Ch. Khalid Mahmood said that 100 per cent implementation of the government's vision against electricity theft was being ensured across the company's jurisdiction. He said strict action was being taken in all six operational circles of IESCO to curb the menace of power theft. He urged the consumers to pay their electricity bills on time and to report any incidents of power theft to the concerned SDO offices or IESCO's helpline 118. He said public cooperation was essential to ensure a transparent, stable and sustainable power distribution system.—APP

ANF arrests 14, seizes over 90 kg of narcotics

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting 12 operations across the country, arrested 14 suspects, including 2 women, and seized 90.73 kilograms of narcotics with an estimated value of Rs10.4 million, the force said on Monday. In operations carried out near educational institutions, the ANF recovered 1.2 kilograms of hashish from a suspect near Sakhi Sarwar Road in Dera Ghazi Khan district. The arrested suspect confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions. Under international drug interdiction efforts, 28 grams of weed were seized from a parcel arriving from the United Kingdom at the International Mailing Office in Rawalpindi. Near the Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza in Sheikhupura, 30 kilograms of hashish were recovered from a vehicle, and 2 suspects were arrested. On Raiwind Road in Lahore, 20.4 kilograms of hashish were seized from a man and a woman travelling in a rickshaw. At Jamshoro Toll Plaza.—APP

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Trump sets a devastating precedent in Venezuela

MICHAEL HIRSH

By attacking Venezuela, seizing its president and promising to “run” the country indefinitely – all without any congressional or UN authorization – US President Donald Trump may well have shredded what little is left of international norms and opened the way to new acts of aggression from US rivals China and Russia on the world stage, some experts say. In return, Trump probably achieved little in the way of stopping narcotics flows into the US, even as he asserts what he calls the “Trump corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine in his new National Security Strategy, which aims “to restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere.” While it is true that much of the world and, by most accounts, a majority of Venezuelans did not see President Nicolas Maduro as legitimate – and Maduro has been indicted in the US on charges of being a drug trafficker – Trump has now set a potentially devastating precedent, some critics and experts say. Beijing and Moscow could decide to act in similar fashion against regional leaders whom they deem to be threats – especially in Ukraine and Taiwan – all without worrying about the legitimacy of such actions. At a news conference on Saturday announcing what he called “one of the most stunning, effective and powerful displays of American military might and competence in American history,” Trump made clear that his goal was regime change – and even long-term US occupation. This in spite of the administration’s repeated denials that this was his goal; Trump ran for president in 2024 on a platform of avoiding such interventions. “We’re going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition,” Trump said. And he did not deny suggestions from reporters that this could require years. In a haunting echo of similar claims made more than two decades ago before the US invasion of another oil-rich nation, Iraq, Trump said that any US costs would be reimbursed by “money coming out of the ground” – in other words, Venezuelan oil. “We’re going to be taking a tremendous amount of wealth out of the ground,” Trump added. It is noteworthy that, more than two decades ago, President George W. Bush’s invasion and occupation of Iraq was seen as a huge blow to the legitimacy of international law; indeed, Putin has cited it as a justification for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Yet even in that case, the Bush administration sought UN Security Council authorization, while Trump and his team have not bothered to do so. Thus, combined with Trump’s military strike against Iran last summer – also done without UN or congressional authorization – this latest action could be seen as a Trumpian hammer blow to the frail husk of international law that remains. “I think Trump is really serious about extending US dominion over the Western Hemisphere,” said Ryan Berg, the head of the Americas program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “Their argument is this regime has no legitimacy and the only legitimization they need is the Southern District of New York,” he said, referring to the district court where Maduro was indicted. Trump’s action “weakens the already compromised US ability to credi-

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bly make arguments about rules concerning use of force in international politics – which is zero cost to this administration since it does not care about such things,” said William Wohlforth, an international relations expert at Dartmouth University. The ostensible reason for the Maduro operation does not hold up very well against the facts. “A lawless administration has reached a new low,” said Harold Koh, an expert in international law at Yale and former legal adviser to the State Department. “Trump has baldly violated the UN Charter, with no valid claim of self-defense and engaged in an illegal extraterritorial arrest that will be vigorously contested in a US court.” In a statement, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the US operation “contravenes the principle of non-use of force that underpins international law.” Other responses from US allies were more muted: EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas wrote on X that the EU views Maduro as “lacking legitimacy” and called for “restraint,” while saying “the principles of international law and the UN Charter must be respected.” Shortly after Trump announced the attack in a post on Truth Social, US Attorney General Pam Bondi wrote on X that Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, would now “face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts” after being indicted in the Southern District of New York. It is noteworthy that only hours before US special operations forces descended on his home in Caracas “in the dead of night,” as Trump described it, Maduro met with Qiu Xiaoyi, the Chinese government’s special representative for Latin American affairs, at the Miraflores presidential palace. China fiercely condemned the attack, saying, “Such hegemonic behavior by the US seriously violates international law,” according to a statement from Beijing’s Foreign Ministry. “I’m told Chinese diplomats were still in Caracas when the attack happened,” Berg said. What has Trump possibly gained in return? The ostensible reason for the Maduro operation – that he is an indicted drug trafficker responsible for pouring “gigantic amounts” of narcotics into the US mainland, as Trump described it Saturday – does not hold up very well against the facts. “Most of those drugs come from a place called Venezuela,” Trump said. But based on US drug enforcement data compiled by the Congressional Research Service, Venezuela is responsible for only a tiny amount of the heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and fentanyl imported into the US. For example, more than 85 percent of heroin analyzed by US agencies originates from Mexico and only about 4 percent is from South America, while most of the cocaine still comes from Colombia. It is possible, of course, that a US-orchestrated transition in Venezuela could benefit the country, especially if opposition leaders Maria Corina Machado, the winner of the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize, and her designated candidate Edmundo Gonzalez – who is believed to have soundly beaten Maduro in the 2024 presidential election – are able to take power. Even so, on Saturday, Trump appeared to dampen expectations of such an outcome, saying, “I think it would be very tough for her to be the leader. She doesn’t have the support within – or the respect within – the country.” The closest precedent to Trump’s action may well have been former President George H.W. Bush’s decision to send US troops in to capture dictator Manuel Noriega in Panama in 1989, which later helped promote stability in that country, though it did not really alter the stakes of the US’ drug crisis. But history suggests more pitfalls than promising outcomes may ensue. Nearly every US military intervention in Latin America, going back to at least the Bay of Pigs in 1961, has ended in fiasco – with no real benefit to Washington.

Trump sets a devastating precedent in Venezuela

Michael Hirsh

In return, Trump probably achieved little in the way of stopping narcotics flows into the US, even as he asserts what he calls the “Trump corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine in his new National Security Strategy, which aims “to restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere.” While it is true that much of the world and, by most accounts, a majority of Venezuelans did not see President Nicolas Maduro as legitimate – and Maduro has been indicted in the US on charges of being a drug trafficker – Trump has now set a potentially devastating precedent, some critics and experts say. Beijing and Moscow could decide to act in similar fashion against

By attacking Venezuela, seizing its president and promising to “run” the country indefinitely – all without any congressional or UN authorization – US President Donald Trump may well have shredded what little is left of international norms and opened the way to new acts of aggression from US rivals China and Russia on the world stage, some experts say. In return, Trump probably achieved little in the way of stopping narcotics flows into the US, even as he asserts what he calls the “Trump corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine in his new National Security Strategy, which aims “to restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere.” While it is true that much of the world and, by most accounts, a majority of Venezuelans did not see President Nicolas Maduro as legitimate – and Maduro has been indicted in the US on charges of being a drug trafficker – Trump has now set a potentially devastating precedent, some critics and experts say. Beijing and Moscow could decide to act in similar fashion against regional leaders whom they deem to be threats – especially in Ukraine and Taiwan – all without worrying about the legitimacy of such actions. At a news conference on Saturday announcing what he called “one of the most stunning, effective and powerful displays of American military might and competence in American history,” Trump made clear that his goal was regime change – and even long-term US occupation. This in spite of the administration’s repeated denials that this was his goal; Trump ran for president in 2024 on a platform of avoiding such interventions. “We’re going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition,” Trump said. And he did not deny suggestions from reporters that this could require years. In a haunting echo of similar claims made more than two decades ago before the US invasion of another oil-rich nation, Iraq, Trump said that any US costs would be reimbursed by “money coming out of the ground” – in other words, Venezuelan oil. “We’re going to be taking a tremendous amount of wealth out of the ground,” Trump added. It is noteworthy that, more than two decades ago, President George W. Bush’s invasion and occupation of Iraq was seen as a huge blow to the legitimacy of international law; indeed, Putin has cited it as a justification for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Yet even in that case, the Bush administration sought UN Security Council authorization, while Trump and his team have not bothered to do so. Thus, combined with Trump’s military strike against Iran last summer – also done without UN or congressional authorization – this latest action could be seen as a Trumpian hammer blow to the frail husk of international law that remains. “I think Trump is really serious about extending US do-

minion over the Western Hemisphere,” said Ryan Berg, the head of the Americas program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “Their argument is this regime has no legitimacy and the only legitimization they need is the Southern District of New York,” he said, referring to the district court where Maduro was indicted. Trump’s action “weakens the already compromised US ability to credibly make arguments about rules concerning use of force in international politics – which is zero cost to this administration since it does not care about such things,” said William Wohlforth, an international relations expert at Dartmouth University. The ostensible reason for the Maduro operation does not hold up very well against the facts. “A lawless administration has reached a new low,” said Harold Koh, an expert in international law at Yale and former legal adviser to the State Department. “Trump has baldly violated the UN Charter, with no valid claim of self-defense and engaged in an illegal extraterritorial arrest that will be vigorously contested in a US court.” In a statement, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the US operation “contravenes the principle of non-use of force that underpins international law.” Other responses from US allies were more muted: EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas wrote on X that the EU views Maduro as “lacking legitimacy” and called for “restraint,” while saying “the principles of international law and the UN Charter must be respected.” Shortly after Trump announced the attack in a post on Truth Social, US Attorney General Pam Bondi wrote on X that Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, would now “face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts” after being indicted in the Southern District of New York. It is noteworthy that only hours before US special operations forces descended on his home in Caracas “in the dead of night,” as Trump described it, Maduro met with Qiu Xiaoyi, the Chinese government’s special representative for Latin American affairs, at the Miraflores presidential palace. China fiercely condemned the attack, saying, “Such hegemonic behavior by the US seriously violates international law,” according to a statement from Beijing’s Foreign Ministry. “I’m told Chinese diplomats were still in Caracas when the attack happened,” Berg said. What has Trump possibly gained in return? The ostensible reason for the Maduro operation – that he is an indicted drug trafficker responsible for pouring “gigantic amounts” of narcotics into the US mainland, as Trump described it Saturday – does not hold up very well against the facts. “Most of those drugs come from a place called Venezuela,” Trump said. But based on US drug enforcement data compiled by the Congressional Research Service, Venezuela is responsible for only a tiny amount of the heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and fentanyl imported into

the US. For example, more than 85 percent of heroin analyzed by US agencies originates from Mexico and only about 4 percent is from South America, while most of the cocaine still comes from Colombia. It is possible, of course, that a US-orchestrated transition in Venezuela could benefit the country, especially if opposition leaders Maria Corina Machado, the winner of the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize, and her designated candidate Edmundo Gonzalez – who is believed to have soundly beaten Maduro in the 2024 presidential election – are able to take power. Even so, on Saturday, Trump appeared to dampen expectations of such an outcome, saying, “I think it would be very tough for her to be the leader. She doesn’t have the support within – or the respect within – the country.” The closest precedent to Trump’s action may well have been former President George H.W. Bush’s decision to send US troops in to capture dictator Manuel Noriega in Panama in 1989, which later helped promote stability in that country, though it did not really alter the stakes of the US’ drug crisis. But history suggests more pitfalls than promising outcomes may ensue. Nearly every US military intervention in Latin America, going back to at least the Bay of Pigs in 1961, has ended in fiasco – with no real benefit to Washington. And it has not really mattered whether the issue was Cold War communism or post-Cold War narcotics. Indeed, the last clear, if ugly, US success in the region may have been the Spanish-American War of the late 19th century. In 1954, the CIA-backed overthrow of Guatemala’s elected government created decades of civil war and instability. The Bay of Pigs disaster – President John F. Kennedy’s failed coup against Cuban leader Fidel Castro – helped lead to the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1973, a US-supported coup against President Salvador Allende in Chile opened the way to Augusto Pinochet’s brutal 17-year dictatorship – and did permanent damage to the reputation of then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. President Ronald Reagan’s 1980s intervention against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua ended in the Iran-Contra scandal and another civil war. Beyond that, repeated interventions in Haiti going back to President Woodrow Wilson in 1915, then Presidents Bill Clinton in 1994 (“Operation Uphold Democracy”) and George W. Bush 10 years later, have only produced more instability, leading to such vicious gang violence that Haitians cannot hold elections. And Washington spent billions on “Plan Colombia,” including a large amount of military assistance, only to decertify Bogota in September for “failed” and “ineffective counter-narcotics policies.” As for Venezuela itself, an allegedly US-supported coup backfired against then-President Hugo Chavez in 2002. His hand-picked successor was Maduro.

Crime Society and the Limits of Policing

Dr. Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti

Over time, digitisation and monitoring have enhanced investigative capacity; however, crime itself has become more intricate. The criminal environment today includes murder, robbery, sexual assault, drug trafficking and public order offences, as well as emerging cyber-enabled crimes. Even so, while technology is essential, it cannot on its own compensate for deeper structural flaws within society. The persistence of crime is further explained by criminological theory. For instance, Routine Activity Theory suggests that crime occurs when a motivated offender encounters a suitable victim in the absence of sufficient guardianship

Crime is a reflection of society, not an anomaly. Just as each perpetrator incorporates unique social, psychological and structural elements, every crime has distinct features. Therefore, in order to comprehend crime, it is necessary to look at broader patterns, including offenders, victims, motivations, settings and the social circumstances in which crimes take place. In this sense, every crime, whether violent, property-related or organised, is part of a larger social structure that is moulded by opportunity, inequality and governance. Prior to the development of contemporary technology, Pakistani law enforcement agencies mostly depended on institutional memory, registers, and manual record-keeping. Over time, digitisation and monitoring have enhanced investigative capacity; however, crime itself has become more intricate. The criminal environment today includes murder, robbery, sexual assault, drug trafficking and public order offences, as well as emerging cyber-enabled crimes. Even so, while technology is essential, it cannot on its own compensate for deeper structural flaws within society. The persistence of crime is further explained by criminological theory. For instance, Routine Activity Theory suggests that crime occurs when a motivated offender encounters a suitable victim in the absence of sufficient guardianship; a situation common in dense metropolitan areas marked by weak social control. Similarly, Strain Theory holds that social injustice, unemployment and limited opportunities for mobility generate dissatisfaction, which may result in criminal behaviour. Consequently, in a society where access to justice and opportunity remains unequal, crime becomes both a symptom and a consequence of structural imbalance. Crime trends are also significantly influenced by age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Violent crimes are committed at a disproportionate rate by young men, often due to peer pressure, hostility and weak social ties. By contrast, property crimes are frequently associated with economic distress, while organised crime thrives where institutions are weak and enforcement selective. In the Pakistani context, patronage structures, familial networks and tribal ties further complicate crime control by shielding offenders and discouraging victims from reporting crimes or seeking justice. One of the most serious shortcomings of the

criminal justice system lies in crimes of sexual violence against women and children. As feminist criminology explains, patriarchal norms, underreporting, victim-blaming and procedural insensitivity collectively contribute to the persistence of these crimes. Accordingly, addressing sexual offences requires more than arrests; it necessitates survivor-centred policing, forensic competence, prompt prosecution, digital profiling of sexual offenders and a broader transformation of social attitudes that normalise shame and silence. Another major challenge is organised crime, particularly drug trafficking. Criminal networks function like enterprises, exploiting demand, geography and corruption while rapidly adapting to enforcement pressures. Given its strategic location, Pakistan is especially vulnerable to transnational drug routes. Therefore, intelligence-led policing, financial tracking and interprovincial coordination are far more effective than sporadic crackdowns that target symptoms rather than underlying structures. Institutional leadership has also played an equally important role at the provincial level. In particular, Dr. Usman Anwar, Inspector General of Police Punjab, has implemented a series of measures aimed at restructuring the police department. His initiatives have focused not only on crime reduction but also on enhancing public engagement, improving police welfare and developing strategies to boost officer’s confidence in the face of increasingly challenging circumstances. Moreover, through technology-driven surveillance, real-time monitoring and coordinated response mechanisms, the Punjab Safe Cities Authority, under the leadership of the Managing Director of PSCA, DIG Ahsan Younas has significantly strengthened both traffic management, crime prevention and detection. Together, these efforts demonstrate how the convergence of welfare, technological innovation and institutional reform has substantially enhanced Punjab’s operational effectiveness while simultaneously increasing public confidence in law enforcement. Within this challenging environment, the Faisalabad Region offers a useful illustration of how targeted institutional leadership and operational

coherence can produce tangible outcomes. In particular, police performance in 2025 demonstrated measurable improvements under the supervision of Regional Police Officer Sohail Akhtar Sukhera. More than 20,620 cases of theft, robbery and dacoity were traced, with recoveries exceeding Rs1.684 billion. At the same time, hundreds of murders, kidnapping and sexual violence cases were investigated, while action against organised crime led to the arrest of over 1,300 gang members and the recovery of assets worth more than Rs454 million. Alongside these efforts, a sustained crackdown on narcotics resulted in thousands of arrests and the seizure of large quantities of heroin, hashish and ice. Moreover, initiatives aimed at rebuilding public trust including Meesaq Centres, Tahafuz Centres, Khidmat Markaz and open courts helped in resolving tens of thousands of citizen complaints. Taken together, these measures reflect a recognition that legitimacy, accountability and accessibility are central to effective policing. Nevertheless, rising crime cannot be attributed solely to deficiencies in police skills. Although gaps exist in forensic investigation, data analytics and victim handling, the deeper problems lie in fragmented databases, weak inter-agency coordination and an overburdened criminal justice system. As a result, criminals often evade consequences not because they are not apprehended, but because prosecution is delayed, evidence mishandled and deterrence weakened by uncertainty. Ultimately, Pakistan’s crime challenge demands coordinated and integrated national action. A harmonised crime data system across provinces, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, judicial reform and socio-economic policies addressing inequality, education and employment are all essential. In this broader framework, policing must be situated within a governance structure that recognises crime as both a social disorder and a law enforcement issue. Without such balance, policing alone will remain an incomplete answer. Dr Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti holds a PhD in Political Science and writes regularly on terrorism, counter terrorism, countering violent extremism, and policing affairs. He can be reached at rizwanbh79@gmail.com.

Briefs

Major terror plot averted in Karachi

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Meanwhile, Sindh reported 51 incidents causing 56 fatalities and 40 injuries; 1.73% of the total. With about 2,060 deaths as a result of at least 392 security operations, the outlaws accounted for over 60% of the fatalities recorded in 2025 – surpassing the combined fatal losses among the civilians and security officials. We need Greenland from the standpoint of national security, and Denmark is not going to be able to do it,” he said in response to a reporter’s question. “We’ll worry about Greenland in about two months... let’s talk about Greenland in 20 days.” Over the weekend, the Danish prime minister called on Washington to stop “threatening its historical ally”. “I have to say this very clearly to the United States: it is absolutely absurd to say that the US should take control of Greenland,” PM Mette Frederiksen said in a statement. She also noted that Denmark, “and thus Greenland”, was a Nato member protected by the agreement’s security guarantees.

PTI reiterates demand...

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The National Assembly, saying all objections raised by Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq had been addressed. The Imran Khan-founded party formally requested the appointment of Achakzai as Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly. PTI was forced to name new opposition leaders in both houses after Omar Ayub, Leader of Opposition in NA, and Shibli Faraz, opposition leader in the Senate, were removed from the top parliamentary positions on August 9, following their convictions in the May 9 cases. Speaking to Geo News after meeting the NA speaker, Dogar dismissed reports suggesting PTI lawmakers had made backchannel contacts with Sadiq, clarifying that he had personally met the NA Speaker and formally repeated the party’s long-standing demand. He said the speaker was informed that PTI had resolved all concerns and that there was no longer any impediment to notifying the opposition leader. Dogar said the speaker was told that cases pending against former opposition leader Omar Ayub Khan had been withdrawn, removing the last legal hurdle. He stressed that the nomination of Achakzai had been made by the PTI founder and endorsed by the party, leaving no ambiguity over the candidate’s legitimacy. Referring to the exchange of official correspondence, Dogar said the appointment process had been stalled due to letters sent by the speaker and subsequent replies from PTI. He added that the issue of summoning PTI lawmakers to verify signatures would be addressed if it formally arose, reiterating that PTI MNAs were ready to establish their identity and participate in any lawful procedure. Separately, NA speaker Sadiq maintained that every step would be taken strictly in accordance with the Constitution, law and parliamentary rules, adding that the House would be informed of developments in the upcoming National Assembly session. He said the procedure for appointing the opposition leader would be restarted. Earlier, on January 1, PTI submitted a formal reply to the National Assembly Secretariat regarding the appointment of Achakzai and urged the speaker to issue the notification. Dogar, along with PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and MNAs Jamal Ehsan Khan and Sohail Sultan, visited the Legislation Secretary and submitted the required documents. Speaking at Parliament House, Dogar said the party had responded to objections raised in the Secretariat’s letter and clarified that the petition filed in the Peshawar High Court by Ayub – naming the National Assembly as a party – had been withdrawn. “There is now no pending court case related to the opposition leader’s slot,” he said, urging the speaker to move swiftly.

Head hits back for Australia after Root’s majestic 160

Jamie Smith lived dangerously and was fortunate to survive after chipping Cameron Green to Labuschagne at cover on 22. He began walking off but replays showed Green overstepped and it was a no-ball

SYDNEY: An imperious Joe Root hit a magnificent 160 to drive England to 384 in the fifth and final Ashes Test Monday before Travis Head let rip to haul Australia back into the contest with a rapid-fire unbeaten 91. Root’s superb innings, his 41st ton to match Ricky Ponting, was only ended courtesy of a brilliant caught-and-bowled by Michael Neser, who finished with 4-60. Australia were left to negotiate the final session of day two at a sold-out Sydney Cricket Ground, which they did for the loss of Jake Weatherald (21) and Marnus Labuschagne (48). By stumps, the hosts had raced to 166-2 with nightwatchman Neser on one alongside Head. Weatherald, who needed a big score to stave off the critics, again failed to live up to expectations since making his de-

but at the first Test in Perth. He was dropped twice in the space of three balls, by Root then Ben Duckett, before Ben Stokes trapped him lbw. But Head, who like Root has slammed two centuries this series, was in the zone.

He clattered three boundaries off the second over from Matthew Potts, in the side for the injured Gus Atkinson, and there was no let-up, blitzing a quickfire 50 off 55 balls. Labuschagne was also in good touch, stroking seven boundaries before thick-edging Stokes to Jacob Bethell at gully. Australia lead the series 3-1 and have already retained the Ashes, with England desperate for another win after victory at the previous Test in Melbourne. England resumed at 211-3 but lost Harry Brook (84), Stokes (0) and Jamie Smith (46) before lunch.

Will Jacks (27), Brydon Carse (1) and Josh Tongue (0), along with Root, departed in the second session. The day belonged to Root, who started on 72 and reached an almost chanceless century off 146 balls to reaffirm his status as an all-time great.

The 35-year-old had begun the series under pressure after failing to make a hundred in Australia over three previous Ashes tours. He snapped the drought with an unbeaten 138 in the day-night Test at Brisbane and his exploits in Sydney drew him level third with Australia’s Ponting on the all-time century-makers’ list, with 41.

Only India’s Sachin Tendulkar (51) and South Africa’s Jacques Kallis (45) have scored more Test centuries.

Root and Brook came together with England in trouble at 57-3 on Sunday, with both

eyeing big centuries on an ideal batting deck. But Brook only lasted five balls on Monday, adding six to his overnight 78 before dabbing at a Scott Boland delivery and edging into the safe hands of Steve Smith at slip. It ended a 169-run partnership, not just England’s best of the series but the biggest by either team, surpassing Head and Alex Carey’s 162 in Adelaide.

Stokes only survived 11 balls before getting the faintest of edges off Mitchell Starc to Carey. Jamie Smith lived dangerously and was fortunate to survive after chipping Cameron Green to Labuschagne at cover on 22. He began walking off but replays showed Green overstepped and it was a no-ball. He added another 24 before medium-pacer Labuschagne bagged him in his first over. – **Agencies**

Pakistan, China agree to build upgraded version of CPEC 2.0

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communication, deepen strategic mutual trust, jointly safeguard their common interests, promote the economic and social development of the two countries, and safeguard and advance peace, development and prosperity of the region and beyond. The two sides announced the launch of commemorative activities in 2026 celebrating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, which will serve as an opportunity to consolidate China-Pakistan friendship and expand new areas of cooperation. Pakistan spoke highly of China’s development achievements in the new era under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, and congratulated China on the successful conclusion of the 14th Five-Year Plan and the upcoming 15th Five-Year Plan. Pakistan firmly supported every effort of China to achieve national reunification, and opposes any form of “Taiwan independence” and any attempt to

create “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan.” Pakistan also firmly supported China on issues concerning Xinjiang, Xizang, Hong Kong and the South China Sea. China reiterated its steadfast support for Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. While China supported Pakistan in firmly combating terrorism and playing a bigger role in international and regional affairs. Likewise, China commended the comprehensive measures taken by Pakistan to combat terrorism and protect the safety of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan. China fully recognized the significant contributions and huge sacrifices that Pakistan made in combating terrorism over the years. The two sides reiterated their commitment to combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations with zero tolerance, and agreed to further deepen all-round cooperation on counter-terrorism and security, and make concerted efforts to ensure that the China-Pakistan Belt and Road

cooperation advance in a secure and smooth manner. The two sides expressed satisfaction at their expanding space cooperation and for the expected early entrance of Pakistani astronauts into the China Space Station. They agreed to explore space in a peaceful and mutually beneficial manner for greater economic and social development and prosperity. Furthermore, the two sides expressed support for the postwar international order underpinned by international legal documents such as the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation and other principles of international law for the maintenance of world peace and security, and protect historical truth and international justice.

The two sides emphasized the importance of a South Asian regional order underpinned by the U.N. Charter, international law, and the basic norms governing international relations, reiterated opposition to any unilateral actions, and reaffirmed the significance of maintaining peace and stability

in South Asia and the necessity of resolving all outstanding disputes through dialogue and consultation. The Pakistani side briefed the Chinese side on its position on and latest developments of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. China reiterated that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is left over from history, and should be properly and peacefully resolved in accordance with the U.N. Charter, relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements. The two sides expressed readiness to conduct trans-boundary water resources cooperation under the principle of equality and mutual benefit, and emphasized the imperative of fulfilling international legal obligations. The significance of the maintenance of international and regional security and stability was reiterated. The two sides expressed readiness to continue leveraging the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers’ Dialogue and the China-Bangladesh-Pakistan cooperation mechanism to deliver new outcomes.

Chess Federation Officials Suspended Over Financial Irregularities

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Adjudicator has taken decisive action in the ongoing administrative and financial dispute within the Chess Federation of Pakistan (CFP), suspending three senior officials after hearing all parties and examining the record. According to the written order, PSB-appointed Adjudicator Shakil Durrani directed the immediate suspension of CFP President Hanif Qureshi, Finance Secretary Raja Gauhar Iqbal, and General Secretary Omar Khan, holding them administratively responsible for the federation’s financial affairs. The adjudicator ordered that the officials will remain suspended until the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP) completes a comprehensive inquiry and issues final directions based on its findings. The decision followed detailed hearings and scrutiny of documents submitted by both sides in a dispute that has remained pending since 2023.

The order further stated that all bank and deposit accounts of the Chess Federation of Pakistan will remain frozen until a final decision is taken after completion of the audit. The AGP inquiry will determine whether any financial or administrative rules were violated and whether financial mismanagement occurred. To ensure that chess activities in the country are not disrupted, the adjudicator directed the PSB to nominate an impartial CFP office bearer or a PSB official, on a case-to-case basis, to authorize the release of essential funds strictly for the federation’s core operational needs. Additionally, the adjudicator ordered the withdrawal of services of an individual appointed against an unsanctioned position, terming the appointment irregular.

Maduro presented before court

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“We extend an invitation to the US government to work together on an agenda for cooperation,” the former vice president said. However, around 2,000 Maduro supporters, accompanied by a group of pro-Maduro paramilitaries and bikers, demonstrated Sunday in Caracas to demand his release from US custody. Trump announced late Sunday that the United States was “in charge” of the South American nation, while US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that discussions of Venezuela holding elections following Maduro’s ouster were “premature.” When asked what he needs from interim leader Rodriguez, Trump said: “We need total access. We need access to the oil and other things in their country that allow us to rebuild their country.” Leading opposition figure Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia said that while the US intervention was “important” without the release of political prisoners and acknowledgement that he won the 2024 election, it was simply “not enough.” The Trump administration says it retains powerful economic leverage by blockading oil tankers from Venezuela. Trump has also threatened additional military attacks if needed. While there are no known US forces left inside Venezuela, a huge naval presence, including an aircraft carrier, remains off the coast. Details of the US operation were still emerging Monday, with Havana saying 32 Cubans were killed in the attack and Trump adding that Cuba itself was ready to fall after Maduro’s capture. “I don’t think we need any action. It looks like it’s going down,” Trump said.

Mashhood reiterates support for Kashmiris

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister’s Youth Programme (PMYP) Chairman, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan reiterated Pakistan’s unwavering political, moral and diplomatic support for the Kashmiri people’s right to self-determination. On the Right to Self-Determination Day, he reminded the world of the United Nations Security Council resolution of January 5, 1949. The resolution guaranteed Kashmiris the right to decide their future through a free and impartial plebiscite. Chairman PMYP also announced that the PMYP would intensify youth-led advocacy at national and international levels. The aim is to highlight India’s violations of international law in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

Pakistan-China Friendship Tenpin Bowling Championship from Jan 24

ISLAMABAD: The Sports and Culture Attache of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, Cheng Peng, visited Tenpin Bowling Club, here at the Leisure City Bowling Club, Safa Gold F-7 Mazkaz. Other officials of the Chinese Embassy, Zhang and President of the Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Ijaz-ur-Rehman, were also present on the occasion, said a press release. President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Ijaz-ur-Rehman, briefed the Sports and Culture Attache of the Chinese Embassy, Cheng Peng, regarding the arrangements for the Pak-China Friendship Tenpin Bowl-

ing Championship. The Pak-China Friendship Tenpin Bowling Championship and the 18th National Tenpin Bowling Championship will be held from January 24 to 30. Bowlers from all over the country will participate in the Championship. The events of the championship will be the part of the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of Pak-China friendship. Singers, musicians and actors will perform and show their talents and performance in this event. Ijaz-ur-Rehman said that the aim is to further strengthen bilateral cooperation and promote bowling in both countries. – **DNA**

Inter on fire, 3-1 victory over Bologna at San Siro

BAKU: Inter keep their league momentum going with a 3-1 victory over Bologna on match day 18, according to One Football. Chivu’s side put on a dominant display, scoring three goals and creating many opportunities, while Ravaglia was the standout for the visitors. The Nerazzurri took the lead through Zielinski in the 39th minute with an incredible left-footed finish, set up by Lautaro. Early in the sec-

ond half, the captain scored to make it two to the good, heading in Calhanoglu’s corner. The third goal came in the 74th minute, with Thuram cleverly flicking a corner into the net. Towards the end, Matteo Lavelli, born in 2006, made his first-team debut, before Castro’s goal made it 3-1. After 17 matches, Inter remain at the top of the table with 39 points, ahead of Milan (38) and Napoli (37). – **APP**

Handshake with Indian FM Jaishankar was...

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including her son and other close relatives, emphasising the cordial nature of these interactions. In addition, he recounted the unusual moment when Indian FM Jaishankar personally approached him, introduced himself, and shook his hand, a gesture Sadiq said was “well-prepared and carefully planned.”

After Venezuela Trump...

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control of Greenland,” Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in a statement on Sunday. She called on Washington to stop “threatening its historical ally”. European leaders were rattled by Trump sending his military to attack Caracas and grab Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro, who is now being detained in New York. Meanwhile, Greenland’s leader declared “enough is enough”, and Denmark’s allies in Europe affirmed that the Arctic island’s future must be determined by its people, rebuffing renewed remarks by US President Donald Trump about acquiring the vast territory. Trump spoke a day after the US special forces captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in a stunning raid, with Trump stating that Washington intended to oversee governance of the oil-rich Latin American country. The US operation rekindled concerns in Denmark that Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory, might face a similar scenario.

PM visits Bangladesh HC for...

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Remembering the late Begum Khaleda Zia as a sincere friend of Pakistan, the prime minister noted that she had left behind an enduring and inspirational legacy. On behalf of the government and people of Pakistan, Prime Minister Shehbaz extended heartfelt condolences to Begum Zia’s family, her admirers, and the people of Bangladesh, and prayed that Almighty Allah blessed her soul with the highest place in Jannah. The prime minister was accompanied by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar and Special Assistant to the PM Tariq Fatemi.

One killed, nine injured in IED attack

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All the victims belong to Begukhel village. Rescue 1122 teams reached the site soon after the blast and shifted the injured to City Hospital, Lakki. Those in critical condition were later referred to Bannu for further treatment. The incidents occurred amid a rise in terrorism targeting law enforcement agencies in the country, particularly in the bordering provinces of KP and Balochistan, since the Afghan Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 2021. The attack comes a day after four policemen were martyred in two different incidents of firing carried out by unidentified assailants in Lakki Marwat and Bannu districts. In Lakki Marwat, unidentified motorcycle-riding terrorists opened fire on traffic police personnel in Sarai Naurang city, resulting in the martyrdom of three officers, according to a police spokesperson. The martyred officials were identified as Traffic Police In-charge Naurang Jalal Khan, Constable Aziuallah, and Constable Abdullah. The attackers managed to escape after the incident. Separately in Bannu, a police constable was martyred after unidentified individuals opened fire in the Mandan area. Police said Constable Rashid Khan came under attack while he was on his way from home to report for duty at Mandan Police Station. According to a Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) annual security report.

New “digital frontier trade” flourishes in China-Russia border city

CHANGCHUN: Amid the constant hum of scanners and the swift movements of workers, countless parcels zipped along conveyor belts at the cross-border e-commerce supervision center in Hunchun Comprehensive Bonded Zone, located in northeast China’s Jilin Province. Labels were affixed, packages sorted and trucks loaded in a seamless orchestration of activity. These parcels, destined for international delivery, were set to travel along a “digital channel” to households across Russia. Hunchun, a city in eastern Jilin that shares a border with Russia’s Primorsky Krai, has long been known for traditional frontier trade. Today, it is emerging as a dynamic hub for “digital frontier trade.” “When Russian consumers place orders on e-commerce platforms, goods from across China converge in Hunchun. After customs clearance, they are shipped directly to overseas warehouses,” explained Li Jinhai, head of e-commerce business at Hunchun Comprehensive Bonded Zone Administration. This efficient cross-border logistics network ensures that “Made in China” products reach Russian consumers faster than ever before. From January to October of 2025, cross-border e-commerce import and export volume in Hunchun Compre-

hensive Bonded Zone totaled 8.73 billion yuan (about 1.24 billion U.S. dollars), a striking year-on-year increase of 90.1 percent, cementing its role as a new engine for local foreign trade growth.

At the Northeast Asia Cross-border E-commerce Industrial Park north of this bonded zone, the Northeast Asia International Shopping Mall building stands out. Its first two floors feature exhibition and sales centers showcasing affordable daily goods from Russia, the Republic of Korea and Mongolia. The upper floors offer bright, spacious offices housing diverse businesses. “We source small appliances like humidifiers and coffee makers, consumer electronics and emerging products like 3D printers from China and sell them directly to Russian customers,” said Yan Yuchen, general manager of an e-commerce trade company, which operates stores on major Russian platforms like Ozon and Wildberries, processing around 3,000 orders monthly with annual revenue surpassing 20 million yuan as of December 2025.

Responsive customer service is key to their success. A dedicated team of young employees manages store operations and customer inquiries around the clock. “Beijing Time is five hours ahead of Moscow. To en-

sure seamless service, we have staff monitoring and responding to messages even during nighttime hours,” Yan noted, while adding that express shipping now delivers most Russian orders within 9 to 13 days.

At Vladivostok’s Far Eastern Federal University in Russia, ordering Chinese goods online has become an integral part of campus life. “We often shop on platforms like AliExpress and Ozon for everything from electronics to clothing. Recently, I bought some NBA team merchandise, and the entire experience was smooth and satisfying,” shared a student. As Chinese products reach global consumers, Russian specialties such as scallops, cod, squid, soybean oil and milk powder are increasingly finding their way into Chinese households. At Hunchun-based Jidian International Trade, a display highlights the impact of this digital border trade service platform.

“Through this online platform, residents in border areas can jointly select and purchase Russian goods, which are then processed locally,” explained Zhu Yang, the company’s general manager.

The platform facilitates remote participation and digital declarations for Chinese buyers, assists businesses in accessing

preferential border trade policies and reducing raw material costs, and delivers tangible benefits to Russian suppliers.

Notably, a series of pragmatic measures implemented in Jilin Province have accelerated the international expansion of Chinese parcels. In Hunchun, Cainiao’s dedicated logistics line to Russia ensures rapid delivery for packages weighing under 31 kg to most regions across the country.

Meanwhile, cross-border e-commerce road transport has established a “direct corridor” linking Hunchun with Vladivostok and Moscow. In Jilin’s capital city Changchun, a specialized customs channel for cross-border e-commerce exports has substantially streamlined the declaration, review and clearance processes for fragmented, small-batch shipments. In 2024, the province’s cross-border e-commerce B2B direct exports surged by 207.8 percent year on year, with more than 200 new cross-border e-commerce enterprises established.

As exemplified by the border city of Hunchun, digital frontier trade between China and Russia is advancing steadily. These “digital corridors” are increasingly serving as vital bridges, fostering higher-quality development and shared prosperity for both nations. – **APP**

Briefs

Iranians to receive monthly payment amid eco woes

TEHRAN: Iranian authorities on Sunday announced they will give a monthly allowance to every citizen in the country to alleviate economic pressure, after a week of protests. "Individuals can receive an amount equivalent to one million Tomans (approximately \$7) per person per month, which is credited to their accounts for four months," government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mo-Hajjariani told state TV. She said the amount will be given to every Iranian for four months in the form of credit that can be used to purchase certain goods and is intended to "reduce the economic pressure on the people." In Iran, which has a population of more than 85 million people, the minimum wage is roughly \$100 (85 euros) and average monthly salaries are around \$200.

Iranians mostly use mobile phones and debit cards for their daily purchases instead of cash. Iran's economy has been grappling with biting US and international sanctions over Tehran's nuclear program for years, and December saw a 52 percent year-on-year inflation rate.

The national currency has lost more than a third of its value against the US dollar over the past year, causing a sharp decrease in people's purchasing power and broad discontent in the country.—APP

At least 287 killed during Hasina-era abductions

DHAKA: A Bangladesh commission investigating disappearances during the rule of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina said Monday at least 287 people were assumed to have been killed. The commission said some corpses were believed to have been dumped in rivers, including the Buriganga in the capital, Dhaka, or buried in mass graves. The government-appointed commission, formed after Hasina was toppled by a mass uprising in August 2024, said it had investigated 1,569 cases of abductions, with 287 of the victims presumed dead. "We have identified a number of unmarked graves in several places where the bodies were presumably buried," Nur Khan Liton, a commission member, told AFP. "The commission has recommended that Bangladesh seek cooperation from forensic experts to identify the bodies and collect and preserve DNA samples from family members."

In its final report, submitted to the government on Sunday, the commission said that security forces had acted under the command of Hasina and her top officials. The report said many of those abducted had belonged to the country's largest Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, or the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), both in opposition to Hasina.—APP

Palestine, Egypt officials discuss Gaza safety, security

LONDON: Hussein Al-Sheikh, deputy president of the Palestinian Authority, discussed security and diplomatic issues during separate meetings in Cairo with Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdel Ati and Hassan Rashad, director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service. Al-Sheikh briefed Egyptian officials on the latest developments regarding the Occupied Territories, in the presence of Maj. Gen. Majed Faraj, head of the Palestinian General Intelligence Service. The discussion on Sunday also focused on strategies for achieving stability and security for the Palestinian people, and progressing to the second phase of US President Donald Trump's plan for Gaza, as reported by the Wafa news agency. Officials aim to improve coordination and consultation to tackle the challenges facing the Israel-ravaged Palestine and the wider region. Al-Sheikh might become Palestine's president in the event of a power vacuum in the Palestinian Authority, currently led by 90-year-old Mahmoud Abbas.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding SMEDA.

Market-driven research vital for export diversification: Tahir

The ICCI President reaffirmed that the Chamber is committed to promoting an enabling environment for innovation by organizing capacity-building programs, industry-academia dialogues, and policy advocacy aimed at strengthening Pakistan's export base

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has underscored that a strong research and innovation ecosystem is indispensable for enhancing market-needed quality production, improving competitiveness, and enabling Pakistani exporters to sustainably integrate into global value chains.

He expressed these views while talking to a group of young entrepreneurs who

called on him at the ICCI. The ICCI President said that in today's knowledge-driven global economy, businesses that invest in research, product development, innovation, and technology adoption are better positioned to meet evolving international standards and consumer preferences.

Sardar Tahir Mehmood emphasized that Pakistani exporters must move beyond traditional practices and focus on value addition, compliance, branding, and innovation-led production to capture new markets. "Research-based decision-making and innovation are no longer optional; they are

essential for producing goods that meet international quality benchmarks and changing market demands," he remarked.

He highlighted the need for stronger linkages between industry, academia, and research institutions to ensure that innovation is aligned with real market needs. He also called for greater involvement of young entrepreneurs in applied research, start-ups, and commercialization of innovative ideas to drive export-oriented growth.

The ICCI President reaffirmed that the Chamber is committed to promoting an enabling environment for innovation by

organizing capacity-building programs, industry-academia dialogues, and policy advocacy aimed at strengthening Pakistan's export base. He assured the young entrepreneurs that ICCI would continue to support initiatives that foster entrepreneurship, research culture, and competitiveness in the business community.

The visiting entrepreneurs appreciated ICCI's proactive role and expressed keen interest in collaborating with the Chamber to develop innovation-driven business models that can contribute to Pakistan's economic growth and export diversification.

Virtual museum preserves Sudan's plundered heritage

CAIRO: Destroyed and looted in the early months of Sudan's war, the national museum in Khartoum is now welcoming visitors virtually after months of painstaking effort to digitally recreate its collection. At the museum itself, almost nothing remains of the 100,000 artefacts it had stored since its construction in the 1950s. Only the pieces too heavy for looters to haul off, like the massive granite statue of the Kush Pharaoh Taharqa and frescoes relocated from temples during the building of the Aswan Dam, are still present on site. "The virtual museum is the only viable option to ensure continuity," government antiquities official Ikhlass Abdel Latif said during a recent presentation of the project, carried out by the French Archaeological Unit for Sudanese Antiquities (SFDAS) with support from the Louvre and Britain's Durham University. When the museum was plundered following the outbreak of the war between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023, satellite images showed trucks loaded with relics heading toward Darfur, the western region now totally controlled by the RSF. Since then, searches for the missing artefacts aided by Interpol have only yielded meagre results. "The Khartoum museum was the cornerstone of Sudanese cultural preservation — the damage is astronomical," said SFDAS researcher Faiza Drici, but "the virtual version lets us recreate the lost collections and keep a clear record." Drici worked for more than a year to reconstruct the lost holdings in a database, working from fragments of official lists, studies published by researchers and photos taken during excavation missions. Then graphic designer Marcel Perrin created a computer model that mimicked the museum's atmosphere — its architecture, its lighting and the arrangement of its displays. Online since January 1, the virtual museum now gives visitors a facsimile of the experience of walking through the institution's galleries — reconstructed from photographs and the original plans — and viewing more than 1,000 pieces inherited from the ancient Kingdom of Kush. It will take until the end of 2026, however, for the project to upload its recreation of the museum's famed "Gold Room," which had housed solid-gold royal jewelry, figurines and ceremonial objects stolen by looters.—APP

LA residents are still battling toxic hazards year after historic wildfires

ALTADENA: "DANGER: Lead Work Area" reads a sign on a front door of an Altadena home. "May damage fertility or the unborn child. Causes damage to the central nervous system. Block after block there are reminders that contaminants still linger. House cleaners, hazardous waste workers and homeowners alike come and go wearing masks, respirators, gloves and hazmat suits as they wipe, vacuum and power-wash homes that weren't burnt to ash. It's been a year of heartbreak and worry since the most destructive wildfires in the Los Angeles area's history scorched neighborhoods and displaced tens of thousands of people. Two wind-whipped blazes that ignited on Jan. 7, 2025, killed at least 31 people and destroyed nearly 17,000 structures, including homes, schools, businesses and places of worship. Rebuilding will take years. The disaster has brought another wave of trauma for people afraid of what still lurks inside their homes.—APP

Maduro's fall tests Venezuela's ruling 'club'

CARACAS: The ousting of Nicolas Maduro as Venezuela's president puts to the test his "Chavista" factions that have governed the oil-rich nation for 27 years. What happens to the so-called "club of five" powerful leftist figures, now that two of its most important members — Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores — have been captured and sent to the United States to face trial? Anointed by his mentor Hugo Chavez before the latter's death in 2013, Maduro kept a tight grip on power until his capture by US forces on Saturday. Maduro ruled alongside Flores and three other powerful figures: former vice president Delcy Rodriguez — now Venezuela's interim leader — her brother Jorge, and their rival: hard-line Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello. "It's like a club of five," a diplomatic source in Caracas told AFP under the condition of anonymity. "They can speak, they have a voice in the government, but Maduro was the one who kept the balance. Now that he's gone, who knows?" The image of Maduro handcuffed and blindfolded as US forces transported him to New York to face trial made headlines around the world. During months in the crosshairs of US President Donald Trump, who accused him of being a drug trafficker, the 63-year-old former bus driver deflected pressure by dancing to techno music at near-daily rallies, always broadcast live, as he chanted the mantra "No war, yes peace!" — in English. Frequently underestimated, Maduro managed to eliminate internal resistance and keep the opposition at bay. Murals, songs and films celebrated him, as did the animated cartoon "Super Moustache," in which he appeared as a superhero, fighting imperialism alongside "Super Cilita," who is based on Flores Toy figurines of both characters were also produced. The military swore absolute loyalty to him, led by Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez. Though defiant at first and calling for Maduro's return, Venezuela's interim leader Rodriguez called for a "balanced and respectful relationship" between the South American country and the United States on Sunday. "The top level of government has survival as its absolute priority," Antulio Rosales, political scientist and professor at York University in Canada, told AFP. Rodriguez controlled the economy and the oil industry as vice president while her brother Jorge is the speaker of parliament. They are known for their incendiary rhetoric, often mixing belligerence, irony and insults against the "enemies of the fatherland." But behind the scenes, they are skilled political operators. Jorge Rodriguez was the chief negotiator with the opposition and the United States, and his sister represented Maduro in various international forums. Experts also attribute purges within government to them, such as one that sent Tarek El Aissami, a powerful oil minister until 2023, to prison. Rodriguez took over his post shortly afterwards. Diosdado Cabello meanwhile is widely feared in Venezuela. Under his ministry, some 2,400 people were detained during protests that followed Maduro's disputed re-election in 2024, in a move that cowed the opposition.—APP

Will Lebanon remain trapped by its old fault lines in 2026?

BEIRUT: As Lebanon enters 2026, the national mood is defined less by a sense of recovery than by the daunting task of managing overlapping crises. While the past year provided the first cautious stirrings of renewal, politicians and analysts alike describe 2026 as the pivotal year that will determine if these fragile foundations can support a permanent state. For former MP Fares Saeed, the coming year is one where Lebanon must continue the deep soul-searching required to enter a true recovery phase. The year 2025 can be considered a year of rebuilding trust between the state and its citizens," he told Arab News. "Lebanon and the region are going through a transitional phase, which complicates internal solutions, and getting out of the situation we are in requires listening to the project that Pope Leo XIV brought to Lebanon to make peace. But Lebanon must first redefine its very raison d'être if it is to truly recover." Khaldoun Al-Sharif, another prominent political figure, views 2025 through the lens of regional upheaval — specifically the power vacuum left by the fall of Bashar Assad in neighboring Syria and the sustained Israeli pressure on Iranian proxies. He warns that the path to stability this year depends on two unresolved issues. "Hezbollah's disarmament and genuine reform. We saw neither this year," he told Arab News, setting a high bar for the government's performance in the months to follow. Optimism that marked the start of the previous year remains the primary fuel for the current administration. After years of paralysis, the 2025 agenda was driven by the leadership of President Joseph Aoun and the government of veteran diplomat Nawaf Salam. Their twin appointments ended the deadlock that had left Lebanon leaderless

during the 2024 war. Their administration is focused on the Aoun's inaugural pledge of "positive neutrality." Aoun enters 2026 committed to the state's monopoly on the use of force. His mandate for the year ahead is clear: "We will build a homeland and we will all be under the rule of law and the judiciary with no immunity for criminals or corrupt individuals, and no mafia, drug smuggling or money laundering." Despite the political transition, peace remains a delicate prospect. As 2026 begins, more than 70,000 residents of the south have yet to return home, haunted by the threat of resumed hostilities. The central tension of the coming year remains the enforcement of the ceasefire's key condition: disarming Hezbollah and relocating its fighters north of the Litani River. The government faces a historic implementation phase. An American-drafted roadmap calls for the group's disarmament and the removal of all illegal weapons by the end of 2025 — a deadline that has now arrived. While a compromise was reached to hand over weapons south of the Litani, 2026 will see the much more contentious task of addressing arms elsewhere. This standoff continues to strain ties with Tehran. As Iranian officials criticize the policy, Beirut must continue to insist that Iran respect Lebanon's sovereignty and refrain from interference. A significant diplomatic milestone will continue to unfold in 2026. Lebanese civilian envoys are expected to continue meeting with Israeli representatives to review ceasefire implementation. These talks, involving former ambassador Simon Karam, Israeli official Yuri Resnick, and US envoy Morgan Ortigas, have emboldened negotiators to push for broader reconciliation — an idea that will remain a sensitive third rail in Lebanese politics throughout the year. The pressure on the state is further intensified by a looming deadline: the UN Security Council has extended the mandate of UNIFIL troops only until the end of 2026, with the intention to withdraw them permanently thereafter. This gives the Lebanese Army exactly twelve months to prove it can secure the south independently. The ripple effects of the collapse of the Assad regime will continue to dominate the 2026 outlook. With regional supply routes severed, Hezbollah's isolation is expected to deepen. Simultaneously, the issue of Syrian refugees remains a priority; following the return of over 378,000 people last year, 2026 will see increased pressure to ease the refugee burden further. On the domestic front, the state's war on drugs is expected to intensify. Having targeted major networks and traffickers like Noah Zaïter in 2025, security forces must now prove they can dismantle production sites without triggering renewed internal strife with the political patrons who once protected these militias. The economic forecast for 2026 remains a point of contention. Economy Minister Amer Bisat is projecting 5 percent growth, citing a rebound in tourism and services. However, the World Bank maintains a more cautious stance, and noted economist Louis Hobeika has warned that the improvement in some sectors cannot yet be called recovery — Lebanon's economy remains hostage to politics and security. As 2026 begins, the bridges built over the last year remain fragile.—Agencies

Syria rebuilds schools, expands digital education

DAMASCUS: The Syrian Arab Republic's Ministry of Education launched a broad set of reforms in 2025 aimed at restoring the education system, rehabilitating damaged schools, and modernizing examinations as part of wider efforts to stabilize learning nationwide. The ministry prioritized rebuilding educational infrastructure, completing renovations at 1,003 schools, while another 1,015 remain under refurbishment across several provinces. Such work has enabled hundreds of thousands of students to return to classrooms. To promote broader access to education, the ministry lifted restrictions previously imposed on students who had been barred from enrollment under the previous regime of Bashar Assad. Affected students were reinstated and offered catch-up examinations. Registration procedures were simplified, including for students returning from abroad, to facilitate enrollment. The ministry also launched initiatives to support inclusive education for children with disabilities. Reforms to secondary and middle school examinations were introduced to improve transparency and administration. Measures included publishing practice materials, opening additional examination centers, and strengthening anti-cheating controls.—APP

Two dead in Israeli strike on south Lebanon

BEIRUT: Lebanon said a strike in the south killed two Sunday while Israel said it had struck a Hezbollah operative, the latest raids as Beirut seeks to disarm the Iran-backed group. Despite a year-old ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, Israel carries out regular strikes on Lebanon, usually saying it is targeting Hezbollah sites and operatives, and has maintained troops in five areas it deems strategic. Lebanon's health ministry said two people were killed in an "Israeli enemy strike that targeted a vehicle" near the town of Jmaïmeh, around 10 kilometers (six miles) from the border. An Israeli military statement said that "in response to Hezbollah's continued violations of the ceasefire understandings," it had struck an operative from the militant group in the area. Under heavy US pressure and fears of expanded Israeli strikes, Beirut has committed to disarming Hezbollah, which was badly weakened after more than a year of hostilities with Israel including two months of open war that ended with the November 2024 ceasefire. Lebanon's army was expected to complete the disarmament south of the Litani River — about 30 kilometers from the border with Israel — by the end of 2025, before tackling the rest of the country.—APP

At least 25 dead, 14 missing after boat capsizes in Nigeria

ABUJA: A passenger boat capsized in northern Nigeria's Yobe state, leaving at least 25 people dead while 14 others remained missing, emergency services. The boat was carrying residents who had gone to the local market as well as some who were involved in fishing or farming when it capsized along the Yobe River in Yobe state's Garbi town on Saturday night, the Yobe emergency management agency said. Out of the 52 passengers on board the boat, 13 were rescued and are receiving medical assistance, the agency said in a statement. "Search and rescue operations are ongoing, with security agencies, emergency responders, and local community volunteers working tirelessly to locate the missing passengers and recover bodies," the agency added.—APP

Briefs

Two killed
in series
of Russian
attacks on
Ukraine

KYIV: Russia bombarded Ukraine early Monday, killing two people in the Kyiv region, authorities said on the eve of a diplomatic summit in France. A countrywide siren was issued just after midnight, while Ukraine's military said air defences were operating in several places. In the capital, a private medical facility caught fire as a result of the Russian strikes, killing one person and wounding three others, the State Emergency Service of Kyiv said. It released images of rescuers removing people on stretchers from a gutted building. Another pre-dawn attack on the neighbouring city of Fastiv killed one man in his 70s, according to Kyiv regional governor Mykola Kalashnyk. The strikes caused power outages in the area, with backup systems activated to maintain water and heating supplies, the official said, as temperatures dropped to -8C. The attacks came on the eve of a meeting of European leaders in Paris as they seek a breakthrough on a peace plan Kyiv says is "90 percent" ready. To lay the groundwork, security advisers from 15 countries, including Britain, France and Germany as well as representatives from NATO and the European Union, gathered in Kyiv over the weekend. US special envoy Steve Witkoff joined the talks virtually, a Ukrainian official told AFP, though the United States' large-scale military attack on Venezuela earlier in the day overshadowed proceedings. Another preparatory meeting, between chiefs of staff, is scheduled for Monday. Diplomatic efforts to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II have gained pace in recent weeks, though both Moscow and Kyiv remain at odds over the key issue of territory in a post-war settlement. — APP

Swiss grieve
as all fire
victims
identified

CRANS MONTANA: All 40 people who perished in a New Year's fire at a Swiss ski resort bar were identified Sunday, with half of them under the age of 18. A heavy pall of grief hung over Crans-Montana as more than a thousand mourners walked in silence through the resort to remember those killed and injured in the tragic blaze at the Le Constellation bar. After days of agonising uncertainty for loved ones, local police on Sunday finished identifying the fire's 40 fatalities. Their ages ranged from 39 to two who were aged just 14. Police said the victims included 21 Swiss nationals, nine French nationals, including one Franco-Swiss and one triple national of France and Britain, six Italians, including one Italian-Emirati, one Belgian woman, one Portuguese woman, one Romanian man and one Turkish man. The bar's owners are under criminal investigation. — APP

Naqvi witnesses live demos by
Shanghai Special Police Force

Mohsin Naqvi witnessed live demonstrations showcasing the professional skills and training of the Special Police Force, including a martial arts performance by the Shanghai Special Police Force personnel

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi has arrived in Shanghai in the first phase of his visit to China. During his visit, he toured the Shanghai Special Police Force Bureau, where he was received by the Chief of the Commanding Center of the Special Police Force Bureau, Xu. The Interior Minister was given a detailed briefing on the Shanghai Special Police Force Bureau. He observed the Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs), bomb disposal unit equipment, and modern weapons being used by the force. He also inspected the latest water cannons and other advanced equipment.

Mohsin Naqvi witnessed live demonstrations showcasing the professional skills and training of the Special Police Force, including a martial arts performance by the Shanghai Special Police Force personnel. Appreciating the modern and advanced systems of the Shanghai Special Police Force, Mohsin Naqvi stated that mutual cooperation between the Shanghai Special Police Force and the Islamabad Police Force would be further strengthened.



ened. He said that the high standard of training of the Shanghai Special Police Force is commendable. Federal Secretary Interior Muhammad Khurram Agha, Inspector General Islamabad Police Ali Nasir Rizvi, and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa were also accompanying the Interior Minister.

Cold weather
to grip country
till February

ISLAMABAD: Director of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Muhammad Irfan Virk, on Monday said that prolonged dry and chilly conditions, along with dense fog in some areas, will prevail until February, without any predictions of rain or snowfall. Talking to a private news channel, the PMD Director said that cold weather is expected to grip Pakistan until February, with no rain or snowfall in sight and that northern areas will not receive any more snowfall. He added that Punjab and other regions will continue to experience foggy conditions and low temperatures until February. Responding to a query, he said the current spell of snowfall has now ended, but the cold will persist, and temperatures will remain low. He said cold and dry weather is expected to continue across most parts of the country, with severe cold conditions forecast for hilly areas during the early morning and nighttime hours. Responding to a query, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) director said that dense to moderate fog is likely to reduce visibility in several plain areas, particularly in Punjab, Upper Sindh, and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and may potentially disrupt travel during early morning and late-night hours. — APP

NA speaker says opposition
has not made formal
contact for initiating talks

“The constitutional process for the appointment of the next opposition leader will be initiated in the next parliamentary session,” Sadiq said. He added that the process will move forward “after checking and verification of the signatures of the opposition members”

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said on Monday that the opposition had not yet made formal contact for initiating talks with the government. He made the remarks while speaking to the media, according to a handout issued by the NA Secretariat. It quoted him as saying that the “opposition had not yet made any formal contact to initiate a dialogue”. “My role in the talks is only that of a facilitator,” he said. Sadiq further stated that the committee system in the lower house of Parliament was fully functional as per constitutional requirements, adding that he was “completely independent” in his position. On the topic of the appointment of the NA opposition leader, Sadiq said that four letters had been sent to the opposition's chief whip in this regard. He said that after the fourth letter, the opposi-

tion had submitted a certified copy of their decision. “The constitutional process for the appointment of the next opposition leader will be initiated in the next parliamentary session,” Sadiq said. He added that the process will move forward “after checking and verification of the signatures of the opposition members”. Last month, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had reiterated his offer for talks with the opposition but also emphasised that dialogue between the two sides could only proceed on “legitimate matters”. Subsequently, at a recent national conference organised by the Tehreek-i-Tahafuz-i-Ayin-i-Pakistan (TTAP) opposition alliance, participants had agreed that the door for dialogue must never be closed in a democracy. The same day, political leaders from across the spectrum, including stalwarts from the ruling PML-N, called for dialogue and restraint to achieve stability in the country, saying that political confrontation was causing instability and violence.

KP CM wants
lawyers to
stand up for
judiciary

BREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Monday called on lawyers in Islamabad to stand up for an independent judiciary as he continued his efforts to rally support for the PTI's street movement. The KP CM made the remarks while addressing the legal fraternity at an event organised by the Islamabad Bar Association. After completing a three-day visit to Lahore, Afridi has announced Karachi as his next destination. “If you do not stand up for the supremacy of the Constitution and the law and for an independent judiciary, then future generations will spit on us and you as well,” Afridi said. He urged them to announce a lawyers' movement, adding that the youth will support them. “Long live resistance,” the chief minister said. “You must support the PTI founder [Imran Khan] against oppression and barbarity. Whose conscience is even one per cent alive will stand against the 26th and 27th Constitutional Amendments, as well as unfair trials — whether of journalists or politicians — and will demand the release of all political workers



who are wrongfully in jail,” Afridi said. CM Afridi also stressed that Imran did not seek his release, but rather a fair trial. “A convicted person was received at the airport,” the PTI leader said, apparently referring to ex-premier Nawaz Sharif landing in Islamabad after he returned to Pakistan in October 2023. During his address, Afridi also praised Advocate Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir, who was among the audience.

“Imaan Mazari has created a new history of resistance. The youth receive encouragement from her,” Afridi said. He also mentioned that some journalists were recently sentenced after their “trials in absentia”. “Arshad Sharif had to leave his country to save his life because he was not getting justice and security here, but he was not spared even abroad,” the KP CM said, referring to the journalist being shot dead in Kenya on Oct 23, 2022. Afridi cautioned the lawyers that while the PTI was facing “oppression and fascism today”, it could be their turn tomorrow. “You will not be able to tolerate what the PTI has,” he said. Afridi once again lamented that he was repeatedly being denied a meeting with Imran, who is incarcerated at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail. “Three judges [of the IHC] issued orders for [my] meeting with the PTI founder, but the Adiala jail's superintendent threw that directive in the trash,” the KP CM said. He said that Imran was “fighting our war in jail”, adding that “those who took cars from the Toshakhana were the rulers and the person who took items legally was in prison”.

Dar for peaceful
resolution of
Kashmir dispute

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday called upon the international community, particularly the United Nations, to honour its long-standing commitment with the Kashmiri people and play its mandated role in ensuring a just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute. In his message on the occasion of Right to Self-Determination Day, the deputy PM said that this day commemorated the landmark adoption of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) resolution on January 5, 1949, a pivotal document that formally guaranteed a free and impartial plebiscite for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. “On this “Right to Self-Determination Day”, the Government and people of Pakistan stand in unwavering solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). We express our solemn commitment to their just struggle to achieve the inalienable right to self-determination.” Ishaq Dar said this commitment was enshrined through multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, and is reaffirmed annually by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolutions upholding the right to self-determination. The international law, he said recognized the right to self-determination as a cornerstone principle enshrined in the UN Charter. However, the people of IIOJK have been denied this right by India for over seven decades. “The illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir by India stands as a stark tragedy of our times as the people of IIOJK continue to endure systematic repression, widespread human rights violations and denial of their fundamental rights and dignity.” — DNA

Iran protests: officials
allege foreign involvement

DNA

TEHRAN: In recent weeks, Iran has witnessed a wave of protests triggered by the sharp rise in the exchange rate, which placed heavy pressure on shopkeepers and guilds across the country. The demonstrations began as lawful gatherings organized by trade associations, demanding government action to stabilize the economy. Authorities quickly acknowledged the grievances and initiated talks with representatives of the guilds, with the President himself playing a central role in negotiations. These discussions led to agreements that addressed many of the protesters' concerns, prompting the main groups of shopkeepers to officially announce the conclusion of their demonstrations. While the lawful protests were winding down, scattered unrest emerged in smaller towns. Officials claim that foreign actors, particularly the United States and Israel, sought to exploit the situation by inciting unrest through cyberspace and public statements of support. According to Iranian authorities, some of those arrested confessed to receiving money from abroad in exchange for partici-

ipating in illegal activities. Security forces responded swiftly to these incidents, dispersing small clusters of demonstrators and restoring order in affected areas. Internet connectivity, which had been disrupted during the height of the protests, has largely been restored nationwide, though some temporary reductions in speed remain due to ongoing security and cybersecurity considerations. Calm has returned to several cities under the supervision of law enforcement agencies, and officials credit the responsible conduct of lawful protesters for preventing escalation. Their commitment to respecting legal frameworks, authorities argue, played a crucial role in containing unrest and stabilizing the situation. Despite these developments, tensions remain. Reports of fatalities in clashes between protesters and security forces have raised concerns about the potential for renewed unrest. The government continues to emphasize dialogue with trade guilds as a path to stability, while warning that foreign interference poses an ongoing threat to national security. Would you like me to expand this into a chronological timeline of events so the progression of protests and government responses becomes clearer?

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