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Marco Rubio says US wants to buy Greenland area

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Govt to launch detailed policy to end polio

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Pakistan may not need IMF after 6 months

Detailed News On Page-08



## Briefs

UN slams Israel over West Bank 'apartheid'

### NEWS DESK

THE United Nations said decades-long discrimination and segregation of Palestinians by Israel in the West Bank were intensifying, and called on the country to end its "apartheid system". In a new report, the UN rights office said "systematic discrimination" against Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territories had "drastically deteriorated" in recent years. "There is a systematic asphyxiation of the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank," UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement. "Whether accessing water, school, rushing to hospital, visiting family or friends, or harvesting olives - every aspect of life for Palestinians in the West Bank is controlled and curtailed by Israel's discriminatory laws, policies and practices," he added. "This is a particularly severe form of racial discrimination and segregation, that resembles the kind of apartheid system we have seen before." A number of independent experts affiliated with the UN have described the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as "apartheid" but this marks the first time a UN rights chief has applied the term.

Plea filed to summon DGISPR as witness

### NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Lawyer and rights activist Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband, Hadi Ali Chattha, submitted an application in an Islamabad court on Wednesday seeking to summon DG ISPR as a witness in a case registered against them over their social media posts. In the case, registered with the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 (Peca), Mazari and Chattha have been accused of inciting divisions on linguistic grounds through social media posts and creating the impression that the armed forces were engaged in terrorism within the country. On Wednesday, the two submitted a written application to Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka during the hearing of the case, referring to a press conference addressed by the military spokesperson on January 6.

Farhan powers Pak to win over Sri Lanka

### SPORTS DESK

COLOMBO: Opener Saibzada Farhan scored a half-century as Pakistan registered a comfortable win over Sri Lanka in the first game of the three-match T20I series at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium on Wednesday. Earlier, Salman Mirza and Abrar Ahmed took three wickets each as Pakistan bowled out Sri Lanka for 128 in the first game. Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha's decision to field first bore fruit as his team's bowling unit skittled the home side to 128 in 19.2 overs. Sri Lanka got off to a shaky start to their innings as they lost both their openers, Kamil Mishara (zero) and Pathum Nissanka, inside the batting powerplay with just 15 runs on the board.

Mohsin Naqvi says

# Special unit for Chinese protection on the anvil

Pakistan, China agree to deepen security cooperation in high-level Beijing meeting

### CENTRELINE REPORT

BEIJING: The government has announced enhanced security measures for Chinese citizens and joint development projects, including the establishment of a dedicated protection unit in Islamabad, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said on Wednesday during a visit to China's Ministry of Public Security. Naqvi made the remarks while meeting his Chinese counterpart, Wang Xiaohong, at the ministry's headquarters, where he was warmly received by senior Chinese officials. The two sides held an extensive three-and-a-half-hour meeting covering bilateral relations, counterterrorism cooperation, police training exchanges and coordination in areas of mutual interest. Both countries agreed to strengthen institutional mechanisms and enhance operational coordination. According to officials, Pakistan and China reached consensus on convening a Joint Working Group meeting every three months, while the interior ministers of both countries will meet annually. The ministers underlined the need for closer coordination to further deepen bilateral cooperation.

Chinese Interior Minister Wang Xiaohong expressed satisfaction with the country's security arrangements for Chinese nationals and development projects, and thanked Naqvi and his team for their efforts. He praised the performance in internal security and counterterrorism. Wang said China highly valued country's sacrifices in the fight against terrorism and held them in great respect. Both sides agreed to make joint and rapid-response mechanisms against terrorism and crime more effective, while expanding the scope of police training and exchange programmes. The two ministers also discussed Islamabad-Beijing sister-city cooperation and agreed to develop a joint strategy to enhance training and professional capacity of police and security personnel. Naqvi emphasised the importance of sharing expertise and information through training initiatives, and briefed the Chinese side on Pakistan's enhanced security measures for Chinese nationals, describing their protection as a "top priority". He welcomed Chinese cooperation to curb cybercrimes and said Pakistan was seeking support from Chinese institutions to strengthen

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Aleema, others end sit-in outside jail

## Imran Khan meets Bushra in Adiala jail

Jail sources say couple's meeting lasts for 45 minutes in Rawalpindi prison's conference room

### FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan met his wife Bushra Bibi at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail, sources said on Wednesday. During the 45-minute meeting held in the conference room, as per the jail sources, the couple inquired about each other's health. The meeting between Bushra Bibi and PTI founder is held as per prison rules, and they had also met last week, they added. The jail administration received some essential items, including blankets, warm clothes, fruits, and dates, from Bushra's lawyer on Tuesday. The meeting comes as the couple is incarcerated in Adiala jail owing to their involvement in various cases. The former prime minister has been behind bars since August 2023 in several cases, ranging from corruption to terrorism. The jailed PTI founder has denied wrongdoing in all the cases, which his party says are politically motivated. Last month, the duo were sentenced to 17 years'

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Sanaullah warns: PTI protest doomed, governor's rule possible

### FAIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: PM's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday expressed concern over the PTI's stance, warning that the federal government had the constitutional authority to impose governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and that continued confrontation by the PTI founder would invite serious consequences, while dismissing the party's planned protest as bound to fail. While speaking to a local news channel, Rana Sanaullah hailed the DG ISPR's press conference the

Continued on Page 06

## France to act on US Greenland threat

### NEWS DESK

PARIS: France is working with partners on a plan over how to respond should the United States act on its threat to take over Greenland, Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said on Wednesday. Barrot said the subject would be raised at his meeting with the foreign ministers of Germany and Poland later in the day. The White House said on Tuesday that President Donald Trump is discussing options for acquiring Greenland, including potential use of the US military, in a revival of his ambition to control the strategic island despite European objections.

PTI pushes back against criticism of party policies

### NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The PTI has pushed back against criticism of its party leadership and policies, terming such remarks "regrettable". In a statement posted on the social media platform X late on Tuesday, the party referred to the military spokesperson's latest press conference. It said that it was "regrettable" that the party, its leadership and an elected provincial government were subjected to such criticism. The PTI maintained that consistent criticism "not only escalates political temperatures but also raises

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5 killed as bus plunges into ravine

### STAFF REPORT

CHAKWAL: Five people were killed while 24 others were injured as a passenger bus carrying them fell into a ravine near Talagang, Rescue 1122 said on Wednesday. According to rescue officials, the incident occurred at around 2:15am early on Wednesday. Chakwal Rescue 1122 spokesperson Qazi Muhammad Akram said the passenger bus was on its way from Rawalpindi to Bahawalpur. As the motorway was closed due to fog, the driver opted for an alternative route and used the Talagang-Fatehjang Road, he said.

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BEIJING: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Xiaohong, at the ministry's headquarters. - DNA

National reconciliation

# Ex-PTI leaders moot urges govt to enter dialogue

Acting as "bridge" between rivals, National Dialogue Committee proposes president, PM, Nawaz lead govt's side in talks

### SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A national conference convened by the National Dialogue Committee (NDC) has urged the government's top leadership to step forward and engage directly in a structured political dialogue with the opposition in an effort to ease political tensions and stabilise the country's democratic and economic landscape. The call came during a representative national gathering convened by the NDC in Islamabad on Wednesday, attended by leaders of major political parties, intellectuals, journalists, lawyers and other stakeholders associated with Pakistan's political and democratic system. The National Dialogue Committee was recently formed by former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders,

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Afridi urges inclusion of KP govt in policy making

### SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Wednesday called for the inclusion of the provincial government in the formulation of counter-terrorism policies. Addressing a convocation at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University in Peshawar, CM Afridi said: "If [you] really want to eliminate terrorism, then come and formulate the policy with us." His remarks came a day after Inter-Services

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## Indonesia threatens to ban Musk's Grok AI

A preliminary investigation found that Grok "does not yet have explicit and adequate regulations to prevent the production and distribution of pornographic content based on real photos" of Indonesian citizens

### NEWS DESK

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Communications Ministry threatened on Wednesday to ban Elon Musk's X and its artificial intelligence chatbot Grok after degrading pictures of women and children generated without consent surged on the social media platform. Grok has been complying with requests from X users to modify images of real women and children stripped to their

underwear, creating a viral trend that has sparked concerns across the globe. A preliminary investigation found that Grok "does not yet have explicit and adequate regulations to prevent the production and distribution of pornographic content based on real photos" of Indonesian citizens," Indonesia's Ministry of Communications and Digital Affairs said in a statement. Indonesia has strict laws against the

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# Greenland, Venezuela, and the global backlash

By acting aggressively in Venezuela, Washington may have opened the door for Moscow and Beijing to justify similar moves elsewhere

### EDITORIAL

#### ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

THE desire of President Donald Trump to expand America's territorial reach has once again stirred controversy on the global stage. His reported interest in acquiring Greenland, coupled with the United States' aggressive stance in Venezuela, has raised alarms not only among adversaries but also among allies. While such moves may be framed as serving U.S. national interests, the broader international reaction suggests that coercive expansionist policies are unlikely to yield long-term benefits and may instead isolate Washington further. Trump's desire to take over Greenland, a vast Arctic territory managed by Denmark, reflects a continuation of his expansionist vision. Greenland's strategic location, rich natural resources, and potential military significance make it attractive to Washington. However, the idea of purchasing or annexing Greenland has been met with sharp resistance from Denmark and the European Union. European leaders have already issued warnings, signaling that any attempt to undermine Denmark's sovereignty would provoke a strong and unified response. Unlike Venezuela, where even close allies of Caracas turned a blind eye to U.S. actions, Europe is unlikely to remain passive. Greenland is not just a remote territory; it is part of the European sphere of influence. Any coercive attempt to acquire it would be

seen as a direct challenge to European sovereignty and international law. Thus, while Trump may view Greenland as a prize for U.S. national security, the backlash from Europe could be far more severe than anything witnessed in Latin America. The U.S. approach to Venezuela has already been slammed by much of the international community. Washington's charges against President Nicolás Maduro may have been justified in terms of corruption and human rights abuses, but the method of attempting to delegitimise and replace a sitting president was widely criticized. The principle of sovereignty remains central in global politics, and America's intervention was seen as undermining that principle. Even U.S. allies expressed discomfort with the strategy. Critics argued that while Maduro's governance was deeply flawed, the way to bring change was through democratic processes, not external coercion. The Venezuelan case highlighted the dangers of using forceful means to achieve political ends. It reinforced the perception that Washington was willing to bypass international norms to pursue its interests, a perception that has damaged America's credibility. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the Venezuelan crisis was the muted response of China and Russia, both traditionally close friends of Caracas. Their silence puzzled many observers, but it may be explained by broader geopolitical calculations. Analysts suggest that part of the tacit deal could involve Russia being allowed to consolidate its hold over

parts of Ukraine, while China may be given leeway to pursue its ambitions in Taiwan. If true, this would represent a dangerous precedent: great powers trading silence on one issue for concessions on another. Such geopolitical bargaining underscores the fragility of international norms. It also reveals the risks of unilateral U.S. actions, which may inadvertently encourage other powers to pursue their own expansionist agendas. By acting aggressively in Venezuela, Washington may have opened the door for Moscow and Beijing to justify similar moves elsewhere. Trump's expansionist designs, whether in Greenland or Venezuela, reflect a broader pattern of coercive policy. During his previous tenure, the United States often found itself isolated on the global stage. Critics famously remarked that with Trump at the helm, America did not need enemies—his policies alienated allies and emboldened rivals. The pursuit of short-term gains through coercion undermined long-term strategic interests, leaving Washington with fewer friends and more adversaries. The Greenland issue threatens to repeat this pattern. While Venezuela exposed America's willingness to intervene in Latin America, Greenland risks alienating Europe, a region critical to U.S. alliances. The difference is stark: in Venezuela, allies largely turned a blind eye; in Europe, resistance will be stiff and unified. Trump's steps may be justified domestically as serving national interest, but globally they are unwelcome and potentially destabilizing.

The policy of coercion may provide immediate benefits—control over resources, strategic territories, or political influence. Yet history shows that such gains are often temporary and come at the cost of long-term stability. Coercive expansion breeds resentment, resistance, and isolation. It undermines trust in international institutions and erodes America's moral authority. If Washington continues down this path, it risks not only alienating allies but also encouraging adversaries to pursue their own aggressive ambitions. The silence of China and Russia over Venezuela should serve as a warning: coercive policies do not exist in a vacuum. They create openings for other powers to exploit, often in ways detrimental to U.S. interests. Trump's ambitions in Greenland and his actions in Venezuela highlight the dangers of expansionist thinking in the modern world. While such moves may be framed as serving U.S. national interests, they are unlikely to be welcomed internationally. The backlash from Europe over Greenland and the criticism of U.S. intervention in Venezuela demonstrate that coercive policies isolate America rather than strengthen it. The United States must abandon the policy of coercive means. Sustainable influence comes not from force but from cooperation, diplomacy, and respect for sovereignty. Short-term gains achieved through expansion may backfire, leaving Washington weaker in the long run. In a world where alliances and credibility matter more than ever, America cannot afford to pursue policies that alienate friends and embolden rivals.



## Several injured as vehicles collide due to dense fog in Mardan

PESHAWAR: Several passengers including women and children were critically injured when a coaster collided with a truck on Mardan Road near Katlang due to dense fog on Wednesday. Police said, the accident took place at Gulbahar Stop where a truck collided head-on with a coaster during dense foggy condition. As a result, the coaster driver and multiple passengers sustained severe injuries. Several women and children were reported to be unconscious and were immediately shifted to the hospital. The coaster driver, along with a woman and a child were referred from Mardan to Peshawar for advanced medical treatment, while other injured passengers are receiving treatment at local hospitals. Authorities stated that poor visibility caused by heavy fog was the main reason behind the accident. Rescue teams and traffic police promptly reached the scene and carried out relief operations. Further assistance and investigation by traffic police are ongoing. The injured have been identified as 29-year-old Hazrat Nabi, 45-year-old Ihsan (mother), 35-year-old Amjad, 40-year-old Junaid, 6-year-old Ayesha, 33-year-old unidentified woman, 34-year-old Manzoor, 35-year-old Salman, 35-year-old Waseem and 46-year-old Arshad. —APP

## Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD :The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.06 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 280.07. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.75 and Rs 282.3, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.46 to close at Rs 327.16 from the previous day's close of Rs 328.62, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.78, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 2.06 and closed at Rs 377.80 compared to the previous day's Rs 379.86. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 76.24, and the Saudi Riyal remained stagnant at Rs 74.67. —APP

## Gold price falls by Rs 1,200 per tola

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices declined in the local market on Wednesday, as the price of 24-karat gold per tola fell by Rs 1,200 to settle at Rs 466,762, while the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold dropped by Rs 1,028 to Rs 400,173, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Likewise, the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold decreased by Rs 942 to Rs 366,838, whereas silver prices remained unchanged, with 24-karat silver per tola and 10 grams of silver stand at Rs 8,361 and Rs 7,168, respectively. In the international market, gold prices decreased by \$12 to \$4,444 per ounce, while silver remained stagnant at \$78.86 per ounce, the association reported. —APP

# Raids conducted in Fateh Jang during crackdown on profiteers

DNA

FATEH JANG: Tehsildar and Price Control Magistrate Fateh Jang Chaudhry Shafqat Mahmood conducted surprise raids on hotels, bakeries, medical stores, vegetable and fruit shops in different areas of Fateh Jang around Rawalpindi Road, Khor Road and Kohat Road. During the operation, expired medicines, spoiled vegetables and fruits and substandard food items were recovered and destroyed on the spot. During the operation, a medical store was sealed along with a heavy fine, while shopkeepers who violated the rules were also imposed heavy fines. Strict notice was taken for keeping expired medicines and incomplete records at medical stores, while legal action was taken against poor cleanliness and sale of substandard items in hotels and bakeries. According to details, Tehsildar and Price Control Magistrate Chaudhry Shafqat Mahmood checked various medical stores, shops, hotels and bakeries in Fateh Jang city. During the checking, a medical store in which expired medicines were being sold was sealed along with heavy fines, while various hotels, bakeries, vegetable and fruit shops were also checked. Substandard items were destroyed on the spot and heavy fines were also imposed. Tehsildar and Price Control Magistrate Chaudhry Shafqat Mahmood has made it clear that poor cleanliness, sale of substandard and unhealthy food and goods and sale of expired medicines will not be tolerated under any circumstances and no concession will be made against those who play with the health of the public. He public paid tribute to the efforts of Tehsildar and Price Control Magistrate Chaudhry Shafqat Mahmood and termed his steps as a source of relief for the citizens. Locals say that such actions will play an important role in improving cleanliness and order in the city.



## 3,000 new wheat lines enter field trials in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has moved around 3,000 newly developed wheat lines into field evaluation after accelerating early-stage breeding through a speed breeding facility Dr Zahid Mahmood, Program Leader of Wheat Program at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), told Wealth Pakistan that the wheat lines have been developed since the launch of the facility in 2022 and are now undergoing field evaluation. "These wheat lines were developed using controlled-environment speed breeding techniques," he said, adding that the facility allows scientists to significantly reduce the time required for early-stage variety development. Dr Zahid explained that under conventional breeding methods, developing a wheat variety takes between 12 and 15 years because eight generations must be completed in open-field conditions. "With this controlled environment, we can complete a generation in just two months and develop a new variety within seven to eight years." —APP

# Migrant entries into Spain drop over 40% in 2025

MADRID: Migrant arrivals to Spain fell by over 40 percent in 2025, largely due to a sharp drop in arrivals along the perilous Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, official figures showed. Friday Spain is one of the main entry points for people seeking a better life in Europe, and the country has faced pressure from European Union partners to curb irregular migration. The interior ministry said 36,775 migrants entered Spain irregularly last year, the vast majority by sea, declining by 42.6 percent from 64,019 in 2024. Arrivals to the Canary Islands dropped 62 percent to 17,788 in 2025, while arrivals in the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean — mainly from Algeria — rose 24.5 percent to 7,321. Despite the overall decline, migrant deaths remained high. Spanish NGO Caminando Fronteras said Monday that over 3,000 people died while trying to reach Spain in 2025,

including 437 minors. The group compiles its figures from families of migrants and official statistics of those rescued. The drop in arrivals to the Canaries follows improved relations between Spain and Morocco, where many of the boats headed for the archipelago originate, since Madrid in 2022 backed Rabat's autonomy plan for the disputed Western Sahara territory. Both countries have increased maritime surveillance, intelligence sharing and crackdowns on smuggling networks, with Morocco intensifying coastal patrols. Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska has called for "prevention at the source" to reduce irregular migration. He has credited Spain's cooperation with Mauritania and other African countries for the decline in arrivals to the Canaries. "We can only reduce irregular migration by establishing comprehensive al-

liances based on trust and mutual benefit," he said at a November meeting in Malta with EU interior and migration officials. EU border agency Frontex has also cited stricter preventive measures in departure countries, particularly Mauritania, as a key factor in the drop in migrant arrivals in the Canaries. In 2024, Mauritania signed a pact with the EU aimed at curbing dangerous maritime crossings in exchange for 210 million euros (\$246 million) in funding. Human rights groups, however, argue that such agreements can encourage abuse. Human Rights Watch accused Mauritanian authorities in an August report of systematic abuses of migrants, including rape, torture and extortion at the hands of border personnel. It said the violations worsened after Mauritania signed the migration pact with the EU. Mauritania has rejected the accusations. —APP

## Progress on waste-to-value phase reviewed

LAHORE: During a meeting, chaired by Local Government Minister Zeeshan Rafique at the Civil Secretariat, the administrative matters of Suthra Punjab Authority and progress on waste-to-value phase were reviewed. Deliberations were also made on the Suthra Punjab Authority Bill. Secretary Local Government Shakeel Ahmed Mian, Special Secretary Arshad Baig and Additional Secretary Quratul Ain were also present, while Director General Suthra Punjab Authority Babar Sahib Din participated through video link. It was decided to run an effective awareness campaign to increase mass participation in sanitation arrangements. Minister Zeeshan Rafique observed that the start of double shift cleaning at commercial places has yielded good results. He said that it is not possible to clean commercial markets all the time. "For this, traders should cooperate with the Suthra Punjab Authority", he appealed. Zeeshan Rafique warned that fines will be imposed for spreading garbage after collecting waste on scheduled time". —APP

## KP govt finalises Rs 1t for merged districts uplift

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi on Wednesday chaired a meeting to finalise a comprehensive development package for the merged districts. According to the CM House spokesperson, the Rs1 trillion package, titled "Roshan Qabail" (Bright Tribes), will focus on investment across six thematic areas aimed at ensuring sustainable economic development of the merged districts. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Minister said

the package prioritises infrastructure development, human resource capacity building, and employment generation. He directed that the establishment of a Tribes Medical College, an Institute of Modern Sciences, and Digital Cities be included in the package. He also ordered the establishment of District Headquarters (DHQ) and Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) hospitals in areas where such facilities are currently unavailable. The CM further directed that

one sports complex be established in each merged district and a sports ground in every tehsil. He instructed that markets, as well as entry and exit points of the merged districts, be brought under the Safe City project, and that schools, health facilities, and markets be shifted to solar energy. He also directed the establishment of orphanages and shelters in every tehsil, along with the setting up of Rescue 1122 stations across all tehsils in the merged districts. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Two distinguished guests: the legendary Pakistani field hockey players Rana Mujahid Ali Khan, Secretary General of the Pakistan Hockey Federation, and Shahbaz Ahmed Senior, famously known as the "Maradona of Hockey" presenting souvenir to ambassador of Turkey Dr Irfan Neziroglu.

# FBR holds awareness seminar at GCCI to promote tax compliance

ISLAMABAD: Pursuing the Prime Minister of Pakistan's vision to broaden the tax base, the Federal Board of Revenue held a seminar at the Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) to inform the business community of key reforms and measures aimed at broadening the tax base, enhancing voluntary compliance, strengthening transparency and accountability across Pakistan's revenue administration. The seminar was organized by the Taxpayer's Services (TPS) Wing of the FBR under the supervision of Member TPS Tehmina Aamer, the FBR team comprised Muhammad Muti-ur-Rehman Mumtaz, Secretary Taxpayers' Education and Facilitation and Abdul Rehman Sheikh, Second Secretary Facilitation, said a news release. The seminar was attended by a large number of traders, industrialists and members of the business community. Senior Vice President Saad Jamil, Vice President Faisal Sattar Mughal along with chairpersons of various standing committees and executive members of the Chamber also attended the event. During the session, the FBR officials delivered a comprehensive presentation on reforms introduced under the FBR Transformation Plan. He highlighted major initiatives including Point of Sale (POS) Integration, Track and Trace System, Digital Invoicing, Faceless Customs System, Cargo Tracking System, Direct Port Delivery System, Reward & Rating System, and Video Analytics for production monitoring in different sectors. He informed the participants that video analytics has already been deployed in the sugar and cement sectors and is currently being implemented in the textile sector. The presentation highlighted that the integrated implementation of these reforms have contributed to improved tax compliance, increased tax-to-GDP ratio, and reinforced transparency and accountability within the revenue framework. This was followed by an interactive Question & Answer session, during which members of the business community raised various queries regarding tax facilitation and compliance. The FBR team addressed the questions comprehensively and provided necessary guidance. The seminar concluded with the presentation of souvenirs and giveaways by FBR to the office bearers and executive members of GCCI as a gesture of appreciation and collaboration. The event reaffirmed FBR's commitment to sustained engagement with the business community and its resolve to build a transparent, accountable, efficient and facilitative tax system for betterment of national economy. DNA

# Solution to all issues lies in unity, harmony: Khel Das

KARACHI :Minister of State for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Khel Das Kohistani on Wednesday said that the solution to all the issues facing our society today lies solely in unity and harmony and the current government is taking practical steps in this regard. He was addressing as a chief guest in the Conference on Interfaith Harmony & Strategy for mutual understanding between religions at Holy Trinity Cathedral Church. Khel Das Kohistani said that our Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony led by Sardar Muhammad Yousuf, who is a senior politician and has previously served in this ministry. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony is taking steps for welfare of minorities and promotion of interfaith harmony, he said. He said that it is an honor for him to be present here in Sindh, which is also his province, and to see the esteemed scholars and representatives of different religions and faiths gathered here and he has had the opportunity to listen to everyone's perspectives and ideas, and he has taken notes. He said that we are striving and will ensure the protection of minorities' rights and the promotion of tolerance

and interfaith harmony. The government has also allocated annual funds to bring minorities into the mainstream, he said. He was of the view that when there is unity among all religions, we will not need to hold such conferences. Understanding each other's religions and their teachings will help us live with respect and dignity, he added. He said that the current government and the Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs fully support minorities in celebrating their festivals. The state stands on the principles laid down by Quaid-e-Azam three days before the 14th of August 1947. He said that the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Punjab Chief Minister and Sindh Chief Minister of have also celebrated minority festivals, sending the message to the world that we all stand with minorities and will protect their rights. He said that no religion supports terrorism and such conferences should be held at the international level to tell the world how much Pakistan is striving to promote religious harmony. He said that the world should see that Pakistan itself is a victim of terrorism, is living in peace, and is striving to promote peace. He said that India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is today's

Ravan, whose arrogance has been shattered by our Pakistani armed forces. Special Assistant to the Sindh Chief Minister, Dr. Sham Sunder Advani, said that we all live together in harmony and love in this Pakistan of Quaid-e-Azam. Every religion has its own beauty. Every child born is first a human being, and later adopts the religion of his family. He said the vision of the Sindh government and Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, is to promote interfaith harmony. He said the religion of Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and all other religions also teach religious harmony. He said Sindh is the land of Sufis and those who love. Bishop Frederick John said such programs are needed today, as the world needs to learn and teach how to live together and respect each other. He thanked all institutions for providing security on the occasion of the religious festival of Christmas. Speaking on the occasion, renowned religious scholar Dr. Jameel Rathore said we should promote religious harmony. Good people around the world prefer to promote tolerance, and the protection of human rights is an important part of Islamic teachings. —APP

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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  
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# ITP chief vows to support business community

ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood commended Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Inspector General of Police Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Naqvi for their tireless efforts to make Islamabad a safe, secure, and business-friendly city

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad, Hamza Humayun, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and held a comprehensive interactive session with the business community, reaffirming that traders and industrialists are the real stakeholders of the national economy and addressing their issues remains a top priority of Islamabad Police. The CTO emphasized that effective resolution of traffic and parking issues is crucial not only for smooth traffic flow but also for sustainable business growth in the federal capital. He assured the participants that Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) would leave no stone unturned in facilitating the business community and improving traffic management across commercial areas. Highlighting the traffic dynamics of Islamabad, Hamza Humayun informed that around 1.7 million vehicles are currently playing on city roads, while the sanctioned strength of traffic police personnel stands at only 550. Despite limited manpower, he said, traffic police jawans are performing duties for 16 to 18 hours daily without weekly off days, which necessitates prioritization of critical issues for maximum impact. The CTO also apprised the participants about the ITP Cavalry, comprising 120 volunteer university students, who are selflessly assisting traffic police in maintaining smooth traffic flow. He encouraged the business community to motivate students from their respective areas to join the initiative and contribute to civic responsibility. Addressing road safety, Hamza Humayun stated that lane violations are a major cause of fatal accidents, adding that ITP has made awareness and enforcement against lane

indiscipline its top priority, with zero tolerance on violations. He further disclosed that ITP is planning to launch a Google-oriented mobile application to provide real-time information to motorists regarding open and closed routes in the city. He also announced that Islamabad Traffic Police is set to inaugurate the first women driving school, staffed entirely by women instructors, by the end of this month, calling it a major step towards inclusivity and empowerment. To ensure effective coordination with the business community, the CTO appointed Aisha Jamil, Station Director ICT FM, as the focal person to facilitate ICCI members in resolving traffic-related issues. Earlier, in his welcome address, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood commended

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Inspector General of Police Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Naqvi for their tireless efforts to make Islamabad a safe, secure, and business-friendly city. He said Islamabad represents the face of Pakistan, and the business community stands shoulder to shoulder with Islamabad Police to transform the capital into a true model city. He also highlighted key traffic-related issues faced by traders and entrepreneurs. ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub and Vice President Irfan Chaudhry shared the Chamber's initiatives aimed at facilitating the business community and expressed hope that ICT authorities would make sincere efforts to resolve traffic and parking challenges. Business leaders who shared their insights

and area-specific issues included Executive Members Ms. Shumaila Siddiqui, Ms. Fatima Azim, Tahir Abbasi, Chaudhry Ashraf, Waheed Cheema, Ishaq Sial, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Mohsin Khalid Malik, Rohail Anwar Butt, Naveed Satti, Trade leader Yousuf Rajput and former SVP Khalid Chaudhry. The session was skillfully conducted by the Chairman ICCI Standing Committee on Liaison with Police and former Vice President ICCI Saif ur Rehman. The interactive session was attended by a large number of business leaders from Islamabad, including former ICCI President Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi, Ahmed Khan, Raja Abdul Majeed, and others, reflecting strong engagement and collaboration between the business community and law enforcement authorities.

## PMD predicts single-digit temperatures, snowfall after Jan 18

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Director of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Anjum Nazir Zaigham on Wednesday predicted that temperatures in Islamabad and northern parts of the country will drop to single digits from tomorrow through the weekend and that another snowfall is expected after January 18. While speaking to a local news channel, he said that on Tuesday, Quetta recorded a temperature of minus 4 degrees Celsius. He added that Islamabad and other northern parts of the country will continue to experience single-digit temperatures until the weekend, with a further drop in cold weather expected across the country. He also stated that fog will prevail in Sindh and southern Punjab, while Karachi will also witness colder conditions. Responding to a query, he said that a fresh spell of snowfall is expected around January 18 to 19; however, the exact dates have not yet been finalized. He added that after this period, the Meteorological Department will issue a more precise forecast and confirm the dates for another spell of snowfall.—APP

## Five killed, several hurt as bus plunges into ravine near Chakwal

ISLAMABAD: At least five people were killed and 27 others, including seven women, were injured when a bus plunged into a ravine near Chakwal in the early hours of Wednesday. Police officials said that a tragic accident occurred in the Dhok Pathan area when a bus traveling from Rawalpindi to Karachi plunged into a deep ravine while negotiating a sharp turn, killing five people on the spot and injuring at least 27 others, a private news channel reported. Police and rescue teams rushed to the scene after receiving information and shifted the deceased and injured to Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital, Talagang. Rescue officials warned that the death toll could rise, as several of the injured were reported to be in critical condition.—APP

# Gov't launches drive to eliminate pollen allergy

ISLAMABAD :The Ministry of Health has launched a comprehensive and historic campaign to eradicate pollen allergy in the federal capital, on the directions of the prime minister. According to ministry of Health on Wednesday, under the chairmanship of Minister of State for Health Dr Mukhtar Ahmed Malik, a detailed roadmap was prepared, followed by coordinated action between the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the Ministry of National Health Services As part of the initiative, a three-phase, science-based operation targeting pollen-causing trees and plants have been successfully completed. A total of around 29,115 such trees—identified as the primary source of pollen allergy—have been removed from various areas of Islamabad, including F-9 Park, Shakarparian and several major sectors of the city, it further stated. Authorities clarified that only pollen-allergy-causing trees were removed, while local and non-allergenic trees remain fully protected. It was also

announced that three new indigenous trees will be planted to replace each uprooted tree. So far, more than 40,000 eco-friendly trees have already been planted in the affected areas. In addition, tenders have been issued for plantation of more tree with the support of private sector and the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), it noted. Medical experts note that nearly 37 percent of Islamabad's population experiences pollen-related allergies each spring, underscoring the initiative's importance as a public health intervention rather than an environmental compromise. Complementing these efforts, scientific satellite-based analysis further confirms Islamabad's improving environmental outlook. According to the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) analysis, a comparative assessment between January 2023 and December 2025 shows a net increase of more than 9,000 acres in the city's green cover. The data indicates substantial

vegetation growth in the Margalla Hills, while a reduction in green cover is observed in certain sectoral areas where planned urban development has taken place. In the NDVI maps, green shades represent newly added or enhanced vegetation, whereas red dots indicate built-up or developed areas. Overall, the NDVI findings clearly confirm that Islamabad's total green cover has increased, reflecting a positive environmental trend alongside urban expansion. Rehabilitation work is currently underway across 81 acres land in Shakarparian, with the project scheduled for completion by April 2026, it underscored. The initiative has yielded encouraging health outcomes, with a report of around 23 percent reduction in pollen vaccination cases over the past two years. Comparing to 2023, the allergy cases dropped to less than half in 2025. While pollen-related cases in November and December 2025 were recorded at historic lows, it added.—APP

## Police signs key MoUs to expand officers' welfare facilities

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police has entered into major memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with leading health and educational institutions to enhance welfare services for its officers and their families. An ICT Police spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that 340 health cards and 254 pensioner cards were issued under a new healthcare agreement, enabling serving and retired personnel to access quality medical facilities at discounted rates. He added that three separate MoUs were also signed with well-known educational institutions to support the children of martyrs, Ghazis and serving officers, who will now receive special fee concessions under the new arrangements. The spokesperson said these initiatives are part of the Logistics Division's Performance Report for the year 2025, which highlights several welfare-focused reforms implemented across the force. He further stated that the Islamabad Police leadership remains committed to expanding healthcare, education and family-support facilities, adding that additional welfare measures will be introduced during 2026 to further strengthen support for police personnel.—APP

## Governor, health minister discuss strengthening healthcare in KP

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Wednesday held a meeting with Federal Minister for Health Mustafa Kamal to discuss challenges and ongoing initiatives in the health sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During the meeting, Governor Kundi emphasized the importance of federal government support to improve healthcare facilities in the province, particularly in the merged districts and other underdeveloped areas. He stressed the need to launch modern medical projects to ensure access to quality treatment for people living in remote and marginalized regions. Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal assured full cooperation in strengthening the healthcare system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that special attention is being given to the health sector across the country and that the federal government is working closely with the provinces to combat diseases and improve public health outcomes. He added that health sector reforms are being implemented at a fast pace.—APP

## 3,000 new wheat lines enter field trials in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has moved around 3,000 newly developed wheat lines into field evaluation after accelerating early-stage breeding through a speed breeding facility. Dr Zahid Mahmood, Program Leader of Wheat Program at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), told Wealth Pakistan that the wheat lines have been developed since the launch of the facility in 2022 and are now undergoing field evaluation. "These wheat lines were developed using controlled-environment speed breeding techniques," he said, adding that the facility allows scientists to significantly reduce the time required for early-stage variety development. Dr Zahid explained that under conventional breeding methods, developing a wheat variety takes between 12 and 15 years because eight generations must be completed in open-field conditions. "With this controlled environment, we can complete a generation in just two months and develop a new variety within seven to eight years," he said. He said the facility is the first purpose-built wheat speed breeding centre in Pakistan and the first of its kind in South Asia. Inspired by concepts used in space science, the centre provides a fully controlled environment that replaces years of field-based generation advancement. "Normally, completing seven to eight generations takes nearly eight years in open fields," he said. "Here, we can achieve the same in just one to one-and-a-half years." According to Dr Zahid, after two years of field evaluation, the best-performing wheat lines will be entered into national trials, which is a mandatory step before the release of new wheat varieties. He said the programme has already delivered tangible outcomes, noting that the development of around 3,000 wheat lines would otherwise have taken several years using conventional methods. Dr Zahid said the facility has also emerged as a regional hub for capacity building. Pakistan, as a pioneer of speed breeding in the region, has trained between 250 and 300 scientists and postgraduate students from within the country and abroad. "Our collaboration extends beyond Pakistan," he said, adding that the programme has worked closely with Central Asian countries and supported the establishment of the first speed breeding facility in Kazakhstan. He noted that the speed breeding technology was originally developed in 2018 by the University of Queensland, Australia, where he was introduced to the concept during his doctoral research. Pakistan later adapted the system with technical support from Australian scientists. Dr Zahid said the programme also integrates advanced tools, including machine learning, artificial intelligence, drones and multispectral sensors, to improve the speed and precision of crop evaluation. "When breeding material is tested, we use drones and remote sensing technologies for rapid and accurate assessment," he said, adding that these tools help reduce evaluation time while improving data quality. He said the facility also serves as a research and training platform for MPhil and PhD scholars, strengthening Pakistan's scientific and human resource capacity. The speed breeding centre has been developed under a government-funded Public Sector Development Programme and forms part of broader efforts to modernise wheat research in the country.—DNA

## Call for urgent action to address Pak's housing needs

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a seminar here on Wednesday stressed that sustainable urban planning, inclusive finance, corporate engagement, and stronger institutional coordination were critical to tackling Pakistan's housing shortage and ensuring equitable access to decent housing for all. The policy seminar titled, "National Housing Policy: A Framework for Affordable, Inclusive, and Sustainable Shelter for All" was organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) to deliberate on Pakistan's housing crisis and the policy responses required to address it. Speaking on the occasion, Coordinator of the National Housing Policy Working Group and Chief Planner at the Federal

Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), Dr. Malik Asghar Naeem highlighted housing as a basic human right and national responsibility, warning that rapid population growth and urbanization have created a housing shortage of 9–10 million units in Pakistan, forcing nearly half of the urban population into slums, with low- and middle-income groups most affected due to limited affordability, weak financing, regulatory gaps, and climate risks. Dr. Naeem, informed participants that the initiative to update the National Housing Policy was launched on the directive of the Prime Minister to revise the outdated 2001 policy in response to evolving housing challenges. He explained that the National Housing Policy

2025 is currently in its final draft stage and is expected to be presented to the federal cabinet soon. He highlighted that the policy has been developed through a multi-stakeholder, evidence-based process, involving wide-ranging consultations with academia, urban development authorities, civil society, and international partners such as UN-Habitat, the World Bank, and JICA, ensuring alignment with global best practices. He also addressed governance concerns following the 18th Amendment, clarifying that while housing remains a provincial subject, the national policy provides an overarching framework to strengthen coordination across federal, provincial, and local governments.—APP

## DAMAC Properties' delegation visits IT Ministry to explore digital opportunities

ISLAMABAD: A high-level business delegation of Dubai's renowned real estate company DAMAC Properties, led by Sajwani, called on the Federal Minister for Information Technology & Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, to explore collaboration in Pakistan's growing digital and technology ecosystem. Welcoming the delegation, the Federal Minister underscored that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Digital Nation Pakistan (DNP) vision forms the foundation of the government's digital policies and reforms, aimed at building an inclusive, innovation-driven digital economy, said a press release here on Wednesday. The Sajwani delegation was given a comprehensive briefing on Pakistan's digitization vision, with

particular emphasis on women's digital and financial inclusion. Federal Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja noted that under the Prime Minister's Ramadan Package, 500,000 women were digitally onboarded through BISP by opening digital wallets in just one month, marking a major step toward financial inclusion. Moreover, both sides held in-depth discussions on outsourcing opportunities, recognition and deployment of Pakistan's tech talent, and the role of property technology (PropTech) and tokenization in unlocking savings, improving efficiency, and increasing liquidity across the real estate and financial sectors. The DAMAC delegation comprised Ameera Hus-sain Sajwani (Co-Managing Director,

DAMAC Group & CEO, Prypco), Syed Zeeshan Shah Chairman, ONE Group, Aqib Hassan (Chief Commercial Officer, One Homes), and Joseph L. Um (General Manager Tokenisation, Prypco). The Sajwani delegation praised the talent of Pakistani youth and the country's digitization framework, and expressed strong confidence in Pakistan's vast potential for PropTech, tokenization, and technology-led investment. Federal Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunication reaffirmed the commitment to facilitate global partnerships, enable innovation, and create a conducive digital environment to attract international investment and accelerate Pakistan's digital transformation.—APP



**RAWALPINDI:** As part of the welfare measures initiated by Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, 225 ration bags were distributed among railway porters, sanitation workers and other Class IV employees in the Rawalpindi Division on Wednesday. In a message issued on the occasion, the minister outlined his vision of strengthening the Pakistan Railways by prioritising the welfare of its workforce, particularly low-income employees, saying sustained support for labourers was vital for institutional stability and improved service delivery. He said porters and Class IV employees formed the backbone of the organisation and that progress was not possible without ensuring their welfare. He said the Railways Ministry was taking practical steps to ease the economic pressures faced by its workers. A railway spokesman said the ration bags were distributed under the supervision of the Divisional Superintendent (DS) Railways Rawalpindi. He added that the minister had directed the ration support programme to be continued on a regular.—APP

a decrease of 28.43 percent in July-November (2025-26). Meanwhile, year-on-year imports from Italy during November 2025 decreased by 52.18 percent from US \$63.245 million last year to US \$30.239 million. On a month-on-month basis, the imports from Italy also decreased by 25.40 percent during November 2025 as compared to the import of US \$40.538 million in October 2025, SBP data said.

The overall imports increased by 11.06 percent, from US \$23.011 billion to US \$25.558 million during the period under review.

**ISLAMABAD:**Laborers are busy in repairing parts of the Iran Avenue in Federal Capital.

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday held a high-level meeting with Sajwani business delegation to explore potential collaboration in digital finance and emerging technologies. The delegation was led by Syed Zeeshan Shah, Chairman, One Group, said a news release. The meeting focused on emerging global trends in tokenisation, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain and digital infrastructure, and the potential for collaboration in support of Pakistan's ongoing financial sector reforms and digital transformation agenda. Senator Aurangzeb welcomed the delegation's interest and appreciated their willingness to engage constructively with Pakistan. He underscored the government's commitment to responsible innovation, strong governance and regulatory compliance, noting that Pakistan is actively engaging credible international partners to evaluate new technologies that can strengthen its financial ecosystem. The minister emphasised that any future collaboration would be guided by national priorities, transparency and applicable laws and policies. The visiting delegation expressed strong interest in partnering with the government of Pakistan and offered technical expertise, advisory support and capacity building in areas such as tokenisation of real-world assets, blockchain-based platforms, AI-driven solutions and modern digital infrastructure. The delegation highlighted global best practices and private-sector innovation that could support Pakistan in enhancing transparency, efficiency, investor access and financial inclusion, while fully respecting the country's legal and regulatory framework. The discussions took place against the backdrop of Pakistan's recent initiatives to explore responsible adoption of emerging financial technologies, including the government's efforts to assess potential blockchain infrastructure for sovereign and real-world assets. Both sides noted that such technologies, if deployed prudently, can help deepen capital markets, attract international investment and support sustainable economic growth. The visiting delegation also included Amira Hussain Sajwani, Co-Managing Director, DAMAC Group and Co-Founder and CEO, Prypc; Aqib Hassan, Chief Commercial Officer, One Homes; Alp Ozenalp, Chief of Staff; and Joseph El Am, General Manager Tokenisation, Prypc.—DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi on Wednesday announced that several landmark mega railway projects are on the cards this year, including the upgradation of all railway stations across the country with world-class digitalization facilities, alongside major initiatives such as the Lahore-Islamabad rail upgrade and the completion of ML-1 by mid-2026. While speaking to a local news channel, Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi said that the Islamabad-Lahore railway line project, being financed by the Punjab government, is on a fast track. He added that the project aims to significantly upgrade the existing rail infrastructure to ensure faster, safer and more reliable travel. He further stated that once completed, the upgraded railway line will enable citizens to travel between Islamabad and Lahore in just two hours, marking a major milestone in the modernization of Pakistan Railways and improving connectivity between the two major cities. He praised Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for her support in Lahore, noting that she has shown keen interest in advancing the infrastructure initiative, which is in line with the broader objective of modernizing Pakistan's railway network nationwide. Responding to another query, he said that work on the ML-1 project is progressing swiftly with the cooperation of the Sindh government. He added that the pro-

ject remains a key priority for upgrading the country's main railway corridor. He further stated that an Asian Development Bank-funded international tender will be launched soon, and expressed hope that the project's groundbreaking ceremony would take place by July, with the Prime Minister expected to inaugurate it.

He also mentioned that 14 to 15 railway stations have been outsourced to improve cleanliness and service standards, ensuring world-class facilities for passengers. He said these measures are aimed at enhancing the overall travel experience on trains. Additionally, he stated that an online digitalization system, based on European standards, has been introduced across the railway network, adding that free Wi-Fi facilities are also being provided to passengers. Responding to a query about the possibility of governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he strongly criticized the role of KP and Afghanistan for facilitating terrorism, stating that there would be zero tolerance for such activities. He hailed the DG ISPR's press conference on Tuesday as timely and significant, asserting that no leader or individual is above the state or Pakistan, and that there can be no compromise on terrorism. He warned that if the situation so demands, the government will not hesitate to impose governor's rule to safeguard national security and stability. —APP

**ISLAMABAD:** Civil society organizations and youth groups have expressed concern over rising unemployment, delayed wages, and increasing living costs in Jammu and Kashmir, calling on political leaders to urgently address the challenges facing the region's youth. Reports cited by Kashmir Media Service indicate that electricity bills frequently equal or even surpass monthly rent, daily-wage laborers often go unpaid for months, and job applicants face repeated rejections.

Nearly a year after the 2024 assembly elections when large numbers of young voters participated with hopes for meaningful change feelings of anxiety and frustration among the youth continue to deepen. Official figures from 2023 reveal that more than one-quarter of individuals aged 20 to 29 in the region remain unemployed, a rate significantly higher than the national average. Many engineering graduates are forced to take up work as cab drivers or delivery personnel, while

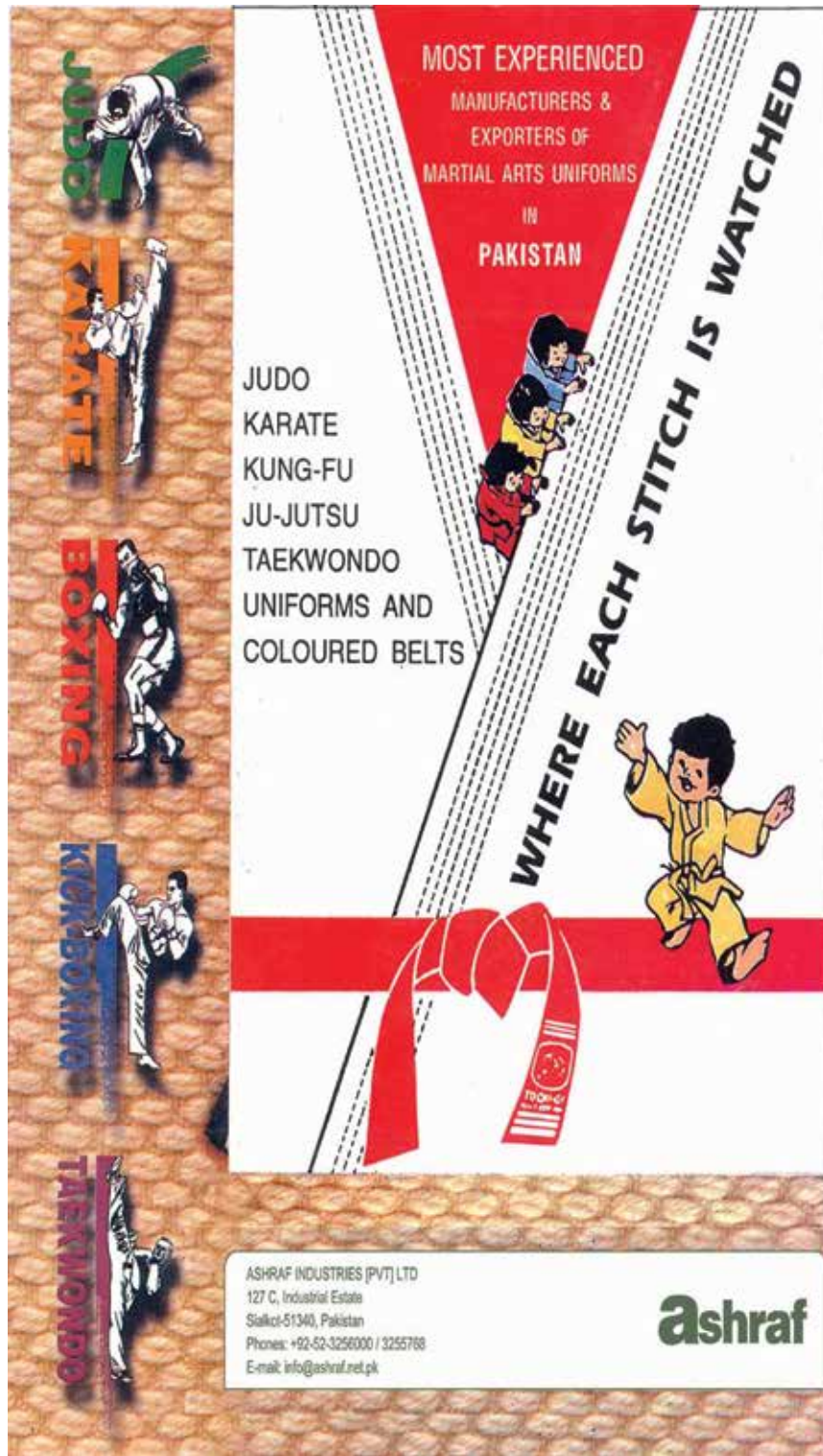
postgraduates continue to wait for government jobs that seldom materialize. Private-sector employment opportunities remain scarce in the region, and while more than a dozen startup incubation centers have been established, many young entrepreneurs say they lack adequate mentor ship, professional guidance, and access to funding. As a result, promising ideas often fail to move beyond the planning stage. "Many talented young people feel stuck, frustra-

ed, and uncertain about their future," said Tufail Hassan, a local startup founder, reflecting the broader concerns shared by emerging entrepreneurs. Civil society organizations have cautioned that without immediate measures to create sustainable jobs, ensure fair and timely wages, and strengthen support for youth-led businesses, growing disillusionment among young people may persist and increasingly influence the region's political discourse.—DNA

**ISLAMABAD :** The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs reported that 93 percent of public complaints received across Pakistan in 2025 were resolved, with action taken on 21,281 applications during the year. The figures were shared in an official statement outlining steps taken to improve public access, accountability, and transparency in government processes. According to the ministry, most complaints received by the Prime Minister's Public Affairs and Grievances Wing related to land occupation, delay in registration of FIRs, police conduct, irregularities in utility bills, and issues linked to financial assistance. Applications from overseas Pakistanis were also included in the total number of cases processed. The ministry said it remains committed to resolving public complaints within timeframes to strengthen transparency, ensure accountability, and build public trust in government institutions. To improve access to government offices, the complaints wing introduced a universal access number 111-555-554, allowing citizens to register grievances more easily. As part of a nationwide awareness drive, the ministry sent around 123 million SMS messages to inform citizens about available complaint services and procedures. Officials stated that these steps led to an increase in public engagement, with the number of complaints rising from 12,597 in 2024 to 21,281 in 2025. Special measures were taken to reach citizens in flood-affected areas. The ministry established complaint desks in flood-hit districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab to ensure direct access for affected communities. Out of 445 complaints received from these areas, most were resolved on the spot with the support of local administrations. The statement also noted that the Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs regularly held meetings to hear public complaints and review progress on their resolution. In addition, the ministry introduced a track-and-trace mechanism to improve coordination between parliament and the government. This system enabled real-time monitoring of government responses to bills, questions, resolutions, and attention notices. During the year, the ministry facilitated 49 meetings of six standing committees and monitored the implementation of 37 official assurances given on the floor of parliament. A ministerial committee headed by the Defence Minister helped move government legislation forward and supported the passage of 39 government bills from both houses of parliament. The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs played an active role in parliamentary proceedings, responding to 207 questions raised by members. The minister also presented 20 attention notices and six constitutional and legal reports in the houses. In addition, responses were given on five resolutions, debates were concluded on nine motions, and proceedings related to 26 legislative bills were handled during the year. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs said it will continue efforts to strengthen institutional coordination and improve links between parliament and the executive to ensure effective governance and public service delivery. —DNA

**RAWALPINDI:** Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Nasir Ali Khan has said that the elimination of drug-related crimes remains a top priority for Rawalpindi Police. Chairing a meeting at the Police Lines Headquarters on Tuesday, SSP Khan stressed the importance of eradicating the drug menace, calling it crucial for ensuring public safety and the well-being of society. The meeting was attended by the District Public Prosecutor, Retired Additional Sessions Judge Masroor ul Zaman, Advocate Syed Masood Shah, DSP Legal, and officers from the National Investigation Unit (NIU). SSP Nasir Ali Khan emphasized the importance of senior officers guiding investigative teams to address any shortcomings in the investigation process, particularly in drug-related cases. He urged officers to ensure that solid evidence is presented in court for individuals involved in drug trafficking and consumption. Furthermore, he stressed the need for timely and effective prosecution, instructing that all ongoing cases be diligently followed up and challans completed without delay. He also directed that both manual and computerized records at police stations be kept up-to-date for better tracking and operational efficiency.—APP

**ISLAMABAD:** The Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) on Wednesday announced the results of the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC-I & II) 2nd Annual Examination 2025. According to the press release, 80.67 percent of candidates cleared HSSC Part-I, while 69.70 percent were successful in HSSC Part-II. Whereas, 70,957 students appeared in the HSSC Part-I examination, of whom 57,181 passed. Meanwhile, 24,840 candidates took the HSSC Part-II examination, with 17,146 securing success. Chairman FBISE, Dr. Ikrām Ali Malik, congratulated the successful candidates and encouraged them to work with greater dedication in future for betterment of the country. The results have been communicated and are available across all official platforms. Result cards for HSSC Part-I students can be downloaded from the FBISE website, while HSSC Part-II result cards will be dispatched to the addresses provided by candidates in their admission forms.—APP





## Is Israel poised to take over Al-Aqsa?

OSAMA AL-SHARIF

ISRAEL is racing to annex occupied Palestinian lands through a systematic plan that involves seizing religious, cultural and historical landmarks, erasing Palestinians' ties to their native territories. Last week, the Israeli Civil Administration – a military body overseeing the West Bank – transferred all administrative authority over the Ibrahimi Mosque from the Palestinian Hebron Municipality to the religious council of the Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba. The move ends Islamic administration of the site. The municipality condemned the action, noting that it violates UNESCO's designation of the Ibrahimi Mosque and Hebron's Old City as endangered world heritage sites. Unlike Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem's Old City, the Ibrahimi Mosque is regarded as holy by Muslims, Jews and Christians alike as the resting place of Prophet Ibrahim, patriarch of all three faiths. Until 1967, it was administered by the Muslim Awqaf and Hebron Municipality. It became a flashpoint when Israeli authorities allowed Jews to pray at the site. In 1994, armed Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein entered the mosque during Ramadan and opened fire on worshippers, killing 29 and wounding more than 120. Following the massacre, a 1997 agreement split control: 63 percent allocated to Jewish worshippers, 37 percent to Muslims. The site remained contentious, as Jewish zealots provoked Muslim worshippers and Israel oversaw a massive Jewish takeover of Palestinian homes in Hebron's old quarter. Muslims were barred from accessing the mosque on Jewish holidays, while the call to prayer was banned at least 80 times in September alone. Last week's move stripped Palestinians of all administrative privileges. Israeli forces seized planning powers, blocked Palestinian staff from accessing utility systems and padlocked control cabinets to prevent maintenance access. What began as an interim spatial and temporal division has become full Israeli control. Few countries condemned the move. The silence over the Ibrahimi Mosque takeover has emboldened radical elements in Israel's far-right government to eye their next target: Al-Aqsa Mosque. Since Ariel Sharon's 2000 incursion of the Al-Aqsa compound – sparking the Second Intifada – successive Israeli governments, especially under Benjamin Netanyahu, have loosened restrictions on Jewish worshippers visiting the exclusively Muslim site. Al-Aqsa is recognized as Muslim under the status quo agreement, administered by Jordan's Awqaf. King Abdullah has repeatedly clashed with Netanyahu over status quo breaches. Under the current Israeli government, which includes extremist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, Jewish incursions have skyrocketed. Be-

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Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



tween October 2024 and September 2025, more than 58,000 Israeli settlers stormed the compound, a 14 percent increase from the previous 12 months. Settlers now conduct twice-daily incursions protected by Israeli forces and are permitted to perform religious rites – a clear breach of agreements. The silence over the Ibrahimi Mosque takeover has emboldened radical elements in Israel's far-right government. Jordanian and Palestinian officials have warned for years that Israeli extremists aim to demolish the mosque to build a Jewish temple on its ruins, pointing to dangerous subterranean excavations threatening the mosque's foundations. Israeli forces have implemented unprecedented multiday closures, restricting Awqaf employees to specific time slots and preventing Palestinian access. The most dangerous escalation came in 2021, when an Israeli court ruled that Jewish silent prayer at Al-Aqsa is not a "criminal act," effectively transforming it from an exclusively Islamic site to a joint Islamic-Jewish site. The eastern section, Bab Al-Rahma, has effectively become an undeclared temple, with settlers raising Israeli flags and performing Jewish religious practices. In a grave departure from decades-old policy, Netanyahu on Sunday publicly backed changes to arrangements at Al-Haram Al-Sharif (which Israelis call Temple Mount), insisting new policies allowing Jewish prayer do not violate the fragile status quo. "The changes Ben-Gvir is making are not changing the status quo and it is in coordination with me. I decide on the policy," Netanyahu said. His remarks followed Deputy Attorney General Gil Limon's warning that Ben-Gvir was unilaterally altering the religious status quo, breaching government commitments to preserve existing worship arrangements, according to Haaretz. With daily incursions continuing, Netanyahu's acquiescence to Ben-Gvir's violations and the Ibrahimi Mosque takeover as precedent, there are real concerns Israel will impose de facto temporal and spatial division of Al-Aqsa this year. Meanwhile, Israel is advancing its control over West Bank antiquities, including areas nominally under Palestinian Authority jurisdiction. In late 2025, a draft law was presented to the Knesset that seeks to extend Israel's authority over "antiquities and heritage sites" in the West Bank, explicitly including Areas A and B – which should remain under Palestinian civil administration as per the Oslo Accords. This followed a government decision to extend the antiquities officer's authority from Area C to parts of Area B, violating Oslo's division of powers and granting authority to prohibit, demolish and intervene at any archaeological site. Weak Arab and Muslim responses to these violations only embolden Israeli religious extremists. Jordan cannot stand alone against these Israeli plans. Urgent joint action is needed, especially from countries that signed up to the Abraham Accords, to clearly object. The Ibrahimi Mosque case reveals Israel's strategy: complete administrative control transferred from Palestinian authorities to Israeli settlement councils – a dangerous precedent Palestinians fear will be replicated at Al-Aqsa. This is annexation by other means, aimed at erasing Palestinian identity and replacing it with an exclusively Jewish one – it is cultural genocide.

## The New Trump Doctrine: Venezuela Taken – Greenland Next?

Qamar Bashir



The Greenland narrative, however, is not simply about Arctic ice sheets or buried rare-earth minerals. It reflects a deeper transformation in how the United States now sees itself in the global hierarchy. Once, American leadership rested on economic dominance, trade reach, investment appeal, technological leadership, alliance cohesion, and moral influence. But increasingly, those pillars are weakening. The US is being challenged by China in trade, manufacturing, and global infrastructure development. Its soft image has been battered by wars, sanctions...

DONALD TRUMP has ignited a geopolitical storm by openly declaring that Denmark has no rightful historical, legal, political, or moral authority over Greenland, the massive Arctic territory with barely 30,000 inhabitants but immense strategic and mineral value. According to Trump, Greenland is practically uninhabited land, poorly governed and inadequately protected, where Chinese and Russian vessels now freely operate in Arctic waters because Denmark lacks the military strength, strategic will, or appetite to defend it. He went further, suggesting that Greenland is essential for the security and survival of the United States in the modern era, as it needs the territory to establish forward-operating bases, secure northern sea routes, and push Chinese and Russian presence away from American borders. When asked whether the United States intended to invade Denmark or seize Greenland by force, Trump scoffed at the idea, saying that Denmark was powerless to resist and possessed neither a capable military nor nuclear deterrent. He laughed that when Denmark heard of his Greenland intentions, the only enhanced security measure introduced was dog-sled patrols. The implication was unmistakable – a superpower could, if it chose, simply take what it wanted. The intellectual and ideological defense of this approach was later reinforced by senior White House adviser Stephen Miller, who appeared on CNN and argued aggressively with anchor Jake Tapper. Miller said that under what he described as the "Trump doctrine," the United States would unapologetically deploy military force anywhere it deemed necessary to protect American interests, declaring that U.S. power and the "future of the free world" were one and the same. He stated bluntly that the United States is a superpower, and under President Trump it intended to act like one. When challenged over the arrest and removal of Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, Miller was unapologetic, interjecting sharply that "Damn straight we did!" before insisting the U.S. would not allow hostile or communist governments to threaten American borders, export drugs or weapons into U.S. cities, or fall into the hands of rival powers. On Greenland, he struck the same defiant chord. He questioned what right Denmark had to govern a

territory so strategic to American security, arguing that no nation on earth would dare challenge the United States militarily over the Arctic. In other words, Greenland was too important to be left in the hands of a country lacking the power to defend it. His earlier social media commentary had already hinted that the Western world had been naive to relinquish its empires after World War II. Now, that thinking appeared to be migrating from fringe rhetoric into governing doctrine. The Greenland narrative, however, is not simply about Arctic ice sheets or buried rare-earth minerals. It reflects a deeper transformation in how the United States now sees itself in the global hierarchy. Once, American leadership rested on economic dominance, trade reach, investment appeal, technological leadership, alliance cohesion, and moral influence. But increasingly, those pillars are weakening. The U.S. is being challenged by China in trade, manufacturing, and global infrastructure development. Its soft image has been battered by wars, sanctions, unilateral interventions, and political polarization. Many European allies are now openly questioning American reliability, while regions that once depended heavily on U.S. investment are now turning to China, Russia, or regional blocs. In such a climate, hard power becomes the primary remaining tool. It is the one arena where the U.S. remains unquestionably formidable. Greenland therefore becomes symbolic – not only as a military and resource prize but as proof that the United States can still impose its will when it chooses. Stephen Miller's comments strip away diplomatic language and reveal the raw calculation beneath. If Denmark cannot protect Greenland, and if China and Russia are already moving into the Arctic, then the U.S. will move more aggressively still. And if force is required, force will be used. Yet this approach also represents a departure from the moral language traditionally associated with American power. In Venezuela, the justification narrative focused on dictatorship, corruption, and human rights violations. But Denmark cannot be painted as a tyrannical state. It is one of the world's strongest democracies, consistently ranked among the happiest, freest, most just, and most socially equitable nations. Greenland, too,

is a democratic autonomous territory whose people repeatedly affirm their partnership within the Danish realm. So the doctrine must shift from moral rescue to strategic entitlement. That shift is profound – and profoundly dangerous. Because once a superpower declares that territory can be seized on the basis of strategic need, the entire post-war global security architecture fractures. NATO unity collapses. European trust evaporates. International law is discarded. The message received globally is that sovereignty is conditional and survival depends only on military strength. In that world, every nation becomes more paranoid, more armed, more volatile. The rule-based order dissolves into the law of the jungle. And yet, Russia and China may not rush to intervene. They may instead sit back and allow the United States to bleed its credibility, erode its alliances, and expose its desperation. Because beneath the chest-beating lies a quieter truth – the United States is losing its global economic primacy, losing trade leverage, losing investment dominance, losing moral authority, and losing its aura as a stabilizer rather than a disruptor. As these softer forms of power weaken, military force becomes the last remaining marker of superpower identity. So the temptation grows to use it – loudly, defiantly, repeatedly – to prove that America still commands the world stage. But superpower status is not measured only by the ability to occupy territory. True power is earned by respect, stability, restraint, partnership, and legitimacy. If the United States chooses instead to move toward annexation rhetoric and gunboat doctrine, then Greenland is unlikely to be the end. It will simply be the opening act in a broader unraveling – one in which the U.S. asserts dominance even as its foundations quietly erode beneath it. And history has shown again and again that superpowers fall fastest not when they are challenged from outside – but when they begin to devour the very principles that once made them strong.

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## A Defining Year for Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



History reminds us, however, that such turning points are both gifts and tests. They demand perseverance and moral clarity. Nations that mistake moments of renewal for moments of rest often forfeit their gains. Those that endure are the ones that convert confidence into reform and opportunity into responsibility

AS the final days of 2025 quietly recede and the first light of 2026 prepares to dawn, the moment demands more than ritual optimism. It invites reflection upon a year that altered the course of a nation. Calendars change every year, but only rarely does history pause to redraw its lines. For Pakistan, the year now ending proved to be one such moment, where destiny, resolve, and divine grace converged with unmistakable force. Until the first decade of May 2025, the national atmosphere was weighed down by uncertainty and apprehension. Daily life continued, yet beneath its surface lay fear, panic, and a persistent sense that decisions were shaped more by expediency and elite comfort than by justice or public welfare. Economic strain tightened its grip, institutional confidence waned, and hope survived largely through patience rather than assurance. Then history intervened abruptly. India, acting in accordance with a long-standing pattern of arrogance and miscalculation, committed a folly that proved transformational. What followed defied many expectations. In those critical hours, the involvement of Allah was evident in the timing, clarity, and outcome of events. Pakistan's response was swift, measured, and resolute, and within moments the strategic landscape was altered. The world watched as restraint combined with preparedness produced an outcome that changed perceptions overnight. The days following May 9 marked a decisive watershed. Pakistan emerged as a country redefined—not merely in military or strategic terms, but in confidence and standing. Globally, the narrative shifted. Diplomatically, Islamabad became a focal point of renewed engagement. From the weeks after May 9 till the closing months of 2025, a steady stream of heads of state, heads of government, and high-powered delegations made their way to the federal

capital. Leaders from friendly and influential countries, senior ministers, national security advisers, economic envoys, and defense officials arrived to reaffirm ties, explore cooperation, and signal confidence in Pakistan's stability and relevance. These visits were not symbolic courtesies alone. They reflected a recalibration of global attitudes. Strategic dialogues were revived, defense cooperation expanded, and economic partnerships revisited with seriousness. Investment-focused delegations discussed energy, infrastructure, minerals, and technology. Parliamentary and diplomatic exchanges gained momentum, while regional and extra-regional actors alike acknowledged Pakistan's renewed role as a stabilizing and responsible state. Islamabad, once perceived as defensive and reactive, was now engaging from a position of assurance and dignity. Internally, this diplomatic resurgence reinforced national morale. The psychological burden of isolation and underestimation began to lift. Institutions rediscovered coherence, and the people sensed that their country had regained a voice that commanded attention rather than sympathy. Pakistan was no longer viewed through a prism of perpetual crisis, but as a state capable of decisive action and mature diplomacy. History reminds us, however, that such turning points are both gifts and tests. They demand perseverance and moral clarity. Nations that mistake moments of renewal for moments of rest often forfeit their gains. Those that endure are the ones that convert confidence into reform and opportunity into responsibility. As 2026 approaches, there is legitimate hope that this remarkable change will not fade. By the will of Allah, the momentum achieved in 2025 can be preserved and strengthened. Yet divine favor carries with it further trials—tests of love for the nation, sincerity of intent, and willingness to sacrifice comfort for col-

lective good. Foremost among the challenges ahead is the urgent task of pulling Pakistan out of the suffocating swamp of debt. Economic dependence has long constrained sovereignty and distorted priorities. True independence cannot coexist with endless borrowing. Fiscal discipline, productive growth, and equitable contribution must therefore replace short-term fixes and cosmetic adjustments. Equally destructive is corruption, a silent termite infestation eating away at the foundations of the state. Its consequences extend beyond financial loss; it corrodes trust, mocks merit, and alienates citizens from their institutions. Eradicating it requires unwavering accountability, transparent governance, and the application of law without discrimination. Justice must stand as the cornerstone of national renewal—justice that does not recognize wealth, status, or influence. A society divided by selective accountability cannot remain stable. Only when the weak and the powerful face the same law can unity become more than a slogan. Beyond institutions lies the deeper task of shaping the citizen. Tolerance, forbearance, and respect for human dignity must be cultivated deliberately. A responsible individual is one who respects law, values humanity, and understands that rights are inseparable from duties. As the first sunrise of 2026 breaks over the land, Pakistan stands at a rare juncture of promise. The events after May 9 demonstrated what faith, unity, and preparedness can achieve. The year ahead will determine whether that promise matures into permanence. If gratitude is expressed through reform, strength guided by justice, and faith reflected in ethical conduct, then the coming year may well mark not merely the continuation of change, but the consolidation of a national rebirth—by the grace of Allah and the steadfast will of the people.



## Briefs

Special unit  
for Chinese  
protection...

FROM PAGE 01  
The National Cyber Crimes Investigation Agency (NC-CIA). The interior minister added that China's AI-based technologies could significantly assist Pakistan in tackling terrorism and emerging security challenges. "Pakistan and China share an unbreakable bond of enduring cooperation, and no one can create a wedge between us," he said. Naqvi also invited his Chinese counterpart to visit Pakistan and conveyed goodwill messages from President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to the Chinese leadership. Wang invited Naqvi to attend the Global Security Cooperation Forum scheduled to be held in China in September. Reaffirming that China and Pakistan are strategic partners, he expressed pleasure at welcoming the Pakistani minister at the start of 2026 and noted China's readiness to expand bilateral cooperation at all levels. He also hosted a luncheon in honour of the visiting delegation.

Sanaullah  
Warns: PTI  
Protest...

FROM PAGE 01  
other day, describing his remarks as clear and important. He said the government had responsibly offered a dialogue with the PTI three times on the floor of the house through the Prime Minister, but the party did not respond. Now, he added, PTI has again planned a protest, which is likely to fail, criticizing the PTI chairman for pursuing politics through street movements and unrest. He also condemned the May 9 incidents of violence and anarchy, saying such actions would not be tolerated. Regarding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sanaullah accused the provincial PTI government of obstructing counter-terrorism operations and said their actions demonstrated alignment with the enemies' narrative instead of cooperation with the state.

Ex-PTI  
leaders  
moot...

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including Fawad Chaudhry, former Sindh governor Imran Ismail and Mahmood Moulvi. Unlike earlier attempts focused on PTI founder Imran Khan's incarceration in the Adiala jail, the group's immediate emphasis is on Kot Lakhpat Jail, where several senior PTI leaders, including Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Mian Mahmoodur Rashid, Ejaz Chaudhry, Umar Cheema and Dr Yasmin Rashid are currently imprisoned. In a joint declaration issued after today's meeting, the committee expressed serious concern over political instability, economic hardships faced by the public, restrictions on political activity and the media, and the persistent threat of terrorism. Participants stressed the need for national unity, political reconciliation and confidence-building measures, while appreciating the NDC's role as a bridge between the government and the opposition.

Indonesia  
threatens to  
ban Musk's  
Grok AI

FROM PAGE 01  
production and distribution of pornography, with the government regularly instructing internet service providers to block access to websites containing such content. "The obligation to comply with Indonesian laws and regulations applies to all digital platforms operating in Indonesia," the ministry said. "Should there be non-compliance or lack of cooperation, the Ministry of Communications and Digital Affairs may impose administrative sanctions, including termination of access to Grok's AI services and the X platform."

ICC committed to ensure BD  
full participation in T20 WC

*BCB issues official statement saying ICC conveyed willingness to address its concerns*

DNA

DHAKA: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), in an official statement, said that the International Cricket Council (ICC) has reiterated its commitment to ensuring Bangladesh's full participation in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, firmly rejecting reports that the global body had issued an ultimatum or turned down the board's security-related request outright. The clarification follows conflicting media reports regarding a virtual meeting between the ICC and the BCB on Tuesday concerning Bangladesh's participation in the tournament, which will be hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8. According to earlier reports by ESPNcricinfo, the ICC had rejected Bangladesh's request to move their T20 World Cup matches out of India due to security concerns and had warned that the team would need to travel to India or risk losing points. The BCB, however, has categorically denied receiving any such warning. In its official statement, the BCB said the ICC had responded to the board's expressed concerns over the safety and se-



curity of the Bangladesh national team in India, including the request for relocation of matches. The ICC, the statement said, reaffirmed its commitment to the "full and uninterrupted participation" of Bangladesh in the tournament and conveyed its willingness to work closely with the BCB to address the concerns raised. The ICC also assured the BCB that its inputs would be welcomed and duly considered as part of

the detailed security planning for the event. "The BCB categorically states that such claims are completely false, unfounded and do not reflect the nature or content of the communication received from the ICC," the board said, referring to reports suggesting that it had been issued an ultimatum. The ICC had organised the meeting after the BCB wrote on Sunday asking the council to "consider" shifting Bangladesh's

matches away from India.

While neither the ICC nor the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) initially issued a statement outlining the outcome of the call, BCB sources earlier told Geo News that the board later received an email from the ICC seeking further clarification on the security concerns cited in the initial correspondence. Those sources said the ICC requested specific details regarding the nature of the concerns, and the BCB was preparing a detailed response. The issue has surfaced less than a month before the start of the 20-team tournament. Bangladesh, placed in Group C, are scheduled to play their opening three matches in Kolkata, against West Indies on February 7, Italy on February 9 and England on February 14, before completing the group stage against Nepal in Mumbai on February 17. The BCB had approached the ICC after the BCCI reportedly directed Kolkata Knight Riders to release Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman. The BCCI's secretary, Devajit Saikia, informed the media of the decision, although no explanation was given for asking KKR to let go of Mustafizur, who was the sole Bangladesh player bought at the 2026 auction.

Adil Boulbina extra-time stunner takes  
Algeria through to AFCON quarter-finals

RABAT: A thunderous strike by substitute Adil Boulbina deep in extra time settled a tense encounter as Algeria beat the Democratic Republic of Congo 1-0 in their Africa Cup of Nations last-16 tie on Tuesday. The game at the Moulay El Hassan Stadium in Rabat was edging towards a penalty shoot-out when Boulbina, a forward who plays club football in Qatar, was released on the left in the 119th minute and advanced into the area before unleashing a vicious strike into the net. The moment of magic sparked wild celebrations within the ground, with the majority of the 18,837 fans in attendance backing Algeria. The 2019 champions, who won all their group games, are looking like serious

contenders to claim a third continental title but now face a fascinating quarter-final showdown with Victor Osimhen's Nigeria in Marrakesh on Saturday. Boulbina was an unlikely hero, making just his second cameo appearance off the bench at the tournament having been included in the squad after featuring for the Algerian team at the recent Arab Cup in Qatar. "I have always dreamed of playing for the national team. It is the ambition of every Algerian to play for their country and do well," said Boulbina, who was in tears at the end. "I had my chance and scored and the most important thing is that we won and qualified for the next round." The outcome is a painful one for the Con-

golese, who came into the AFCON with big ambitions and had been hoping to set up another clash with Nigeria having defeated the Super Eagles on penalties in a World Cup qualifying play-off in November. The Leopards will now at least be able to console themselves with the fact they have an intercontinental play-off to come in March, where a win against either New Caledonia or Jamaica will see them qualify for a first World Cup since 1974. "We are obviously disappointed with the outcome. I thought it was a top-level game between two really good sides," said DR Congo coach Sebastien Desabre. "The players gave everything. We fought to the end but unfortunately it was not enough." Algeria, having

already guaranteed a berth at the finals in North America, remain focused for now on going all the way in Morocco. The match itself, between two of the continent's leading nations, had the makings of the tie of the round but never quite lived up to its billing. There was a lack of quality in the final third from both sides despite all the attacking talent on the pitch, with neither captain Riyad Mahrez nor the thrilling Ibrahim Maza lasting 90 minutes for Vladimir Petkovic's Algerian team. Burnley defender Axel Tuanzebe headed just wide from a corner for DR Congo and Maza fired narrowly past the goal from the edge of the box at the other end in the first half. - APP

Sameer Minhas  
powers Pakistan to win  
over Zimbabwe in U19  
ODI tri-series final

ZIMBABWE: Pakistan clinched the Under-19 ODI tri-series title, beating hosts Zimbabwe by nine wickets at the Old Harariens on Tuesday, thanks to a well-crafted century from Sameer Minhas. Chasing a modest target of 159, the Green Shirts cruised to victory, losing just one wicket, courtesy of a commanding opening partnership between Minhas and Mohammad Shayan. The duo put on a solid 50-run stand, applying early pressure on the hosts and taking the game firmly away from Zimbabwe. Minhas continued his outstanding form with the bat, bringing up a well-deserved half-century - his third of the tournament - before converting it into a magnificent century. The right-handed batter played with authority and intent, dominating the bowling attack and leaving little opportunity for his partner to score freely. The opening pair added a match-winning 145 runs before the stand was finally broken, with Minhas dismissed by Leeroy Chiwaula. He scored a blistering 114 off just 51 deliveries, smashing 17 fours and five sixes in a breathtaking display of power-hitting. The green shirts chased down the target in the 17th over, with Shayan remaining unbeaten on 38 off 42 deliveries, hitting four boundaries and a six, while Usman Khan scored two off five balls. - Agencies

Brigitte Bardot  
died from cancer,  
husband reveals

PARIS: French screen icon Brigitte Bardot had undergone two operations for cancer before she succumbed to the disease last month, her husband told Paris Match magazine in an interview published ahead of her funeral on Wednesday. The actor dealt with the two procedures very well, Bernard d'Ormale told the magazine, as well-wishers gathered in Saint-Tropez on Wednesday for a church service and burial. No cause of death had been given for Bardot, who passed away aged 91 on December 28 at her home, known as la Madrague, on the French Riviera. The animal rights actress, who recovered from breast cancer in the 1980s, was known to have been hospitalised twice in late 2025. "She always absolutely wanted to go back to La Madrague," d'Ormale said. "And there, it was more complicated, notably because of back pain that wouldn't go away, that made her suffer and exhausted her. "It was uncomfortable, even when she was bedridden," he added. "However, she remained conscious and concerned about the fate of animals until the very end." D'Ormale, a former political advisor to far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, did not specify which type of cancer Bardot had been suffering from. - APP

Bethell stands tall as England  
174-3 in final Test, nine behind

SYDNEY: Rock-solid Jacob Bethell was 79 not out as England narrowed Australia's lead to just nine runs by tea on day four of the fifth and final Ashes Test on Wednesday, but veteran Joe Root fell cheaply. The tourists battled to 174-3 by the break at the Sydney Cricket Ground with Harry Brook on 24 alongside the 22-year-old, who is targeting a maiden century. Australia were dismissed for 567 before lunch on the back of Travis Head's 163 and 138 from skipper Steve Smith. That left England chasing a 183-run deficit after their first innings 384, with a question mark over Ben Stokes's ability to bat. The England captain limped off clutching what appeared to be his groin while bowling the third over of the day and did not reappear. Mitchell Starc removed Zak Crawley for one as England reached lunch at 80-1, then Ben Duckett (42) and first innings century-maker Root (6) departed during the second session. Australia lead the series 3-1 and have already retained the Ashes, with England desperate for another morale-boosting win after victory in the previous Test at Melbourne. They needed a solid start to the chase, but chief tormentor Starc once again conjured up a first-over breakthrough - his 29th wicket for the series. The pace spearhead de-

livered a beautiful inswinger that Crawley misjudged and left, with the ball smacking his pads and he was out lbw for one. Duckett and Bethell survived until lunch, though Duckett lived dangerously, dropped on 38 by Cameron Green diving in front of Smith at first slip. The Nottinghamshire opener failed to capitalise and was gone in the third over after the interval, chopping on Michael Neser for 42, his highest score in a wretched series. Root, fresh from his first innings 160, was terrorised by Starc and Neser. He finally fell lbw after 37 facing balls for his six runs to the relentless Scott Boland, with the 35-year-old trudging off dejected. But Bethell proved unmovable and brought up a fourth Test half-century with a boundary from Starc as he looks to make the number three slot his own. Australia resumed at 518-7, with Smith on 129 after his 13th Ashes century - more than any other player except the legendary Don Bradman - and Beau Webster on 42. Smith flogged Stokes through the covers for a boundary in his first over, while Webster dished out similar treatment to Brydon Carse. But the Australia skipper did not last long, nicking a fuller length delivery from Josh Tongue to wicketkeeper Jamie Smith. - Agencies

Pakistan squash aces Noor, Nasir, Ashab  
headline opening day of Karachi Open

*Noor Zaman rallies past French rival as Pakistan shines at Karachi Open, Nasir Iqbal stuns Egyptian, Ashab Irfan advances, women wildcards bow out at PSA Gold event amid roaring crowds*

KARACHI: Squash ace Noor Zaman clawed his way back to a thrilling 3-2 victory over his French competitor to advance to the next round and round out Pakistan's performance at the Rich Venus Karachi Open on Tuesday. Zaman took the first game 11-9, every point greeted by applause from the home crowd packed in the corridor between the courts at the Creek Club in the port city. France's Melvil Scianimanico got his revenge in the second set with a 12-10 win. He then gave an 11-3 thrashing to Zaman, who looked visibly tired in the third set as the crowd of adolescent squash players and global icons like Jahangir Khan watched on, mumbling their own predictions in between shouting praise for the home favourite. Zaman is no stranger to comebacks, having been crowned the U23 world champion at the same venue in April. He won the fourth set 11-6 and proceeded to demolish the Frenchman 11-6 to win the fifth set and game to cheers from the crowd. Eleventh seed Zaman will play Egypt's Fares Dessouky on Wednesday in the Round of 16. Dessouky is seeded eighth in the tournament and has a world ranking of 15. "Melvil is a great player and, so is Dessouky; it'll be a fight to beat him tomorrow the same way I won the match today," Zaman told Dawn after the match. "There's a

lot you learn from top-tier championships like this with all the best players in the world," Zaman said of the PSA Gold level, the first of 2026. "It feels great to have an event like this in Pakistan after years." The biggest upset of the day came from Pakistan's wildcard entrant Nasir Iqbal, currently ranked number 134 in the world. The veteran international player was two down before he staged a comeback against world number 45 Moustafa El Sirty of

Egypt. After El Sirty took the first two sets 11-5, 11-8, Iqbal flipped the script and demolished the Egyptian 11-5, 11-9, 11-6 in the next three sets to claim Pakistan's first win of the day. Over at the state-of-the-art glass court, Ashab Irfan took an easy 3-0 win over Japan's Ryunosuke Tsukue with scores of 11-4, 11-6, 11-9. In Wednesday's Round of 16, Irfan will play top seed Karim Gawad of Egypt. "He's literally my squash idol, and to play against him tomorrow, that

too at a Gold level PSA event, feels surreal," a beaming Irfan told Dawn. Irfan reached a career-high world ranking of 47 late last year after a series of international wins. He recently committed to Trinity College in the US, where he'll begin this year. Zaman also climbed to his lifetime best ranking of 37 last year with championship wins in Canada and the US. "I want to break through to the top 15 world rankings this year," Zaman said. Pakistan's other three players - all wildcard entrants - lost their games and were eliminated from the tournament. Sana Bahadar opened Pakistan's campaign at the championship in the glass court against Egypt's Mariam Metwalli, who demolished her 11-4, 11-1, 11-6. Bahadar is the first and only player in Pakistan and across Asia who is fully deaf and can't speak. She relies on her father, who travels with her for every competition, to translate everything for her and often sign the score to her when it's not being displayed on a screen. "I was emotional when I found out Sana is deaf. I've never competed against a deaf player before, and it makes me realise how much we take for granted when you see her overcome the obstacles she has to reach this level," world number 35 Metwalli told Dawn after the match. - APP

Imran Khan  
meets  
Bushra in  
Adiala jail

FROM PAGE 01  
imprisonment each by a special court in the Toshakhana-2 case involving the under-priced purchase of luxury state gifts. Furthermore, meetings with Imran have been a point of contention between the PTI and the government, where the latter has imposed a blanket ban on meetings till February 8 over alleged violations of prison rules by Khan's sisters

PTI pushes  
back against  
criticism...

FROM PAGE 01  
questions about the balance of the state apparatus". The party said that terminating opposition to a military operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where it is in power, as support for terrorists was contrary to ground realities. It recalled that a peace jirga was organised by the provincial government on Nov 12, 2025, where participants "unanimously resolved that a military operation is not a sustainable solution to any problem, and a comprehensive, consensus-based, and inclusive national policy is indispensable for lasting peace". It also took offence at the statement that terrorists do not target the PTI. "This is completely contrary to ground realities," it said, adding that raising such questions would only add to the grief of the martyrs, the injured and the affected families. The party maintained that the impression the PTI was safe from terrorism reflected "a disregard for facts and is unfortunate". The PTI noted that several state departments in the past had issued threat alerts for party founder Imran Khan and other leaders on multiple occasions.

Afridi urges  
inclusion  
of KP govt...

FROM PAGE 01  
Public Relations (ISPR) Director-General Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry came down hard on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership in KP, blaming it for the rising terrorism. The chief minister, while addressing the convocation, stressed that anti-terrorism operations should be carried out after taking the nation into confidence. He said that they restored peace after great hardship, but "closed-door decisions" had once again made life difficult for its people. The PTI-backed chief minister said that they had rendered sacrifices for Pakistan repeatedly and would continue to do so. He expressed dissatisfaction with the compensation announced by the federal government for people whose houses were destroyed during the war on terror. Stressing the need for a shift in the existing policy against terrorism, the chief minister said that a new policy should be made in consultation with the KP government, tribal elders and other stakeholders.

5 killed as  
bus plunges  
into ravine

FROM PAGE 01  
When the bus was passing by Dhoke Pathan village located on the bank of the Sowaan River, the driver lost control on a winding patch of road, the Rescue 1122 spokesperson said. As a result, the bus plunged into a 100-foot-deep ravine, he said. Five passengers, including the bus driver, died at the spot while 24 others sustained injuries, he said. He said that Rescue 1122 officials rushed to the scene after the incident was reported. He added that 15 officials and five emergency vehicles took part in the rescue operation which lasted for more than two hours. Four of the deceased were identified as 56-year-old Abdul Sattar, the driver of the vehicle; 40-year-old Zia Ahmed from Kotli Sattian; 33-year-old Mohammad Ishaq from Lodhran; and 45-year-old Ramzan from Multan. The body of the fifth person has not yet been identified.



## Briefs

**Jordanian, Libyan army chiefs discuss expanding military coop**

LONDON: Jordanian and Libyan army commanders met in Amman on Tuesday to discuss opportunities for joint military cooperation and coordination. The meeting involved Jordan's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti and Libyan Deputy Commander-in-Chief Lt. Gen. Saddam Khalifa Abu Qasim. The two sides discussed joint military cooperation, the exchange of training expertise, and capacity building to support defense partnerships and address shared security challenges, the Petra news agency reported. Huneiti discussed key modernization programs by the Jordan Armed Forces and their ongoing humanitarian efforts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He emphasized that the JAF prioritize military cooperation to enhance regional security and mutual interests, the Petra added. Abu Qasim stressed the importance of ongoing coordination and the sharing of military expertise between the two countries.—APP

**35 have been killed and 1,200 held in Iran's econ protests**

DUBAI: The death toll in violence surrounding protests in Iran has risen to at least 35 people, activists said on Tuesday, as the demonstrations showed no signs of stopping. The figure came from the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which said more than 1,200 people have been detained in the protests, which have been ongoing for more than a week. It said 29 protesters, four children and two members of Iran's security forces have been killed. Demonstrations have reached over 250 locations in 27 of Iran's 31 provinces. The rial fell further to 1,489,500 on Tuesday, representing a 4 percent fall since the protests started. The group, which relies on an activist network inside of Iran for its reporting, has been accurate in past unrest. The semi-official Fars news agency reported late on Monday that some 250 police officers and 45 members of the Guard's all-volunteer Basij force have been hurt in the demonstrations. The authorities have acknowledged the economic hardships but accused networks linked to foreign powers of stoking the protests. On Tuesday, Iran's police chief vowed to "deal with the last of these rioters." The shopkeepers' protest continued on Tuesday in the bazaar, with about 150 people focusing on economic demands, Fars reported.—APP

**US seizes Russian-flagged oil tanker linked to Venezuela**

WASHINGTON: The US seized a Russian-flagged oil tanker that was being shadowed by a Russian submarine on Wednesday, after a more than two-week-long pursuit across the Atlantic as part of a US "blockade" of Venezuelan oil exports, two US officials told Reuters. This appeared to be the first time in recent memory that the US military has seized a Russian-flagged vessel. The operation took place after the tanker, originally known as the Bella-1, slipped through a US maritime blockade of sanctioned tankers in the Caribbean and rebuffed US Coast Guard efforts to board it. The seizure effort was first reported by Reuters. In a post on X, the US military's European Command said the Trump administration had seized the vessel for violating US sanctions. "The blockade of sanctioned and illicit Venezuelan oil remains in FULL EFFECT — anywhere in the world," US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said in reply to that post.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level meeting on loans to SME and Agri-Sector.

# UAE uniquely positioned to fuel UK's Green Hydrogen growth

The World Future Energy Summit, taking place at ADNOC Centre Abu Dhabi from 13th-15th January and part of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week hosted by Masdar, is set to highlight the pivotal role of green hydrogen in industrial decarbonisation. Against the backdrop of the UK's ambition to expand low-carbon hydrogen production to 10GW by 2030, the Summit provides a platform for industry leaders, policymakers, and investors from the UAE and UK to explore collaborative solutions. The Summit will showcase how the UAE's expertise in renewable energy and large-scale Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) projects can help scale the UK's green hydrogen market, laying the groundwork for strategic partnerships and cross-border investment. Leading market analysts insist that the "hurricane of hype" on green hydrogen has now settled into a new phase of market realism during the past two years, prompting the UK to push a more ambitious development agenda with low-carbon hydrogen at the forefront of its energy plans. Increasingly confident statements

from leading UK Government figures highlight a transition from stated intent to actual movement on scalable projects and investments. Sarah Jones, UK's Minister of State for Industry, recently confirmed this stance. "I am convinced hydrogen must be at the heart of our plans to grow the economy and to become net zero by 2050," she said. "Already, Government and industry are delivering real projects to kick-start the UK hydrogen economy." The UAE is well placed to benefit from, and actively fuel, the growth of the expanding UK green hydrogen industry." Dr. Carole Nakhlle, the CEO of Crystall Energy and Secretary General of the Arab Energy Club, will speak at the Summit next week. She added, "The UK and the UAE share a long-established strategic relationship that goes far beyond energy, but hydrogen is now a natural extension of that partnership as both countries pursue industrial decarbonisation and long-term growth. After the initial surge of enthusiasm, the hydrogen market has entered a more sober and disciplined phase, where scale, capital strength, technical expertise, and

genuine long-term commitment will determine who succeeds. For that potential to translate into delivery, the UK will need a clear and stable regulatory framework that gives international partners such as the UAE the confidence to commit capital at scale and over decades." In a two-part roundtable discussion last year, the World Future Energy Summit hosted leading figures from both countries' clean energy companies, industry groups, and financial and governmental bodies. The participants concluded that there is extremely fertile ground for deeper UAE-UK collaboration on green hydrogen development. With their overlapping interests, ambitions, and areas of expertise, the years 2026-2030 could represent a new phase of UAE-UK collaboration on green hydrogen. Upscaling green hydrogen in the UK from pilot projects and isolated case studies into industry-wide integration efforts will require massive, sustained funding. The UK Government's own projections suggest that a further £9 billion (AED44.6 billion) of private sector funding will need to be raised to keep its

2030 ambitions on track, primarily through the 27 hydrogen projects that represent the next stage of the government's flagship hydrogen programme. June 2025 saw the UK Government invest a further £500 million of public funds for the specific purpose of developing hydrogen infrastructure, signalling its long-term commitment to building this nascent industry. This represents an unmissable opportunity for the UAE to solidify its position as a long-term strategic partner in the UK's green hydrogen development journey. At home, the UAE has already allocated billions of dollars to upscale its production facilities, such as the Ta'iz Industrial Hub and a gigawatt-scale hub in the Khalifa Economic Zones Abu Dhabi (KEZAD). Abroad, its appetite for funding is growing even faster, as last year saw UAE private interests commit £18.5 billion to a new green hydrogen and ammonia project in Dakhla, Morocco, to develop a facility with a 1 million tonnes per year capacity. Private and public investment sources within the UAE are now primed to flow towards

the UK as well, if properly encouraged with a suitable combination of clear government signals and a strong list of viable, de-risked projects. In another Future Energy Insights episode, Cornelius Mathes, CEO of Dii Desert Energy, outlined the reasoning behind the UAE's increasing eagerness to grow its own domestic capabilities in green hydrogen, with a view to creating an industry that outstrips local demand and taps into the growing global appetite for decarbonisation. "The UAE has a target of 1.4 million tonnes per year by 2031, but with so many new projects in the pipeline, I'm confident it will exceed that level, even if they don't all materialise," he said. In recognition of its growing role and prominence in the global energy transition, the World Future Energy Summit 2026, which already hosts several leading players in the sector, will once again feature the Green Hydrogen Innovation Hub, a dedicated zone that showcases 20+ startups whose innovations may pave the way to even faster global integration and upscaling.—Agencies

## EU urges Israel not to halt NGO registration law

NEW YORK CITY: The EU on Tuesday urged Israeli authorities not to implement in its current form a new law governing the registration of international nongovernmental organizations, warning it could jeopardize life-saving humanitarian operations in Gaza and the other occupied Palestinian territories. In a joint statement, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, Kaja Kallas, and Commissioners Hadja Lahbib and Dubravka Suica said the law could severely restrict the ability of international aid organizations to operate and deliver assistance to civilians amid one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. The European Council highlighted the need for "rapid, safe and unimpeded" delivery of aid and warned that without nongovernmental organizations, "humanitarian aid cannot be delivered at the scale needed to prevent further loss of life in Gaza." The new law, adopted by the Israeli government after the introduction of new registration requirements in March 2025, obliges foreign humanitarian organizations to provide detailed information about their operations, including full lists of local and foreign staff, as a condition for registering to operate in Palestinian areas. Dozens of aid groups, including Doctors Without Borders, World Vision and Oxfam, face having their accreditation revoked or licenses suspended after failing to meet the new criteria by the Dec. 31 deadline that was set. Israeli authorities have said organizations that fail to meet the new requirements must cease all activities by March 1.—APP

## Yemenis look forward to outcomes of Riyadh dialogue

RIYADH: Last December marked a troubled end to the year in Yemen, particularly in its southern and eastern governorates. While much of the world marked the season with hopes for peace and stability, developments on the ground took a sharply different turn. The Southern Transitional Council (STC), led by Aidarous Al-Zubaidi, moved to seize control of state institutions and military camps, defying expectations in Hadramout and Al-Mahra and mounting a direct challenge to the internationally recognized government. These actions, carried out through armed force and supported by external actors, led to casualties and an escalation of tensions in both governorates. In response, Yemen's political leadership appealed to the Saudi-led coalition to contain the situation, called for the withdrawal of Emirati forces, and initiated operations to reassert control over military headquarters in Hadramout and Al-Mahra. Subsequently, Rashad Mohammed Al-Alimi, chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, asked Saudi Arabia to host a conference in Riyadh, bringing together all southern factions to discuss solutions — a request accepted by the Saudi leadership. The initiative comes amid the Kingdom's affirmation of the legitimacy of the southern cause, coupled with its clear rejection of any solution imposed by force. Arab News surveyed the views of several Yemeni politicians and analysts on their expectations for the conference, convened at a critical and highly sensitive juncture, and on the key issues anticipated to dominate the dialogue. Among them was Salah Batis, a member of the Yemeni Shura Council, a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Unified Council of the Eastern Governorates, and a prominent figure in Hadramout. "We extend our sincere gratitude to our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — both leadership and people — for their steadfast support, assistance, and courageous stand alongside the people of Hadramout and the eastern governorates in particular, and Yemen as a whole," Batis told Arab News. "Without this support, and without the role of the Saudi Air Force, this victory would not have been achieved, security would not have been restored, and this militia would not have been removed from these sensitive areas, especially Hadramout and the eastern governorates. "We also express our appreciation to the political leadership, represented by the chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, Dr. Rashad Al-Alimi, and to the governor of Hadramout and commander of the Homeland Shield Forces, Saleem Al-Khanbashi. "Our gratitude further extends to the heroes of the Homeland Shield Forces, the armed forces, and the security forces who participated in the operation to take control of the camps. It was a swift and decisive operation, carried out at minimal cost, praise be to God." However, Batis said he opposes the inclusion of the STC in the upcoming Riyadh conference, citing its involvement in the killing and terrorizing of civilians in Hadramout and Al-Mahra. He described the call for dialogue as "a positive step toward preserving the southern cause, which the STC had sought to hijack and undermine, nearly causing severe damage had it not been for swift and decisive intervention.—Agencies

# Academia-industry linkage vital for national progress: RCCI chief

RCCI President Usman Shaukat highlighted the critical importance of academia-industry collaboration, noting that chambers of commerce and the business community have always played a proactive role in bridging the gap between education and employment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The human resource development is the cornerstone of sustainable national progress, no economy can achieve long-term growth without empowering its youth. The President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), Mr. Usman Shaukat, expressed these views while addressing a Job Fair at Iqra University Islamabad, where he participated as Chief Guest along with Senior Vice President RCCI Khalid Farooq Qazi and Executive Committee Member Ali Waqas. Addressing students and faculty, the RCCI President Usman Shaukat highlighted the critical importance of academia-industry collaboration, noting that chambers of commerce and the business community have always played a proactive role in bridging the gap between education and

employment. He said such partnerships are essential to equip students with market-relevant skills and to ensure a brighter and more secure future for Pakistan. Usman Shaukat remarked that while advanced technologies and artificial intelligence are transforming industries worldwide, human intelligence, creativity, and critical thinking remain the most valuable assets of any organization. "Even the most technology-driven companies acknowledge that technology can never fully replace the human touch. Sustainable growth whether in industry or society will always depend on people," he added. Encouraging students to actively engage with participating organizations, he advised them to share their perspectives, suggestions, and constructive feedback. He noted that such interaction not only reflects confidence and analytical thinking but also helps potential employers identify talent with problem-solving capabilities.

Referring to a recent Gallup survey, the RCCI President said that Pakistani youth have shown remarkable optimism regarding the country's economic outlook for 2026, even more positive than many countries in the region. He added that improved macroeconomic indicators, including reduced inflation, stronger foreign exchange reserves, improved current account position, and the strong performance of the stock market, reflect growing economic stability. However, he stressed that these macroeconomic gains must now translate into microeconomic growth by reducing the cost of doing business and creating an enabling environment for enterprises. He concluded by congratulating Iqra University on successfully hosting the Job Fair and expressed hope that such initiatives would continue to connect young talent with the corporate sector, fostering employment and national development.

**S. Korea to import over 2m eggs from US**

SEOUL: South Korea will import 2.24 million fresh eggs from the United States this month to help stabilize domestic egg prices amid the recent spread of highly contagious avian influenza (AI), the agriculture ministry said Wednesday.

The eggs will be purchased by the Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corp., and distributed to supermarkets and food ingredient suppliers here, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

It will mark the first time in two years for South Korea to purchase U.S.-produced eggs. Seoul last imported U.S. eggs in January 2024, a ministry official said.

The move is part of a pre-emptive measure against a potential egg supply shortage, as the country has been coping with the spread of highly contagious bird flu in recent months.

Since the start of the cold season, more than 4.32 million laying hens have been culled at farms affected by AI, according to the ministry. The ministry said the country's egg supply currently remains stable, with the number of laying hens growing 1.2 percent from a year earlier as of end-2025, though its daily egg production dropped 1.1 percent to 49 million over the cited period. South Korea has confirmed more than 30 cases of highly contagious AI at poultry farms this winter as of Monday.—APP

**Germany records 2.2% average inflation**

BERLIN: Preliminary estimates from Germany's Federal Statistical Office showed a slowdown in the inflation rate in December 2025 compared with the same month in 2024. The office said the inflation rate in the final month of last year stood at 1.8 percent, and that average annual inflation for 2025 reached 2.2 percent, according to preliminary estimates.

The statistical office attributed the slowdown in the pace of price increases to a decline in energy prices compared with the previous year, pointing to a tangible impact from developments in electricity and gas prices on the overall price index.

The German office said energy prices in the consumer price index fell by about 0.1 percent in December 2025 compared with December 2024, reflecting the impact of lower electricity and gas costs on the energy component of the overall price index, which reduced price pressures in this category compared with previous years. The consumer price index report issued by the German Statistical Office said that overall inflation for 2025 averaged 2.4 percent for energy and food prices, excluding core prices, which recorded inflation of 2.2 percent.—APP

**Teen killed after Israeli bus hits ultra-Orthodox protesters**

JERUSALEM: A mass ultra-Orthodox Jewish rally against military conscription turned deadly in Jerusalem on Tuesday, when a teenage boy was crushed and killed after a man driving a bus hit the crowd. The Israeli police said they detained the driver and are investigating. Video of the scene shows a bus driving straight into a crowd of ultra-Orthodox men at the demonstration, attended by thousands. Reuters could not immediately contact the driver while in police custody and police have not released his name. Israel's Magen David Adom emergency services said the 18-year-old, who had been trapped under the bus, was pronounced dead on the scene. The debate over mandatory military service, and those who are exempt from it, has long caused tensions within Israel's deeply divided society and has placed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu under increasing political strain over the past year. Ultra-Orthodox seminary students have long been exempt from mandatory military service. Many Israelis criticize what they see as an unfair burden carried by the majority who serve. The ultra-Orthodox resistance to joining the military is based on their strong sense of religious identity, which religious leaders say they fear risks being weakened by army service.—APP



## Briefs

PSX soars  
past 187,000  
barrier on  
fresh equity  
buying

THE Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) extended its bullish momentum on Wednesday with the benchmark index climbing nearly 2,000 points as fresh equity buying lifted market sentiment at the start of the year. The KSE-100 Index touched a new all-time intraday high of 187,015.11, up 1,989.01 points, or 1.1%, from the previous close of 185,062.10 points. During the intraday session, the index registered a low of 184,896.70, reflecting a fall of 165.40 points, or 0.09%. Market analyst attributed the rally to renewed investor confidence, with equities increasingly seen as a more attractive investment option. "The market is being led by overall fresh equity positions at the start of the year, with investors chasing the stock market as a better asset play than keeping money in banks or cash funds," said AAH Soomro, an independent investment and economic analyst. He added that optimism surrounding the broader economy was drawing new participants into the market. "The economic outlook is promising, hence new investors are jumping in," Soomro said. On Tuesday, the benchmark KSE-100 Index settled at 185,062.10 points, up 2,653.87 points, or 1.45%, from 182,408.23. — APP

Sindh to launch  
'massive  
operation'  
against dacoits

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar on Wednesday said that a massive operation is being launched against dacoits in the Katcha (riverine) area. "We will use whatever resources [needed against dacoits]," said Lanjar while speaking to the media alongside Sindh IGP Jawed Akhtar Odho. "Dacoits will be destroyed," he said, adding that notorious dacoits will be targeted specifically in "ruthless action" and no one will be spared. However, the minister noted that those willing to surrender will be given the chance to do so. "The absconders will face strict action," he warned, noting that Sindh Rangers will participate alongside Sindh Police in the operation, the minister said that the services of Punjab Police will also be needed. The latest operation against dacoits came months after at least 72 dacoits from the riverine (katcha) area laid down their weapons in a ceremony held at Police Lines in Shikarpur back in October 2025. Several most-wanted dacoits, with bounties of millions on their heads, were among those who surrendered before the police during the ceremony.

Rubio tells lawmakers US  
aims to buy Greenland

*The congressional briefing was focused on Venezuela, but lawmakers raised concerns about Trump's intentions on Greenland given aggressive remarks this week by the American president and a top aide, Stephen Miller, the Times said*

## NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told lawmakers Tuesday that President Donald Trump aims to buy Greenland — a semi-autonomous region of fellow NATO member Denmark — and is not planning an imminent military invasion, according to a media report. Rubio, the top American diplomat, made his remarks in a briefing on Monday with lawmakers from the main armed services and foreign policy committees in both chambers of Congress, The New York Times reported. The same day, Trump asked his aides to give him an updated plan for acquiring the territory, the newspaper reported citing US officials. The congressional briefing was focused on Venezuela, but lawmakers raised concerns about Trump's intentions on Greenland given aggressive remarks this week by the American president and a top aide, Stephen Miller, the Times said. Rubio did not go into detail on what he meant by buying Greenland. Trump spent decades in New York as a real estate developer, and one of his top diplomatic envoys, Steve Witkoff, comes from the same background. Trump has coveted Greenland since his first term. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said the administration's

approach to Greenland "is all about negotiations," adding that the US needs "legal control and legal protections" to justify building up the territory and putting Americans on the ground, according to the report. Meanwhile, the White House said on Tuesday that the Trump administration was discussing a "range of options" for acquiring Greenland, including utilizing the US military. "President Trump has made it well known that acquiring Greenland is a national security priority of the United States, and it's vital to deter our adversaries in the Arctic region," White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said. "The President and his team are discussing a range of options to pursue this important foreign policy goal, and of course, utilizing the U.S. Military is always an option at the Commander in Chief's disposal," Leavitt added. The statement came following Trump's repeated proposals to acquire the island



for strategic purposes. A day after the US military operation in Venezuela that captured President Nicolas Maduro Saturday, Trump renewed his call for a takeover of Greenland in the interest of "national security." On Sunday, Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One that "Greenland is covered with Russian and Chinese ships all over the place." "We need Greenland, from the standpoint of national security, and Denmark is not going to be able to do it," he had said when asked about any potential US action against Greenland. Greenland is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark and has repeatedly rejected proposals suggesting any transfer of sovereignty to the US. Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has urged Trump to "stop the threats." The Danish statement came hours after European leaders issued a joint statement rallying behind Denmark. The nations that aligned with Denmark were Britain, France,

Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland, all of which are close allies of the United States. "Security in the Arctic must therefore be achieved collectively, in conjunction with NATO allies including the United States, by upholding the principles of the U.N. Charter, including sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders," they said. "These are universal principles, and we will not stop defending them." "Greenland belongs to its people," they added. "It is for Denmark and Greenland, and them only, to decide on matters concerning Denmark and Greenland." Some lawmakers voiced concern about Trump's stated plans. On Tuesday evening, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, a Democrat, and Senator Thom Tillis, a Republican, issued a joint statement saying the U.S. government must respect its allies. "When Denmark and Greenland make it clear that Greenland is not for sale, the United States must honour its treaty obligations and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark," said the senators, who lead the Senate NATO Observer Group. "Any suggestion that our nation would subject a fellow NATO ally to coercion or external pressure undermines the very principles of self-determination that our alliance exists to defend," they added.

Venezuela  
to export  
\$2bn worth  
of oil to US

Trump says he wants Venezuela's interim president to give US, private companies "total access" to its oil industry

## DNA

HOUSTON/WASHINGTON: Caracas and Washington have reached a deal to export up to \$2 billion worth of Venezuelan crude to the United States, US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday, a flagship negotiation that would divert supplies from China while helping Venezuela avoid deeper oil production cuts. The agreement is a strong sign that the Venezuelan government is responding to Trump's demand that they open up to US oil companies or risk more military intervention. Trump has said he wants interim President Delcy Rodriguez to give the US and private companies "total access" to Venezuela's oil industry. Venezuela has millions of barrels of oil loaded on tankers and in storage tanks that it has been unable to ship due to a blockade on exports imposed by Trump since mid-December. The blockade was part of rising US pressure on the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro that culminated in US forces capturing him this weekend. Top Venezuelan officials have called Maduro's capture a kidnapping and accused the US of trying to steal the country's vast oil reserves.

PPP leader  
urges NA  
speaker  
to appoint  
opposition  
leader

## BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: Former Senate chairman Raza Rabbani has called on the National Assembly (NA) speaker and Senate chairman to appoint opposition leaders in both houses of Parliament, saying that leaving the posts vacant "sidelines dissent". The posts have been lying vacant since August last year, when then-opposition leaders in the NA and Senate — PTI's Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz — were disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan following their conviction in cases related to riots on May 9, 2023. The PTI has nominated Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai as the opposition leader for the NA and Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen's Allama Raja Nasir Abbas for the Senate slot, but their notification remains pending. Rabbani pointed out in a statement that "Parliament is incomplete", adding that "this exposes a contradiction in our democracy." "We talk of the supremacy of Parliament, yet less inclined to uphold this principle," he added.

Govt mulls seeking  
relaxation in FY27 budget  
framework from IMF

Suggestion calls for further reduction in power tariffs to provide industry with competitive edge in int'l markets

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a move aimed at spurring sluggish economic activities, the government is mulling various options to convince the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to secure relaxations on different macroeconomic and fiscal frameworks for the next budget 2026-27. This thinking among policymakers has surfaced in the context of increasing criticism over the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) that suffocated growth by increasing the tax burden and hike in electricity and gas tariffs. With the lenient conditions of the IMF, the government wants the revival of economic growth, attracting investment, reducing unemployment and poverty, cutting power tariffs, offering tax incentives and creating room for a reduction in the policy rate. The government plans possible relaxation in targets related to the primary balance and provincial budget surpluses in the next fiscal year 2026-27. The government might request the IMF to allow a relatively higher fiscal deficit target in the upcoming budget to create fiscal space for growth-oriented measures. After completing two years in

office, the government has now started moving seriously towards allowing the economy to grow during the third year of its tenure, to achieve economic growth of 5 to 6%. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has instructed the Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue to fully cooperate with the business community to help attract domestic and foreign investment. Four key proposals have been discussed, with the government's foremost priority being export-led growth. The prime minister has also expressed concern over the trade deficit recorded during the July to December period of the current fiscal year. The second major proposal focuses on boosting investment by exploring all possible opportunities. The Special Investment Facilitation Council has been tasked with taking concrete measures to increase investment. Another proposal under consideration is a further reduction in power tariffs to provide industry with a competitive edge in international markets. The government is also seeking fiscal space to offer tax incentives. According to the draft of the industrial policy, a decision has been made to reduce super tax for the manufacturing sector, but it will be implemented subject to the approval of the IMF.

‘Sir, may I see you please’: Trump  
recalls meeting with India’s Modi

“India has been waiting for five years for the Apache helicopters,” says US president

WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump has recounted a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that Modi had sought permission to meet him. Delivering remarks at the House GOP Member Retreat, Trump was speaking on the demand for the US-made Apache helicopters and said India has been waiting for five years for the Apache helicopters. Trump said that India ordered 68 Apaches and "Prime Minister Modi came to see me, 'Sir, may I see you please'. Yes." The US president said that Modi was "not that happy with me" because of the tariffs imposed by Washington on

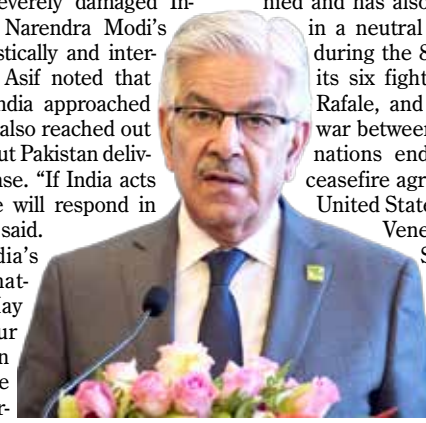
Delhi for its purchases of Russian oil. "I have a very good relationship with him. He's not that happy with me because you know they're paying a lot of tariffs now because they're not doing the oil, but they are, they've now reduced it very substantially, as you know, from Russia," Trump said. Trump has imposed 50% tariffs on India, including 25% for its purchases of Russian oil. On Sunday, the US president said that Washington could raise tariffs on India if New Delhi doesn't meet its demand to curb purchases of Russian oil. "Modi [...] knew I was not happy, and it was important to make me happy," Trump added. "They do trade, and we can raise tariffs on them very quickly," Trump said in response to a question on India's Russian oil purchases. The US doubled import tariffs on Indian goods to 50% last year as punishment for its heavy buying of Russian oil. Despite the hefty tariffs, India's exports to the US leapt in November. — APP

Pakistan may not need IMF  
after six months as defence  
orders rise: minister

Asif says Pakistani military's strength earned global recognition, boosting confidence post-May 2025 war

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Tuesday said that the country may not require financial assistance from IMF within six months as defence procurement orders continue to rise. Speaking on Geo News programme 'Capital Talk', the minister noted that the world witnessed Pakistan's resolve and military effectiveness during the May 2025 India-Pakistan conflict. "The confrontation severely damaged Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's credibility both domestically and internationally," he said. Asif noted that during the conflict, India approached the United States and also reached out to China for support, but Pakistan delivered a decisive response. "If India acts aggressively again, we will respond in the same manner," he said. He added that India's confidence was shattered after the May 2025 war, noting: "Our aircraft have been tested, and we are receiving so many or-

ders that Pakistan may not need the IMF in six months." Pakistan and India went to war in May after India launched an unprovoked attack on Pakistan following the attack on tourists in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). New Delhi maintains that the terrorists who killed 26 tourists in IIOJK's Pahalgalam were Pakistanis — a charge that Islamabad has denied and has also asked India to partake in a neutral investigation. Pakistan, during the 87-hour conflict, downed its six fighter jets, including three Rafale, and dozens of drones. The war between the two nuclear-armed nations ended on May 10 with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States. Citing the example of Venezuela, Asif said that the South American country did not possess a large army or advanced weaponry, contrasting it with Pakistan's globally respected military strength. — DNA



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