



Daily Islamabad POST

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US policies have put world peace in serious danger

Detailed News On Page-08

Pak suffered Default in 2022: Ahsan

Detailed News On Page-08

Trump says only he can stop himself

Detailed News On Page-08

Briefs**China, Japan rift deepens**

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China is ramping up economic and political pressure on Japan, announcing on Tuesday a ban on exports of equipment with dual military and civilian applications, including items that use rare earth elements. Beijing followed up the next day by launching an anti-dumping investigation into a Japanese compound used in the manufacturing of semiconductors. The measures come shortly after Beijing canceled a visit by Japanese business leaders, which had been scheduled for this month. China also put pressure on domestic travel agencies to cancel trips to Japan, resulting in millions of Chinese booking alternative destinations over the coming months. The row between Beijing and China is continuing to escalate two months after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi responded to a question in the Japanese parliament by saying that a "contingency" around Taiwan – broadly understood to mean a Chinese invasion of the self-ruled island – could constitute a threat to Japan's national security and necessitate a military response.

Iran not to back down, says leader

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Friday insisted that the government would "not back down" in the face of protests after the biggest rallies yet in an almost two-week movement sparked by anger over the rising cost of living. Chanting slogans including "death to the dictator" and setting fire to official buildings, crowds of people opposed to the establishment marched through major cities late on Thursday. Internet monitor Netblocks said authorities had imposed a total connectivity blackout late on Thursday and added early on Friday that the country has "now been offline for 12 hours [...] in an attempt to suppress sweeping protests". The demonstrations represent one of the biggest challenges yet to the nation in its over four-and-a-half decades of existence, with protesters openly calling for an end to its theocratic rule.

Iranian govt offering subsidies: envoy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamic Republic of Iran is currently implementing a comprehensive program of economic reform aimed at restructuring and targeting subsidies to enhance public welfare and ensure social justice. As with any major adjustment, this process has led to price increases, prompting lawful and peaceful demonstrations by shopkeepers and business communities. These protests have been recognized by the Iranian government as legitimate expressions of public concern. Unfortunately, certain rioters and individuals affiliated with foreign-backed hostile elements have sought to exploit these peaceful gatherings.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.

- Editor

Pakistan, other nations condemn Israeli official's visit to Somaliland

Joint statement calls visit illegal, urges respect for Somalia's sovereignty and international law

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and more than two dozen other countries, along with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have strongly condemned the recent visit by an Israeli official to the "Somaliland" region of the Federal Republic of Somalia, declaring it illegal and a violation of international law. The statement came two days after the Israeli foreign minister arrived in the "Somaliland" region in a high-profile visit, condemned by Somalia as an "unauthorised incursion". Israel announced last month it was officially recognising Somaliland, a first for the self-proclaimed republic since it declared independence from Somalia in 1991. Somaliland enjoys a strategic position on the Gulf of Aden and has its own currency, passport and army, but has struggled to win international recognition, amid fears of provoking Somalia and encouraging other separatist movements in Africa.

In a joint statement issued today, the foreign ministers of Algeria, Bangladesh, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, The Gambia, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Maldives, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Turkiye and Yemen, as well as the OIC, recalled their earlier declaration of December 27, 2025, which rejected Israel's recognition of the "Somaliland" region.

PPP minister receives CM

KP CM given a warm welcome upon arrival in Karachi

Sindh govt assures CM Afridi of facilitation, free movement and unhindered political activities during Sindh visit

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: The Chief Minister KP Sohail Afridi was given warm welcome upon arrival in Karachi on Friday. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has announced holding a public gathering at Mazar-e-Quaid in Karachi on January 11 as part of its street movement ahead of the Feb 8 protest call, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi said in a statement on Friday. "I will hold a rally at Mazar-e-Quaid in Karachi at 4:30pm on Sunday," said CM Afridi in a message ahead of his Sindh visit set to commence today.

The KP chief minister said he will spread the message of jailed PTI founder Imran Khan to every nook and corner of Sindh. He also urged the people of Sindh to extend all-out support to the PTI in the preparations of street movement. "We will hold largest rally in Karachi's history," CM Afridi said. However, contrary to the KP CM's announcement, the district

Talks with govt only after meetings with Imran allowed

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: PTI leader Barrister Ali Zafar on Thursday said that no dialogue could be held with the government until it allowed meetings with incarcerated party founder Imran Khan. He made the remarks while speaking alongside a delegation of the opposition alliance Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) in Lahore, which is on a three-day visit to the city as part of the opposition's "street movement" to hold political and social gatherings. The alliance posted on X that TTAP chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Allama Raja Nasir



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Sajwani Business delegation of UAE and holds a luncheon in its honor. - DNA

Strict screening of travel documents ordered

Naqvi says human traffickers deserve no leniency, orders crackdown against "professional beggar mafia"

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has directed authorities concerned to enforce strict screening of passengers' travel documents at all airports across the country to prevent illegal immigration. Presiding over a high-level meeting to review the performance of the Federal Investigation Agency's immigration wing and ongoing efforts to curb illegal immigration and human trafficking, the interior minister directed the FIA to continue taking strict and impartial action against the mafia involved in illegal immigration. He instructed the FIA to ensure the effective implementation of immigration laws and strengthen

Continued on Page 06

Trump says will meet Machado 'next week'

APP

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said Thursday that Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado will be in Washington next week, indicating he planned to meet with the Nobel Peace Prize winner. "I understand she's coming in next week sometime, and I look forward to saying hello to her," Trump told Fox News host Sean Hannity in an interview. The meeting would be the first between the US president and Machado and comes just over a week after US forces captured Venezuelan

Continued on Page 06

Shehbaz Sharif says

Pakistan, UAE relations moving toward effective economic cooperation

He emphasized that Pakistan gives special importance to business-to-business (B2B) collaboration in sectors such as information technology, digital innovation, blockchain and other emerging technologies

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said the longstanding fraternal relations between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates are moving further toward effective economic cooperation and investment. He made the remarks during a meeting with Sajwani Business delegation of UAE in Islamabad. The Prime Minister said that Pakistan and the UAE share deep, long-standing and brotherly relations based on mutual trust and respect.

He mentioned that the recent visit of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to Pakistan has further strengthened the partnership between the two countries and created a favourable environment to promote cooperation. The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction that recent high-level contacts and exchanges have increased mutual confidence between the private sectors and investors of Pakistan and the UAE, providing a strong foundation for promoting cooperation.

Continued on Page 06

New transparent system replaces decades of corrupt practices

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the federal government had established a transparent system to provide subsidized essential food items to the underprivileged during Ramazan, replacing a decades-old corrupt system of financial irregularities and mismanagement in utility stores. He directed all relevant institutions to develop an even more effective and beneficial relief package for the upcoming holy month. The prime minister was chairing a review meeting on the proposed Ramazan package and

Continued on Page 06

Info minister terms PTI 'political wing' of TTP

Opposition party leaders "falter" when speaking about banned militant group, says Attaullah Tarar



ISLAMABAD: Federal Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Friday termed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) a "political wing" of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, saying that the party avoids condemning the banned militant outfit. Addressing a presser in Islamabad alongside Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Zahid Khan, Tarar lambasted the PTI over its stance on the banned TTP, saying that the Imran Khan-founded party leaders "falter when speaking" about the outlawed group and

Continued on Page 06

Moscow says US released 2 Russian crew

APP

MOSCOW: Russia on Friday said the United States had decided to release two Russian members of the crew of a Russian-flagged oil tanker that Washington seized earlier this week. The American authorities said the tanker was part of a shadow fleet that carried oil from countries such as Venezuela, Russia and Iran in violation of US sanctions, and seized it in the North Atlantic despite the ship being escorted by the Russian navy. "In response to our request, US President Donald Trump has decided to release two Russian citizens aboard the *Marinera Alta*, previously detained by the United States during an operation in the North Atlantic,"

Israel says struck Hezbollah targets in many Lebanon

NEWS DESK

TEL AVIV: Israel's military said it struck Hezbollah targets in several areas of Lebanon, a day after the Lebanese army said it had completed the first phase of its plan to disarm the group in the south. In a statement on Friday, the Israeli military said it struck "several areas in Lebanon", targeting "weapons storage facilities and a weapons production site that were used for the rehabilitation and military build-up of the Hezbollah".

JANUARY 2026

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Weekly
inflation up by
0.12%

ISLAMABAD :The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), increased by 0.12 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on January 08, 2026, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review was recorded at 334.35 points, up from 333.96 points last week. On a year-on-year basis, the SPI increased by 3.20 percent.

The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group (up to Rs 17,732) increased by 0.12 percent, to 324.37 points from 323.98 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 increased by 0.13 percent, 0.13 percent, 0.13 percent and 0.11 percent, respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 21 (41.18%) items increased, 08 (15.68%) items decreased and 22 (43.14%) items remained stable.

Major commodities registering a week-on-week increase included Wheat Flour (5.07%), Chicken (2.86%), Garlic (2.44%), Chilies Powder (1.01%), LPG (0.88%), Tea Prepared (0.73%), Shirting (0.61%), Sugar (0.58%), Bread (0.51%), Rice Basmati Broken (0.41%) and Firewood (0.25%). Items showing a decrease in prices included Potatoes (3.73%), Onions (2.20%), Pulse Gram (1.51%), Eggs (1.44%), Pulse Mash (0.65%), Pulse Masoor (0.38%), Bananas (0.21%) and Tomatoes (0.05%). On a year-on-year basis, major increases were observed in the prices of Wheat Flour (31.12%), Gas Charges for Q1 (29.85%), Beef (13.15%), Chilies Powder (11.43%), Sugar (11.18%), Bananas and Firewood (10.57%) each, Gur (10.50%), Powdered Milk (9.51%), Shirting (8.73%), Latta Printed (8.29%) and Eggs (8.03%).—APP

Balochistan
cabinet
okays health
insurance,
electric bikes
schemes

LAHORE Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has ordered for preparation of a revised medicine list for government hospitals and called for a foolproof mechanism to ensure an uninterrupted supply of essential drugs across the province. Presiding over a meeting on health projects on Friday, she ordered for formation of a dedicated committee to finalise the updated medicines list. Expressing serious concern over reports of medicine shortages despite hefty allocations, she noted that Rs80 billion is being spent on medicines and termed any failure in timely delivery to

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Cabinet Committee on State-Owned Enterprises (CCoSOEs) was held today at the Finance Division under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb. The Cabinet Committee was presented the Annual Consolidated Performance Report of Commercial and Non-Commercial State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) for FY 2024-25, prepared by the Central Monitoring Unit (CMU) of the Finance Division. The presentation made by Major Soofi Director General CMU, covered in depth detail of SOE 260 degree view covering the financial and non-financial performance of SOEs, government support and fiscal flows, contribution of SOEs to the exchequer, debt profile, corporate governance and compliance status, business plan assessments, and the proposed way forward under the SOEs Act, 2023. The Committee was informed that during FY 2024-25, aggregate revenues of SOEs stood at approximately PKR 12.4 trillion, reflecting a decline largely attributable to reduced profitability in the oil sector following lower international oil prices. Aggregate profits of profit-making SOEs declined by 13 percent to PKR 709.9 billion compared to PKR 820.7 billion last year, while aggregate losses of loss-making SOEs showed improvement, declining by around 2 percent to PKR 832.8 billion. Despite this improvement, the net result was an overall net loss of PKR 122.9 billion for the SOE sector, compared to a net loss of PKR 30.6 billion in the previous year. It was highlighted that losses remain heavily concentrated in a small number of entities, particularly in the transport and power distribution sectors. National Highway Authority and several power distribution companies continued to be major loss contributors, reflecting structural issues, high depreciation, financing costs, and the public service nature of certain operations that are not commercially viable. The Committee was briefed on the categorization of SOEs into green, amber and red categories based on financial sustainability, with a view to prioritizing reforms and decision-making. On fiscal support, the Committee noted that total government support to SOEs increased to PKR 2,078 billion during FY 2024-25, driven mainly by higher equity injections to clear CD stock, while subsidies showed a modest decline. At the same time, inflows from SOEs to the government increased to PKR 2,119 billion, supported by higher dividends, tax receipts and interest income on government lending. The debt profile of SOEs was discussed in detail. Total SOE debt at the portfolio level increased to PKR 9.57 trillion, comprising cash development loans, foreign lending, bank borrowings and accrued interest. The Committee was also briefed on the quantification of unfunded pension liabilities across SOEs, estimated at around PKR 2 trillion, which was identified



as a major legacy risk requiring policy attention. Guarantees and other off-balance-sheet contingencies were reported at PKR 2.16 trillion. The Chair commended the Central Monitoring Unit for strengthening transparency, consolidating SOE financial information on an IFRS-aligned basis, and establishing a comprehensive digital database to support evidence-based decision-making. He noted that the presentation reflected meaningful progress in oversight, disclosure and risk identification, particularly in areas of fiscal flows, debt mapping and unfunded pension liabilities.

The Chair emphasized that these improvements provide a credible foundation for informed policy action and sustained reforms, and reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving governance, enforcing accountability, and placing State-Owned Enterprises on a path toward financial sustainability and operational efficiency.

While appreciating the progress achieved, the Committee members stressed the need for enforcement of audit completion in compliance with the SOEs Act, 2023, and timely transition to IFRS-based reporting by February 2026. The importance of realistic business plans, sector-specific engagement, loss reduction strategies and hard budget constraints, particularly for chronically loss-making entities, was also underscored. The Cabinet Committee directed that the findings of the report be shared with relevant ministries to inform reform measures and that progress on audits, governance reforms, debt rationalization and fiscal risk containment be reviewed regularly. The Committee approved the submission of the Annual Consolidated Performance Report for publication, noting it as an important step toward enhanced accountability, transparency and informed policy-making in the management of State-Owned Enterprises.

Punjab CM orders revised medicines list Warns zero tolerance for hospital lapses

patients as "unacceptable." The meeting also reviewed proposals aimed at modernising public hospitals, including the possible use of Chinese-manufactured medical equipment to upgrade healthcare facilities throughout Punjab. Taking strict notice of public complaints regarding the conduct of hospital security staff, CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif approved, in principle, the installation of body cameras for security guards, ward boys, nurses and pharmacy staff. She further directed hospital administrations to ensure daily steam cleaning of facilities by 9:00 a.m. to maintain hygiene standards.

The chief minister also ordered a ban on the use of mobile phones by doctors and nurses during duty hours, stressing that patient care must remain the top priority at all times. To strengthen hospital governance, the meeting approved the creation of a Medical Superintendent (MS) pool, with salary increments to be linked directly to performance. Community health inspectors were assigned the task of conducting regular hospital surveys to monitor service delivery and identify shortcomings.—APP

Rs 1600 per
maund rate
for Kinnow
agreed

SARGODHHA :After a lengthy meeting mediated by the district administration, Kinnow farmers and factory owners have agreed on a rate of Rs. 1600 per maund for the current week. The meeting, which continued late into the night, involved all concerned parties, including farmer representatives, factory owners and exporters. Farmer representatives thanked Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sargodha Captain (retd) Muhammad Waseem for their timely intervention in resolving the long-standing dispute. —APP

Sb for expediting K-IV
project to augment city's
water supply system

KARACHI: The Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat, taking notice of water supply issues of Karachi, on Friday urged the Sindh Government to take swift steps for curbing the tanker mafia and upgrading existing water infrastructure in line with the K-IV water supply project and the rapidly growing requirements of the city. The Committee further decided that the matters related to the funding and progress of the K-IV project would be reviewed on a quarterly basis. The Committee suggested convening a single-point agenda joint meeting of Senate Standing Committees on Finance, Planning and Development, Cabinet Secretariat and Water and Power, with participation of the Sindh Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Mayor of Karachi.—APP

citizens to pay for water. The Committee recommended that the Sindh Government should take immediate measures to curb the tanker mafia and upgrade Karachi's existing water infrastructure in line with the K-IV water supply project and the rapidly growing requirements of the city. The Committee further decided that the matters related to the funding and progress of the K-IV project would be reviewed on a quarterly basis. The Committee suggested convening a single-point agenda joint meeting of Senate Standing Committees on Finance, Planning and Development, Cabinet Secretariat and Water and Power, with participation of the Sindh Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Mayor of Karachi.—APP

KP minister for making private schools' registration easier

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education, Arshad Ayub Khan, has directed the relevant authorities to simplify the registration process for private educational institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to extend full cooperation to private institutions for the promotion of education. He emphasized that this would enable as many institutions as possible to obtain registration and provide their services in the education sector. He expressed these views while presiding over a briefing meeting on Thursday in Peshawar regarding the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Private School Regulatory Authority (PSRA). On this occasion, Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education Muhammad Khalid Khan, Special Secretary Muhammad Masood, Managing Director of the Private School Regulatory Authority Iftikhar Ahmad, and other officers were also present. During the meeting, the Managing Director of PSRA, while giving a briefing, stated that the Private School Regulatory Authority has established a mechanism for online registration of private institutions in the province and for addressing their complaints. A proper complaint tracking system is available on the dashboard through which complaints are resolved. Similarly, the authority has its own website, and issues such as school leaving certificates and migration of students have also been digitized, with proper records maintained by the authority. He further stated that private institutions under the authority can easily pay their dues through online banking and Easypaisa under the renewal process. In addition, facilities such as a GIS-based mapping of the registration system, fine management system, and mobile applications are also available. On this occasion, the Provincial Minister for Education stated that the number of students enrolled in all private institutions in the province, along with the prescribed procedures for these institutions, should be reviewed, and the registration of missing (unregistered) schools should also be ensured. He directed the relevant authorities to introduce modern-day reforms for private educational institutions in the province so that children of the province may have access to high-quality and standard education. He also emphasized that SLO-based examinations and training, along with the cluster system examinations, should be made more effective. —DNA



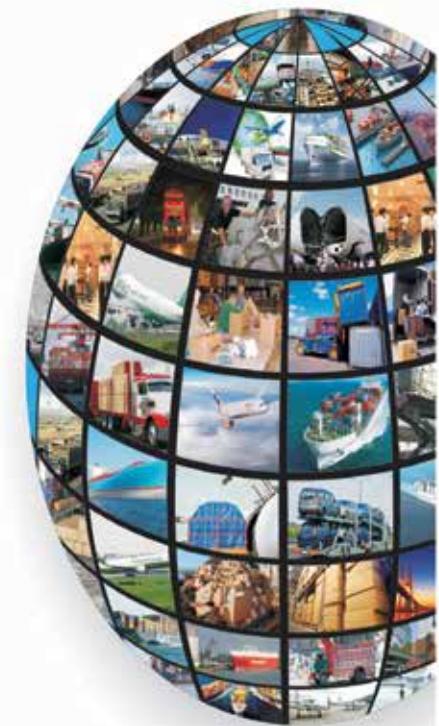
Karachi: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah hosted a lunch in honour of Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at CM House Karachi. PM AJK, Governors KP, Punjab, CM Balochistan, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, former PM, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Mayor Karachi, Provincial Ministers and notable politicians were also present.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Palestine Palestine Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Sudan National Day

Jan 04 / Myanmar Independence Day

Jan 06 / Iraq Armed Forces Day

Jan 12 / Tanzania Armed Forces Day

Jan 14 / Uzbekistan Armed Forces Day

Jan 15 / Nigeria Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Mali Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Laos Armed Forces Day

Jan 25 / Thailand Armed Forces Day

Jan 26 / Australia National Day

Jan 26 / India Republic Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.....451152
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.....9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



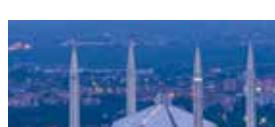
Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHO.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 927015-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Pothar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: A dense blanket of fog envelopes the entire Federal Capital during the early morning hours as children head to school amid low temperatures.

Health Ministry, Roche sign MoU to provide free cancer medicines

The Ministry reaffirmed its commitment to expanding access to life-saving treatments and ensuring equitable healthcare services for all citizens, particularly those from underserved regions

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A formal signing ceremony for an agreement between the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and Roche Pakistan was held to facilitate the provision of cancer treatment to patients residing in federally administered areas. The ceremony took place at the Ministry of National Health Services and Coordination and was attended by the Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, Secretary Health, Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh, Director General Health, Managing Director Roche Pakistan, Hafsa Shamsie, along with other senior representatives from Roche. Addressing the ceremony, Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal appreciated Roche Pakistan for a period of five years, under which thou-

offering a medicines support agreement and described the initiative as a landmark step towards reducing the affordability gap in cancer treatment. He stated that the partnership reflects a strong model of public-private collaboration, which the government intends to replicate in other regions of the country. The Federal Minister highlighted that Roche Pakistan provides medicines for three major types of cancer, and under this agreement, free cancer medicines will be provided to patients from Islamabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. He emphasized that the medicines will be made available through the joint collaboration of the Government of Pakistan and the multinational pharmaceutical company Roche. Syed Mustafa Kamal informed that the agreement is being signed for a period of five years, under which thou-

sands of cancer patients will benefit. The project will initially be launched at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Islamabad, and will later be expanded based on its success. Under the initiative, medicines will be provided for three types of cancers, including breast cancer, lung cancer, and liver cancer. The Federal Minister noted that the cost of treatment for a single cancer patient can reach up to PKR 9.8 million, and under this agreement, medicines worth approximately PKR 10 million will be provided free of cost to each eligible patient. He further explained that PKR 1 million will be contributed by the Government of Pakistan, while PKR 9 million will be borne by Roche Pakistan, making it a significant relief for patients and their families. Overall, 70 percent of the treatment cost will be covered by Roche, while 30 percent will be borne

by the Government of Pakistan. Patients from Islamabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan seeking treatment at PIMS will directly benefit from this facility. The Federal Minister reiterated that providing quality healthcare services to the public remains a top priority of the government. Syed Mustafa Kamal expressed sincere gratitude to Roche Pakistan for its cooperation and commitment, stating that this initiative marks the first phase of rebuilding trust in public-private partnerships. He added that once this model demonstrates success, more collaborative healthcare projects will be launched to further strengthen the national health system. The Ministry reaffirmed its commitment to expanding access to life-saving treatments and ensuring equitable healthcare services for all citizens, particularly those from underserved regions.

SSGC cuts unaccounted-for-gas losses by 60%

ISLAMABAD: The Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC) has achieved a major reduction in unaccounted-for-gas (UFG) through a series of structural, technical and governance reforms implemented over the past several years.

According to a document available with Wealth Pakistan, the company reduced UFG by 43.6 billion cubic feet, reflecting a 60% decline between FY19 and FY25. Out of these, 12 billion cubic feet were achieved in Balochistan between FY23 and FY25, indicating targeted interventions in high-loss areas.

To support these initiatives, the SSGC significantly enhanced its capital investment in gas infrastructure. Capitalization increased from Rs9 billion in FY22 to Rs17 billion in FY23, followed by further expansion to Rs24 billion in FY24 and Rs37 billion in FY25. The company has projected capitalization of Rs40 billion for FY26 and FY27. As part of this investment drive, around 5,000 kilometers of the gas

distribution network have been rehabilitated across Sindh.

Alongside infrastructure upgrades, the company carried out extensive operational restructuring. This included the establishment of a zonal structure and new regions, as well as a redefinition of departmental and divisional responsibilities aimed at improving accountability and operational efficiency.

The SSGC has stated that the large-scale restructuring of the distribution network, combined with vigilant monitoring, gas load management and comprehensive pipeline rehabilitation across its franchise area, has enabled more efficient utilization of limited gas volumes.

In a landmark step toward digitalization, the company has deployed automation systems at 50 distribution town border stations (TBSs) under a pilot project. Building on its outcomes, another project to automate 47 additional TBSs and 18 Sales Meter Stations (SMSs), covering 42 legs

or runs, is under execution. The company has also enabled round-the-clock monitoring of gas purchases at points of delivery fiscal meters. Almost 100% gas volumes are now monitored through check meters, while 78.2% of volumes are being tracked through remote data acquisition systems, improving transparency and control.

Measurement accuracy has been further strengthened through the replacement of existing electronic volume correctors with updated versions, improved vigilance against suction devices, and better management of meter sizing and selection.

The reliability of the measurement infrastructure has been verified by an international consultant.

In addition, SSGC has improved SMS and TBS-wise purchase and sales reconciliations through detailed surveys and the correction of tagging inaccuracies, contributing to tighter control over gas accounting and further reduction in system losses.—APP

Minister leads Islamabad environment review

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review environmental protection measures and the preservation of green cover in the federal capital, stressing the need for coordinated and transparent action to address public health and ecological concerns.

During the briefing, Dr Malik was informed about an ongoing campaign aimed at reducing the presence of non-native paper mulberry trees in Islamabad.

Officials told the minister that the species is highly allergenic and a major contributor to severe allergies and asthma-related health issues among residents of the capital.

The campaign focuses on the selective removal of paper mulberry trees in areas where their concentration exceeds 90 per cent, including Shakar-

parian, F9 Park, and parts of the H-8 and H-9 sectors. These will be replaced with native, fruit-bearing trees and pine species.

Dr Malik was assured that the campaign will not lead to a reduction in Islamabad's overall tree cover, as plans are in place to plant more trees than those removed. Replantation efforts will include the installation of mature native trees to accelerate ecological recovery.

Emphasising timely implementation, the minister directed relevant departments to strengthen coordination to ensure plantation activities are carried out during the upcoming spring season.

He underlined the importance of synchronised planning between the Ministry of Climate Change, EPA, CDA and IWMB to maximise environmental and public health benefits.

Dr Malik also instructed officials to develop a transparent, well-defined and streamlined mechanism to ensure full compliance with existing laws, rules and procedures governing environmental interventions, including permissions and licensing.

A comprehensive stocktaking of the current situation was conducted during the meeting, and the minister directed all stakeholders to maintain close coordination on future steps, particularly in relation to large-scale tree plantation initiatives.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Secretary Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Aisha Moriana, and senior officials from the CDA, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), and the ministries of climate change, health and interior.—APP

Police put five behind bars, seize illegal weapons in operation

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested five suspects and recovered a large quantity of illegal weapons and ammunition during a targeted crackdown carried out by Shalimar Police Station under the ongoing "Arms-Free Islamabad" campaign. A police spokesperson told APP on Friday that the arrested suspects were found in possession of four guns of various bores, a pistol, and a sizeable quantity of ammunition. All weapons have been seized and cases have been registered under relevant sections of law. The spokesperson said the operation was part of ICT Police's continuous efforts to eliminate the possession, sale, and public display of illegal arms in the federal capital. He quoted DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq as saying that the police had adopted a zero-tolerance policy against illegal weapons and those involved in supplying arms or creating insecurity in the city. He said that, on the directions of Inspector General of Police Islamabad, operations under the "Arms-Free Islamabad" initiative are underway across all zones, with special focus on hotspot areas. The spokesperson urged the public to cooperate with police during checking and to immediately report any suspicious activity to the nearest police station or helpline. "ICT Police is fully committed to ensuring the safety of citizens and maintaining peace by keeping the capital free of illegal weapons," he added. APP

CTP highlights extensive road safety awareness activities

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Traffic Police have issued the 2025 annual performance report of their education wing, highlighting extensive awareness activities aimed at promoting road safety and compliance with traffic laws. A CTP spokesman said on Friday the traffic education wing delivered 146 lectures on traffic rules and road safety during the year. He said the wing also organised 46 traffic awareness walks in 2025 to sensitise the public about safe driving practices. According to the report, 1,134 traffic laws and road safety awareness panflexes were installed across the city during the year, while more than 7,500 traffic education and road safety pamphlets were distributed among citizens. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Farhan Aslam said behavioural change was only possible through sustained traffic laws and road safety education. He said traffic education had contributed to improved road discipline and smoother traffic flow. He said that, along with religious and formal education, traffic education was essential for effective training.

Police arrest 6 suppliers, seize 221 kites

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police on Friday continued their crackdown against kite suppliers, arresting six accused and seizing 221 kites along with 16 rolls of string from different areas. A police spokesman said the New Town Police arrested two suspects and recovered 85 kites and two rolls of string. In another action, the Saddar Beruni Police apprehended two individuals and seized 80 kites and two rolls of string. Similarly, the Wah Saddar Police arrested one suspect and recovered 51 kites and six rolls of string, while the Race Course Police apprehended another individual and seized five kites, six rolls of string and kite-making material. Separate cases have been registered against all the arrested suspects. Mean while, The Rawalpindi Police have arrested four drug suppliers, including a major trafficker.—APP

NA body lauds health services academy's performance

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Health has expressed complete satisfaction over the overall performance, academic standards and growing role of the Health Services Academy (HSA) and termed it an exemplary public institution. In the meeting of the committee, the members unanimously said that the Health Services Academy has delivered results beyond expectations in education, research and public health policy-making. The meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on National Health, Regulations and Coordination was held at the Health Services Academy on Thursday, chaired by Member of National Assembly Mahesh Malani. In the meeting, the committee members were given a detailed briefing on the academy's educational activities, research projects, faculty development and collaboration with national and international institutions. The committee members said that institutions like the Health Services Academy are practical proof that if there is transparent governance, effective leadership and clear direction in the public sector, sustainable development is possible. The members also appreciated the fact that the academy not only produced health experts for the country but also played a key role in the preparation and implementation of national health policies. On this occasion, Vice Chancellor of Health Services Academy Dr. Shahzad Khan told the committee that the institution is paying special attention to public health education, research and policy support in accordance with modern requirements. He said that the aim of the academy is not only to issue degrees but also to prepare professionals who can provide practical solutions to Pakistan's public health problems. Dr. Shahzad Khan further said that the Health Services Academy, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health and provincial departments, is playing its role in evidence-based policy making, disease prevention and strengthening the health system.—DNA

Yasin reviews progress on 'Apni Chhat Apna Ghar' scheme

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Minister for Housing and Public Health Engineering Bilal Yasin on Friday visited Rawalpindi to review progress on the chief minister's flagship housing initiative, Apni Chhat Apna Ghar. During the visit, the minister met with beneficiaries of the scheme, who expressed gratitude to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and described the initiative as people-friendly and welfare-oriented. Bilal Yasin emphasized the provision of quality housing facilities and the promotion of dignified living standards for citizens. He also received detailed briefings from officials of the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) and the Horticulture Agency Rawalpindi. WASA Rawalpindi Managing Director Muhammad Saleem Ashraf briefed the minister on the ongoing mega project Dreams and the Agency's overall performance in the city. Speaking on the occasion, Bilal Yasin said that, under the chief minister's vision, public welfare projects were being implemented across the province. He said establishing WASA in every district and ensuring the supply of clean drinking water were among the government's key priorities. The minister said the housing department was actively working on low-cost housing schemes, improving urban infrastructure and providing essential civic facilities to the public. —APP

Briefs

Special foreign currency accounts opened for firms in Gwadar Free Zone

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has allowed Habib Bank Limited (HBL) to open special foreign currency accounts (SFCA) for companies registered in the Gwadar Free Zone, according to an SBP letter, Gwadar Pro reported. Under the approval, enterprises operating in the Gwadar South Free Zone and Gwadar North Free Zone can open SFCA with HBL, subject to terms and conditions set by the central bank. The letter says Chinese and other foreign companies in the two zones will be exempt from the Foreign Exchange Policy Framework (FEPF) and may retain up to 50% of their foreign-currency earnings in SFCA for trade-related payments and remittances. HBL will open each SFCA in the name of the relevant entity, with a Gwadar Free Zone identifier to distinguish it from other foreign currency accounts. The letter bars the accounts from being funded by cash foreign-currency deposits or by foreign currency purchased in Pakistan from authorised dealers or exchange companies. If an entity does not have sufficient funds in its SFCA to make a legitimate overseas payment, the letter allows HBL to meet the shortfall by purchasing foreign exchange from the interbank market for the underlying transaction.—APP

Chinese technology powers homes and harvests in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Chinese solar technology powers homes and harvests in Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday. The report says, for years, Rashid Akram and his family endured the harsh routines of summer in Lahore, where temperatures regularly climb above 45 degrees Celsius. Chronic power outages and rising electricity prices have long strained households and farmers across Pakistan, particularly during peak heat. That began to change about 18 months ago, when Akram installed 36 rooftop solar photovoltaic modules from Chinese manufacturer Astronergy, following a recommendation from a friend. "The most noticeable difference is the electricity bill," Akram said. "Even on the hottest days, our air conditioners and refrigerators run without interruption." The 21-kilowatt system generates about 28.5 megawatt-hours of electricity a year, significantly reducing household energy costs while cutting carbon emissions by an estimated 27.36 tonnes annually. Such installations are becoming increasingly common across Pakistan. As economic growth and rising appliance ownership place added strain on an ageing power grid, rooftop solar—once considered a niche option—has increasingly become a practical solution for energy security. The impact is also being felt in agriculture. In Okara district in Punjab province, solar-powered irrigation systems are replacing grid-dependent pumps that were often disrupted by power cuts and high tariffs.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Visitors taking interest in pieces of art during an exhibition. DNA

Pakistan-China iron brotherhood grows ever stronger: Dar

DNA

BEIJING: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that over the past 75 years, Pakistan and China have firmly upheld a tradition of mutual respect, trust, and cooperation, and that despite changing global circumstances, the "iron-clad friendship" between the two countries has continued to deepen. In a recent interview with People's Daily Online, he noted that 2026 will mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. Ishaq Dar said that the two countries have always strongly supported each other on core interests and major issues, while steadily implementing the important consensus reached by the leadership of both sides through close cooperation in areas including the economy and industrial development. He added that in the new era, efforts are being accelerated to build a China-Pakistan community with a shared future. According to Ishaq Dar, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is entering a new phase of high-quality development, and both sides are placing special emphasis on building a "corridor of people's well-being." He said that agriculture is one of the cornerstone industries of Pakistan's economy, and in recent years companies from both countries have achieved positive results through cooperation in

crops such as chili peppers, rapeseed (mustard/canola), and sesame. Meanwhile, many Pakistani agricultural products have gained access to the Chinese market. He noted that these developments are significant for enabling Pakistani farmers to integrate into regional value chains and increase their incomes. He further explained that in 2025, Pakistan launched a training program for 1,000 agricultural experts in China, under which two batches were sent to China to understand its experience in agricultural innovation and systematically learn modern agricultural skills. Ishaq Dar said that in the next phase, both countries hope to further deepen cooperation across the entire agricultural value chain under the CPEC framework, which will help transform and upgrade Pakistan's agriculture sector. Ishaq Dar said that close cooperation between Pakistan and China in industry and technology is delivering direct benefits to the Pakistani people. He noted that Chinese solar photovoltaic equipment, electric vehicles, and electric motorcycles have entered the Pakistani market, making daily life and work more convenient for the public. He added that Chinese companies have also established manufacturing units in Pakistan, creating opportunities for industrial upgrading. According to him, in areas where infrastructure is weak and energy costs are high, China's new energy technologies are generating new hope for public welfare. Speaking about cooperation in the space sector, he said that Pakistan and China have jointly launched nine satellites to date, covering areas such as communications, earth observation, remote sensing, and lunar missions. He added that it is expected that a Pakistani astronaut will visit the Chinese space station this year. One success after another in China-Pakistan space cooperation reflects a "trustworthy, reliable, and enduring partnership" between the two countries in the space domain. Ishaq Dar said that China's prospects for economic development are vast. In 2026, China will begin its 15th Five-Year Plan, and its high-quality development and high-level opening-up are attracting global attention. He said Pakistan is eager to further strengthen cooperation with China and learn from China's experience in modernization. Commenting on the global situation, the Deputy Prime Minister said that amid a complex and rapidly changing international environment, the four initiatives proposed by President Xi Jinping have received broad recognition from the international community.

PM approves policy framework to reform gemstones sector

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday gave an in-principle approval to the national policy framework to reform the gemstones sector, align it with international standards, and provide a conducive environment for foreign investment. The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting here on the country's gemstone reserves, sectoral reforms, export enhancement, and implementation of modern technology, directed strict adherence to the timeline for actions outlined in the policy framework this year. Citing vast reserves of gemstones in Pakistan, he instructed geological surveys to determine the geography and value of these reserves, ensuring full consultation with all relevant institutions, provincial governments, and stakeholders. The prime minister also instructed immediate measures to establish international-standard laboratories and certification systems. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the establishment of two model Centers of Excellence for gemstones in the country this year and engaging the internationally acclaimed experts to resolve obstacles in policy implementation. He said that the country's gemstone exports were negligible comparing immense reserves, and called for encouraging private companies, especially young entrepreneurs, to invest in the sector. Highlighting the globally-famed quality of Pakistan's precious stones, he said that curbing smuggling and promoting legal exports would bring in billions of dollars in foreign exchange. The prime minister also instructed the finance ministry to immediately release available funds to uplift the sector. The participants of the meeting were briefed on Pakistan's gemstone potential, regional comparisons, required measures for export growth, and the National Policy Framework's structure, objectives, and implementation timelines. It was told that Pakistan's gemstone reserves valued at around \$450 billion while annual exports stood merely at \$5.8 million. Over 5,000 companies are processing more than 30 types of precious stones in the country. Leading reserves include emerald, peridot, ruby, topaz, and aquamarine. The Ministry of Industries and Production has formulated a comprehensive action plan identifying challenges and priority measures to achieve a \$1 billion export target over five years through reforms. This year, the ministry will integrate the gemstone value chain into the national economy, promote local processing for value addition, adopt modern technology, launch private sector training programs, and introduce Brand Pakistan. The key elements of the framework include an international-standard certification regime, establishment of a dedicated authority for sector development and investment, a National Warranty Office, geological mapping, modern mining technology, Brand Pakistan promotion, and Centers of Excellence. The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Azam Nazir Tarar and Ali Pervaiz Malik, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar, and senior officials.—DNA

Saudi envoy to Pakistan called on Federal Minister Dr. Musadik

Pakistan Saudi Arabia Pledge Stronger Climate Cooperation as Saudi Ambassador Meets Climate Change Minister to Discuss Resilience Sustainability Strategic Partnership and Expanding Bilateral Engagement in Islamabad today during high-level talks



of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, called on the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik, in Is-

lamabad today. During the meeting, both sides held comprehensive discussions on avenues for enhanced mutual and strategic cooperation.

The Federal Minister highlighted Pakistan's priorities in climate resilience and sustainable development, and emphasized the importance of international partnerships in addressing global environmental challenges. He appreciated Saudi Arabia's continued support and engagement with Pakistan across multiple sectors. The Saudi Ambassador reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation. Both sides reiterated the deep-rooted, brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and expressed confidence that the longstanding partnership would continue to grow.—DNA

Sino-Pak green energy coop leads to sustainable growth: Report

ISLAMABAD: Chinese solar solutions are becoming increasingly embedded in Pakistan's industrial and public-service sectors, helping stabilize electricity supply, reduce operating costs and support the country's shift toward cleaner energy, according to a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday. In Multan, a 300-kilowatt solar power system installed at Laeeque Rafiq Hospital serves as a critical backup source, ensuring that essential medical equipment continues to operate during grid disruptions. Hospital administrators say the system has strengthened energy security for patient care. Manufacturing facilities are also benefiting from Chinese photovoltaic technology. At the Pak Rice Mill along the GT Road in Kamoke, a 400-kilowatt rooftop solar installation generates about 5.46 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, reducing carbon emissions by more than 520 tonnes. "Pak Rice is sold across Pakistan," said factory representative Ahmed Ilyas. "Since installing solar panels, our electricity costs have fallen and production efficiency has improved.—APP

ITP arrests tout issuing fake driving licences at Faizabad office

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) arrested a tout involved in preparing and issuing fake driving licences from the parking area of the Faizabad Traffic Office. An ITP spokesperson told media on Friday that the arrested suspect, identified as Mutayb ur Rehman Abbasi, was caught red-handed while trying to sell fake licences to citizens. The suspect was receiving money from applicants and preparing counterfeit licences of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The spokesperson stated that the citizen had complained that a man outside the Traffic Headquarters was luring people into making fake licences in exchange for money. Acting on the complaint, the ITP's vigilance team kept surveillance of the area and arrested the suspect during an operation. Fake driving licences, forged documents and other incriminating materials were recovered from his possession. The suspect has been handed over to the police for further investigation, and a case is being registered at Aabpara Police Station.—APP

NA speaker visits residence of Khurshid Shah

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq visited the residence of senior Pakistan Peoples Party leader and Member National Assembly Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah to inquire after his health. During the visit, the Speaker expressed his best wishes and prayed for the speedy recovery of Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah. He said Syed Khurshid Shah as a seasoned, experienced and active Member of the National Assembly, and conveyed his hopes that he would soon regain full health and continue to play an effective role in the proceedings of the National Assembly. Syed Khurshid Shah thanked the Speaker of the National Assembly for his visit, concern, and well wishes.—APP

Teacher's professional training ensures success of distance education: VC

ISLAMABAD: The Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood stated that continuous professional training of teachers is indispensable for maintaining and further improving quality in the distance education system. Skills-based training workshops play a key role in aligning faculty members with modern teaching requirements and emerging educational trends. He expressed these views while addressing the closing ceremony of a three-day training workshop on distance education organized for new faculty members by the Department of Distance, Non-Formal and Continuing Education. The workshop aimed to familiarize faculty members with new dimensions of distance education, effective teaching strategies and modern pedagogical methods. Faculty members from various departments of the university participated actively and enthusiastically in the training program. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Vice Chancellor distributed certificates among the participants and resource persons and directed that such skills-based workshops be conducted regularly to further enhance academic standards. On this occasion, Chairman of the Department, Dr. Muhammad Athar Hussain and the Workshop Coordinator, Dr Muhammad Ajmal Chaudhry thanked the Vice Chancellor for the successful organization of the workshop and appreciated the efforts of their team. They reaffirmed their commitment to organizing training workshops on course development skills in the near future.—DNA

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Overcapacity is China's biggest AI advantage

ANGELA HUYUE ZHANG

WHILE debates over the artificial intelligence race between the US and China tend to fixate on which country has the most powerful frontier models and the most advanced semiconductors, that framing is becoming outdated. As AI moves from our screens into the physical world, the question is no longer whose models hit technical benchmarks but who can build and sustain an ecosystem that embeds AI into everyday products and services. Such an ecosystem must rest on three pillars. First, it requires cheap, reliable and widely deployed hardware capable of hosting AI systems across a range of applications, from cars and drones to industrial equipment. Second, it depends on software in the form of AI stacks that can be updated continuously as firms learn from real-world use. And lastly, it involves supporting infrastructure that allows these systems to operate safely, such as data centers, smart roads, charging stations and power grids. Viewed through this lens, China enjoys a distinct advantage that does not show up in standard measures of AI performance. Counterintuitively, China's strength stems from what economists have long treated as one of its deepest structural weaknesses: overcapacity. Excess capacity is built into China's growth model. For decades, local officials have been rewarded for meeting investment and output targets rather than generating high returns on capital. State banks and local financing vehicles have kept credit flowing, while industrial policies have encouraged each province to cultivate its own "strategic" champions in steel, solar and shipbuilding. More recently, this approach has expanded into emerging sectors like batteries, electric vehicles and clean energy. From a macroeconomic perspective, China's growth model creates severe distortions, including duplicated investment, intense competition, thin margins and trade friction as surplus output spills into overseas markets. When it comes to AI development, however, the same dynamic can turn into a competitive advantage. The EV sector offers the clearest example. Developing autonomous driving capability requires a large installed base of modern vehicles that can run advanced driver-assistance systems. China has built such a base on a scale no other country can match, largely because of its overcapacity. More than 60 percent of the EVs sold in China now come equipped with driver-assistance features

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that support partial automation, often at no additional cost for consumers. Each of these vehicles functions as a rolling sensor platform. Every assisted mile generates data on what sensors see, how human drivers react and where systems may fail. By driving down EV prices and accelerating adoption, China's overcapacity is effectively subsidizing the continuous collection of real-world data.

At the same time, China is rapidly building the infrastructure to support the shift toward autonomous driving, even ahead of private demand. Its "vehicle-road-cloud" strategy, for example, aims to turn cars into nodes in a broader digital network through dense 5G coverage, smart roads equipped with cameras and roadside units, high-definition maps, traffic-coordinating cloud platforms and pilot zones where regulations are loosened to facilitate testing and deployment. A similar dynamic is playing out in what Chinese policymakers call the "low-altitude economy" — airspace below roughly 1 km — which they seek to turn into a new growth engine via drones and flying taxis. Here, too, local governments are repeating the EV playbook, with at least 45 localities announcing drone industrial parks and competing to attract firms with tax breaks, subsidies, cheap office space and procurement contracts. As in the EV sector, this investment frenzy is putting downward pressure on prices. DJI, China's largest civilian drone manufacturer, with a global market share of 70 percent to 80 percent, has recently cut prices by more than 20 percent across its domestic online stores. Lower prices and subsidies, in turn, are accelerating adoption. Meituan, China's leading food-delivery platform, has completed more than 600,000 orders across dozens of drone routes in major cities. And DJI says its agricultural drones now spray roughly one-third of all Chinese farmland. China is steadily assembling the hardware base and infrastructure on which the next phase of AI will depend. The same logic applies to robotics. Buoyed by generous local subsidies and national industrial policy, robot manufacturing in China has expanded rapidly in recent years. Chinese factories now install about 280,000 industrial robots annually — roughly half of the global total — with nearly 60 percent of those units supplied by domestic manufacturers offering cheaper machines. This mass deployment, in turn, accelerates the learning and improvement of China's robotics AI.

To be sure, China still trails the US in cutting-edge model development. But thanks to its tendency to scale aggressively, even to the point of overproduction, it is steadily assembling the hardware base and infrastructure on which the next phase of AI will depend, from EVs and robots to drones and flying taxis. American policymakers ignore this shift at their peril. By narrowly focusing on winning the race for better models and chips, the US risks losing the more consequential contest to embed AI into the infrastructure, machines and daily routines that will ultimately shape the global economy.

Trump's War on the World Order: Burying the United Nations and NATO

Qamar Bashir



This memorandum did not emerge in isolation. Immediately upon returning to office, President Trump renewed the U.S. withdrawal from the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement. On his first day, he also notified the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development that its Global Tax Deal would have "no force or effect" in the United States, while ordering an investigation into whether foreign tax regimes unfairly target American companies. Weeks later, he signed an executive order withdrawing from the UN Human Rights Council...

In his first term, Donald Trump unsettled the international system but did not fully dismantle it. Bureaucratic inertia, judicial limits, and allied resistance acted as brakes. In his second term, those restraints have largely disappeared. What is unfolding now is not simply an assertive foreign policy, but a systematic effort to dismantle the post-World War II international order—an order built around the United Nations, collective security, multilateral problem-solving, and the idea that power must be tempered by rules. That intent became unmistakable on January 7, 2026, when President Trump signed a Presidential Memorandum directing the United States to withdraw from 66 international organizations deemed no longer aligned with American interests. The order instructed all executive departments and agencies to cease participation in and funding for 35 non-UN bodies and 31 UN entities. This sweeping decision followed a government-wide review of every international organization, treaty, and convention in which the United States holds membership or provides financial support. The stated rationale was blunt: these institutions were judged to operate against U.S. national interests, sovereignty, economic prosperity, or security, or to function so inefficiently that American taxpayer dollars were "better allocated elsewhere." The administration framed the move as an act of reclamation—"restoring American sovereignty." Officials argued that many of the targeted organizations promote what they describe as globalist governance, radical climate policies, and ideological agendas incompatible with U.S. priorities. Billions of dollars, they contended, had been spent on bodies that routinely criticize U.S. policy, dilute American influence through one-nation-one-vote structures, or fail to deliver measurable results. Withdrawal, in this view, was not isolationism but efficiency: cutting costs, ending constraints, and redirecting resources toward "America First" objectives.

This memorandum did not emerge in isolation. Immediately upon returning to office, President Trump renewed the U.S. withdrawal from the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement. On his first day, he also notified the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development that its Global Tax Deal would have "no force or effect" in the United States, while ordering an investigation into whether foreign tax regimes unfairly target American companies. Weeks later, he signed an executive order withdrawing from the UN Human Rights Council and permanently prohibiting U.S. funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency for the Near East.

The January 7 memorandum consolidated these actions into a single doctrine: disengage, defund, and dismantle multilateral constraints.

That institutional retreat has been paired with a dramatic expansion of hard power. The U.S. defense budget for 2026 stands at approximately US\$901 billion, already the largest in the world by a wide margin. President Trump has now proposed raising military spending to US\$1.5 trillion in 2027, citing "troubled and dangerous times." This figure would exceed the combined defense spending of the next several major powers. By comparison, the entire European continent—including all NATO members except the United States—collectively spends roughly US\$300–350 billion annually, lacks unified command, and depends heavily on U.S. strategic enablers. The gap underscores a shift from deterrence to dominance.

That dominance was displayed on January 3, 2026, when U.S. forces carried out a sudden military operation in Venezuela, capturing President Nicolás Maduro and transferring him to the United States to face federal drug-trafficking charges. U.S. naval and air assets surged in the Caribbean, while Venezuelan oil exports were effectively sealed off under intensified enforcement. Regardless of legal justifications, the geopolitical meaning was stark: a sitting head of state was removed by force. The precedent shattered long-standing norms of sovereignty and reinforced the administration's belief that power, not process, is the ultimate arbiter.

From the Caribbean, the strategic focus turns northward—to the Arctic and Greenland. Greenland has moved to the center of U.S. attention because climate change is rapidly transforming the region.

As Arctic ice melts, new sea routes are emerging that could shorten Asia-Europe shipping distances by up to 40 percent. Analysts estimate that a fully viable trans-Arctic corridor could eventually carry trade worth hundreds of billions of dollars annually, reducing reliance on chokepoints like the Suez Canal and reshaping global commerce.

Greenland also holds significant mineral potential.

The island contains deposits of rare earth elements,

zinc, iron ore, uranium, neodymium, dysprosium,

cerium, gallium and other critical minerals essential

for advanced electronics, defense systems, and

energy technologies. The strategic value lies in fu-

ture access combined with geography. Greenland

sits astride the North Atlantic and Arctic approach-

es, offering proximity to Russia's northern flank

and growing Chinese polar interests.

Demographically and politically, Greenland is small

but democratic. Its population of roughly 56,000,

overwhelmingly Inuit, governs itself through an elected parliament under a system of extensive autonomy within the Kingdom of Denmark. What Greenland lacks is military capability. That asymmetry fuels the dangerous assumption that control could be asserted without resistance—a notion that sends shockwaves through Europe.

For European allies, particularly Denmark, this is a profound betrayal. Denmark was among NATO's most committed contributors in Afghanistan, suffering one of the highest per capita casualty rates. For decades, Europe accepted reduced military autonomy in exchange for American protection. Now, the prospect that territorial threat could originate from the alliance's dominant power has forced a strategic reckoning. Only France and the United Kingdom retain full-spectrum capabilities, including nuclear deterrence. The rest are scrambling to rebuild defenses hollowed out by dependence.

This strikes at the heart of NATO. An alliance cannot survive when its strongest member behaves as a territorial revisionist. If the United States were to assert control over Greenland, NATO would not collapse under external attack; it would die of internal contradiction. In such a scenario, the strategic logic underpinning the war between Ukraine and Russia would also change. A hollowed-out NATO would no longer represent a coherent expansion threat to Russia, eroding the rationale that has sustained confrontation with Ukraine.

What emerges is a world in accelerated realignment. Europe is reconsidering dependence, Latin America braces for renewed interventionism, and Asia prepares for maritime and economic confrontation. With the United Nations weakened and multilateral forums abandoned, disputes that once might have been mediated now drift toward unilateral force.

These are perilous times. The January 7 withdrawal from 66 international organizations marks not a tactical adjustment, but a strategic severing from the architecture that once stabilized global politics. Power is being centralized, institutions dismantled, and restraint discarded. History suggests that such moments rarely end quietly. The choice before the world is stark: rebuild collective order—or prepare for an era in which power alone decides, and the world order is not merely weakened, but buried.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)

Former Press Minister,

Embassy of Pakistan to France

Former Press Attaché to Malaysia

Former MD, SRBC

Macomb, Michigan, USA

Arab world's clear warning from Venezuela

Khalaf Ahmad Al-Habtoor

The UN met. Statements were delivered. Concerns were voiced. But beyond words, there was little action. This familiar pattern sends a clear message to the world: power overrides principle and accountability is selective. When international institutions fail to act decisively, they do not preserve stability; they erode it. Even warnings from UN bodies that such actions make the world less safe were met with indifference. This silence is not neutral; it is consequential.

WHAT unfolded in Venezuela over the weekend is not an isolated incident, nor should it be treated as such. It is a clear signal, one that deserves careful reading, not emotional reaction, and is a defining moment that exposes the fragile reality of the international order we inhabit today. On Saturday, the US carried out a direct military operation on Venezuelan soil, resulting in the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro and his transfer to America to face criminal charges. This was not the result of a multilateral decision, nor the conclusion of an international judicial process. It was a unilateral act, executed by force. The message is unmistakable: there are no absolute guarantees and state sovereignty is conditional when it clashes with the interests of powerful states.

If the accusations against Maduro were legal in nature, a simple question must be asked: Why was the International Criminal Court not used? Why were formal complaints not submitted, evidence examined and due process followed?

By bypassing international legal institutions, the US has effectively taken international justice into its own hands. In doing so, it has not only weakened Venezuela's sovereignty but also undermined the very system it claims to uphold. This sets a dangerous precedent. If one power can ignore international mechanisms without consequence, what prevents others from doing the same? The US is not the only global power. China, Russia, India, Pakistan and others all possess military strength and nuclear capability. If unilateral action becomes an accepted norm, who will restrain the next intervention carried out under the banner of "security" or "justice"? This is why Venezuela matters. Not because of sympathy for a regime or a leader but because the rules themselves are being rewritten. The UN met. Statements were delivered. Concerns

were voiced. But beyond words, there was little action. This familiar pattern sends a clear message to the world: power overrides principle and accountability is selective. When international institutions fail to act decisively, they do not preserve stability; they erode it. Even warnings from UN bodies that such actions make the world less safe were met with indifference. This silence is not neutral; it is consequential. President Donald Trump has repeatedly stated that Greenland is vital to US national security. If security interests justify unilateral action, it is reasonable to ask: Should the world expect similar logic to be applied elsewhere? This is not alarmism. It is the logical outcome of a world in which power replaces law. The uncomfortable question we must ask, honestly and without illusion, is this: Who is safe today? Despite this reality, we must be clear about one thing: we are not powerless.

The Arab world possesses immense human capital; scientists, innovators, thinkers and leaders, many of whom have contributed significantly to global progress when given the opportunity. Our challenge has never been a lack of talent. There has been a lack of consistent structures that protect, empower and retain that talent. Our most successful Arab economies were not built through dependence. They were built on our land, by our people, through vision, discipline and long-term planning. This is not theory; it is lived experience. True independence does not come from slogans. It comes from knowledge, institutions and the ability to make sovereign decisions without fear. So, what must be done? First, strengthen the Arab League in practice, not form. The Arab League must move beyond symbolism. It must evolve into a credible political, economic and security framework capable of protecting its members and deterring external pressure. A

bloc that cannot protect its own sovereignty will not be respected by others. Second, keep Arab capital and strategic assets within the region. Recent global events have once again proven a simple truth: assets held abroad are vulnerable. The freezing and seizure of Russian private assets in Europe stand as a clear reminder that political decisions can freeze, seize or restrict access to foreign-held wealth overnight, regardless of legal ownership or prior assurances.

The message is unmistakable: there are no absolute guarantees and state sovereignty is conditional. Economic sovereignty begins at home — through regional investment in food security, energy, industry and technology. This is not isolationism; it is prudence.

Third, unity, vigilance and trusted leadership circles. Unity is not an emotional concept; it is a strategic necessity. Arab states must coordinate policies, close ranks and reinforce internal cohesion. At the same time, it is imperative to examine carefully those closest to decision-makers, retaining only those whose loyalty to national interests is unquestionable. History teaches us that external weaknesses are often more destructive than internal threats.

Venezuela is not an exception. It is a warning. We are entering an era where international guarantees are fragile, institutions are weakened and power speaks louder than principle. Awareness today is not a luxury; it is a requirement for survival. Those who understand the direction of the world and prepare wisely will endure. Those who rely on assumptions that no longer hold may not be given another opportunity. The lesson is clear. The time to act is now.

— Khalaf Ahmad Al-Habtoor is a prominent UAE businessman and chairman of the Al-Habtoor Group and Dubai National Insurance and Reinsurance Company. X: @KhalafAlHabtoor

Briefs

Moscow says US released 2 Russian...

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Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharkova said in a statement, "We welcome this decision and express our gratitude to the US leadership," she added. Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev said on Telegram that Trump decided to release "all Russians" on board the Marimera tanker. The United States said previously the Marimera's crew could be prosecuted - which Russia said was "categorically unacceptable." Moscow on Thursday accused Washington of stoking tensions and threatening international shipping with the seizure of the tanker, which it has cast as illegal. Russia's foreign ministry said the move will "only result in further military and political tensions", adding that it was worried by "Washington's willingness to generate acute international crisis situations."

Pakistan,
UAE
relations...

FROM PAGE 01
He emphasized that Pakistan gives special importance to business-to-business (B2B) collaboration in sectors such as information technology, digital innovation, blockchain and other emerging technologies. The Prime Minister welcomed the growing interest of UAE investors in Pakistan's digital economy. He said that the UAE's investment, innovation and global connections combined with Pakistan's human capital and capabilities, form a highly beneficial partnership for economic development. Shehbaz Sharif expressed confidence that, with the strong support of the political leadership of both countries, increased private-sector collaboration will take economic cooperation between Pakistan and the UAE to new heights.

New
transparent
system...

FROM PAGE 01
third-party validation of last year's package. During the meeting, he praised all relevant institutions and ministries on the report by a reputable audit firm regarding the transparency of last year's Ramazan package. He noted that deserving individuals were deprived of their rights due to corruption in utility stores. Financial support and social well-being for the poor and the middle class are among the top priorities of the government, the prime minister said directing that subsidy amounts for the Ramazan package for the deserving people should be distributed exclusively through digital wallets so that their dignity and respect was not compromised.

KP CM given
a warm...

FROM PAGE 01
administration has said that no permission has been given to the PTI yet to hold a public rally. Permission to hold a rally will be granted after security clearance is received, added the administration. Meanwhile, KP CM's aide on information, Shafi Jan said that CM Afzad will also meet Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah on Monday (January 12), and will also hold meetings with party leadership at the Insaif House, followed by a visit to the press club during his stay in Sindh. "A big rally will be held at the Mazar-e-Quaid on January 11. [KP] CM's visit to Sindh is important to further accelerate the street movement," Jan remarked.

Strict
screening...

FROM PAGE 01
airport immigration systems. He also called for rigorous screening of travelers' documents at all airports to prevent illegal activities. During the meeting, officials also discussed operations against the "organised professional beggar mafia," ordering an effective crackdown against them. Naqvi said that elements involved in human trafficking are not entitled to any leniency and warned that Pakistan's reputation must not be compromised under any circumstances.

Venezuela frees ex-presidential candidate in 'large' prisoner release

Renowned Spanish-Venezuelan activist Rocio San Miguel was among five Spanish citizens freed, according to Spain's foreign ministry

CARACAS: Venezuela on Thursday began releasing a "large number" of political prisoners, including several foreigners, in an apparent concession to the United States after its ouster of ruler Nicolas Maduro. The releases are the first since Maduro's former deputy Delcy Rodriguez took over, with the backing of President Donald Trump, who says he is content to let her govern as long as she gives Washington access to oil. Former Venezuelan opposition candidate Enrique Marquez - who opposed Nicolas Maduro in the contested 2014 presidential election - was among those released Thursday. "It's all over now," Marquez said in a video taken by a local journalist of him and his wife, accompanied by another released opposition member Biaño Piliero. The White House credited Trump with securing the prisoners' freedom. "This is one example of how the president is using maximum leverage to do right by the American and Venezuelan people," Deputy Press Secretary Anna Kelly said in a statement to AFP.

Trump broadened his threat to drug traffickers in a Fox News interview that aired Thursday night, saying he would target cartels in land strikes - the US military has already destroyed at least 31 vessels in maritime attacks in the Eastern Pacific and the Caribbean, killing at least 107 people.

"We are going to start now hitting land with regard to the cartels. The cartels are running Mexico," Trump told broadcaster Sean Hannity. Interim leader Rodriguez's brother, parliament speaker Jorge Rodriguez, said "a large number of Venezuelan and foreign nationals" were being immediately freed for the sake of "peaceful co-existence." He did not say which prisoners would be released, nor how many or from where. Venezuela's opposition leader Maria Corina Machado hailed the announcement, saying in an audio message on social media: "Injustice will not

last forever and... truth, although it be wounded, ends up finding its way."

Trump told Fox he plans to meet with the Nobel Peace Prize winner "next week."

Renowned Spanish-Venezuelan activist Rocio San Miguel was among five Spanish citizens freed, according to Spain's foreign ministry.

She was imprisoned since February 2014 over a purported plot to assassinate Maduro, which she denied. Security was stepped up Thursday afternoon outside the notorious El Helicoide detention center in Caracas, used by the intelligence services to jail political and other prisoners.

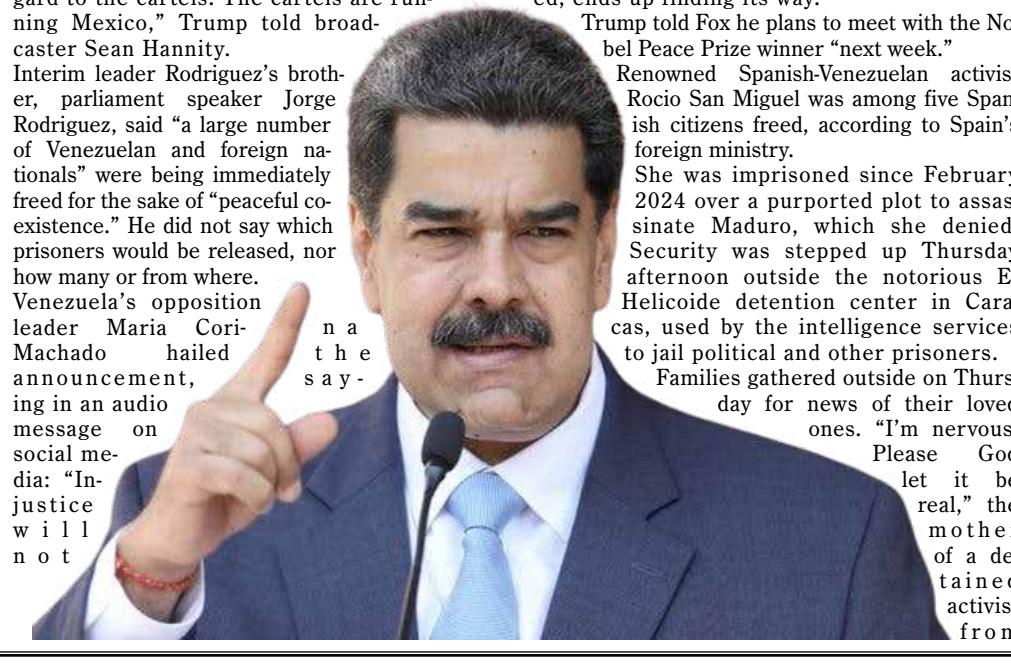
Families gathered outside on Thursday for news of their loved ones. "I'm nervous. Please God let it be real," the mother of a detained activist from

Machado's party told AFP.

On Tuesday, Trump had told Republican lawmakers that Rodriguez's administration was closing a "torture chamber" in Caracas but gave no further details. His remarks had sparked speculation that Venezuelan authorities had agreed to close El Helicoide. Venezuelan rights NGO Foro Penal estimates over 800 political prisoners are in the country's jails. Maduro was seized in a special forces raid accompanied by airstrikes, operations that left 100 people dead, according to Caracas.

US forces took Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores to New York to face trial on drug charges.

Trump said the US would "run" the Caribbean country for a transitional period and tap into its oil reserves for years. Delcy Rodriguez insisted Thursday her country was "not subordinate or subjugated." "Nobody surrendered. There was fighting for the homeland" when the US forces attacked, she said during a ceremony for the Venezuelans killed. Thousands of Maduro's supporters waving red flags rallied in Caracas on Thursday, demanding his release. Meanwhile, the US Senate on Thursday took a major step toward passing a resolution to rein in military actions against Venezuela, but it is expected to face resistance in the Republican-dominated House. - Agencies



Real Madrid Win Sets Up El Clásico Showdown

Real Madrid victory in Super Cup semi-final sets up fourth consecutive El Clásico in Saudi Arabia

JEDDAH: While Wednesday saw a sea of blue and red take over Al-Ittihad Stadium, Thursday belonged almost entirely to the colour white. The second semi-final of the 2026 Spanish Super Cup pitted Madrid Derby rivals Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid against each other in a fiercely contested encounter that ignited within the opening two minutes and ended with a 2-1 victory to Real Madrid. In the first minute of the game, Real Madrid won a free kick from a position that appeared harmless, but Federico Valverde had other ideas. The Uruguayan unleashed a thunderous long-range strike that flew into the net, sending the

stadium into raptures almost immediately. Despite the early breakthrough, Real Madrid did not dominate proceedings. Atlético controlled much of the shot count, pushing relentlessly as they attempted to overcome the forged "home" advantage enjoyed by their city rivals in Jeddah. That advantage was not driven solely by Saudi supporters. Ahead of kick-off, official broadcaster Thimany Sports got hold of a Real Madrid fan from Iraq who praised the organisation of the event and thanked Saudi Arabia for providing fans from across the region the opportunity to watch their team live. Atlético didn't plan on sending

those fans home with a smile. They forced Thibaut Courtois into action on multiple occasions, with his save from a corner mid-way into the first half proving key in preserving Real's lead. Real did get close to doubling their advantage in the 27th minute when Rodrygo found himself through on goal, executing a trademark Ronaldo chop to beat his marker before being denied by Jan Oblak. Atlético resumed their push after the break. In the 49th minute, they looked to find Julián Alvarez with a dangerous cross, but Antonio Rüdiger reacted sharply to step in and clear. Once again, it was Real Madrid's individual quality that

One dead, 38 missing after Philippine dump site collapse

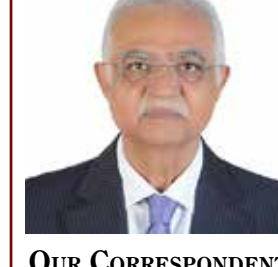
MANILA: Rescue workers searched Friday for dozens of people feared buried under a mountain of garbage that collapsed at a landfill in the central Philippines, killing at least one. Dozens of sanitation workers were buried when the towering pile of refuse toppled onto them on Thursday at Binaliw Landfill, a privately operated facility in Cebu City. "It must be four storeys high," Jason Morata, a city assistant public information officer, said of the trash mountain. At least 12 employees were pulled alive from the garbage and hospitalised, according to a statement on the official Facebook page of city mayor Nestor Archival. Rescue workers were "fully engaged in search and retrieval efforts to locate the remaining missing persons", he said. Aerial photos released by police showed what appeared to be multiple structures crushed under the weight of the garbage. City information officer Morata said the buildings had housed "company offices, HR, admin, maintenance staff" for a private firm that ran the site. "We're considering several factors. If you remember, Cebu was struck by two typhoons in the latter part of 2025... and also an earthquake," said Morata. He added information was emerging at a trickle, as there was "no signal" at the dump site. The landfill "processes 1,000 tons of municipal solid waste daily", according to the website of operator Prime Integrated Waste Solutions. - APP

Xi Jinping chairs CPC leadership meeting to hear work reports of state institutions

BEIJING: The Communist Party of China (CPC) leadership met on Thursday to hear a series of work reports from the leading Party members' groups of the top legislature, central government, top political advisory body, supreme court and supreme procuratorate. The Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee also heard a work report from the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over and addressed the meeting. The meeting emphasized that China is confronted with profound and complex changes in its development environment over the five-year period ahead, with arduous and demanding tasks on the agenda. It stressed the imperative of upholding, making full use of, and further developing the Party's leadership - the country's greatest institutional strength - to provide the fundamental guarantee for advancing Chinese modernization.

Last year, the leading Party members' groups of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the State Council, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate resolutely upheld the authority of the CPC Central Committee and its centralized, unified leadership, and made significant advancements in various fields, the meeting noted. It also commended the work of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee over the past year. Noting that 2026 marks the 105th founding anniversary of the Party and the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), the meeting urged the leading Party members' groups to focus on major economic and social development tasks for the 15th Five-Year Plan period, and to pool their strength to advance work in various fields. - APP

Qadir Memon Elected New PBSA President



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Abdul Qadir Memon has been elected as the new President of the Pakistan Billiards & Snooker Association (PBSA). According to an official PBSA statement, the election was held following the resignation of former President Zulfiqar Ali Ramzi, who stepped down due to personal commitments. The General Body unanimously elected Abdul Qadir Memon to lead the association. Qadir Memon brings with him vast administrative experience and in-depth knowledge of sports governance. He has previously served PBSA as Senior Vice President and Honorary Treasurer.

Pakistan U16 Football Team Makes Historic UEFA Debut

Pakistan's inclusion in the tournament highlights the improving relationship between the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) and international football bodies, particularly UEFA, and underscores renewed efforts to integrate Pakistan into global youth football pathways

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's U16 national football team is set to make history by participating in the UEFA U16 Development Tournament for the first time. The tournament will be held from April 24 to 30 in Kazakhstan. Talking to reporters, Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) President Mohsin Gillani termed the participation a "major breakthrough" for youth football in the country. He said exposure to elite international tournaments is essential for the long-term growth of Pakistani football. "This is a historic moment for Pakistan football. Playing in a UEFA Development Tournament will provide our young players with invaluable experience, confidence, and a clearer understanding of international standards," Gillani stated. Gillani emphasized that the PFF has placed youth development at the core of its football strategy, aiming to create structured pathways from grassroots to elite levels. "Our vision is to invest in youth, provide them with competitive opportuni-

ties abroad, and build a strong foundation for the future of Pakistan football. These tournaments are not just matches; they are learning platforms for players, coaches, and support staff," he added. He said the landmark participation marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's youth football journey and reflects the growing emphasis on international exposure for young players. The tournament will be hosted by Kazakhstan, with Russia and Azerbaijan also taking part. The event will provide Pakistan's young footballers a rare and valuable opportunity to compete against technically strong and tactically advanced teams in a high-level international development environment. The tournament is designed to nurture emerging talent by exposing players to competitive European-style football at an early age. Pakistan's inclusion in the tournament highlights the improving relationship between the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) and international football bodies, particularly UEFA, and underscores renewed efforts to integrate Pakistan into global youth football pathways.

Israel says struck Hezbollah...

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"Additionally, several launch sites and rocket launchers, along with military structures, were struck," it added. Lebanese official news agency NNA reported strikes on southern Lebanon in areas far from the border, as well as in the eastern Bekaa area where Hezbollah has a strong presence. "The targets that were struck, and Hezbollah's re-establishment activity in these sites, constitute a violation of the understandings between Israel and Lebanon, and pose a threat to the State of Israel," the military statement said.

Talks with govt only after...

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Abbas arrived on Friday at a gathering held at the residence of Advocate Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas, where a large number of journalists, political leaders and PTI workers were present. Speaking during the gathering, PTI leader Barrister Ali Zafar welcomed the TTAP delegation to Lahore. He urged the TTAP to use its platform to push for a meeting with Imran, who has not been allowed visitors in recent weeks. "No talks or dialogue can start until meetings are allowed with Imran," he said. Zafar assured the TTAP of "full cooperation and support from [PTI's] leaders and workers in Lahore".

Info minister terms PTI...

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The information minister also took a jibe at what he termed "false claims," referring to a PTI leader's assertion of having built Lady Reading Hospital, which he dismissed as misleading. Tarar also drew the development comparison in KP and other provinces, saying that Punjab's progress was "visible" to all, while development projects are also underway in Sindh and Balochistan. In contrast, he said KP "lagged behind" in development. He was of the view that the health and education sectors in the province governed by the PTI are "in a state of decline due to negligence" by the provincial government.

Trump says will meet...

FROM PAGE 01
President Nicolas Maduro and his wife and whisked them to New York to face trial on drug and weapons charges. Trump said last week that Machado does not have the respect or support within Venezuela to lead the country and has since suggested the US could effectively control Venezuela for years. He told Fox News on Thursday that the South American country, currently led by interim President Delcy Rodriguez, was not in a position to hold fresh elections. "We have to rebuild the country. They couldn't have an election," he said.

Myanmar vote a 'facade' to entrench military rule, UN rights expert says

"The international community should make clear that Myanmar's future belongs to its people," Andrews added, "not to those who imprison, silence and terrorize them"

UNITED NATIONS: A UN human rights expert has urged the international community to reject the electoral process organized by Myanmar's military government, after the first round of voting revealed widespread coercion, exclusion and violence. Thursday's statement from Tom Andrews, the UN Human Rights Council-appointed Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, reinforces earlier warnings from senior UN officials that the polls lack any democratic credibility. The initial phase of voting on 28 December exposed what he described as a "junta-orchestrated sham" designed to entrench military rule rather than reflect the will of the people. Naqvi said that elements involved in human trafficking are not entitled to any leniency and warned that Pakistan's reputation must not be compromised under any circumstances.

leaders to cancel the remaining two phases of voting. "The international community should make clear that Myanmar's future belongs to its people," Andrews added, "not to those who imprison, silence and terrorize them." Myanmar's military authorities planned the staged voting process nearly five years after they seized power in a February 2021 coup. Since then, the country has descended into widespread armed conflict pitting the ruling military against numerous ethnic armed groups, triggering mass displacement, economic collapse and deepening humanitarian needs, further compounded by devastating earthquakes in March 2025. Two further rounds are scheduled for 11 and 25 January, although the junta has already ruled out holding polls in at least 65 townships and thousands of wards and village tracts, underscoring its lack of control over large parts of the country. According to reports cited by the UN expert in a press release, voter turnout in the first

round was very low despite threats and intimidation. The National League for Democracy, which won sweeping victories in the 2015 and 2020 elections, was barred from participating after being dissolved by the military. Its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, has been detained since the coup, and her whereabouts and current condition remain unknown. Official results indicate that the junta's proxy, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, won nearly 90 per cent of contested seats in the lower house of parliament. "It should surprise no one that the military-backed party has claimed a landslide victory," Mr. Andrews said. "The junta engineered the polls to ensure victory for its proxy, entrench military domination, and manufacture a facade of legitimacy while violence and repression continue unabated." Andrews said junta forces have used the threat of conscription to compel young people to vote. "This is not political participation; it is coercion," he said. Displaced people, students, civil servants

Briefs

PSX sheds 1,133 points to close at 184,410 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Friday closed bearish, losing 1,133.34 points, a negative change of 0.61 percent, to settle at 184,409.67 points compared to 185,543.01 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market witnessed a trading volume of 1,033,852 million shares with a traded value of Rs 52.924 billion, against 1,433,986 million shares valuing Rs 91,336 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization declined to Rs 20,768 trillion from Rs 20,862 trillion a day earlier.

Out of 483 active companies in the ready market, 162 advanced, 271 declined, while 50 remained unchanged.

Fauji Foods Limited charted the volume chart with 75,815 million shares, followed by Hasco Petroleum Limited with 68,349 million shares and Media Times Limited with 56,235 million shares. The top gainers included Khyber Textile Mills Limited, which rose by Rs 67.33 to close at Rs 1,819.27, and Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited, which increased by Rs 57.02 to settle at Rs 10,039.03. —APP

Rupee gains 03 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 03 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.02 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 280.05. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.8 and Rs 282.75, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 0.87 to close at Rs 326.14 from the previous day's close of Rs 327.01, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.77, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 0.43 and closed at Rs 376.07 compared to the previous day's Rs 376.50.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 paisa each and closed at Rs 76.23 and Rs 74.67, respectively. —APP

China's trade corridor sees surge in cargo volume

CHONGQING: The New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, a key initiative enhancing global trade connectivity for China's western inland regions, reported a 30 percent year-on-year increase in cargo volume from the southwestern Chongqing Municipality in 2025, local authorities said Thursday. A total of 327,700 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of goods worth over 58.31 billion yuan (about 8.3 billion U.S. dollars) were transported from Chongqing via the corridor last year, up 30 percent and 25 percent, respectively, according to the city's port and logistics office. With Chongqing as its operational hub, the corridor links western China to global markets through multimodal transport routes via seaports or border ports in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan Province. Its network now spans 584 ports in 127 countries and regions, handling over 1,300 types of goods, including electronics, vehicles and auto parts, and machinery. The corridor has significantly improved logistics efficiency and trade accessibility, strengthening its role as a vital artery for the export of goods from China's western inland, said an official from the office. —APP

Ali asks envoys to mobilise global participation for PMIF

Recalling the success of PMIF 2025, the Minister highlighted that the previous edition was organised in line with international standards and delivered tangible outcomes. The forum attracted participation from over 50 countries and more than 5,000 delegates, while the signing of 14 MOUs with globally recognised companies validated growing international confidence in Pakistan's mineral sector

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik held a briefing session with Pakistan's Ambassadors and High Commissioners posted in key foreign capitals to advance preparations and mobilise international participation for the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2026 (PMIF26). The meeting was conducted virtually with Pakistan's Missions abroad, while senior officials from the Petroleum Division and representatives of key public sector entities attended in person. The session focused on aligning diplomatic outreach with national economic priorities and positioning PMIF26 as a premier global platform for investment in Pakistan's mineral and mining sector. During the briefing, the Federal Minister outlined the vision, scale and strategic importance of PMIF26, emphasising that the forum represents a national economic priority. He urged Ambassadors and High Commissioners to actively engage with leading mining companies, institutional investors, financial institutions and relevant government counterparts in their host countries to ensure broad-based and meaningful international participation. "PMIF26 will serve as a key platform for promoting mining awareness, stimulating economic activity and attracting sustainable investment into Pakistan's mineral sector," the Minister stated. Re-



calling the success of PMIF 2025, the Minister highlighted that the previous edition was organised in line with international standards and delivered tangible outcomes. The forum attracted participation from over 50 countries and more than 5,000 delegates, while the signing of 14 MOUs with globally recognised companies validated growing international confidence in Paki-

stan's mineral sector. Building on this momentum, PMIF 2026 is being positioned as a strategic economic initiative aimed at steering Pakistan's mineral and mining sector towards sustainable growth and long-term value creation. Pakistan's envoys reaffirmed their full commitment to leverage Pakistan's extensive diplomatic network to ensure strong and diversified

international participation in PMIF 2026. PMIF 2026 will be held in Islamabad on April 8-9, 2026. The forum will feature a Strategic Conference, Technical Conference, and an International Exhibition, alongside a Gemstone Exhibition and a comprehensive Resource Library designed to support informed, data-driven investment decisions. —DNA

Lebanon urges Iran to find 'new approach' on Hezbollah arms

BEIRUT: Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Raggi on Friday urged his visiting Iranian counterpart to find a "new approach" to the thorny issue of disarming the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group Lebanon is under heavy US pressure to disarm Hezbollah, which was heavily weakened in more than a year of hostilities with Israel that largely ended with a November 2024 ceasefire, but Iran and the group have expressed opposition to the move. Iran has long wielded substantial influence in Lebanon by funding and arming Hezbollah, but as the balance of power shifted since the recent conflict, officials have been more critical toward Tehran. "The defense of Lebanon is the sole responsibility of the Lebanese state," which must have a monopoly on weapons, Raggi told Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, a Lebanese foreign ministry statement said. Raggi called on Iran to engage in talks with Lebanon to find "a new approach to the issue of Hezbollah's weapons, drawing on Iran's relationship with the party, so that these weapons do not become a pretext for weakening Lebanon." He asked Araghchi "whether Tehran would accept the presence of an illegal armed organization on its own territory." Last month, Raggi declined an invitation to visit Iran and proposed meeting in a neutral third country. Lebanon's army said Thursday that it had completed the first phase of disarming Hezbollah, doing so in the south Lebanon area near the border with Israel, which called the efforts "far from sufficient." Araghchi also met President Joseph Aoun on Friday and was set to hold talks with several other senior officials. After arriving on Thursday, he visited the mausoleum of former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in a massive Israeli air strike on south Beirut in September 2024. Last August, Lebanese leaders firmly rejected any efforts at foreign interference during a visit by Iran's security chief Ali Larijani, with the prime minister saying Beirut would "tolerate neither tutelage nor diktat" after Tehran voiced opposition to plans to disarm Hezbollah. —APP

Switzerland mourns Crans-Montana fire tragedy

CRANS MONTANA: All of Switzerland will mark a national day of mourning Friday for the dozens of mostly teenagers killed when fire ravaged a ski resort bar crammed with New Year revellers. Just over a week after the tragedy at the Le Constellation bar in Crans-Montana, which left 40 dead and 116 injured, the wealthy Alpine nation will come to a standstill for a minute of silence at 2:00 p.m. (1300 GMT). A chorus of church bells will then ring throughout the country. The moment of silence will stand as a "testament to the shared grief felt by the entire nation with all the families and friends directly affected," the Swiss government said in a statement. At the same time, a memorial ceremony for the victims will be held in Martigny, a town about 50 kilometers (31 miles) down the valley from Crans-Montana, which had been rendered all but inaccessible by a large snowstorm. Inhabitants of the plush ski resort town will meanwhile be able to watch the ceremony as it is livestreamed to large screens, including at the congress center that for days after the tragedy accommodated families seeking news of missing loved ones. A memorial that has sprung up in front of the bar, loaded with flowers, candles and messages of grief and support, was covered in an igloo-like tarp Thursday to protect it from the heavy snowfall. Swiss President Guy Parmelin, who has declared the fire

"one of the worst tragedies that our country has experienced," will be joined for the ceremony by his French and Italian counterparts, whose countries lost nine and six nationals respectively in the fire. Top officials from Belgium, Luxembourg, Serbia and the European Union were also due to participate in the ceremony. Most of those impacted by the inferno at Le Constellation were Swiss, but a total of 19 nationalities were among the fatalities and the wounded. Half of those killed in the blaze were under 18, including some as young as 14. Of those injured, 83 remain in hospital, with the most severely burned airlifted to specialist centers across Switzerland and abroad. Prosecutors believe the blaze started when champagne bottles with sparklers attached were raised too close to sound insulation foam on the ceiling in the bar's basement section. Experts have suggested that what appeared to be highly flammable foam may have caused a so-called flashover — a near-simultaneous ignition of everything in an enclosed space, trapping many of the young patrons. Video footage which has emerged from the tragedy shows young people desperately trying to flee the scene, some breaking windows to try to force their way out. On Tuesday, municipal authorities acknowledged that no fire safety inspections had been conducted at Le Constellation since 2019, prompting outrage. —APP

Syrian govt announces ceasefire in Aleppo

ALEPOO, Syria: Syria's defense ministry announced a ceasefire in Aleppo on Friday after days of deadly clashes between the army and Kurdish fighters forced thousands of civilians to flee. The violence killed 21 people and was the latest challenge for a country still struggling to forge a new path after Islamist authorities ousted longtime ruler Bashar Assad just over a year ago. Since Tuesday, government forces have been fighting the US-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Aleppo, the country's second city. Both sides have traded blame over who started the fighting, which comes as they struggle to implement a deal to merge the Kurds' administration and military into the country's new government. The SDF controls swathes of Syria's oil-rich north and northeast, and was key to the territorial defeat of the Daesh group in Syria in 2019. "To prevent any slide toward a new military escalation within residential neighborhoods, the Ministry of Defense announces ... a ceasefire in the vicinity of the Sheikh Maqsud, Ashrafiyeh and Bani Zeid neighborhoods of Aleppo, effective from 3:00 am," the ministry wrote in a statement. There was no immediate comment from Kurdish forces in response. Kurdish fighters were given until 9:00 am Friday (0600 GMT) to leave the three neighborhoods, while the Aleppo governorate said the fighters would be sent, along with their light weapons, to Kurdish areas further east. The ceasefire appeared to be holding through Friday morning, said an AFP photographer located on the edge of the Ashrafiyeh neighborhood. He saw members of the security forces enter the area, as well as vehicles that appeared to be preparing to evacuate Kurdish fighters. He also saw some civilians leave the area. The goal of the ceasefire is for civilians who were displaced by the fighting to be able "to return and resume their normal lives in an atmosphere of security and stability," the defense ministry said.

CDNS nears annual target midway through FY

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has recorded a significant milestone in promoting Shariah-compliant investments, achieving Rs 23.4 billion in Islamic finance inflows from July 1, 2025, to January 8, 2026. This figure brings the directorate close to its annual target of Rs 25 billion for the current fiscal year 2025-26, signaling robust investor confidence in Islamic savings products amid Pakistan's evolving financial landscape. A senior CDNS official highlighted the achievement as a testament to the growing appeal of ethical, interest-free investment options. "We have revived and reinforced our focus on Islamic finance this fiscal year, which is poised to drive sustainable growth in the country's Islamic economy," the official stated. The issuance of dedicated Islamic bonds and Shariah-compliant certificates has been pivotal in attracting investors seeking halal returns while contributing to national savings. —APP

Call for stronger B2B linkages between Pakistan & Jordan

ICCI to take all possible steps to promote JVs, mutually beneficial partnerships between Pakistan and Jordan: Sardar Tahir Mehmood

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Major General Khurram Sarfraz Khan (Retd), held a meeting with Sardar Tahir Mehmood, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). During the meeting, discussions were held on different avenues for strengthening bilateral trade, investment and business-to-business (B2B) linkages between the two brotherly countries. Both sides observed that Pakistan-Jordan relations were witnessing renewed vigor and robustness, underpinned by enhanced high-level exchanges and shared goodwill. They emphasized the growing recognition of enhancing B2B linkages between the two countries, through exchange of business delegations and increased people-to-people contacts. Ambassador Khurram Sarfraz Khan highlighted that the 10th session of Pakistan-Jordan Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) was scheduled to be held in Islamabad on 4-5 February 2026, terming it a significant platform to advance multifaceted cooperation between the two countries, including in the economic and trade domains. He added that the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Jordan stood at around US\$ 51.29 million in 2024, which was far below the actual potential. He assured ICCI of his full support and availability to achieve the shared objective of enhancing economic ties between Pakistan and Jordan. In his welcome remarks, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that the existing Pakistan-Jordan

trade volume did not reflect the true potential of the two economies and stressed the need for closer liaison between the business communities through the respective Chambers of Commerce and Industry. He assured the Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Jordan, that ICCI, being the leading chamber of the federal capital, would take

all possible steps to organize B2B meetings, business delegations, and Business Opportunities Conferences to promote joint ventures and mutually beneficial partnerships between Pakistan and Jordan. Highlighting the potential sectors for trade, investment, exports and joint ventures, the ICCI President identified pharmaceuticals, agriculture and agro-based products, food processing, textiles and garments, leather goods, IT and IT-enabled services, construction materials, engineering goods, renewable energy, tourism and hospitality, education, and healthcare as promising areas for enhanced collaboration between Pakistan and Jordan. Senior leadership of the ICCI including, Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, and Executive Member Mian Shaukat Masood who were also in attendance, emphasized the need for effective dissemination of information regarding available trade and investment opportunities in Pakistan, regulatory frameworks.

S Korea's ex-President faces potential death sentence request in trial

SEOUL: South Korea's special prosecutor is expected to make a sentencing request for former president Yoon Suk Yeol on charges of insurrection over his brief imposition of martial law in 2024, as a lower court trial convened on Friday for its final session. Yoon, who is accused of masterminding an insurrection, could face the death penalty or life in prison under South Korean law if found guilty. South Korea has followed an unofficial moratorium for nearly 30 years and has not executed a death-row inmate since 1997. In hearings at the Seoul Central District Court, prosecutors have alleged Yoon and then-defense minister, Kim Yong-hyun, began devising a scheme as far back as October 2023 to suspend parliament and take over legislative powers. Prosecutors allege Yoon sought to brand political opponents — including then-opposition leader Lee Jae Myung — as "anti-state forces" and detain them. The then president and Kim also tried to manufacture a pretext for martial law by escalating tensions with North Korea through a covert drone operation, prosecutors have said. While the botched bid to impose martial law lasted only about six hours, it sent shockwaves through Asia's fourth-largest economy, a key US security ally and long considered one of Asia's most resilient democracies. Yoon, 65, has denied the charges. The conservative has argued it was within his powers as president to declare martial law and that the action was aimed at sounding the alarm over opposition parties' obstruction of government. Dressed in a dark suit and white shirt and appearing noticeably thinner than at the start of the trial in February, Yoon sat with seven other defendants including Kim and legal counsel. —APP

Belarus, Thailand discuss launch of joint trade-economic committee

MINSK: Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Thailand Vladimir Borovikov met with Director-General of the Department of European Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand Krongkanit Rakcharoen during his visit to the Kingdom of Thailand on 8 January. BelTA learned from the Belarusian diplomatic mission in Vietnam. The parties reviewed the progress in implementing the agreements reached during the visit of Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxim Ryzenkov to Thailand on 16 July 2025. The importance of more actively utilizing the potential of people-to-people diplomacy was noted. On the same day, Vladimir Borovikov held a meeting with Director-General of the Department of Trade Negotiations of the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand Chotima Yimsawasdiuk. —APP



Briefs

Bangladesh's key missions suspend visa services in India

DNA

DHAKA: Bangladesh's interim government has directed its key diplomatic missions in India, including the High Commission in New Delhi, to suspend visa services citing security concerns, a move that underscores the continuing strain in Dhaka's relations with New Delhi. Foreign Affairs Adviser M Touhid Hossain said at a media briefing at his office on Thursday that he had instructed Bangladesh's three missions in India to temporarily close their visa sections. The Star Daily reported on Friday. "What I have done is that I have asked our three missions [in India] to keep their visa sections closed for the time being. It's a security issue," Hossain said. The remarks came after Bangladesh's Deputy High Commission in Kolkata overnight restricted visa services, following similar steps taken earlier by missions in New Delhi and Agartala. However, business and work visas were kept outside the scope of the restriction. Bangladesh also maintains diplomatic missions in Mumbai and Chennai, where visa services continued to operate. India had previously imposed restrictions on visas for Bangladeshi nationals after August 5, 2024, citing security concerns.

India-US trade deal stalled

NEW DELHI: India's trade pact with the United States was delayed because Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not make a telephone call to President Donald Trump to close a deal they were negotiating, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said on Friday. The trade talks fell apart last year and Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods in August to 50%, the world's highest rate, including a levy of 25% in retaliation for India's purchases of Russian oil. "It's all set up and you have got to have Modi call the President. And they were uncomfortable doing it," Lutnick said in an interview on the All-In podcast, a US show by four venture capitalists that focuses on business and technology. "So Modi didn't call." The comments came after Trump stepped up the pressure for talks with a warning this week that tariffs could rise further unless India curbs its Russian oil imports. That step pushed the Indian rupee to a record low and spooked investors waiting for progress in two-way negotiations for a trade deal that remains elusive. India still seeks a tariff rate between Washington's offers to Britain and Vietnam that had formerly been agreed but the offer has expired, Lutnick added. - Agencies

Pakistan suffered 'internal default' in April 2022: Ahsan

Planning minister says the country's economy has made "remarkable recovery" since PTI-led govt's ouster

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal revealed on Friday that Pakistan "virtually" suffered an internal default during the PTI-led government in April 2022, saying the Ministry of Finance had said it had no money to release the final instalment of the development budget.

He was referring to the last days of Imran Khan-led government, which was ousted from power via opposition's no-confidence motion on April 7, 2022.

Speaking on Geo News programme "Geo Pakistan", the federal minister said the country's economy has made a "remarkable recovery" since Imran's ouster and under the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N)-led coalition government. "On April 1, 2022, for the first time in Pakistan's history the Ministry of Finance raised its hands and said we will not release the final instalment of the development budget because we have no money," he added. "So, virtually, an internal default happened in April 2022," he said, adding that people were then guessing Pakistan could also default externally within "4-6 weeks".

Iqbal cited what he described as improvements in key indicators, saying Fitch, Standard & Poor's and Moody's up-graded Pakistan's

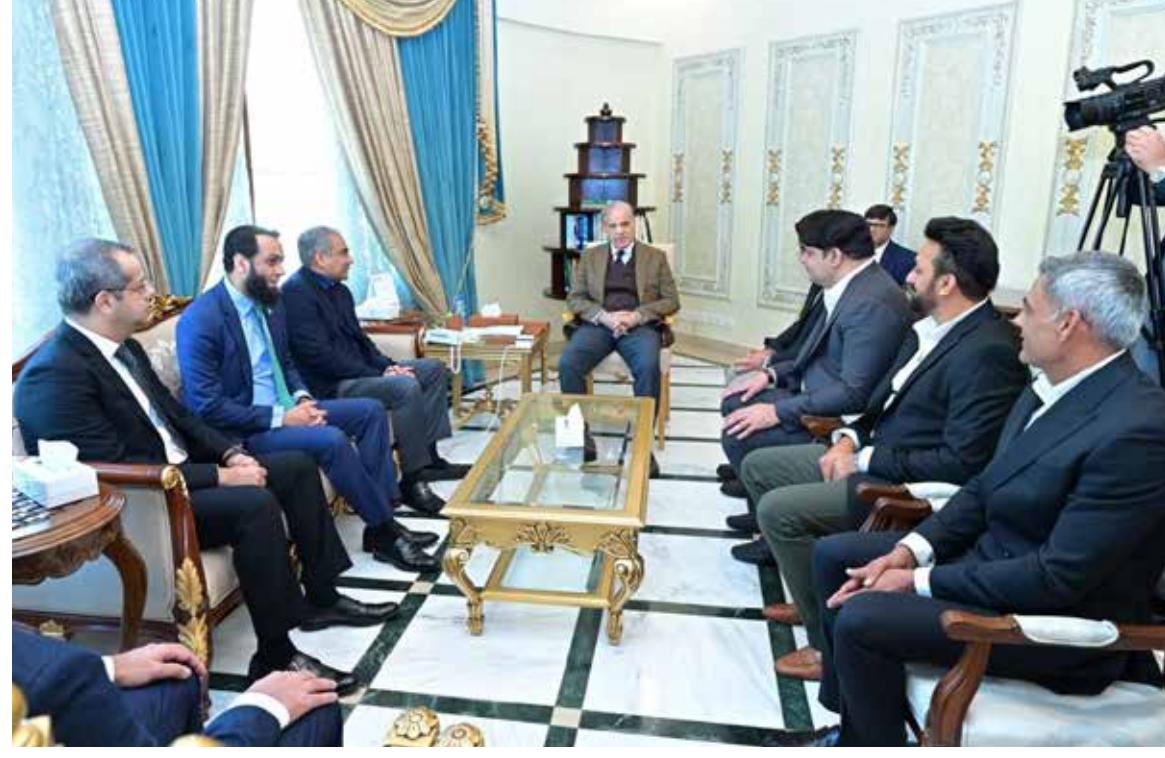
rating, while inflation that "was going up at the rate of 38%" had "come down to 4%". He said if inflation had not been brought under control, it would have continued rising each month. He added that the economy, which was "at zero", posted 3.7% growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal year and claimed large-scale manufacturing was increasing. "The IMF [International Monetary Fund] programme is our programme up to 2027," he said.

He said the government had taken a "conscious decision" in the budget to reduce duties

in sectors that can enable exports and to "somewhat" liberalise imports for raw materials and machinery to raise export capacity. He said such steps typically lift imports first, but that machinery and raw-material imports would "start translating into exports" in the coming quarters.

On whether relief was reaching the public, Iqbal said taxes on the salaried class were imposed "under compulsion" of the IMF and said tax filers had increased by "more than almost double", with further relief promised in the next budget.

Calling taxation a "life and death" issue, he said every income earner would have to pay tax "whether he is a trader, whether he is a landowner". He added that digitisation would help authorities match lifestyle and spending data with tax records.



ISLAMABAD: Representatives of the firms which acquired two new teams of Pakistan Super League meet with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif (Friday, 9 January, 2026). - DNA

Govt notifies base prices, spectrum volumes for 5G auction

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has notified the base prices and spectrum volumes for the auction of next generation mobile services (5G). A formal policy directive has been issued via the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication after approval by the auction supervisory committee, chaired by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. The policy states that the spectrum fee will be reflected in the licence in equivalent Pakistani rupees, with the US dollar to Pakistani rupee conversion based on the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) TT selling rate prevailing on the day preceding the auction date. Under the directive, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) will conduct the auction through a transparent and competitive process, covering six spectrum bands. The auction will include 15 MHz of paired spectrum in the 700 MHz band, 36 MHz of paired spectrum in the 1800 MHz band, 20 MHz of paired spectrum in the 2100 MHz band, 50 MHz of unpaired spectrum in the 2300 MHz band, 190 MHz of unpaired spectrum in the 2600 MHz band, and 280 MHz of unpaired spectrum in the 3500 MHz band.

Hospital staff to wear body cams

Punjab govt unveils sweeping hospital reforms, bans mobile use, orders medicine supply overhaul

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Punjab government has decided to introduce body cameras for hospital security guards, ward boys, nurses and pharmacy staff as part of wide-ranging reforms aimed at improving security and service delivery in public hospitals. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, where the progress of ongoing health projects was reviewed. The meeting also reached a consensus on banning the use of mobile phones by doctors and nurses during duty hours to ensure better patient care. Taking serious notice of public complaints against private security guards deployed in hospitals, the chief minister directed strict action and accountability. She also ordered that all government hospitals complete full steam cleaning by 9am daily to maintain hygiene standards.

CM Maryam directed authorities to prepare a new and modern medicines list for government hospitals and to constitute a dedicated committee for this purpose.

She expressed concern over medicine shortages, saying the government was al-

locating Rs80 billion for medicines, and

Trump says power constrained only by 'my own morality'

NEW YORK: President Donald Trump said in an interview published Thursday that his authority as commander-in-chief is constrained only by his "own morality," dismissing international law and other external checks on the use of U.S. military, economic, and political power. "Yeah, there is one thing. My own morality. My own mind. It's the only thing that

can stop me," Trump told The New York Times Wednesday night when asked if there were any limits on his international power. "I don't need international law," he said. "I'm not looking to hurt people." When pressed on whether his administration is required to abide by international law, Trump said, "I do," but added, "It depends what your definition

of international law is." His remarks follow U.S. attacks on groups in Venezuela, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Nigeria, Iraq and Iran throughout the first year of his second term. Trump's decision to capture Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro prompted backlash and concerns about the potential of a war ensuing. Trump, who spoke to the newspaper as his administration looks into "a range of options" in attempts to gain control of Greenland, also emphasized the importance of ownership. "Ownership is very important," Trump said, adding, "Because that's what I feel is psychologically needed for success. I think that ownership gives you a thing that you can't do with, you're talking about a lease or a treaty." - Agencies

US endangering world peace: German president

In unusually strong remarks, which appeared to refer to actions such as the ousting of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro over the weekend, the former foreign minister said global democracy was being attacked as never before



CENTRELINE REPORT

BONN: German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has strongly criticized US foreign policy under President Donald Trump, warning against allowing the world order to disintegrate into a "den of robbers," where the unscrupulous take what they want, Reuters reported on Thursday.

Chinese experts said the remarks reflect growing anxiety in Europe, where recent US actions—including pressure related to Greenland—have deepened a sense of crisis and exposed a structural breakdown in value-based transatlantic cooperation, as Washington increasingly prioritizes pursuing self-interest over shared values.

In unusually strong remarks, which appeared to refer to actions such as the ousting of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro over the weekend, the former foreign minister said global democracy was being attacked as never before, Reuters reported. Frank-Walter Steinmeier could soon disintegrate, adding that US raid on Caracas and seizure of Venezuelan leader, Nicolás Maduro, and to President Trump's repeatedly stated aim of taking control of Greenland were flawed policies.

Steinmeier, speaking on Wednesday night at a symposium in Berlin marking his 70th birthday, said global democracy was at risk. He said that there had been a "breakdown of values" by Germany's most important partner, the US, adding that "it is about preventing the world from turning into a robber's den, where the most unscrupulous take whatever they want," according to the Guardian.

Steinmeier also said that the erosion of the world order had already reached an advanced stage. Smaller, weaker states risked becoming "completely defenceless," and entire regions could be treated "as the property of a few great powers," according to the Guardian.

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