



# Islamabad POST

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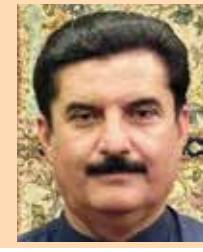
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**KP CM not acting in a serious way**

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**Pakistan team announced for pro league**

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## PTI in trouble

# Non-bailable arrest warrant for Afridi in cybercrime case

Senior civil judge orders law enforcement authorities to ensure KP chief minister production before court

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad district and sessions court on Wednesday issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister (CM) Sohail Afridi over his repeated failure to appear in a case involving alleged misleading statements against state institutions. Senior Civil Judge Abbas Shah issued the warrant after Afridi did not attend the hearing despite being summoned by the court. Taking notice of his continuous non-appearance, the court ordered his arrest and production before the court. The court adjourned further proceedings in the case until February 10. The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) had registered a case against the KP chief minister under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), accusing him of making statements that allegedly harmed the reputation of state institutions. In addition to the cybercrime case, CM Afridi is facing proceedings in an anti-terrorism court over his alleged role in the November 26 protest in Islamabad. KP chief minister is also facing a case before the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) over an alleged violation of the code of conduct during a recent by-election for a National Assembly seat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A day earlier, the Peshawar High Court (PHC) restrained the ECP from taking any action or issuing a final order against the CM Afridi in a case related to a notice served over alleged threats to government officials during the Haripur by-election. A two-member bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Faheem Wali



## PTI concerned at Imran Khan health reports

FIAZ CH.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Barrister Gohar Khan on Wednesday voiced "grave concern" following reports that party founder Imran Khan was taken to a hospital in Islamabad recently. "A report has emerged that the PTI founder was brought to the hospital and then returned to jail. This news has caused severe worry for both the party and the family," he said while addressing a press conference alongside PTI leaders in Islamabad. The PTI chief said that the party and family members have not been informed about the nature of Khan's illness, demanding a meeting with the founder be arranged immediately. "If not today, then at least tomorrow, a meeting should be allowed," he added. Earlier today, local media reported that Khan was admitted to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences on Saturday under tight security for a medical procedure. Citing a hospital doctor, the report stated the former prime minister underwent a procedure for an eye ailment, and was returned to Adiala jail the next day. The PTI on Tuesday had cited "credible media reports" that Khan had been diagnosed with Central Retinal Vein Occlusion (CRVO) in his right eye, resulting in a blockage in the retinal vein.

## ECC approves key economic measures

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Wednesday approved the disposal of 500,000 metric tons of PASSCO wheat stock through competitive bidding, with the objective of managing surplus stocks, reducing carrying and storage costs, and ensuring price stability in the domestic wheat market while safeguarding food security considerations. The ECC met under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb to consider a range of important economic, fiscal and sectoral matters aimed at ensuring macroeconomic stability, protecting consumers, strengthening social services and addressing operational requirements of key public sector entities. The meeting was attended by Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the concerned ministries, divisions and regulatory bodies, said a press release. During the meeting, the ECC approved the disposal of 500,000 metric tons of PASSCO

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## Man killed in IED blast in Bajaur

DNA

BAJAUR: A man was killed in a blast caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) in War Mamund tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district on Wednesday, according to police. Police and local residents said the explosion occurred near Zaga Deri Sewi bazaar, leaving a man seriously injured. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Niaz Muhammad told Dawn that the victim, identified as 47-year-old Najibullah, died while being transported to the Khar District Headquarters Hospital for treatment. He said the IED was planted by unidentified miscreants. The DSP added that a team of police personnel from the War Mamund police station, led by Station House Officer (SHO) Aslam Khan, had rushed to the spot and launched a search operation for the terrorists involved in the incident. He further said an investigation was underway to determine the cause of the blast and identify those were responsible for it.

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ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Australia, H.E Mr Timothy Kane called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters. – DNA

## Crown Prince MBS says

# Riyadh will not permit attack on Iran from Saudi territory

In phone call with Iranian president, MBS affirms Saudi Arabia's position on respecting Tehran's sovereignty

CENTRELINE REPORT

RIYADH: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during a call on Tuesday that Riyadh would not allow attacks on Iran to be launched from its soil. MBS "affirmed during the call the kingdom's position on respecting the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and that the Kingdom will not allow its airspace or its territory to be used for any military actions against" Iran, Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry said in a statement. The Saudi crown prince also affirmed Riyadh's support for any efforts aimed at resolving disputes through dialogue. During the telephonic conversation, the Iranian president told the Saudi crown prince that US threats against Tehran would only result in instability. "The threats and psychological operations of the Americans are aimed at disrupting the security of the region and will achieve nothing other than instability

Continued on Page 06

## Iran closes its airspace

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran has issued a Notice to Airmen (Notam) announcing live-fire military activity in airspace near the Strait of Hormuz, hours after US military assets arrived in the Middle East, reflecting heightened tensions in the region. The aviation warning, published on Tuesday, said Iranian forces will carry out live-fire exercises from 27 to 29 January within a five-nautical-mile radius around the strait. The notice said that the airspace in the designated area – from ground level up to 25,000 feet – will be restricted and considered hazardous for the duration of the activity.

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## Briefs

Trump says time running out for Iran



NEWS DESK

PARIS: President Donald Trump on Wednesday warned Iran that time was running out for the Islamic republic to prevent American military intervention as Tehran rejected holding negotiations against a backdrop of threats. Trump has never ruled out a new attack on Iran in the wake of its deadly crackdown on protests this month, to follow the 12-day June war between the Islamic republic and Israel which the US backed and joined. A US naval strike group that Trump described as an "armada" led by aircraft carrier the USS Abraham Lincoln is now lurking in Middle East waters.

Net metering credit issue resolved

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power Division Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari has taken notice of complaints regarding non-crediting of net metering users' units under Power Planning and Monitoring Company (PPMC) instructions. Following the minister's directives, PPMC promptly reviewed the instructions sent to all power distribution companies (DISCOs) regarding the credit of units of net metering consumers. The issue of crediting units is resolved after issuance of revised directives, read a statement issued by the Power Division. As per details, some net metering consumers have installed systems exceeding the approved capacity under their license. .

## Pakistan orders strict screening of travellers to stop Nipah virus spread

Authorities across Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Malaysia taking urgent steps to stop virus from spreading

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has issued strict health screening measures at all entry points after two cases of the deadly Nipah virus were confirmed in India's West Bengal. Nipah is classified as a priority pathogen by the World Health Organisation (WHO) because of its ability to spark fast moving outbreaks, its fatality rate of 40% to 70%, and the fact that there is no approved vaccine or cure. In its health advisory, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination has mandated that no individual will be allowed entry into the country without clearance from Border Health Services – Pakistan. The ministry stated that the decision comes "in view of the recent re-

gional alert regarding Nipah Virus (NiV), as reported through international and regional public health surveillance mechanisms, including the WHO South-East Asia Region Epidemiological Bulletin (January 2026), which has reported suspected cases of Nipah virus infection in West Bengal, India, and considering the high case fatality rate, zoonotic nature, and potential for human-to-human transmission."

To prevent cross-border transmission and ensure early detection, the health ministry has ordered enhanced surveillance at all points of entry (POEs), including international airports, seaports, and land crossings. "No individual is allowed entry into Pakistan without health clearance by Border Health Services-Pakistan," the advisory said. The instructions call for 100% screening of all passengers, transit travellers, crew members, drivers, helpers, and support staff. Mandatory verification of country of origin and complete travel history for the past 21 days will be conducted for all travellers, regardless of nationality. Special attention will be given to individuals arriving from or transiting through Nipah-affected or high-risk areas,

Continued on Page 06

## Ban on use of social media by children under age of 18

Earlier this month, senators Falak Naz, Fawzia Arshad, Aimal Wali Khan, Saadia Abbasi and Dilawar Khan called for keeping tabs on the use of social media platforms by children under the age of 18

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday sought replies from the federal government and other authorities on a petition seeking a ban on the use of social media by children under the age of 16. LHC Chief Justice Aalia Neelum heard the petition filed by Aliya Saleem and others through Advocate Shiza Qureshi on Tuesday. Justice Neelum observed that it was an important matter and a policy issue that should be addressed by the government. The counsel for the petitioner contended that social media was causing serious harm to the mental, moral and educational development of children. The petitioner's counsel stated that developed countries were also considering restrictions on social media use by underage children. The lawyer informed the court that Australia imposed a ban on children's

use of social media in December 2025, while France, Norway, Malaysia and New Zealand were in the process of legislating on the matter. Qureshi asked the court to order a ban on social media use for children under 16 years of age.

Justice Neelum directed a law officer to seek instructions from the government and submit a report by February 16.

Earlier this month, senators Falak Naz, Fawzia Arshad, Aimal Wali Khan, Saadia Abbasi and Dilawar Khan called for keeping tabs on the use of social media platforms by children under the age of 18. Presiding over the sitting, Senator Sherry Rehman said some checks were needed and suggested forming a special committee to develop safeguards in consultation with relevant ministries. In September, the LHC issued notices to the federal government and other respondents on a petition seeking a ban on the use of Facebook and TikTok by children.

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# KP to increase energy generation capacity to 1000MW: Secretary

PESHAWAR: The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has completed 10 hydropower projects of 224megawatt capacity and earning a Rs. 13 billion income per annum for the province while in the completion of 7 more projects the capacity of the economical energy will surge to 1000 MW and expected to generate Rs.55 billion per annum.

Moreover, working is also underway on three flagship energy projects in Swat district, which will start generating 387 MW of electricity in the next two years.

This was stated by Secretary Energy & Power Nisar Ahmad while presiding over a meeting here on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by Additional Secretary Energy Anwar Khan Sherani, Chief Executive Engineer Anwarul Haq, Senior Chief Planning Officer Syed Zahar Shah and other senior officials.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) Engineer Anwarul Haq briefed the participants of the meeting regarding the energy projects initiated by the organization.

The Secretary Energy & Power said that construction work has been accelerated on laying a 40-kilometer transmission line on the Swat corridor, which will be completed next year. With the completion of this transmission line the economic energy provision by the hydropower projects will be sold to the industrial sector of the province. Engineer Anwarul Haq in his briefing told the meeting that the major 63 MW hydropower projects including 40.8MW Koto Dir, 11.8 MW Karora (Shangla) and 10.2 MW Jabori Mansehra have been completed successfully last year, after which the total generation capacity of cheap electricity of PEDO has increased to 224 MW.

Similarly, work is underway on 7 projects including 300 MW Balakot Mansehra, 215 MW Madin Swat, 88 MW Gabral Kalam, 84 MW Matlitan Swat, 69 MW Lawi Chitral, 13.5 MW Chapri Charkhel Kuram and 6.9 MW Mujahideen Power Project Torghar. The Secretary Energy & Power termed the upcoming 40 km long

## Gwadar hosts Pathways to Modern Coastal City Expo

GWADAR: An exhibition titled "Expo: Pathways to a Modern Coastal City" was held at the Expo Center in the Gwadar Free Zone, drawing wide participation from government departments and private sector organizations from across the country. Various institutions set up stalls to showcase their projects and initiatives, while the staff of the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) emerging as a major attraction for participants and visitors. The Federal Minister for Planning and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, attended the expo as the chief guest and paid a special visit to the GDA stall. On the occasion, Deputy General GDA, Mo'in ur Rehman Khan, briefed the minister in detail on ongoing and proposed development projects in Gwadar.

The briefing covered investment opportunities, tourism potential, available resources, and the steps being taken by GDA to transform Gwadar into a modern coastal city. Discussions were also held on overall development, infrastructure expansion, urban planning, and investor-friendly policies aimed at attracting local and international investment. Following his visit to the GDA stall, the minister toured stalls set up by other participating organizations. He also addressed a seminar organized on the sidelines of the exhibition, where he highlighted Gwadar's strategic importance, coastal development prospects, and its growing economic potential. Several political and government figures accompanied the minister, including MNA Malik Shah, Provincial Minister for Planning Zahoor Ahmed Bul-ed, Provincial Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kaker, Provincial Minister for Industries Kohyar Domki, MPA Maulana Ashfaq ur Rehman, Mir Asghar Rind, Provincial Adviser Meena Majeed, Barakzai and others.

Throughout the exhibition, the GDA stall received a large number of visitors, including investors, industrialists, tour operators, university faculty members, students, government officials.

## Green Pak initiative, mod tech to cultivate barren land reviewed

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan presided over a high-level review of the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI) on Tuesday, describing the program as a cornerstone for the province's agricultural revolution and environmental resilience. The meeting focused on transitioning from traditional farming to a technology-driven corporate model designed to transform thousands of acres of barren land into productive assets. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary said the Green Pakistan Initiative is a vital national and provincial program aimed at boosting agricultural development and ensuring environmental sustainability. He emphasized that the initiative focuses on bringing barren land under cultivation through the use of modern technology and corporate farming practices. Shakeel Qadir Khan noted that the program is expected to significantly increase agricultural output, improve efficient use of water resources, and bring transformative changes to the lives of local farmers. In addition to agriculture, the GPI also includes components such as dairy development, aquaculture, the blue economy, and tourism, all of which are expected to have wide-ranging positive impacts on the people of Balochistan. The Chief Secretary further

# CM KP okays Peshawar revitalization plan

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Shafiq Afridi accorded in-principle approval to the Peshawar revitalization plan aimed at restoring the city's past glory and transforming it into a modern, beautiful and well-facilitated provincial capital. Chairing a meeting here at the Chief Minister's House, he directed the relevant authorities to thoroughly review all proposed projects and proceed with those found fully viable. He stressed the timely completion of feasibility studies, PCI documents and other technical and financial requirements to avoid delays in the implementation of the plan. During the meeting, a detailed review of the projects included in the revitalization plan was conducted and future strategies were discussed. The CM emphasized that a clear and effective implementation strategy must be adopted to bring visible improvement to the overall condition of Peshawar. He expressed confidence that effective execution of the plan would bring a noticeable transformation in the city's outlook within the next two to three years. The meeting was briefed that the Peshawar revitalization plan comprises dozens of development projects worth billions of rupees under various departments, including the Peshawar Development Authority, Public Health Engineering, Local Council Board, Irrigation Department, Communication and Works Department, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority. Some of these projects are already part of the Annual Development Programme and are currently in progress. - APP

# Sindh to introduce multilingual education policy

KARACHI: The School Education and Literacy Department of Sindh will introduce a multilingual education policy to teach language as a subject in Sindh for nurturing the fundamental language skills of the children.

The British Council will provide technical assistance for the initiative aimed at enabling students, speaking different languages, to effectively acquire basic reading and writing skills of their mother tongue along with speaking proficiency. The decisions, according to a statement issued on Tuesday, were taken in a meeting of a British Council delegation with the Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah. The delegation led by Helen Sylvester, Regional Director of the British Council South Asia included James Hampson, Country Director of the British Council Pakistan and Manager EaSTE-II Program Muhammad Umar while Secretary School Education Zahid Ali Abbasi and other officers were present. During the



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Dr. Oumer Oba hosted Malick Ceesay, Head of the UNAMA Liaison Office, at the Ethiopian embassy Islamabad. DNA

## Polio campaign shows major gains in Kohat

PESHAWAR: District authorities in Kohat have reported significant improvements in the ongoing polio eradication campaign, reducing the number of poorly performing union councils (UCs) from 26 to just 5, while missed child cases have also declined markedly. This progress was shared during a meeting chaired by the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Muhammad Nawaz Wazir on Wednesday to assess preparations for the upcoming polio vaccination campaign scheduled from February 2 to 7. Officials highlighted improved field supervision, expanded vaccination coverage and timely data reporting as key factors behind the gains. According to district health officials, overall performance has improved in the ongoing month. A police spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that various police teams carried out indiscriminate operations in different areas, resulting in the recovery of over 11,000 kites and more than 10,000 kite strings

## Over 21,000 kites, strings seized in month-long crackdown

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have confiscated more than 21,000 kites and kite strings and arrested 54 kite sellers and flyers during an intensified crackdown against the illegal activity across the federal capital in the ongoing month. A police spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that various police teams carried out indiscriminate operations in different areas, resulting in the recovery of over 11,000 kites and more than 10,000 kite strings

## Crime rate in Quetta drops by 70% in two months: CM

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti has announced a sharp decline in crime in Quetta, saying that the city has witnessed a 70 percent reduction over the past two months due to effective government policies and the tireless efforts



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**Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training**  
**Federal Directorate of Education**



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1	RENOVATION OF LABORATORIES IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF FDE, ISLAMABAD	177,084,344/-	8,854,217/-	16-02-2026 at 2:00 pm	16-02-2026 at 2:30 pm

- The firms may apply who fulfill the criteria mentioned in the Bid document available in the office of Director (Admin), Federal Directorate of Education, and on EPADS at ([www.epprocure.gov.pk](http://www.epprocure.gov.pk)). Last date for submission of applications is tabulated above. No bid will be received after closing date and time. Manual submission without submission on EPADS is not allowed.
- The interested firms should submit in the Technical Envelop duly stamped signed having the name of the firm, address(s), signature of representative, valid enlistment / renewal of firm with PEC (having relevant category and codes), tax registrations & Completion certificate of similar nature of work done within last 5 years. The details of the submissions are given in the bidding document.
- The owner of the firm should submit the application and collect the tender by deposit. In case of authorized person, authority letter (regarding the particular work) in favor of the person deputed on the letter pad of the firm is required along with copy of CNIC. This shall be uploaded in the technical envelop. Details of submission are available in the bidding document. If any contractor wants to participate in tender opening process through their representative, they should issue authority letter on letter head pad of the firm depicting complete valid address & contact numbers along with attested copy of CNIC this shall be presented at the time of opening of the bid.
- The Bid Security shall be in the form of Call Deposit bearing Name of Firm in favor of DDO, Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, from local scheduled Bank of Islamabad in the technical envelop. Without call deposit the firms shall be rejected in the technical evaluation stage. Cash/ cheque will not be accepted.
- The contractor will submit the documentary evidence as per instructions in the bidding documents, without which tender will be liable for rejection.
- Procuring Agency may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to acceptance of bid or proposal. The Procuring Agency shall upon request communicate, to any supplier or contractor who submitted a bid or proposal, but is not required to justify those grounds.
- The bidding shall be conducted in line with the procedure prescribed under Public Procurement Rules 2004, e-Pak Procurement Regulations, 2023 and any Regulations, Regulatory Guides, Procurement Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Authority (from time to time), and is open to all potential bidders registered in the EPADS
- The electronic bids prepared in accordance with the instructions prescribed in the electronic bidding documents must be submitted through EPADS on or before **2:00 pm 16th February 2026**. The bids will be opened on the same day at **2:30 pm**
- Pre-Bid meeting is scheduled on **6th February 2026 at 2:00 pm** for clarification and details are mentioned in the bid document

**Director (Admin)**  
**Federal Directorate of Education, Rohtas Road, Sector G-9/4,**  
**Islamabad. Tel: 051-9260948**

PID (I) No. 6231/25

# Senator's delegation inspects Islamabad Airport's operational efficiency

The inspection was carried out as part of the Committee's oversight agenda to evaluate aviation infrastructure and public service delivery at one of the country's most important international gateways



ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Defence conducted a comprehensive on-ground inspection of Islamabad International Airport on Tuesday to review infrastructure readiness, passenger facility coordination, and future development projects. The CAA informed the Committee that Islamabad International Airport currently has the capacity to handle nine million passengers annually and manage cargo operations of up to 100,000 tons per year. Officials also briefed the Committee on the nature of complaints received from passengers, particularly regarding prayer areas, cleanliness, washrooms, and e-tag areas, and outlined the steps being taken to address these issues. The condition and maintenance of runways and taxiways were reviewed, with assurances provided that regular inspections and maintenance protocols are in place to ensure operational safety. Authorities informed the Committee that the passenger terminal building is equipped with a seating capacity of 5,343 and 3,250 baggage trolleys. There are nine designated prayer areas, 90 sets of toilets comprising 370 units, 17 baby changing rooms, two children play areas, and eight charging facilities. Passenger facilitation is further supported by 26 golf carts, including 19 in the departure area and seven in arrivals, along with six passenger bridges, four serving departures and two for arrivals. The Committee was also briefed on the terminal's structural and processing facilities, which include 17 structural levels comprising 11 international and six domestic areas. The airport has 112 departure lounges, including 80 international and 32 domestic lounges, and 35 briefing corners, with 15 for departures and 20 for arrivals. Immigration processing is supported by 10 counters, seven international and three domestic. Baggage security includes 12 hold baggage scanning machines, with seven for international and five for domestic use, and eight hand baggage scanning machines, five international and three domestic. The airport operates 17 baggage belts and has a car parking capacity for 2,200 general vehicles, 150 cargo vehicles, and 200 vehicles for functionaries. It was further shared that a separate lounge for Chinese passengers has been established to facilitate diplomatic, business, and commercial travel.

## Minister urges responsible Basant celebrations

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari expressed hope that citizens would celebrate Basant responsibly as the festival returns after 25 years under strict safety measures and announced that a successful celebration could lead to a province-wide event next year. While speaking in an exclusive interview, she said the Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari said that the Basant festival is important for a healthy and vibrant society. The minister further warned that strict action will be taken against any violations during the Basant festival in Lahore. To ensure safety, the city has been divided into three specific kite-flying zones, and residents are expected to follow all rules while enjoying the celebrations, she highlighted. She emphasized that the government is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities while ensuring the celebrations are conducted under strict SOPs. She announced that during the three-day Basant festival on February 6, 7 and 8, citizens will be provided free transportation to enjoy the festivities safely, instead of using their own motorcycles, in order to reduce accidents and ensure public safety. Kite flying will not be permitted on any other dates. The minister added that if citizens cooperate and the festival is successfully conducted this year, the Punjab government plans to celebrate Basant across the entire province next year, marking a grand revival after a long gap. Response to a query, she said a complete ban has been imposed on kite carrying images of personalities, holy books, or religious places and the use of loudspeakers has been prohibited to maintain peace in the city during the Basant festival. Azma Bukhari also mentioned that the one-month registration process for kite manufacturers and sellers has been completed, ensuring that only registered individuals are allowed to produce or sell kites for the festival. In a special message, the minister said Basant is returning to give people a chance to enjoy their long-missed cultural festival. "Citizens have the right to celebrate this tradition, enjoy festive foods and relive the culture we have not seen for 25 years," she added. -DNA

## Reinstatement does not guarantee back wages, clarifies SC

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has laid down key legal principles regarding reinstatement and back wages for police employees, ruling that annulment of a dismissal order does not automatically entitle an employee to full salary and benefits for the intervening period. Instead, the authority to grant or deny back wages rests with the competent authority, which must exercise this discretion fairly, reasonably, and transparently. In a reporting-approved detailed judgment, a five-member bench headed by Justice Shahid Waheed issued a consolidated decision on multiple civil appeals and petitions involving employees of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. One member of the bench included Justice Naeem Aghar Khan, Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan, Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, and Justice Shakeel Ahmed. The central question before the court was whether an employee, after reinstatement following the annulment of a dismissal order, is automatically entitled to full back wages and benefits for the dismissal period. The court ruled that under Section 17 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Servants Act, 1973, the grant of back wages is a discretionary power of the competent authority, which must be exercised in line with Article 10-A of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to a fair trial, and the broader principle of a "culture of justification." The judgment emphasized that administrative powers should not be exercised solely on the basis of authority or power, but must be supported by sound reasoning, rational justification, and transparent grounds. The court clarified that the annulment of a dismissal order and the approval of back wages are two distinct, though interrelated, matters. The Supreme Court identified four possible grounds on which a dismissal may be set aside: procedural defects, technical grounds, disproportionality of punishment, and failure to prove allegations. It observed that if a dismissal is found to be substantively wrongful, the likelihood of full reinstatement with back wages is higher. However, where reinstatement results from technical or procedural shortcomings, the decision on back wages should be made in light of the specific circumstances of each case. The court further ruled that an employee seeking back wages must demonstrate before the relevant forum that they remained unemployed or worked on lower wages during the dismissal period. Conversely, if the government or relevant authority opposes payment of back wages, it bears the burden of proving, with credible evidence, that the employee was fully or comparably employed elsewhere during that time. The judgment underscored that discretionary powers must be exercised proportionately, impartially, and in accordance with the law, warning that failure to do so would invite judicial intervention. The court stressed that good governance requires decisions to be reasoned and justified, ensuring transparency, accountability, and fairness in public administration. -APP

## 585 challans issued as Islamabad shifts to e-stamping

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad has moved its stamp paper system to a digital platform, marking a change in how legal and financial documents are processed in the federal capital. Under the e-stamping project, 585 challans have been generated so far, while the Federal Treasury has issued the first physical stamp papers. Officials said the new system aims to stop fraud linked to stamp papers and improve record keeping. The process of stamping is continuing in the federal capital, according to the district administration, highlighting the digital process. Officials further stated that the e-stamping system allows the administration to compile and manage complete data related to stamp papers. The district administration highlighted that citizens can also verify stamps through the Citizen Portal. This feature allows users to confirm the authenticity of an stamp without visiting government offices. By using the portal, citizens can check details related to their or financial matters. The Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad said that 585 challans have been generated under the e-stamping project so far. These challans reflect the use of the new system by citizens for various official purposes. The administration expects the number to increase soon as more people shift to the digital process. Officials further stated that the e-stamping system allows the administration to compile and manage complete data related to stamp papers. The district administration highlighted that citizens can also verify stamps through the Citizen Portal. This feature allows users to confirm the authenticity of an stamp without visiting government offices. By using the portal, citizens can check details related to their

## Mushaal vows to protect legal rights of Yasin Malik

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, has expressed determination to protect her husband's legal rights, questioning the transparency of his case amidst repeated adjournments. She in a statement issued here, sent a strong message following the latest hearing of her husband's case in the Delhi High Court, reaffirming his resolve and expressing hope for justice from the international community. The Delhi High Court heard the case of Yasin Malik on Wednesday, during which he appeared via video link. She said that Malik raised contentions before the court over the repeated adjournments of case, questioning the transparency of the legal proceedings. Mushaal Mullick said that Yasin Malik told the court he remains firmly determined to protect his legal rights. The hearing was limited to arguments only, and no final decision was announced. -APP

## Gwadar MoU signed for drinkable water

ISLAMABAD: In order to ensure potable water, urgent medical facilities and pollution-free environment to the citizens of Gwadar, Alkhidmat Foundation Balochistan and Gwadar Municipal Committee (GMC) signed a landmark MoU, according to Gwadar MoU report. As per the MoU signed by Gwadar Municipal Committee Chairman Majid Johar and Alkhidmat Foundation Balochistan Chairman Abdul Mujeeb, collaboration and joint work will ease the public daily life. Under the MoU, Alkhidmat Foundation Gwadar will install water filtration plants in various areas. It will also make available the facility of water boring as per the demand. Gwadar Municipal Committee will build 200-gallon underground water tank. -APP

## FCCP issues detailed verdict in multiple tax cases

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan has released a detailed written judgment in a dozens of tax-related civil appeals, constitutional petitions, and transfer cases, issuing key directions on their disposal and further legal proceedings. According to the verdict, some cases have been concluded, while several tax references have been remanded to the district court. Justice Ameenuddin Khan, along with Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi and Justice-APP



## Briefs

### Racing cars run over motorcyclists

ISLAMABAD: At least one person was killed and another sustained injuries in a late-night traffic accident near Jinnah Garden on a highway in Islamabad during the wee hours of Wednesday, when speeding cars, reportedly involved in racing, ran over two motorcyclists. According to rescue officials, the accident took place in the early hours when several speeding vehicles hit the motorcyclists, inflicting critical injured, and one rider died on the spot, while the other was seriously injured, private news channel reported. Rescue teams reached the spot immediately and shifted the deceased's body and the injured person to a nearby hospital for medical-legal formalities and treatment. Authorities have yet to confirm the identities of the victims, while investigations are underway to determine the vehicles involved and the exact cause of the crash.—APP

## Wajiha calls MAKTAB game-changer

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education & Professional Training Wajiha Qamar on Wednesday said the launch of HEC's integrated automation suite "MAKTAB" marks a new era of digital efficiency and a game-changer for higher education, initially implemented in 25 public universities to enable hassle-free degree verification and streamlined academic management. In an exclusive interview with a local news channel, Minister of State Wajiha Qamar described the launch of HEC's integrated automation suite "MAKTAB" as a revolutionary step in higher education. She said the initiative, initially launched in 25 public universities, is aimed at ensuring hassle-free degree verification, boosting academic efficiency, and modernizing university administration, with plans to gradually expand across all public universities nationwide. Calling it a pioneering initiative under the government's reform agenda, the minister emphasized that MAKTAB will bring transparency, secure faculty data and streamlined governance to universities, she added. "This transformation platform is aimed at digitizing our education ecosystem, ensuring reliable academic records, and simplifying processes for students and staff alike," she highlighted. The minister highlighted that the suite will not only reduce bureaucratic delays but also strengthen the credibility, accountability and operational efficiency of Pakistan's higher education sector. Responding to a query, she said that under MAKTAB, all universities' records including challenges, fees, degree verification and attendance will be fully digitalized, making academic processes faster and more transparent. She added that teachers' pay slips, as well as administrative data such as procurement and furniture purchases, will also be maintained digitally, ensuring efficient management, accountability, and streamlined record-keeping across universities.—APP

## Dr. Tariq terms KP CM's statement on Tirah Valley false

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Wednesday rejected the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister's remarks on the Tirah Valley operation, calling them false, politically driven and misleading. In a post on X, he "we said using a serious national issue like terrorism for political purposes was irresponsible and against the country's interests. He added that such issues required national unity, not political scoring. The minister said the steps being taken in Tirah Valley were not aimed at any person, political party or government. He said the measures were necessary to restore peace, protect citizens and fully eliminate terrorism from the country.—APP

# German envoy calls on Finance Minister, discussed economic coop

The meeting also touched upon the broader regional and global economic environment, recognizing shared challenges and opportunities arising from global uncertainty. Both sides highlighted the importance of cooperation, policy continuity, and mutual understanding in navigating these dynamics and advancing sustainable economic outcomes.

**SAIFULLAH ANSAR**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Germany on Wednesday reaffirmed their strong and longstanding partnership, underscoring their shared commitment to maintaining close coordination and constructive dialogue to support economic reforms, promote investment and enhance mutually beneficial cooperation. Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Pakistan Ms. Ina Lepel called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and discussed matters relating to strengthen bilateral cooperation, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance. The meeting reviewed the overall state of Pakistan-Germany economic relations and underscored the

importance of sustained engagement to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, and development. Both sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to deepening economic ties and promoting a stable, transparent, and predictable business environment that supports long-term growth. The minister outlined the government's broad economic outlook and reform priorities, emphasizing the importance of macroeconomic stability, fiscal sustainability, and competitiveness-led growth. He shared perspectives on ongoing efforts to support economic recovery, strengthen export capacity, and improve resilience against external shocks, while maintaining momentum on structural reforms aimed at ensuring inclusive and durable development. Discussions also covered the Gov-

ernment's revenue and taxation reform agenda, with emphasis on broadening the tax base, improving compliance, and enhancing efficiency through technology and data-driven processes. The Minister highlighted that reforms are designed to promote fairness, reduce distortions, and create a level playing field for all economic actors, while supporting investment and formal economic activity. The Ambassador welcomed the reform efforts underway and shared general observations from engagements with the business community, noting the importance of clarity, consistency, and effective dialogue between stakeholders and public institutions. Both sides emphasized the value of continued engagement to ensure that policy objectives are well understood and that implementation remains aligned

with economic growth and investor confidence. The Finance Minister also highlighted the ongoing administrative and technological measures to strengthen administration, improve service delivery, and enhance transparency. The discussion underscored the importance of predictable processes, timely resolution of matters, and continued modernization of systems to support economic growth and facilitate business activity. The meeting also touched upon the broader regional and global economic environment, recognizing shared challenges and opportunities arising from global uncertainty. Both sides highlighted the importance of cooperation, policy continuity, and mutual understanding in navigating these dynamics and advancing sustainable economic outcomes.

## Role of science diplomacy in climate action discussed



ISLAMABAD : Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik, met with Alexis Roig, Chief Executive Officer of SciTech DiploHub.

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Malik on Wednesday met Chief Executive Officer of SciTech DiploHub Alexis Roig to discuss strengthening the role of science diplomacy in climate action. During the meeting, the minister appreciated the work of SciTech DiploHub in promoting collaboration between diplomacy and science, noting that such integration had become a global necessity, particularly for countries like Pakistan that face growing economic and social challenges due to climate change. The discussion focused on utilising Pakistan's local research capacity and knowledge base, while emphasising the need for evidence-based and science-driven policymaking. Both sides also explored the development of structured training and fellowship programmes, including proposals to place scientists within government ministries to improve policy formulation and implementation.

## Pakistan-China cultural exhibition opens

ISLAMABAD: An exhibition celebrating cultural heritage and long-standing ties between Pakistan and China opened in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), Gender Pro reported. Titled "A Fictorial Depiction of History, Heritage and Diversity of Pakistan," the showcase presents 80 original collages offering a chronological visual journey through Pakistan's history, landscapes, arts, languages, and the diversity of its people. The exhibition is part of a series of activities marking the 75th anniversary year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. It highlights cultural connections between the two countries and presents Pakistan as a layered and evolving civilization. Khali Hashmi, Pakistan's ambassador to China, inaugurated the exhibition. Speaking at the event, Hashmi underscored the durability of Pakistan-China relations and noted that the anniversary-year commemorations were launched earlier this month in Beijing with the unveiling of a 75th-anniversary logo by Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar alongside China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Hashmi said the collages span themes including Pakistan's ancient roots, the freedom movement, geography and landscapes, historic monuments, religious architecture, arts and sciences, sports, languages, and cultural diversity. He also pointed to cultural convergences between Pakistan and China, including shared heritage such as Gandhara art, according to Gwadar Pro .

## Ali Pervaiz invites Chinese firms

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik on Wednesday invited Chinese companies to participate in the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum (PMIF) 2026, scheduled to be held on April 8 and 9 this year. Addressing the Pakistan-China Minerals Cooperation Forum, the minister said, "I extend a formal invitation to all the Chinese companies and delegates present here to participate in the Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2026 scheduled to be held in April." "We would particularly welcome participation through a country pavilion showcasing mining capabilities, technologies and equipment. The forum will serve as a focused platform for structured engagement with policymakers, regulators and project sponsors," he said. The minister thanked the Chinese Chamber, Metallurgical Corporation of China Ltd (MCC), and all delegates for contributing to the success of the forum. Highlighting decades-long Pakistan-China cooperation, the minister said the partnership had translated into tangible outcomes

across multiple sectors of Pakistan's economy. Under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, he said, Chinese investment had played a pivotal role in rapidly expanding Pakistan's power generation capacity through a diverse portfolio of energy projects, helping address a longstanding constraint on economic development. Beyond the power sector, he added, Chinese collaboration had supported mass transit solutions, modern road networks and electric mobility initiatives, contributing to productivity growth and employment generation. The minister noted that China was among the early countries to recognise the strategic importance of the mining sector and now holds a dominant position in rare earth elements, as well as key metals such as antimony, while playing a leading global role in copper smelting and refining. He added that China's achievements offered valuable lessons for emerging mineral economies like Pakistan, adding that Pakistan-China cooperation in the mining sector already had a strong foundation, particularly through MCC's operations

in the country. Ali Pervaiz Malik also highlighted the long-standing collaboration between the Geological Survey of Pakistan and the Chinese Geological Survey since 2010, under which nationwide geochemical sampling was carried out to identify mineralised zones and guide systematic exploration. "Building on this milestone, we are now advancing towards high-resolution surveys and integrated geoscientific programmes to further unlock Pakistan's mineral potential into productivity growth and employment generation. The minister said growing confidence among domestic investors was a key indicator of a sustainable business environment, noting that an increasing number of Pakistani companies were entering the mining sector and forming partnerships with international firms. He added that significant strategic partnerships had been made and the momentum presented strong opportunities for Chinese mining companies, service providers and equipment suppliers to deepen engagement in Pakistan.—APP

## Pakistan-China mineral forum boosts bilateral ties: BOI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI) Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Wednesday said that the Pakistan-China Mineral Cooperation Forum was a significant initiative aimed at further strengthening economic and investment cooperation between Pakistan and China. Addressing the Pak-China Mineral Cooperation Forum as chief guest, the minister said that Pakistan and China were bound by a strong and time-tested bond of "iron friendship," which continued to deepen through mutual trust, cooperation and shared development goals. "I have personally witnessed the extraordinary development of China, from which Pakistan can learn a great deal," he said, adding that enhanced collaboration in minerals and other key sectors would be mutually beneficial for sustainable growth. The minister emphasized the need to further expand people-to-people and business-to-business contacts between the two countries, noting that more than 300 Pakistani companies had visited China in September 2025 alone. He informed that 167 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed during the Pak-China Business-to-Business Conference, and the Board of Investment was actively working on the implementation of all signed agreements.—APP

## Pak, Turkiye boost rice trade with competitive pricing

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a detailed meeting with the Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to review and enhance bilateral trade cooperation, with a special focus on increasing Pakistan's rice exports to Türkiye. The meeting was held on the directions of Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, who has assigned priority to strengthening agricultural exports, particularly rice, and intensifying global competition, said a release issued here on Wednesday. During the discussions, the Federal Minister highlighted that Pakistan has recorded an excellent rice harvest this season, ensuring both quality and sufficient exportable surplus. However, he noted that aggressive pricing by competing exporters—especially India and Vietnam has created challenges in global markets, exerting downward pressure on prices despite Pakistan maintaining strong export volumes. Jam Kamal Khan informed the Turkish side that the government, in close consultation with rice exporters and industry stakeholders, has developed a pricing support mechanism to ensure Pakistan remains competitive in international markets. Under this mechanism, Pakistan is prepared to match prevailing global prices so that buyers do not face cost disadvantages when sourcing rice from Pakistan. The Minister emphasized that Pakistan is fully prepared to supply both basmati and non-basmati rice to Türkiye at internationally competitive rates. He urged Türkiye to consider increasing import volumes from Pakistan as a special case, stressing that Pakistan's primary objective is volume enhancement rather than price maximization, in order to safeguard farmer incomes and sustain the agricultural value chain. To facilitate this objective, both sides discussed activating government-to-government (G2G) trade channels along side existing private-sector mechanisms. Under the proposed framework, Pakistan's state trading entities would coordinate with relevant Turkish public and private sector institutions, including state-owned grain procurement bodies, to enable bulk procurement where price competitiveness is ensured. The Federal Minister also raised key market-access issues, including tariff-rate quotas (TRQs), import licensing procedures, and the possibility of zero or reduced tariffs on basmati rice. He called for expansion and better utilization of the existing TRQ of 18,000 metric tons under the Pakistan-Türkiye Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), noting that the quota had remained underutilized in previous cycles due to procedural constraints. The Turkish Ambassador welcomed Pakistan's proposals and reaffirmed Türkiye's commitment to strengthening economic ties with Pakistan. He noted that bilateral trade volumes remain below potential despite strong political relations, and recalled the jointly agreed target of achieving USD 5 billion in bilateral trade, set during the Pakistan-Türkiye High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council meeting.—APP

## Pakistan eyes mineral-led growth under CPEC 2.0

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday said Pakistan and China were eyeing new phases of economic partnership by placing mineral development at the centre of CPEC 2.0, aimed at transforming connectivity into productivity, exports and sustainable growth. Addressing the launching ceremony of the China-Pakistan Mineral Cooperation Forum here, he said the two countries were repositioning their strategic partnership towards mineral-led industrialization, with Gwadar emerging as the principal gateway to connect Pakistan's mineral-rich regions with regional and global markets. The minister said the initiative reflected a deliberate shift from infrastructure-centric cooperation to value-added, export-oriented collaboration, as both countries approach the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. "As we approach 75 years of Pakistan-China relations, our partnership stands as a model of continuity, trust and strategic depth. This is a relationship that has never wavered a season of autumn; it has always flourished in spring and reached new heights every year," he remarked. Ahsan Iqbal said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Phase-I remained the most visible expression of this enduring partnership, noting that projects completed under the corridor had added over 8,000 megawatts of energy capacity, upgraded more than 1,000 kilometres of road infrastructure, modernised Gwadar and strengthened national connectivity. Referring to his recent visit to Gwadar, the minister said the China-built international airport had positioned the port city to play a pivotal role in Pakistan's phase of growth. "Gwadar is now ready not only to function as a smart port city but also to serve as a hub for the mining industry by linking Pakistan's mineral resources with global markets," he added. He said CPEC Phase-II was focused on addressing Pakistan's longstanding structural weaknesses, particularly its weak export base. "Infrastructure for its own sake is not enough. Our objective is to translate connectivity into productivity, productivity into exports, and exports into jobs and sustainable growth," he said. Highlighting Pakistan's untapped mineral wealth, Ahsan Iqbal said the country hosts around 92 known minerals, with 52 currently under extraction, nearly 5,000 operational mines and annual production of about 68.5 million metric tons. Despite this scale, he observed, mineral exports remained modest, contributing only 2-3 percent to GDP. "This gap between potential and performance is largely due to lack of value addition," he said, adding that over 90 per cent of mineral exports were raw or semi-processed, while only about 40 percent of Pakistan's land had been geologically mapped. Citing marble and granite reserves stretching from Turbat to Chitral, the minister said outdated blasting and extraction methods were destroying value. "There is a huge opportunity for Chinese enterprises to invest in modern cutting and processing technologies so Pakistan can become a global hub for world-class marble and earn billions of dollars from this sector alone," he added. He said with improved governance, technology and strategic partnerships, Pakistan's mineral exports could rise to 86-8 billion annually within this decade, support GDP growth of around 6 percent and generate more than 350,000 direct and indirect jobs. Ahsan Iqbal said China's role was central to this transformation due to its expertise across the mining value chain, including geological surveying, modern extraction, processing, smelting, refining, environmental management and project financing. Existing projects such as Saindak Copper-Gold, Duddar Lead-Zinc and Thar Coal, he added, illustrated the potential of bilateral cooperation.—DNA

## Trump's board of peace

**DR. RAMZY BAROUD**

THE history of American power is, in many ways, the history of re-inventing rules — or designing new ones — to fit strategic US interests. This may sound harsh but it is a necessary realization, particularly in light of US President Donald Trump's latest political invention: the "Board of Peace." Some have hastily concluded that Trump's newest political gambit — unveiled last week at the World Economic Forum in Davos — is a uniquely Trumpian endeavor, detached from earlier US foreign policy doctrines. They are mistaken, misled largely by Trump's self-centered political style and his constant, though unfounded, claims that he has ended wars, resolved global conflicts and made the world a safer place. At the Davos launch, Trump reinforced this carefully crafted illusion, boasting of America's supposed historic leadership in bringing peace, praising alleged unprecedented diplomatic breakthroughs and presenting the Board of Peace as a neutral, benevolent mechanism capable of stabilizing the world's most volatile regions. Trump's political designs — whether in Gaza or beyond — are not an aberration but part of a familiar pattern. Yet a less prejudiced reading of history allows us to see Trump's political designs — whether in Gaza or beyond — not as an aberration but as part of a familiar pattern. US foreign policymakers repeatedly seek to reclaim ownership of global affairs, sideline international consensus and impose political frameworks that they alone define, manage and ultimately control. The Board of Peace — an invitation-only political club controlled entirely by Trump — is increasingly taking shape as a new geopolitical reality. Through this scheme, the US is imposing itself as the self-appointed caretaker of global affairs, beginning with genocide-devastated Gaza, and positioning itself as an alternative to the UN. The irony is staggering. A body ostensibly meant to guide Gaza through reconstruction after Israel's devastating genocide does not include Palestinians — let alone Gazans. Even more damning is the fact that the genocide it claims to address was politically backed, militarily financed and diplomatically shielded by successive US administrations, first under Joe Biden and later Trump. It requires no particular insight to conclude that Trump's Board of Peace is not concerned with peace, nor genuinely with Gaza. So what, then, is this initiative really about? It is not about reconstruction or justice but about exploiting Gaza's suffering to impose a new US-led world order, first in the Middle East and eventually beyond. Gaza — a besieged territory of just 365 sq. km — does not require a new political structure populated by dozens of world leaders, each reportedly paying a \$1 billion membership fee. Gaza needs reconstruction, its people must be granted their basic rights and Israel's crimes must be held accountable. The mechanisms to achieve this already exist: the UN, international law, long-standing humanitarian institutions and, above all, the Palestinians themselves, whose agency, resilience

## How Trump Pushed the World Toward Beijing



**Qamar Bashir**

Europe's own posture toward Beijing illustrates this reality. Only a few years ago, European policy focused on "de-risking" and restricting Chinese investment in strategic sectors. Today, that posture is being recalibrated at unprecedented speed. High-level dialogues on industrial cooperation, green technology, electric vehicles, and infrastructure investment reflect a recognition that Europe's economic competitiveness is tied to engagement with China, not isolation from it. Canada's recalibration mirrors this logic. Energy partnerships with the Gulf, expanded Asian trade, and financial diversification are not ideological statements...

## Netanyahu the biggest obstacle to Trump's Gaza plan

**Osama Al-Sharif**

Netanyahu was equally unhappy with Trump's idea of establishing a "Board of Peace" to oversee the implementation of his plan, including the naming of a Palestinian national committee to run the enclave and inviting international troops to serve as a stabilization force in Gaza. When Trump unveiled the four-tier structure of his Board of Peace this month — with an executive committee, a Palestinian national committee, a US general to head the stabilization force and a high commissioner to liaise between the Palestinian...

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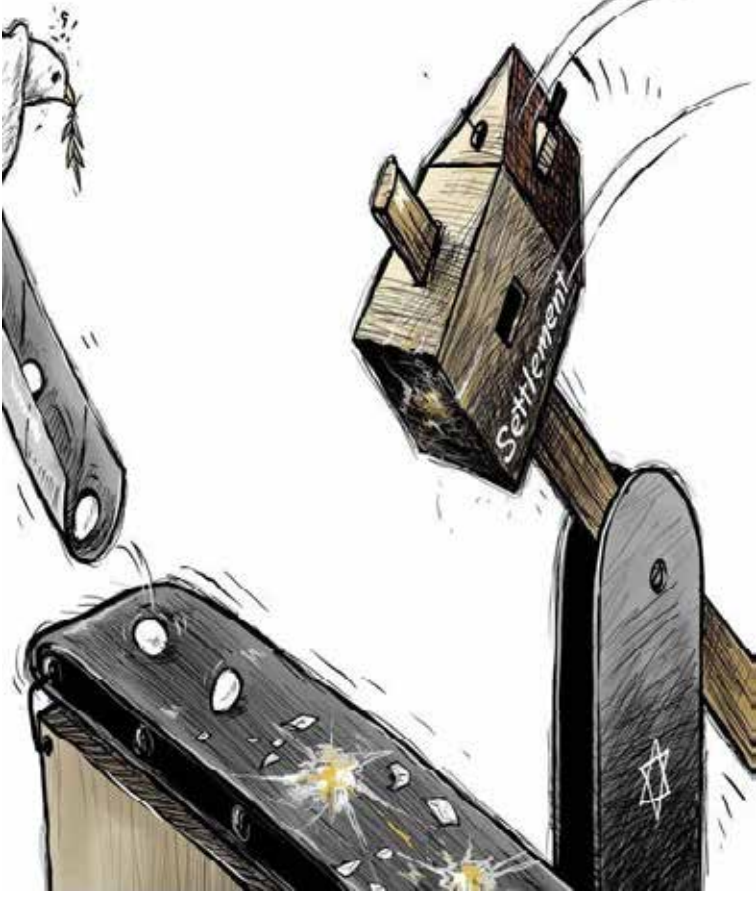
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and determination to survive Israel's onslaught have become legendary. The Board of Peace discards all of this in favor of a hollow, improvised structure tailored to advance US-Israeli political and geopolitical interests. In effect, it drags Palestine back a century, to an era when Western powers unilaterally determined its fate, guided by racist assumptions about Palestinians and the Middle East — assumptions that laid the groundwork for the region's enduring catastrophes. Yet the central question remains: Is this truly a uniquely Trumpian initiative? No, it is not. This is a familiar American tactic, particularly during moments of profound crisis. This strategy is persuasively outlined in Naomi Klein's 2007 book "The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism," which argues that political and economic elites exploit collective trauma — wars, natural disasters and social breakdown — to impose radical policies that would otherwise face public resistance. It requires no particular insight to conclude that the Board of Peace is not concerned with peace, nor genuinely with Gaza. Trump's Board of Peace fits squarely within this framework, using the devastation of Gaza not as a call for justice or accountability but as an opportunity to reshape political realities in ways that entrench US dominance and sideline international norms. This is hardly unprecedented. The pattern can be traced back to the US-envisioned UN, established in 1945 as a replacement for the League of Nations. Its principal architect, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was determined that the new institution would secure the structural dominance of the US, most notably through the Security Council and the veto system, ensuring Washington's decisive influence over global affairs. When the UN later failed to fully acquiesce to US interests — most notably when it refused to grant the George W. Bush administration legal authorization to invade Iraq — the organization was labeled "irrelevant." Bush then led his own so-called coalition of the willing into a war of aggression against Iraq and destabilized the entire region, with consequences that persist to this day. A similar maneuver unfolded in Palestine with the 2002 invention of the Quartet on the Middle East, a US-dominated framework. From its inception, the Quartet systematically sidelined Palestinian agency, insulated Israel from accountability and relegated international law to a secondary — and often expendable — consideration. The method remains consistent: when existing international mechanisms fail to serve US political objectives, new structures are invented, old ones are bypassed and power is reasserted under the guise of peace, reform or stability. Judging by this historical record, it is reasonable to conclude that the Board of Peace will eventually become yet another defunct body. Before reaching that predictable end, however, it risks further derailing the already-fragile prospects for a just peace in Palestine and obstructing any meaningful effort to hold Israeli war criminals accountable. What is truly extraordinary is that even in its phase of decline, the US continues to be permitted to experiment with the futures of entire peoples and regions. But it is never too late for those committed to restoring the neutrality of international law — not only in Palestine but globally — to challenge such reckless and self-serving political engineering. Palestine, the Middle East and the world deserve better.

It takes stark contrast. As China's economic centrality expands, the United States finds itself increasingly isolated in political terms. In this emerging narrative, only one relationship remains absolute: the United States and Israel, bound together in mutual political and strategic defense as much by global criticism as by shared policy. Israel, facing growing diplomatic, legal, and public pressure across Europe, the Global South, and even within Western societies, leans heavily on American veto power and political backing in international forums. The United States, in turn, finds itself defending Israel in a world where sympathy and alignment are steadily shifting elsewhere. The result is a form of strategic isolation that contrasts sharply with China's expanding web of economic partnerships. The Western hemisphere, once considered America's natural sphere of influence, now reflects this tension. Caribbean and Latin American states increasingly engage China as a primary trade partner, infrastructure financier, and development lender. In Africa, China has surpassed traditional Western powers in trade volume and project scale. In the Middle East, even longstanding US allies are diversifying away from Beijing for energy, technology, and investment ties. What emerges is not a world won by China through conquest or coercion, but one reshaped by America's own confrontational posture. The paradox of this moment is that America's political capital is eroding. China, by contrast, often avoids overt military or ideological confrontation, relying instead on slow, cumulative force of economic integration. The gravitational pull of markets, supply chains, and infrastructure has proven more durable than the shock of tariffs or the threat of sanctions. In the unfolding order, China's rise has not been driven solely by its own strategy, but by the vacuum created as the United States confronts rather than consolidates. The world's capitals, boardrooms, and media forums are increasingly calculating futures not in terms of allegiance, but in terms of access-to markets, to capital, to infrastructure, and to stability. In that calculation, Beijing now sits at the center of the equation. What history may ultimately record is not merely a contest between two powers, but a transformation in how power itself is measured. Military strength and financial dominance remain formidable, but in a world bound by trade, technology, and shared vulnerability, the ability to attract, integrate, and sustain economic relationships may prove to be the decisive force of the century. —Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France Former Press Attache to Moscow Former MD, SRBC Macomb, Michigan

The real challenge will be forcing Netanyahu to embrace the plan and its requirements fully and unconditionally. Within 24 hours, the Israeli military found the hostage's remains in an area under its control in Gaza. Netanyahu bowed — but not before setting new conditions. He would allow the Rafah crossing to open not for aid trucks, but only for pedestrians to travel between Gaza and Egypt as part of a "limited reopening." Meanwhile, Israel continues to refuse partnership to the 15-member Palestinian committee tasked with assuming responsibilities in the beleaguered Strip. Whatever the outcome of Kushner and Witkoff's trip to Israel, the general impression is that Netanyahu will continue fighting to have a final say on what happens next in Gaza. While the two US envoys met with Netanyahu, Israeli shelling killed at least three Palestinians in various parts of the Strip. The Israeli army has also continued expanding areas under its control beyond the so-called Yellow Line. It is believed to occupy nearly 60 percent of Gaza. The areas under its control have been flattened, while the army is digging deep trenches to prevent Palestinians from returning to what used to be their homes. Trump's Board of Peace has sent tremors across the globe because it has been given a mandate that extends beyond Gaza. Most of America's Western allies have declined the invitation to join. The Arab and Muslim nations that have joined have done so after a careful assessment of the costs and benefits. Being on board regarding Gaza's future is better than opting out. Working with Trump and his aides from various viewpoints being locked out of the deliberations and discussions. The Palestinian Authority has not been represented at any level of Trump's plan and is unlikely to have a role in the near future, pending its much-touted reform, which is a red herring. As much as the PA needs genuine reform and accountability, Israel will never approve of a Palestinian body that seeks to fulfill the ambition of a two-state solution. Netanyahu is always planning ahead, working to impose new conditions that will keep him in the game. Even so, Netanyahu's recent political maneuvers do not bode well for the Board of Peace and Trump's peace plan. He remains the biggest obstacle to ending the carnage, opening border crossings and allowing much-needed aid and supplies to enter freely. Legally, Netanyahu has the right to refuse, but he still espouse a plan to forcibly remove Gazans from the enclave, retain open-ended military control of the Strip and prevent reconstruction efforts. The opening of the Rafah crossing will put Trump's plan and his board to the ultimate test. Already, Netanyahu is seeking to derail that effort. He now plans to establish another crossing point, totally controlled by Israel, next to Rafah inside Gaza. Netanyahu has always planned ahead, working to impose new conditions that will keep him in the game. At some point, the US president must realize that only one man stands in the way of truly ending the war, easing the plight of Gazans and allowing the implementation of his plan. That man is Netanyahu, whose self-interest requires that the Gaza crisis continues so that he can keep his coalition alive and avoid accountability for the debacle of Oct. 7, 2023. Netanyahu will seek ways to delay moving to the second phase. He still rejects any role for Turkey and Qatar on the executive board. He wants the final say on what enters Gaza and who is allowed to return. He will resist the deployment of foreign troops and find excuses not to withdraw his army's single inch. Such clear disdain for what Trump is trying to achieve should be evident to the White House by now. For Trump's plan to proceed, Netanyahu must commit openly and without delay, regardless of his personal calculations. Only one man can force him to do so: the US president. —Osama Al-Sharif is a journalist and political commentator based in Amman. X: @plato1010



## Briefs

### Non-bailable arrest warrant for Afridi...

FROM PAGE 01  
heard the writ petition filed by Chief Minister Sohail Afridi. His counsel Bashir Khan Wazir appeared before the court and argued that the ECP had taken notice of a speech delivered by the chief minister during a public gathering, alleging that he had threatened government officials. The News reported on Wednesday. The counsel maintained that the speech in question was delivered outside the constituency where the National Assembly by-election was being held, and that the chief minister was on a province-wide tour announcing development projects. Despite this, the ECP issued a notice and initiated proceedings against him. During the hearing, Justice Arshad Ali asked the petitioner's counsel whether the ECP's decision had been received. The lawyer responded that the decision had just been received and was available with a supplementary application. The court summoned the record of the ECP decision and briefly adjourned the hearing.

## Riyadh will not permit attack...

FROM PAGE 01  
for them." Pezeshkian told the Saudi crown prince, according to his office. Pezeshkian told MBS that the "unity and cohesion" of Islamic countries can guarantee "lasting security, stability and peace in the region". The Iranian president said that Tehran always welcomed any process, within the framework of international law, that prevents war, Iranian media reported. The telephonic conversation came as the US announced a major multi-day military exercise in the Middle East. The exercise will "demonstrate the ability to deploy, disperse, and sustain combat airpower across" the Middle East, the Air Force said. The exercise is part of Central Command, which is responsible for American forces in the region, said in a statement. No date or exact location for the exercise were released.

## Iran closes its airspace

FROM PAGE 01  
The Strait of Hormuz is a strategic chokepoint for global trade, with millions of barrels of crude oil passing through it each day. Any disruption there often sends ripples through international energy markets and heightens geopolitical concern. The US has long come amid an increase in American military activity in the region as US Air Forces Central (AFCENT) has announced a multi-day readiness exercise across its area of responsibility, aimed at demonstrating rapid deployment and sustainment capabilities. Officials in Washington have said options remain on the table in dealing with Tehran, including the possibility of military action, as the United States and Israel seek to counter Iran's influence. Iranian authorities have responded with warnings that any attack would prompt a "swift and comprehensive" response. The Iran navigation warning will affect civil and military flights through the area during the period of the exercises. Aviation authorities typically issue Notams in advance of in-flier drills to alert pilots and airlines to potential risks and temporary airspace closures.

## Man killed in IED blast in Bajaur

FROM PAGE 01  
No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blast. Despite record militant deaths, Pakistan saw a sharp escalation in militant violence in 2025, with terrorist attacks rising by 34 per cent and terrorism-related fatalities increasing by 21 per cent year on year, according to a report released by the Islamabad-based Pak Institute for Peace Studies.

# 20-member squad for FIH Pro League and World Cup Qualifiers

*These matches form part of Pakistan's debut season in the elite FIH Pro League, following their promotion after finishing runners-up in the Nations Cup. The series will be a tough test against higher-ranked opponents, but it marks a significant step in Pakistan hockey's revival on the global stage*



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has officially announced the national men's hockey team squad for the second phase of the FIH Hockey Pro League 2025-26 and the upcoming World Cup qualifying round. The 20-player squad, along with six officials, will depart for Australia on February 2, 2026. The announcement was made at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium by PHF Secretary Rana Mujahid and Head Coach Tahir Zaman.

The same squad will represent Pakistan in both the Pro League and the Nations Cup.

Zerev sent down 24 aces in a 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1, 7-6 (7/3) victory and faces world number one Carlos Alcaraz or home hope Alex de Minaur for a place in the Melbourne final.

World number three Zverev is desperate to finally win a Grand Slam at age 28, having lost three major finals including being well beaten in last year's title-decider by Janik Sinner. The German's 2025 season fell away after that, winning just one title in an injury-hit campaign and he also struggled with his mental health, taking a one-month break after losing in the first round at Wimbledon.

"The last 10 days I felt healthy, which is very nice, and pain-free, which I haven't felt in a long time. Probably in 12 months," he said after dismantling Tien. "I feel like I'm happy on the court because I am playing pain-free and I'm playing a good level." The quarter-final took place under a closed roof at Rod Laver Arena to fend off temperatures forecast to hit 45C outside. At 29 in the world, the Californian Tien was the lowest-ranked player left in the men's draw. He was also the youngest at age 20 and was playing in the biggest match of his life, having never reached the last eight at a major before. In contrast, Zverev is an experienced campaigner at the deep end of Grand Slams, but has famously never captured one of the four biggest tournaments. He was also a runner-up at the US Open in 2020 and again at the French Open in 2024. - Agencies

# U19 World Cup: Sameer Minhas powers Pakistan to victory over New Zealand

*Minhas' unbeaten 76 powers Pakistan to eight-wicket win over New Zealand in Super Sixes clash at ICC Men's U19 World Cup 2026 after dominant bowling display at Harare Sports Club*

SAMEER Minhas scored an unbeaten 76-run knock as Pakistan beat New Zealand by eight wickets in the Super Sixes fixture of the ICC Men's U19 World Cup 2026 at Harare Sports Club on Tuesday. The Green Shirts chased down the 111-run target for the loss of two wickets in 17.1 overs. Openers Hasan Zahoor and Minhas set the tone early, as the duo dealt in boundaries to put pressure on the New Zealand bowling attack with a solid partnership to launch the chase.

The partnership was broken when Zahoor was dismissed for eight off 11 balls, including two fours and two sixes, while Yousaf contributed 11 off nine deliveries.

Batting first, New Zealand got off to a poor start as opener Marco William Alpe was dismissed in the third over by pacer Ali Raza for two runs off seven balls.

Usman Khan and Minhas batted sensi-

gently in December 2025).Goalkeeper Abdullah Ishfaq has been replaced by Ali Raza. Manan Raza (or Abdul Manan) has been replaced by Umeir Sattar (Umair Sattar). Full Squad (Players) Muneeb ur Rehman Ali Raza Arshad Liaquat Mohammad Abdullah Sufyan Khan Arbaz Ahmad Hamad Anjum Moeed Shakel (Moeen Shail) Ghazanfar Ali Zakaria Liaquat (Zakrya Liaquat) Umeir Sattar Hanan Shahid (Abdul Hanan Shahid) Rana Waheed Nadeem Ahmad (Ahmed Nadeem) Abdul Rehman Rana Waleed (Rana Mohammad Walid) Afraz

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## Briefs

**DPM Dar for enhanced engagement with UN bodies on IT sector**

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on Wednesday stressed the need to enhance Pakistan's engagement with UN bodies dealing with information technology and telecommunications through a coordinated approach among all stakeholders. He was chairing a meeting to review Pakistan's presence and role in multilateral forums related to the information technology and telecommunications sectors. The meeting was attended by Minister for IT Shaza Fatima Khawaja, SAPM Tariq Bajwa, Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch, Secretary IT, Pakistan Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, and other senior officials from relevant departments.

**Gul plaza toll rises to 79**

## BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: Karachi's Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi has finalised the investigative report on the devastating Gul Plaza fire, which will be submitted to Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, which revealed that 79 lives were lost in the tragedy, sources told Geo News. The committee, comprising the commissioner and Additional IG, compiled the report, the sources said on Wednesday. Karachi's largest fire in more than a decade broke out on January 17 and quickly spread through the sprawling shopping complex, famous for its 1,200 family-owned stores selling wedding clothes, toys, crockery, and other goods. According to sources, the report details the causes of the fire, actions taken by the fire brigade, rescue operations, and relief efforts. It also incorporates information from victims, eyewitnesses, and rescue officials. The blaze broke out at 10:15pm on January 17, with the fire brigade informed at 10:26pm. The first fire tender arrived on the scene within 11 minutes, at 10:37pm, while the Deputy Commissioner South reached at 10:30pm and Rescue 1122 personnel arrived at 10:53pm. Investigators found that the fire originated at a flower shop on the ground floor, caused by a child, and spread rapidly through air-conditioning (AC) ducts to other parts of the building. The tragic incident claimed 79 lives, with the majority of fatalities occurring on the mezzanine floor. Meanwhile, the search operation of the deadly shopping centre fire culminated after 10 days of arduous rescue and relief efforts, and the scorched shopping centre was sealed on Tuesday.

**India's Maharashtra deputy CM dies**

## DNA

NEW DELHI: The deputy chief minister of India's Maharashtra died in a plane crash on Wednesday morning along with four others, NDTV reported. The plane carrying Ajit Pawar, Nationalist Congress Party chief, was traveling from Mumbai and attempted an emergency landing in his family stronghold of Baramati, 250 km (155 miles) away, where he was scheduled to campaign in the elections. With four others on board, the deputy chief minister was travelling in a privately operated chartered plane, according to Indian media reports. Pawar's personal security officer and an assistant were also on board along with two crew members at the time of the crash, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a statement.

# Govt taking steps to eradicate polio disease from Pakistan: PM

The prime minister also directed the federal health ministry to formulate recommendations, in coordination with all relevant institutions, for public awareness and the supply of vaccines related to polio eradication

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday emphasized that the government was taking practical steps through a comprehensive strategy and an effective team to completely eliminate Polio disease from Pakistan at the earliest. He was talking to President Global Development Gates Foundation Dr. Chris Elias who along with his delegation called on him at the PM House. The prime minister expressed the government's resolve that Pakistan will continue its efforts, with the support of trusted partners like the Gates Foundation, until the complete eradication of polio from the country. "The invaluable services of Bill Gates for the eradication of polio from Pakistan will always be remembered," he said adding Pakistan was deeply grateful for the cooperation of Bill Gates and brotherly Muslim countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, in efforts to eradicate polio. Despite significant success in the ongoing fight against the disease, the prime minister noted that further urgent measures were indispensable. He said the federal government was working in full coordination with the provinces to ensure access for polio teams across the country adding that relevant projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the anti-polio campaign will be continued. The prime minister also directed the federal health ministry to formulate recommendations, in coordination with all relevant institutions, for public awareness and the supply of vaccines related



to polio eradication. Gates Foundation President for Global Development Chris Elias said the Foundation highly appreciates the prime minister's personal attention to polio eradication and the effective practical measures taken in this regard. "Pakistan is taking effective steps towards the complete eradication of polio and is moving steadily towards success," he said. Chris Elias emphasized that constructive consultations on polio eradication will continue with the federal and provincial governments and relevant institutions in Pakistan. "Effective and commendable measures have been taken to eliminate the environmental presence of the polio virus in Pakistan and to ensure access for polio

teams in all areas," he added. Director Polio Kathy Neuzil, and Deputy Director Polio Michael Galway were part of the visiting delegation. Gates Foundation President for Global Development Chris Elias expressed full confidence in Pakistan's successfully ongoing anti-polio campaign. He also conveyed best wishes to the prime minister on behalf of Bill Gates. He further expressed hope that, as a result of the ongoing measures, Pakistan would soon achieve the milestone of complete eradication of the disease. Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal, the Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication Ayesha Raza Farooq,

and other senior government officials were also present at the meeting. On the occasion, Minister Ahsan Iqbal briefed the delegation on the initiatives being undertaken under the PSDP for polio eradication. Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal thanked the prime minister for his leadership and the Bill Gates team for their support, reiterating the government's resolve to continue these efforts in an even more effective manner. Ayesha Raza Farooq, also briefed the participants on ongoing anti-polio initiatives across all provinces and cities. PM Shehbaz Sharif congratulated Gates Foundation Director for Polio, Dr. Kathy Neuzil, on her recent appointment and extended his best wishes to her.

## FBR eyes Rs150-200bn super tax collection in current quarter

FBR's estimation increased following Federal Constitutional Court's decision declaring super tax valid

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Following the Federal Constitutional Court's ruling upholding the Super Tax, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is preparing to collect an estimated Rs150-200 billion in the current quarter (January-March) to help bridge the revenue shortfall. FBR officials are awaiting the official written verdict from the apex court, expected to be received today (Wednesday). With just two working days remaining, the tax authorities aim to mobilize Rs50-60bn to achieve the January 2026 tax target of Rs1,031bn, The News reported. "We have informed the IMF of the collection of Rs200bn through Super Tax in the aftermath of the decision from the apex court. Although, the pending liability has been worked out at Rs300bn, for all practical purposes, the expected recovery will be hovering around Rs150 to Rs200bn," top official sources confirmed to The News. "The FBR plans to secure this amount within the ongoing quarter of the current fiscal year to minimise revenue

shortfall." Under the existing structure, Super Tax is imposed at rates ranging from 1% to 10%, depending on annual profits. Companies earning between Rs150 million and Rs200m annually are subject to a 1% Super Tax, while profits of up to Rs250m attract a 1.5% rate. Profits up to Rs300m are taxed at 2.5%, up to Rs350m at 3.5%, up to Rs400m at 5.5%, up to Rs500m at 7.5%, and profits above that threshold face a Super Tax of up to 10%. The tax applies mainly to large companies, banks and other highly profitable sectors. In the first six months (July-Dec) period, the FBR has collected Rs616bn, facing a revenue shortfall of Rs329bn in achieving the target agreed with the IMF. For the end of March 2026, the FBR and the IMF have agreed on a collection of Rs9,917bn; the FBR requires a collection of Rs3,756bn in the January to March period to achieve the fixed target. The Ministry of Finance has issued budget strategy guidelines to the FBR, directing that any revenue shortfall be addressed through improved tax collection rather than new taxation measures, with no additional taxes to be imposed.

## Governor Kundi blames 'barrage of statements' by KP govt for Tirah exodus

## FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday blamed statements by the PTI-led provincial government for the recent evacuation of residents from Tirah Valley in Khyber district. The federal and provincial governments have recently traded barbs over who authorised the evacuation process after hundreds of Tirah residents vacated their homes ahead of a planned military action against terrorists. Speaking to reporters in Khyber's Bara tehsil — where families displaced from Tirah have arrived — Kundi noted that while there is usually around 20 per cent "migration"

during winters, it was 50 to 60pc this year. "It is 50 to 60pc this time because statements were repeatedly made that perhaps an operation will be conducted in Tirah, so people vacated." "In my opinion, people are suffering today due to the failure and weakness of our province's government." The governor noted that the KP government issued a "barrage of statements and compelled these people to leave the area," adding that the residents realised the situation was different when they reached Bara. He noted that, usually, people do not live in "tent villages" after evacuating during winters, but stay in the homes of host families Kundi stressed that whenever a military operation is planned, official statements are issued and necessary preparations are made. KP Opposition Leader Ibadullah Khan, who belongs to the PML-N, also accompanied the governor on his visit to Bara. Speaking to reporters alongside Kundi, Ibadullah said their Bara visit aimed to meet the people who had come from Tirah and "see the ground situation" and the issues faced by the area residents. "This is our duty, these are our people," he said. "Unfortunately, the person who has government in this province is playing politics on everything," the PML-N MPA said, referring to KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi.

## Bangladesh's 'East Asian Model' outperforms peers in exports

## SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Japanese development economist and a former visiting fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, from Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan, Prof. Yamagata Tatsufumi at the special guest lecture on Bangladesh's development trajectory highlighted that the country has effectively transitioned from a typical South Asian economy to an East Asian powerhouse by adopting a high-intensity industrial development model that offers important lessons for Pakistan and other South Asian countries. The distinguished guest lecture titled "Bangladesh as an East Asian Country: Its Pattern of Industrial Development", co-hosted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the Embassy of Japan, was attended by participants online and brought together policymakers, researchers and development practitioners to discuss regional industrialization, export competitiveness and labor-intensive growth. Opening the session, Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director SDPI, said that Bangladesh's development experience is particularly relevant for Pakistan due to strong similarities in natural resource

endowments and economic structure. He noted that Bangladesh's strategic shift towards an East Asian development model helped expand its export share and significantly increase women's participation in the workforce. Dr. Suleri observed that Pakistan and Bangladesh were once competitors in sectors such as bicycle exports, but Bangladesh has since captured a substantial share of that market. He described the Japanese expert's perspective on Bangladesh's economic transformation as eye-opening for South Asian countries and in line with SDPI's mandate to promote evidence-based policymaking. In his lecture, Prof. Yamagata argued that while Bangladesh is geographically a South Asian country, its development pattern increasingly resembles that of East Asia. He amid drawing on his experience as a visiting fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, challenged the race to the bottom argument that attributes the growth of Bangladesh's apparel exports solely to labor exploitation. Instead, he described the ready-made garments sector as a window for diversification and a foundation for broader industrial development. He said Bangladesh serves as a natural reference point for Pakistan, noting historical complementarities along the textile value chain, where Pakistan has strength in upstream segments while Bangladesh has built competitiveness in downstream manufacturing.

## FCCP hears election matter in PB-21

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan (FCCP) has adjourned the hearing of an election challenge related to Balochistan Provincial Assembly constituency PB-21 until Thursday, January 29. The case was heard on Wednesday by a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of the Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan, Justice Ameen-ud-Din Khan, and comprising Justice Ali Baqar Najafi and Justice Syed Arshad Hussain Shah.

During the proceedings, Khawaja Harris, counsel for Saleh Bhootani, argued that Form 47 is still available on the Election Commission of Pakistan's website, according to which Saleh Bhootani secured 30,910 votes and stood first, while Ali Hassan Zehri obtained 17,000 votes. Khawaja Harris contended that following a recount requested by Ali Hassan Zehri, 13,507 votes cast in favor of Saleh Bhootani were declared invalid, even though the recount request was based only on suspicions. He further stated that law and order deteriorated after polling ended on election day, leading to clashes and road blockages. FIRs were registered over these incidents, but charge sheets have not yet been submitted. He also noted that the Returning Officer had formally informed the Election Commission about the situation.

Chief Justice Ameen-ud-Din Khan inquired about the legal procedure for recounting under the Election Act if the allegations are proven. In response, Khawaja Harris said a recount is permissible and claimed that the recount resulted in an additional 10,577 votes, with total votes rising from 76,000 in the initial count to 87,000 after the recount. After the completion of arguments by Saleh Bhootani's counsel, Ali Hassan Zehri's lawyer, Farooq H. Naek, began his submissions, stating that the case concerns 39 polling stations. He said that the Election Commission had initially ordered re-polling on the recount request, which was challenged by both parties before the Supreme Court. According to Farooq H. Naek, the Supreme Court subsequently ordered a recount at the request of both parties. He will continue his remaining arguments at the next hearing.

## World Bank forecasts 3.2% GDP growth in FY26

## NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) has projected Pakistan's GDP growth rate at 3% for the current fiscal year, down from official estimates of 4.2%. The News reported on Wednesday. The Global Economic Prospects released by the WB says that in Pakistan, growth rate is expected to remain at 3% in FY2025/26 (July 2025 to June 2026) and then increase to 3.4% in FY2026/27, with a recovery of agricultural production and reconstruction following a series of floods in 2025. According to the report, another upside risk is a further commitment to implementing growth-enhancing structural reforms. In Morocco and Pakistan, the implementation of deeper-than-anticipated regulatory reforms to promote private sector activity could boost growth, reduce informality and create jobs. In Pakistan, a relaxation of import restrictions and an expansion of bank credit, stemming partly from easing financial conditions, have contributed to the strengthening of activity, particularly in the industrial sector. Among oil importers, current account balances have improved in Morocco, Pakistan and Tunisia, partly because of increases in remittances and tourism revenues. In several oil-importing countries, particularly Pakistan and Tunisia, further increases in US tariffs could lead to notable declines in exports.

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