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Finance Minister talks about reforms at economic forum

Detailed News On Page-08

Ex-Korean PM gets 23 years Jail sentence

Detailed News On Page-08

KP CM for wheat stock for public

Detailed News On Page-02



Pak joins Trump peace board for 'peace' in Gaza

Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to playing a constructive role within the Board of Peace to help achieve these objectives and to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has decided to join US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace (BoP), the Foreign Office announced on Wednesday. As Islamabad aims to contribute to stability in Gaza, the decision has been taken as part of Pakistan's ongoing efforts to support the implementation of the Gaza Peace Plan under the framework of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803, read the statement issued by the FO. The invitation was extended last week by US President Donald Trump, who invited selected global figures to join the board and related bodies overseeing governance and reconstruction in post-war Gaza. The FO said that Pakistan expressed hope that the establishment of the Board of Peace would pass the way for concrete steps towards a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, a significant scale-up of humanitarian assistance for Palestinians, and the reconstruction of the war-torn territory.

The FO said Islamabad also hopes that these efforts will contribute to the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination through a credible and time-bound political process, in line with international legitimacy and relevant UN resolutions. According to the statement, this process should result in the establishment of an independent, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to playing a constructive role within the Board of Peace to help achieve these objectives and to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. The BoP deal has not progressed beyond the first-phase ceasefire, under which major fighting stopped, some Israeli forces pulled back, and Hamas freed hostages in return for Palestinian detainees and convicted prisoners. Israel has continued violating the ceasefire, with more than 400 Palestinians killed in clashes since October. Under future phases whose details have yet to be finalized, the US has proposed a "gradual" withdrawal, with Israel withdrawing further, and an internationally backed administration is installed to rebuild the ruined, densely populated territory. But no timetable has been set to implement the plan. A day earlier, Trump suggested that his Board of Peace "might" replace the United Nations, but said, "I believe you got to let the UN continue because the potential is so great," he added. He said, "you got to let the UN continue, " when asked about the future of the UN. "I think it has done a great job in international efforts. "The UN just hasn't been very helpful, I am a big fan of the UN's potential but it has never lived up to its potential," Trump said in a briefing. The White House on Friday named some individuals who will sit on the board, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Trump's special envoy Steve Wilkoff, former British prime minister Tony Blair and Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Imaan Mazari gets protective bail

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Lawyer and rights activist Imaan Mazari and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha, on Wednesday, secured from the Islamabad High Court (IHC) a case-referred under terrorism and attempted murder charges. IHC Justice Muhammad Azam Khan approved Mazari and Chattha's bail plea against surety bonds worth Rs10,000 and directed the couple to appear before the relevant court on the next date. The case relates to a first information report (FIR) registered at the Kohsar Police Station on October 27, 2025, in the federal capital relating to the Baloch Yajehi Committee's (BYC) protest at the National Press Club (NPC).

Grenade attack at KP minister residence

STAFF REPORT

SWAT: Unidentified assailants hurled a hand grenade on the residence of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Housing Dr Amjad Ali in Swat district on Wednesday morning, police said. According to Swat District Police Officer (DPO) Muhammad Omar Khan, the incident occurred in the Shamsi area of Barot town, where a group of suspected terrorists had gathered at the minister's house. "At the time of the attack, the provincial minister was not present at his residence," the DPO told Dawn. "The explosion caused minor damage to the house's boundary wall," he said, adding that the minister's family members remained safe.

DAVOS MEET

Trump says US will not use force to acquire Greenland

Washington has "nothing to do with" Russia-Ukraine conflict, says US president

NEWS DESK

DAVOS: US President Donald Trump, on Wednesday, ruled out the use of force in his bid to control Greenland, but said in a speech in Davos that no other country can secure the Danish territory. "People thought I would use force, but I don't have to use force," Trump said at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Switzerland. "I don't want to use force, I want to negotiate."

Trump made the comments in a closely-watched economic speech that has been overshadowed by fraying transatlantic ties and tensions with Europe over his push to acquire Greenland. He downplayed the issue as a "small ask" over a "piece of ice" and that an acquisition would be no threat to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato)

alliance that includes Denmark and the United States. "No nation or group of nations is in any position to be able to secure Greenland other than the United States," Trump said, adding: "I'm seeking immediate negotiations to once again to discuss the acquisition of Greenland by the United States."

Trump, who marked the end of a turbulent first year in office on Tuesday, is set to oversee most of the agenda of the World Economic Forum (WEF) which global elites from business and political trends. Nato leaders have warned that Trump's Greenland strategy could upset the alliance, while the leaders of Denmark and Greenland have offered a wide array of ways for a greater US presence in the strategic island territory of 57,000 people. "We want a piece of ice for world protection, and they won't give it," Trump said in his speech to a congress hall packed with business and political leaders,

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

At UN, Pakistan slams India for water weaponization

The Indus River Basin, the Pakistani envoy said, sustains one of the world's largest contiguous irrigation systems, provides over 80 percent of Pakistan's agricultural water needs, and supports the lives and livelihoods of over 240 million people

Journalists asked to sign pledge

NEWS DESK

UNITED NATIONS: A senior Pakistani diplomat has told a UN-related event on global water scarcity that India had created an unprecedented crisis for Pakistan's water security and regional stability by "unilaterally" holding in abeyance the 1960 Indus Water Treaty which regulated water sharing between the two neighbours. "This is not nature doing; this is a nation state deliberately weaponizing water," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, acting permanent representative of Pakistan, said at the roundtable discussion organized by the UN Environment Programme and the Carnegie Mission to the UN on Wednesday. He highlighted the material breaches, including unannounced disruptions of downstream flows and withholding of hydrological information that followed India's action on the six-decades-old treaty. "Pakistan's position is unequivocal; the Treaty remains legally intact and permits no unilateral suspension or modification," he said. The event followed after the release by UN researchers of their flagship report on 'Global Water Bankruptcy' which calls for fundamental reset of global

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06



DAVOS: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Ms. Kristalina Georgieva on the sidelines of 56th Annual meeting of the World Economic Forum. — DNA

In National Assembly

Bill passed to keep lawmakers assets 'confidential'

Elections Amendment Bill now requires approval from Senate and assent from president before it can become law

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) on Wednesday passed the Elections Amendment Bill, 2025, seeking to allow the withholding of public disclosure of lawmakers' assets and liabilities if such disclosure is deemed to pose a serious threat to the life or safety of the member or their family. Under the proposed amendment to Section 138 of the Elections Act, the bill seeks to insert a proviso stating: "Provided that the statement of assets and liabilities made by the member in the case may be, the chairman of the senate, or an application made by a member and for reasons to be recorded in writing, by a ruling delivered in the chamber, determine that the statement of assets and liabilities of that member shall not be published publicly by the commission if such publication would

Continued on Page 06

PTI leaders oppose change in voting age

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Five senior PTI leaders incarcerated at Lahore's Kot Lakhpat on Wednesday opposed a bill in the Senate on the proposed amendment to the voting age, asking whether those "operating in the dark" were afraid of the youth's power. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Dr Yasmin Roshid, Ejaz Chaudhry, Mian Mahmood Rashed and Omar Sarfraz Cheema made the remarks in a letter sent through their advocate. The development comes as debate has been

Continued on Page 06



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More than
108,000 under-
immunized kids
vaccinated

PESHAWAR: Through coordinated planning and coordinated implementation by the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its 103 districts, more than 105,000 underimmunized children were vaccinated. While this effort achieved 100% coverage in rural areas and significantly reduced immunity gaps across the province, The Immunization Roadmap, launched under the leadership of the Chief Secretary KP, has delivered strong and measurable results within 10 months. This initiative marks a major improvement in public health service delivery in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by strengthening accountability, modernizing service delivery systems, and accelerating progress toward universal immunization coverage. It reflects the government's strong commitment to protecting child health. A major achievement under the roadmap was a targeted immunization campaign carried out in Peshawar in November 2025. With close coordination between provincial and district EPI teams, the campaign successfully reached underimmunized children in high-risk urban localities and helped close critical immunity gaps.

Director EPI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr Mehtab Khan said that routine immunization coverage rates have also improved significantly.

The Health Department upgraded vaccinator monitoring systems to track individual performance, which enhanced accountability and operational efficiency.

As a result, community-based routine coverage improved from 65 percent in October 2025 to nearly 70 percent in December 2025, expanding access to life-saving vaccines across the province. —APP

Pashto declared compulsory subject in KP

PESHAWAR: The Office of the District Education Officer (MDC), Nowshera has issued a circular regarding the implementation of Pashto as a compulsory subject in all government schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to a circular, an official notification dated 15 January 2015, 2026, Pashto must be taught as a compulsory subject from primary classes up to second year (Intermediate). The directive has been addressed to Principals at Headmasters of Government Secondary, High, as well as Middle Schools, and the Sub-Divisional Education Officers of Nowshera, Kohat and Jaghori. The notification refers to earlier instructions issued by the Assistant Director (P&D) on October 3, 2023, and the Deputy Director (P&D) on January 22, 2024, emphasizing province-wide implementation of the circular. The circular states that in case of non-compliance, the head of the institution will be summoned by the respective Director or the Disclosing Officer (DO) who will be held responsible at any time may face adverse consequences.—APP

Women entrepreneurs shine at conference

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Women after a meeting held in Islamabad across the country participated enthusiastically in the All Pakistan International Women Conference organized by the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Azerián Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Addressing the closing session of the conference, Director General Trade Organization Khan Bhan Pasht highlighted the issues faced by the chamber and issued comprehensive guidelines for their resolution. Khan Bhan Pasht said that the doors of the Trade Organization are always open for chambers of commerce, and anyone facing any kind of issue can contact the Trade Organization with their organization. He said that the entire system of the Trade Organization is being diversified, thus

Pak-Uzbek textile industrial zone proposed in Uzbekistan

President Mirziyoyev's visit to open new avenues of trade and investment:Tahir



ISLAMABAD: Uzbekistan has expressed keen interest in selling its 29 textile units producing yarn and fabrics to Pakistani entrepreneurs and has also proposed the establishment of a dedicated Uzbekistan-Pakistan Textile Industrial Zone in Uzbekistan, complemented by tax holidays to promote joint industrial growth and mutual prosperity of the business communities of both countries. The landmark offer was made by Rukhullo Zillayev, Deputy Director, Agency for Development of Light Industry of Uzbekistan, who was leading an Uzbek delegation during a significant meeting with the leadership of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICC) at the Chamber's premises in Islamabad. Zillayev said that Pakistan is interested to accept the textile units through easy year-by-year payments spread over five years, low-interest credit facilities, and cashback guarantees. He added that Uzbek textile entrepreneurs are also keen to invest to Pakistani companies by entering into joint venture production arrangement where Uzbek side ready to bring best quality Uzbek fabrics to Pakistan and jointly produce ready garments for big brands in Europe and USA that allows to achieve value addition and boost exports for mutual benefit. He also offered to establish cooperation with Pakistani Textile Sourcing companies by offering them up to 5% cashback from their export amount from Uzbekistan. Highlighting that the cost of electricity in Uzbekistan is very low, he said that electricity tariffs are as low as eight US cents per unit. He further stated that Uzbekistan enjoys GSP Plus status with Europe and PTA with CIA countries, making it an attractive destination for export-oriented investments. In his welcome address, President ICCI Sardar Tahir Mahmood said that Pakistan and Uzbekistan are fully aware of their immense potential in trade, transportation, energy, tourism, regional connectivity, and several other sectors. He expressed

KP CM orders release 136,000 metric tons wheat for public relief

PESHAWAR: Following the directive of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the supply of 136,000 metric tons of wheat has been initiated from the province's strategic reserves to provide relief to the public. According to details on Wednesday, the KP government took immediate action to cope with the price pressure of wheat in the open market. The initiative is being carried out by the Food Department, to stabilize prices and ensure food security. Chief Minister Mohammad Sohail Afridi stated that the open market price of wheat in the province surged to Rs 13,650 per 100 kg. To counter this, the KP government will now provide wheat at a subsidized rate of Rs 10,414 per 100 kg. He further announced that flour, previously sold at Rs 3,020 per 20 kg, will be supplied at Rs 2,220. The wheat will be supplied strictly to eligible flour mills and authorized dealers under a transparent and predefined mechanism. The Chief Minister emphasized

that the safe of flour at officially notified prices will be ensured at all costs. District and tehsil-level monitoring, physical verification, and strict action against hoarding and overpricing will be carried out. Reaffirming the government's commitment, the Chief Minister said the provincial government stands firmly with the poor. Measures to ensure welfare will be made in the interests of the poor. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Khan Afridi took immediate notice of a social media complaint regarding the critical condition of a minor child and paid a visit to the Emergency Children Ward of Lady Reading Hospital late last night. The Chief Minister met the child's family and ordered the immediate admission of the patient. Doctors informed him that due to the shortage of beds in the Children ICHU it was necessary to shift the patient to Khyber Teaching Hospital where a bed was available. The Chief Minister immediately directed the provision of an ambulance and ensured the timely transfer of the patient. He directed the authorities concerned to arrange additional beds for the Children ICHU to establish prefabricated extension rooms and enhance capacity on an emergency basis. He also made it clear that if beds are not available in the hospital, treatment will be arranged at private hospitals at government expense. The Chief Minister further instructed to make the centralized hospital system effective for monitoring bed availability to improve the primary health care system and take immediate steps to address the shortage of rooms in doctors' hostels. He also ordered the spot resolution of issues faced by other patients. Chief Minister stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is committed to the doctor and teaching community and that their fair and facilitation remains a priority. The principal appreciated the prompt action of the Chief Minister and thanked him for personally visiting the hospital and resolving the child's issue in a timely manner. APP

189 terrorists killed in operations in DI Khan during 2025

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The Dera Ismail Khan Range Police killed 189 terrorists in over 550 search-and-strike and intelligence-led operations. The force did not accept the region during 2025, marking a major success in the anti-terror campaign and securing the region. The details were released in a press conference held in Dera Ismail Khan on Tuesday, 25th August 2025, issued from the Dera Ismail Khan Range Police Headquarters. The report, titled 'Annual Report of Dera Range Police under the leadership of Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera, Sptd Aslam Ahsiar, with significant achievements in counterterrorism, crime control, police welfare and infrastructure development. According to the report, police conducted 336 search-and-strike operations and 215 intelligence-based operations during the year. During these actions, 189 terrorists were neutralized. While 74 others were arrested for their involvement in terrorism, target killings, and planning subversive activities. In addition, 1,549 proclaimed offenders wanted in serious criminal cases were apprehended. The police also recovered a large cache of weapons and ammunition, including 74 Kalashnikovs, 119 rifles, 166 shotguns, 1,229 pistols, nine hand grenades, 36 knives, and over 128,000 rounds of ammunition of various calibers. The report further states that Dera Range Police intensified the search for narcotics, resulting in the recovery of 858 kilograms of hashish, 94 kilograms of heroin, two kilograms of opium, 170 kilograms of ice, and 1,286 liters of liquor. A total of 1,192 cases were registered under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act, leading to the arrest of drug traffickers and dealers across the region. Major progress was also made in police welfare and internal accountability. Twenty-three orderly rooms were held at the RPO Office to address issues faced by police personnel, with 379 officials participating. Following the completion of departmental inquiries, 318 police posts were awarded to eligible service members. The RPO personally handed over police posts to the eligible personnel. Dera Ismail Khan Range Police, through its efforts, has been able to issue 1,240 police commendation certificates for their performance against terrorist threats. One of the most significant incidents of the year was the attack on the Police Training School in Dera Ismail Khan on October 11, 2025. The report notes that SPO Syed Aslam Ahsiar personally led the operation, resulting in the killing of four terrorist leaders, including a suicide bomber, while all trainees were rescued safely. The successful operation received appreciation at both provincial and national levels. To enhance public safety, comprehensive security arrangements were implemented on the CPCC Motorway (M-14). New police posts were established at 365 sensitive points, significantly strengthening motorway security. Additionally, efforts to expand policing capacity led to the approval of 350 new posts for Dera Ismail Khan district and 120 for Tariq district. DNA

opportunities for women that they can play an important role in the national economy. President of the National Council of Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Samina Faiz, in her address at the conferences of the NAWC, said that women play an important role in the economy by strengthening networking among women, exchanging international cooperation. She stated that women entrepreneurs are taking practical steps to empower women across the country. Samina Faiz demanded that women entrepreneurs be provided with more facilities and incentives at the policy level so that they can contribute fully to the national economy.

near future, which will enhance transparency and provide greater facilitation to the business community. Speaking on the occasion, UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawar said that women are playing a key role in the development of the national economy, and women associated with



benefit the business communities and peoples of both countries. Advisor to ICCI President on Economy, Naeem Sultani termed the incentives offered by the Uzbek side as highly attractive and significant for Pakistani investors. The meeting was also attended by Vice President Irfan Chaudhary, Executive Member Makhil Mohsin Khalid, Major Naveed Satt, Zulqarnain Abbas, Muhabat Ammar Butt, and other members of the business community. Muhabat Ali Khan, Deputy Director, Uzbekistan Trade Center and Ms. Nafisa Amran, Secretary General, Uzbekistan and CIS Trade Center were also present in the meeting.

From melody to memory: Suraiya Mutankir's legacy immortalised

TENDER NOTICE						
S. No	Name of work	Tender No.	NTC/Em	Empanelled Money	Date & Time of Submission of tenders	Date & Time of opening of tenders
1	PROVIDING AND REPLACEMENT OF DEFECTIVE PARTS OF BOILER AND TUBE SYSTEM AT BLOCK ANWAE-SADR	F-20171620376	Rs 107,580/-	Rs. 29,729/-	13/02/2026 11:30am	13/02/2026 12:00pm
2	PROVIDING AND REPLACEMENT OF DEFECTIVE PARTS OF 2000 KVA GENERATORS AND LT PANEL AT SERVICE BLOCK ANWAE-SADR	F-20171620374	Rs 11,152,840/-	Rs. 334,565/-	13/02/2026 11:30am	13/02/2026 12:00pm
3	PROVIDING FOR AUTOMATION OF SPINNING SYSTEM 57 KLUOR AT ANWAE-SADR, ISLAMABAD	F-201716203608	Rs 1,536,978/-	Rs. 46,198/-	13/02/2026 11:30am	13/02/2026 12:00pm
4	INSTALLATION OF OLD SERVABLE A/C UNITS AND REPAIRS OF MOTORS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT REPAIRS AT ANWAE-SADR, ISLAMABAD	F-20171620368	Rs 367,330/-	Rs. 29,800/-	13/02/2026 11:30am	13/02/2026 12:00pm
5	PROVIDING STOCKS OF UNIFORM FOR LIFT OPERATORS AT ANWAE-SADR, ISLAMABAD	F-20171620358	Rs 523,380/-	Rs. 15,700/-	13/02/2026 11:30am	13/02/2026 12:00pm
6	REPAIRING INSULATING OF DIFFERENT HOT CASES AND STOVE AT RECEPTION OFFICE AND ANWAE-SADR, ISLAMABAD	F-20171620354	Rs 853,400/-	Rs. 25,900/-	13/02/2026 11:30am	13/02/2026 12:00pm
7	ARRANGEMENT OF HOME AND OFFICE					

APPLICANT WITH DIFFERENT EASY ITEMS FOR AAHAN & SAHAB ISLAMABAD	F-26011650208	Rs. 100,000/-	29.30%	11.35%	12.00%
1. Submitting Documents on behalf of PPAF-EASY portal, no hard copy will be used.					
2. Eminent Money / Capital should be provided only from here / Contractor account name mentioned on CDR. The prospective seller shall enclose copy of EASY or EAPDS, Eminent Money / Capital deposit in original mode as deposited to Accounts branch of EASY or EAPDS on 18.02.2019 / Opening of Tender.					
3. The prospective buyer should enclose a copy of EASY or EAPDS on 18.02.2019 / Opening of Tender.					
4. If there are promoters or partners in majority or holding a prominent position through their representation, they should also enclose a copy of their CPEC.					
5. This can request that you attach to this annual letter the copy of the tender or the bid of submission of bids. Bids will not be accepted if the prospective buyer has not provided the copy of the tender or the bid of submission of bids.					
6. The prospective buyer should enclose a copy of Performance Security if requested by the tender or the bid of submission of bids.					
7. The Attorney Lawyer should enclose a copy of Payment Guarantee, Sale Government Document.					
8. Subject of bid will be deposited by the CDR Account holder before receipt acceptance of the lowest bid.					
9. The prospective buyer is also requested to submit his bid notice through EAPDS or through any other portal before opening date.					
10. The Tender shall be opened on <u>18.02.2019</u> three hours following receipt of lowest bid from EASY or EAPDS.					
11. CDS may reject all bids or any bid or any proposal in case of acceptance of bid or proposal by PPAF Rules.					

**Dy. Director (E&M), Aiwan-e-Sadr
CDA Islamabad**

National
Days and
Armed
Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / **Cuba**
Revolution Day

Jan 01 / **Palestine**
Palestine Revolution Day

Jan 01 / **Sudan**
National Day

Jan 04 / **Myanmar**
Independence Day

Jan 06 / **Iraq**
Armed Forces Day

Jan 12 / **Tanzania**
Armed Forces Day

Jan 14 / **Uzbekistan**
Armed Forces Day

Jan 15 / **Nigeria**
Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / **Malta**
Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / **Laos**
Armed Forces Day

Jan 25 / **Thailand**
Armed Forces Day

Jan 26 / **Australia**
National Day

Jan 26 / **India**
Republic Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/Islamabad.....112 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....112 & 16
& Rescue Services.....145/1122
Motorway Police.....9286044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations
Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange.....9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....561111
MHI.....561116
Cantt Hospital.....927097-11
DHQ.....555631-4
RGI.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9281170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603693



Departments

CDM.....9221334-13
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Continent Board 9270151-3

Islamabad
Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potshar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343
Water Tank
Islamabad.....0321-6744480

Ethiopian envoy underscores deep commonalities between Ethiopia, Pak

Ethiopian ambassador Dr. Oumer hosts prominent Pakistani media Editor Ansar Mahmood Bhatti to boost bilateral media ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step toward strengthening people-to-people and media linkages between Ethiopia and Pakistan, His Excellency Dr. Oumer Hussein Oba, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to Pakistan, hosted Mr. Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, Chief Editor of the Islamabad Post and Diplomatic News Agency (DNA), at the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad. The meeting provided a platform for in-depth discussions on matters of mutual interest, with a focus on potential areas of cooperation and areas of bilateral cooperation, particularly in the media sector. Both sides highlighted the growing opportunities to enhance collaboration that could bring the two nations closer through accurate and engaging storytelling. Ambassador Dr. Oumer Hussein Oba underscored the deep commonalities between Ethiopia and Pakistan in areas of culture, faith, and shared values. He pointed to the substantial development potential in both countries and the potential for people-to-people exchanges. Briefing Mr. Bhatti on Ethiopia's evolving media landscape, the Ambassador stressed the critical role of strategic media partnerships. He emphasized that collaborative efforts in journalism and content creation are essential for promoting Ethiopia's rich tourism offerings, historical significance, and vibrant cultural heritage to Pakistani audiences. Mr. Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, a veteran journalist with over 35 years of experience and the Chief Editor of Daily Islamabad Post, Centreline magazine, and DNA News Agency, welcomed the initiative. He noted the rising interest among Pakistani digital influencers and content creators in visiting Ethiopia, describing the country as a historically significant and culturally dynamic hub in Africa. Mr. Bhatti praised Ethiopia's unique blend of destination and heritage with diverse landscapes and warm hospitality. The Chief Editor assured the Ambassador of his full support in fostering media cooperation. He committed to



leveraging his platforms to promote positive narratives about Ethiopia-Pakistan relations, including coverage of tourism, cultural exchanges, and economic opportunities, thereby contributing to stronger diplomatic and economic ties. The discussions also underscored the efforts to deepen bilateral relations since Dr. Oumer assumed his role in late 2025. Recent

developments include increased engagement with Pakistani business chambers, think tanks, and diplomatic circles, as well as encouragement for Pakistani participation in upcoming forums like the Invest in Ethiopia 2026 Business Forum scheduled for March 2026. This initiative marks the growing momentum in Ethiopia-Pakistan ties, which have been bolstered by direct flights via Ethiopian Airlines, a bilateral trade agreement, and active embassy outreach. Media collaboration is seen as a vital bridge to enhance mutual understanding, counter stereotypes, and highlight shared interests in a rapidly changing global landscape. The meeting concluded on a positive and forward-looking note, with both sides expressing optimism about future joint initiatives in media and beyond.

SC grants bail to accused held under child marriage act

After hearing the arguments, the Supreme Court granted post-arrest bail to the accused, Muhammad Irfan, on submission of surety bonds worth Rs100,000

contracted a court marriage with the accused, and that her statement recorded before a magistrate formed part of the judicial record. He further stated that the girl was one of twin sisters, while her other twin sister had been married three years earlier.

Justice Hashim Kokar remarked that there was no need to draw out the family tree, and questioned whether such arguments were intended to initiate proceedings against other individuals. He further stated that the girl had appeared before the court on three occasions and had clearly stated in her statements that she had married her own free will. He questioned what the issue was when both husband and wife were consenting.

During the proceedings, the court inquired about the duration of the accused's custody.

He informed that the accused had been in custody since June 2023.

During the hearing, the court decided to adjourn the hearing, asked whether the trial would proceed under the Child Marriage Act and what punishment was prescribed under the law.

The prosecutor informed the court that under the Child Marriage Act, the maximum punishment is life imprisonment and up to 10 years and four months.

After hearing the arguments, the Supreme Court granted post-arrest bail to the accused, Muhammad Irfan, on submission of surety bonds worth Rs100,000.—APP

Twin cities move closer to permanent water solution

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Wednesday said progress had been made on two proposed dams — Shahdara and Dohra — aimed at providing a permanent solution to the water shortage in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The work was being finalized and the other under way. The development came at a meeting held at the CDA headquarters and chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Ali Randhawa. Officials informed the meeting that the feasibility study for the Shahdara Dam had been completed and the site suitable for construction. Consultants from Nespal have initiated work on the project's detailed design. It was also decided that the dam would be completed by 2025.

The Dohra Dam is currently in its feasibility study phase.

Officials informed the meeting that teams from Wapda and Nespal would join the site in the coming days to review the project's

geotechnical investigations and hydrological studies.

Regarding the Dohra Dam, the meeting was told that Wapda

was currently working on its

feasibility study.—DNA

Over 30 beggars detain Blue Area

ISLAMABAD: The district administration has detained more than 30 beggars during a crackdown carried out in Blue Area and other parts of the city in the last 10 days. The operation is part of an ongoing effort to discourage professional beggars and address related issues in busy public spaces, said the spokesman of ICT administration here. According to officials, teams of the district administration conducted checks at major roads, markets, traffic signals, and commercial areas during the operation, individuals found involved in professional begging were taken into custody and shifted to police lockups for further action under the law. Authority said Blue Area remained a key focus of the operation due to high police mobility and repeated complaints from the public and traders. Similar actions were also taken in other sectors of the city where beggars were reported on a daily basis. The district administration stated that the crackdown aims to curb organized begging and reduce its presence in public places. Officials said such activities often create problems for pedestrians and motorists, especially at traffic intersections and shopping areas. The administration appealed to citizens to support the campaign against professional beggars. Residents were urged to identify such individuals and report them to the police. The spokesman of ICT administration said that the campaign is aimed at ensuring that the drive remains effective and sustainable. Authorities also asked the public not to encourage professional begging by giving money at traffic signals or markets. They said discouraging this practice would help reduce the number of people involved in organized begging. Officials confirmed that action would continue in the coming days and that no area would be excluded from the drive. They said regular monitoring would be carried out to ensure that the campaign is sustained and successful.

The district administration emphasized that the campaign is being conducted in coordination with law enforcement agencies. Police support was provided during the operation to ensure smooth action and maintain order at public places.—DNA

De-escalation, regional stability as Iran situation unfolds urged

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISS) organized a roundtable discussion on the "The Situation in Iran: Regional Consequences & Pakistan's Policy Approach" on Wednesday. The event brought together former diplomats, leading academics, and prominent practitioners to deliberate on Iran's current situation, its regional implications, and Pakistan's current and future policy outlook, said a press release. Participants agreed that the situation in Iran remains fluid and complex, requiring careful assessment, and that Pakistan should continue to maintain its right to sovereignty and Iran's territorial integrity, restraint, dialogue, and de-escalation, while safeguarding regional stability and Pakistan's own security and foreign policy interests. The meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule.—APP

Australian envoy pays courtesy call on Malaysian counterpart

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a display of growing diplomatic camaraderie among missions in Pakistan's capital, Australia's newly appointed High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr. Timothy Kane, paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Ambassador Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, on January 19, 2026, at the Malaysian High Commission in Islamabad. The meeting provided an opportunity for the two envoys to exchange views on a range of matters of mutual interest. Discussions focused on regional developments, the evolving diplomatic landscape in Pakistan, and potential avenues for enhanced cooperation between their respective countries and missions based in Islamabad. Mr. Kane, who assumed his role as Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan earlier in 2026 following his appointment announced by the Australian Government in August 2025, arrived in Islamabad with his wife, Sophie. His previous postings include ambassadorships to Brazil and Chile, as well as assignments in Spain, the United States, and Mexico. Since arriving in Pakistan, he has expressed enthusiasm for building ties in areas such as climate action, education, and shared cultural interests like cricket. Ambassador Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan welcomed his Australian counterpart warmly and extended best wishes for a successful tenure in Pakistan. He confirmed confidence that the bilateral engagement between Malaysia and Australia would continue to strengthen through ongoing constructive dialogue and collaboration in both multilateral and regional forums. The courtesy call highlighted the value of sustained interaction among diplomatic representatives in Islamabad, fostering better understanding and coordination on issues affecting the region and beyond. Both High Commissioners reaffirmed their shared commitment to promot-



ing mutual understanding, peace, and cooperation during their respective assignments in Pakistan. Such exchanges are routine yet significant in diplomatic practice, helping new envoys build networks, share perspectives, and explore synergies that can support broader bilateral and multilateral objectives. Malaysia and Australia, both active players in the Indo-Pacific region, maintain strong ties characterized by trade, investment, education exchanges, and people-to-people connections.

The friendly meeting concluded on a positive note, underscoring the importance of diplomacy in bridging nations and advancing common goals amid a complex global environment. This courtesy call comes amid Mr. Kane's active engagement in Pakistan, where he has already participated in various events and discussions, reflecting Australia's interest in deepening relations with the country.

Briefs

Junaid calls for maritime safety

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said that space-based monitoring systems could play a vital role in safeguarding seas, improving maritime management and strengthening responses to environmental threats. Junaid Chaudhry made the comments during a meeting with the heads of the headquarters of the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), marking the first-ever such visit by any maritime affairs minister in the country. During the visit, Chairman SUPARCO and officials provided the minister with a detailed briefing on the organisation's operations and technological capabilities. The discussions highlighted SUPARCO's role in satellite monitoring, maritime safety, and port management. The minister was also presented with a satellite-based assessment of potential sites for new ports, reflecting Pakistan's focus on expanding its maritime infrastructure. In addition, officials outlined plans for relief and rescue operations within national maritime boundaries, leveraging satellite technology and artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency and response times. Addressing the participants, Junaid Chaudhry stressed the importance of leveraging satellite technology to tackle a range of ecological challenges, including the impacts of climate change and disaster risks facing the country's coastline and maritime sector.—APP

Shezra calls on PTI to play responsible opposition role

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Environment Dr. Shazra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal on Wednesday criticized PTI, saying its demand for opposition leaders was fulfilled, but the party remained focused only on securing Imran Khan's release, urging opposition members to play a responsible role in Parliament. While speaking to PTV News channel, she said that a responsible opposition was the key to a strong democracy, adding that all allied parties truly believed in the democratic process and were committed to strengthening parliamentary traditions. She emphasized that constructive criticism and meaningful participation in Parliament were essential for addressing public issues, urging opposition parties to move beyond personal agendas and contribute positively to democratic stability.—APP

Constructive parliamentary role vital for opposition

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance Bilal Athar Kaganvi on Wednesday said the opposition should move beyond conditions, engage in dialogue with the government and work together on the public issues. He was hoping that opposition leaders would work constructively in Parliament and help move forward on the public agenda. He mentioned that the dialogue process initiated under the Speaker's leadership was halted due to the non-attendance of Imran Khan. PTI's Ministerial attitude that despite this, the crime minister had repeatedly extended offers for dialogue to resolve political issues through consultation Kiyani appealed to opposition leaders to participate in the current political debate, adding, maintaining a single, focused agenda was just to advancing the public interest.—APP

RCCI hosts meeting with U.S. agri delegation

The delegation included Ms. Sarina Welsh, Southeast Asia Representative, USA Pulses and U.S. Dry Beans Council; Mr. Russell Allen Kehl, President & CEO, Farmer Bean & Seed, LLC (USA); Mr. Shane Durwin Berntson, Manager Food Products

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A high-level meeting with a visiting U.S. agricultural delegation was held at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), chaired by RCCI President Usman Shaukat. The delegation was led by Mr. Timothy Welsh, Southeast Asia Representative of USA Pulses and U.S. Dry Beans Council and Managing Director of AgriSource LLC (USA). The delegation included Ms. Sarina Welsh, Southeast Asia Representative, USA Pulses and U.S. Dry Beans Council; Russell Allen Kehl, President & CEO, Farmer Bean & Seed, LLC (USA); Mr. Shane Durwin Berntson, Manager Food Products, Merus Companies (USA); Mr. Austin Robert Chaudhary, Marketing & Growth Manager, Bayside Best Beans (USA); and Mr. Mark Dries, Consul, Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy Islamabad.

Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qasai, Vice President Farhad Barlas, Former President Dr. Hassan Sarosh Akram, Executive Committee members, and sector-specific representatives also attended the meeting.



During the interaction, both sides discussed strengthening bilateral trade relations, particularly in pulses, dry beans, and agricultural commodities. The U.S. delegation highlighted RCCI's strategic importance as a regional trading hub serving

Punjab and adjoining regions, and emphasized the potential for expanding buyer-seller linkages, market access, and long-term partnerships. RCCI Usman Shaukat underscored the importance of fostering sustainable

trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. He noted that such engagements help connect local businesses with international markets, encourage knowledge sharing, and enhance mutual trust.

Food safety, price control provincial subjects

ISLAMABAD, Jan 21 (APP): Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain told the National Assembly on Wednesday that price controls, food safety enforcement and market price control fall under provincial jurisdiction following the 18th Constitutional Amendment. Responding to questions in the House, the minister said food safety and price control measures were the responsibility of the concerned provincial authorities. He said Punjab was the first province to set up a food safety authority, which now regularly inspects restaurants, meat shops and other food outlets. On the issue of poultry prices, Rana Tanveer Hussain said price control was a devolved subject and lay entirely with the provinces. "The federal government does not fix prices," he said, advising lawmakers to take price-related issues to their respective provincial governments. He added that provincial administrations, including Punjab, intervened in markets when necessary. The minister said the government was working to expand Pakistan's meat export potential by addressing animal health challenges, particularly foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). He said 15 FMD-free zones had been established in Punjab and were expected to become fully compliant within three years, which would help improve access to international markets. He informed the House that a Rs 7.2 billion project had been approved under the public sector programme to combat the disease. The project would help control the spread of other diseases of livestock, including FMD and poultry-related illnesses. The project, he said, would also help improve local meat supply, noting that around 45 per cent of meat production was consumed domestically. Referring to trade disruptions caused by border closures with Afghanistan, Rana Tanveer Hussain said alternative routes had been explored to sustain exports of key agricultural products. He said exports of kinnar and potatoes had been affected, but shipments worth \$5 million had been made through alternative routes, including via Iran. He said he was not aware of any major poultry exports being affected by the Afghan border situation, adding that exporters of other agricultural products had raised concerns which were subsequently addressed. Highlighting the government's export-oriented economic strategy, the minister said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had emphasised the need to boost exports for sustainable growth. "While provinces have much areas of scope, local food safety standards can only be met through an export-oriented economy," he said. He added that the government intervened whenever delays or declines were reported. Referring to recent issues faced by rice exporters, he said a committee had been formed to address the matter and corrective steps had since been approved. He said the impact of these measures was expected to become evident in the coming two months, with exports likely to surpass last year's figures.—DNA

Over 200 illegal cabins outside homes removed

ISLAMABAD: The district administration has removed 223 illegal cabins built outside homes across the federal capital as part of an ongoing drive against encroachments, according to an official report released on Wednesday. The operation was carried out in several sectors, including F-6, F-7, F-10, and other areas of the city. The report said assistant commissioners conducted operations in their respective jurisdictions after receiving clear directions from the Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad. The aim of the campaign is to clear public spaces and ensure that no structures are placed outside residential properties in violation of the law. According to the district administration, the action targeted cabins that had been set up outside houses without permission. These structures were found occupying footpaths, green belts, and other public areas meant for common use. The administration stated that such encroachments cause problems for residents and restrict public movement. The operation was carried out in collaboration of the District Municipal Administration (DMA), Capital Development Authority (CDA), and the Islamabad Police. Officials said joint teams were formed to ensure smooth execution of the drive and to maintain order during the removal process. Deputy Commissioner Islamabad directed all

assistant commissioners to take action without discrimination. It made clear that no individual or area would be treated differently during the campaign. "There is no permission for anyone to build a cabin or any structure outside their house in the form of an encroachment," the Deputy Commissioner said while issuing instructions to field officers. He further stated that encroachments, regardless of their nature or location, would be removed in a timely manner. The report emphasized that public land cannot be used for private purposes, and the strict action would continue against violations. Officials said the drive against illegal cabins is part of a broader effort to improve management of public spaces in the capital. The district administration plans to continue inspections in other sectors to identify and remove similar structures. The administration also appealed to citizens to cooperate with authorities. The Deputy Commissioner urged residents to file complaints about encroachments in their areas. He said public spaces must be kept clean for the betterment and to prevent the appearance of illegal structures. Residents were advised not to set up cabins, stalls, or any form of construction outside their homes. The administration warned that such structures would be removed, and legal action could also be taken where necessary.—APP

The Silent Witness

HANIA KHALID

When we think of a crime scene, the first thing that comes to our mind is "blood". Blood covering every inch of a body or a body part is the general image of a crime scene portrayed by movies, novels and sometimes news. But as the world is progressing and evolving into a digital interconnected system, the minds of the criminals are also getting sharper. As our criminals are more intelligent nowadays than they were before, we would find a crime scene with no trace of blood or a body. Such a clean evolution!

Though our smart criminals clean the crime scene and make it spotless, they leave a silent witness. This witness doesn't have a face but what it does have is a fingerprint. It's not the usual fingerprint rather it's a special kind of fingerprint widely known as the forensic fingerprint. What exactly is a linguistic fingerprint? It's our words that we speak, write or type. Every human being has a different selection of words that are as unique as the person's DNA. Just as a fingerprint is one of a kind, so is our linguistic fingerprint. Hence,

criminals leave their linguistic fingerprints, unknowingly a signature that belongs entirely just to them in the whole universe.

Criminals, whether old-fashioned or modern, have to use language in order to plan, progress and execute the crime. Language is the carrier for threat messages, ransom notes, phone calls, texts and social media accounts of the criminals. Forensic linguists analyze the favorite words, specific spelling mistakes and even the unique way someone uses punctuation to unlock the smart criminals. Sometimes this "silent witness" is the only thing left at the crime scene for the investigators. In 2009, a man named Christopher Birks called the emergency helpline late at night informing them of a fire that had broken out at his residence. After the arrival of the rescue team he urged them to save his wife named Amanda who was trapped in the bedroom. The team tried their best to make the rescue but the criminal with her cause of death unclear but believed to be the fire. The husband was left weeping and shouting, grieving for his wife. During the ongoing investigation, the detectives came across a series of texts from Amanda Birks' phone to her relatives before the fire

break out. The texts explained Amanda's plan to light candles for some kind of therapy. The forensic linguists informed the detectives that these texts do not match Amanda's idiolect. The key mistake that gave the murderer away was the use of abbreviations that Amanda used in her texts. Later on, as the investigation proceeded, the texts from Amanda during the fire night were found out to be the hundred percent match for her husband's idiolect. The texts that were supposed to save Mr. Birks and shift the blame for the fire on Amanda ultimately led him to jail.

In the era of rapid industrialization and modernization, criminals may erase their physical and digital footprints but they can't erase their linguistic identity. Forensic linguistics has emerged as a powerful weapon to tackle even evidence-less crime scenes. Nowadays, this silent witness is trying to make the smart criminals silent. Hence, language is not just a means of communication; it can also be used to provide justice and for protecting the innocent people. So, be mindful of your words, for they can be used in your favor or against you.

Economy faces pressure despite modest signals of recovery

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As recent IMF projections and current market sentiment underscore continued pressure on the Pakistan economy, traders warn that policy missteps are undermining any gains from a fragile recovery. Following the IMF's decision to lower Pakistan's growth outlook and the return of the current account to a deficit in December, business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, Shahid Rasheed Butt, said the figures point to structural weaknesses rather than temporary fluctuations. In a statement issued today, Butt argued that flawed tax and energy policies are harming the economy by increasing costs broadly and deterring investment.

The IMF has cut Pakistan's GDP growth projection for the ongoing fiscal year to 3.2 percent, down from an earlier estimate of 3.6 percent.

Such projections reflect the failure to create conditions for sustained expansion, noting that frequent changes in tax rates and heavy reliance on indirect taxation are hurting consumption and economic activity. He said the high electricity and water bills remain a central constraint, especially for small and medium enterprises operating on thin margins. Many businesses are scaling back production or shifting to the informal sector, limiting job creation at a time when people are already struggling with inflation and weak income growth.

After recording a surplus in November, the current account reverted to a deficit in December, primarily due to a steep rise in imports. The imbalance is intensified by structural reforms, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt noted that remittances continue to provide critical support, but relying on them is not a substitute for export-led growth. He called for a reset in tax and energy policy, specifically recommending targeted tax incentives, streamlined energy regulations, and regulatory measures to ease pressure on businesses and consumers. He said the public impact of continued inaction will be felt through higher living costs and weaker employment prospects, while businesses face declining competitiveness. The government must focus on structural reforms to simplify the tax code and achieve regulatory consistency to stabilize growth and reduce recurring balance-of-payments stress, rather than on short-term fixes.—APP

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Lavish spendings of rulers: a stark contrast to Pakistan's struggling masses

In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, where the economy teeters on the brink of collapse and millions grapple with abject poverty, the ruling elite continue to indulge in opulent displays of wealth that defy logic and decency. The recent second marriage of Junaid Safdar, son of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, exemplifies this glaring hypocrisy. Held in Lahore amid extravagant celebrations, the event drew widespread criticism for its lavish spending, with reports highlighting millions poured into designer outfits, bespoke jewelry, and high-end accessories. Maryam Nawaz herself became a focal point of backlash. Social media erupted with accusations of self-obsession and insensitivity, as PML-N leaders, who preach austerity to the masses, flouted their own rules. This isn't just a family affair; it's a symptom of a deeper malaise. Punjab enforces a "one-dish" policy for weddings to curb extravagance and promote simplicity, a measure ostensibly aimed at easing the burden on ordinary citizens during economic hardship. Yet, for the rulers, no such constraints apply. Their figures like Marriyum Aurangzeb also drew attention for their glow-ups and ensembles, further fueling perceptions of elitism. They urge the public to embrace fragility while their lifestyles scream excess. This double standard is why Pakistan stagnates: one set of rules for the rich and powerful, another for the impoverished masses. Nowhere in true democracies do such disparities thrive unchecked. In established systems, leaders are held accountable, and public funds aren't siphoned for personal grandeur. But in Pakistan, the divide is stark. As of 2025, approximately 45% of the population lives below the poverty line, based on updated World Bank thresholds of \$4.20 per day. This translates to over 107 million people scraping by on less than PKR 1,200 daily, with extreme poverty affecting 16.5%—sharp

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Trump's First Year That Shook the World Order

Qamar Bashir



The pressure expanded outward. Warnings were issued to Cuba, Argentina, and Colombia. The terms were simple and direct: align with U.S. policy on trade, security, and resource access, or face economic and political consequences. Cooperation was defined as defiance. The Western Hemisphere, once managed through diplomacy and influence, now faced what many governments saw as a return to overt coercion. This posture was reinforced by continued military action beyond the Americas. U.S. strikes in Somalia, repeated operations in Syria, and the ongoing use of drone warfare extended the same logic into Africa and the Middle East.

This doctrine did not remain theoretical. It was applied openly, most dramatically in the Western Hemisphere. The sitting president of Venezuela was seized and transported to New York and placed in detention. This was not framed as a quiet legal matter. Donald Trump publicly stated that the purpose was to regain control of Venezuela's oil infrastructure, secure energy supply chains, and redirect those resources toward the economic strength of the United States. The language was explicit: energy and natural resources were strategic assets, and access to them was a matter of American national interest, not international negotiation. The pressure expanded outward. Warnings were issued to Cuba, Argentina, and Colombia. The terms were simple and direct: align with U.S. policy on trade, security, and resource access, or face economic and political consequences. Cooperation was defined as defiance. The Western Hemisphere, once managed through diplomacy and influence, now faced what many governments saw as a return to overt coercion. This posture was reinforced by continued military action beyond the Americas. U.S. strikes in Somalia, repeated operations in Syria, and the ongoing

use of drone warfare extended the same logic into Africa and the Middle East. The pattern was consistent: Washington would act where it judged its interests to be threatened, without waiting for international authorization or consensus. Europe felt this shift directly. The administration's stated desire to take control of Greenland, a territory tied to the Kingdom of Denmark, was not presented as a diplomatic proposal but as a strategic objective. European leaders responded with unusually direct language. Governments in Denmark, Germany, France, and across the European Union stated plainly that Greenland's future would be decided only by Denmark and the people of Greenland. The episode became a symbol of a deeper rupture: the United States was no longer seen as a guarantor of European sovereignty, but as a power willing to challenge it. Canada experienced a similar break. Its economy had been deeply integrated with the United States, with the majority of its exports flowing south across the border. Energy, automobiles, agricultural products, electricity, and critical minerals formed the backbone of this relationship. Under Trump's policies, these ties were recast as vulnerabilities. Tariffs and public rhetoric framed Canadian dependence as a weakness that could be exploited for political and economic gain.

Ottawa responded by changing course. Europe became a strategic priority, not just as a trading partner but as a political counterbalance. Canada then moved to strengthen ties with China, focusing on infrastructure, technology, Arctic cooperation, and energy development. This was not an ideological shift. It was a calculation of risk. Reliance on a single dominant partner had become a liability. Diversification became national policy. In the Gulf, Canada sought large-scale investment from Qatar, inviting capital into its energy and industrial sectors. The objective was direct: reduce exposure to American pressure by embedding Canada in a wider network of global finance and trade. Similar strategies appeared across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where governments began to seek alternatives to U.S.-centered economic systems. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, this global reaction was expressed openly. Leaders described a world fractured by economic coercion and unilateral action. The institutions designed to manage conflict through negotiation—the United Nations, trade bodies, and international courts—were described as weak-

ened by the withdrawal or disregard of their most powerful member. The concern was not abstract. It was practical: without shared rules, global stability would depend on power balances rather than legal frameworks.

France's clash with Washington over the proposed "Board of Peace" for Gaza illustrated this new reality. When President Emmanuel Macron declined to commit a billion dollars to the initiative, the response from the United States was a threat of heavy tariffs on French exports, including wine and champagne. The signal was clear: political disagreement would be answered with economic punishment.

As these confrontations multiplied, a broader global shift took shape. Countries that felt targeted or marginalized by U.S. policy began to move closer to China. This was not driven primarily by admiration for Beijing's political system. It was driven by calculation. China offered trade, infrastructure financing, and investment without military intervention or explicit political conditions. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, regional trade agreements, and financial partnerships, Beijing positioned itself as an alternative center of gravity in global economics.

By the end of the first year, the direction of change was unmistakable. The world was moving away from a system organized around shared institutions and toward one shaped by competing power centers. Regional blocs, bilateral deals, and alternative financial systems began to replace global frameworks.

This transformation was neither subtle nor accidental. It was the result of a stated ideology: that strength, not law, should govern international relations; that resources, not agreements, define power; and that alliances exist only as long as they serve national advantage.

The first year of this presidency did not merely adjust the global order. It challenged its foundations. The aftershocks continue to spread. Whether this path leads to a more balanced distribution of power or to a more unstable and confrontational world remains the central question facing nations as they navigate the landscape reshaped by this new doctrine.

—Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC
Macomb, Michigan

Trump's 'Board of Peace' strips Netanyahu of control

Osama Al-Sharif

The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, the third tier in the Board of Peace's governance structure for the Strip, will be tasked with handling day-to-day operations. It comprises 15 Palestinian technocrats led by Dr. Ali Shaath, a former undersecretary in the Palestinian Authority.

Mladenov, as high representative, will liaise between the Gaza body and the Executive Board. The committee convened in Cairo this week and announced it was ready to assume its responsibilities and oversee specific sectors, including the economy, health...

CRTICS from all sides will have much to say about this week's unveiling by President Donald Trump of his much-touted "Board of Peace," of which he is chairman. The board is an international transitional body that will provide oversight and supervision for Gaza's governance under Trump's peace plan, which was signed and adopted late last year and has created a fragile ceasefire between Hamas and Israel. Trump's White House also showcased several related bodies, including the Board of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza and the head of the International Stabilization Force. Seasoned diplomat Nickolay Mladenov has been appointed high representative for Gaza, serving as the on-the-ground link between the Board of Peace and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza.

The Board of Peace is expected to include approximately 10 leaders from Arab and Western countries. Tom Nides, US ambassador to the UN, and State Marco Rubio are among the members, with invitations also extended to the leaders of Jordan, Egypt, Turkiye, Argentina and others. The charter of the Peace establishes a US-led, invitation-only intergovernmental body with a wide peace-building mandate, very strong powers for its chairman and membership and voting rules that heavily privilege states able to pay or contribute at scale.

Responsible parties will be held accountable. Critics believe Trump aims to eclipse the UN and Security Council in conflict resolution. Although the UNSC gave Trump's board a mandate linked to Gaza, the charter itself does not mention Gaza and instead frames a broad global outreach. The board's charter establishes a US-led, invitation-only intergovernmental body with a wide peace-building mandate. But while those invited to the top board have yet to decide whether to join it, it is clear that the US-led National Committee for the Administration of Gaza—the interim government of Gaza composed of Palestinian technocrats—that has rattled Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He claimed he was not consulted on the list of Palesti-

nian members, a claim rejected by US officials. In reality, Netanyahu was taken aback by the White House's invitation of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the main board, along with the naming of a Qatari diplomat and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan to the Executive Board. Netanyahu accused both Turkey and Qatar of supporting Hamas. Other executive members include Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, his son-in-law Jared Kushner, World Bank president David Malpass, and others. The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, the third tier in the Board of Peace's governance structure for the Strip, will be tasked with handling day-to-day operations. It comprises 15 Palestinian technocrats led by Dr. Ali Shaath, a former undersecretary in the Palestinian Authority. Mladenov, as high representative, will liaise between the Gaza body and the Executive Board. The committee convened in Cairo this week and announced it was ready to assume its responsibilities and oversee specific sectors, including the economy, health and security. US Maj. Gen. Jasper Jeffers has been appointed commander of the International Stabilization Force, meaning he will lead security operations, support comprehensive demilitarization and enable the safe delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. However, there is not yet an official list of countries that have committed to sending troops under the International Stabilization Force banner.

On the second tier, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, which is to oversee the second phase, under which Hamas is due to begin to disarm and Israel to make further withdrawals from the enclave, Tel Aviv will no longer be involved in logistical operations such as aid delivery and will be required to observe the ceasefire. Trump's intricate structure for Gaza and his personal involvement in executing his plan mean he is the most stakeholders. It will be nearly impossible for Netanyahu to veto the composition of the Board of Peace, the Executive Board, or the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza. And yet Netanyahu has tried to delay entering phase two of the plan, claiming that Hamas must disarm first and insisting that the Palestinian group hand over the body of the last Israeli captive. Witkoff has brushed aside these claims, saying

there is no reason not to move to the second phase. Netanyahu was taken aback by the White House's invitation of Turkish President Erdogan to the main board. But what Netanyahu has come to realize is that Trump has effectively stripped him of any cards he once held relating to Gaza. The future of Gazans is no longer in the hands of Netanyahu and his extremist government. Also, forced displacement and permanent occupation of Gaza are no longer on the table. But all this does not mean that Trump has given up on his goal of isolating Gaza. Forcing Israel to open the crossing points and allow the delivery of much-needed aid will be the board's first test. If Trump wants to force Israel to start its withdrawal from Gaza—it currently controls more than 50 percent of the enclave. The downside to all this is that Trump has given his Board of Peace a universal mandate that extends beyond Gaza. Leaders who were invited will have to carefully consider the implications of this. It is a bold scheme to sidestep the UN and the international bodies that underpin the current world order. But if Trump wants to give his new board solid credibility, he will want his Gaza plan to succeed. That means ending the humanitarian crisis there and pushing back the Israelis. It also means giving the Palestinians the chance to run their own affairs while providing them with the means to rebuild Gaza and restore a sense of normality.

Osama Al-Sharif is a journalist and political commentator based in Amman. X: @pilot010

Briefs

Bill passed to keep lawmakers assets...

From Page 01
poses a serious threat to the life or safety of the members or as the case may be, his family, for a period not exceeding one year at a time and subject to the condition that a complete and true statement of assets and liabilities shall be submitted confidentially to the election commission." The bill was moved by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) lawmaker Shazia Atta Marri in the lower house. The bill now requires approval from the Senate and assent from the president before it can become law. According to the existing law, members of the National Assembly, Senate and provincial assemblies are required to submit a statement of their assets and liabilities — including those of their spouses and dependent children — to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) or before December 31 each year. Section 138 of the Elections Act further mandates the ECP to publish these declarations in the official gazette. The development comes a week after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) suspended the members of the National Assembly belonging to different legislatures for failing to submit their financial statements. According to the notification issued by the ECP, the membership of 32 MNAs, 50 Punjab Assembly members, 33 Sindh Assembly members, 28 KP Assembly members, seven Balochistan Assembly members and nine senators had been suspended.

PTI leaders oppose change...

From Page 01
ranging in the country on raising the voting age from 18 to 25, with the topic also being discussed on TV shows. It is worth mentioning that a formal bill has been tabled in parliament for raising the voting age in Pakistan. A column published in Dawn on Wednesday also stated that "well-connected people" were instrumental of raising the voting age to 25 as a possible reform. In the letter, seen by Dawn, the PTI leaders said Pakistan had witnessed its first general elections in 1970, when the voting age was 21 years. However, with the advent of democracy, the world transformed into a global village because of which any incident anywhere in the world could be seen in "real time". They said that Pakistan too realized that the voting age limit should be reduced from 21 years to 18 years. And the world, they added, objected to it, they added. They said that since the government had set the age for obtaining a national identity card and getting married at 18 years, there was no justification for increasing the voting age.

Trump says US will not use force...

From Page 01
In his speech, Trump also took aim at Canada, saying it "should be grateful" to Washington, a day after Prime Minister Mark Carney warned of a rupture to the US-led global system of rules. "Our prime minister yesterday," he added. "The US president said that he would meet with his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky, to discuss ending the war with Russia, but slammed Nato and stressed: "We don't want 'nothing to do with' the conflict. "I'm dealing with President Putin, and he wants to make a deal, I believe. I'm dealing with President Zelensky and I think he wants to make a deal. For meeting him today," Trump said, adding that Nato has "to work for Ukraine, we don't... We have nothing to do with it."

Bangladesh say won't not back down to "coercion" and play their T20 World Cup matches in India

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has written to the International Cricket Council (ICC) expressing support for Bangladesh's decision regarding travel to India for the T20 World Cup 2026, and ahead of the governing body's meeting on the matter, ESPNcricinfo reported. In its response, the PCB backed the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) reluctance to play matches in India amid regional political instability. Sources said that the letter was also circulated among ICC Board members. ICC is yet to take a decision on a final decision on Pakistan's involvement in the 2026 men's T20 World Cup in its board meeting today (Wednesday). The BCB will deliberate on Bangladesh's re-

quest to relocate its World Cup fixtures to Sri Lanka, citing security concerns in India. However, it remains unclear whether the PCB's correspondence prompted the ICC to convene the meeting.

While the timing of the PCB's intervention has drawn attention, it is believed to have been in line with the ICC's own decision to postpone the meeting. The governing body has not stood firm on maintaining the existing tournament schedule, not allowing Bangladesh to play its matches in Sri Lanka, one of the event's co-hosts alongside India, as requested.

The ICC reiterated this stance to the PCB during discussions held last week.

Backed by the Bangladeshi government, the BCB has maintained its refusal to travel to India for the tournament. Despite multiple rounds of talks between the ICC and the BCB, including a recent meet-

ing in Dhaka over the weekend, neither side has shifted its position.

The ICC continues to insist that the matches proceed as scheduled, while the BCB remains unwilling to send its team to India. The PCB's entry into the issue follows days of speculation and reports in resolving the deadlock. Unconfirmed reports suggested that Pakistan had offered to host Bangladesh's matches and that the PCB was even considering Pakistan's own participation in the World Cup, depending on the outcome of Bangladesh's case.

The PCB has so far made no public statement on the matter. Bangladesh "won't back down to 'coercion'" Indian officials told to agree to play in India by Friday night, and kicked out of the tournament. But the Dhaka government said they would not be pressured

into changing their stance. Bangladesh said they would not back down to "coercion" and play their T20 World Cup matches in India, casting doubt on their participation.

"We have logically requested a change of venue for valid reasons," Asif Nazrul, Youth and Sports Advisor to the Bangladeshi inter-ministerial committee told the three-run BSS news agency late Tuesday. "We cannot be forced to play in India through illegal pressure or unreasonable coercion." Bangladesh captain Litton Das said he had no idea if the team would take part. "From where I stand, I'm uncertain, everyone is uncertain," Das told reporters after a domestic match on Tuesday, asking back. "Are you sure we will play the World Cup?" "I think that the decision who will play Bangladesh is uncertain," he added in comments reported by Dhaka's Prothom Alo newspaper.

Journalists asked to sign pledge

FROM PAGE 01

The Indian Express, one of India's most respected dailies, said its journalist was summoned four times between January 15 and 19 and asked to sign the pledge on January 16. "He has not signed the bond as asked by the police. The Indian Express is committed to doing what is necessary to uphold and protect the right and dignity of its journalists," the paper's chief editor, Raj Kumar Jain, said in the report. Two other journalists Reuters spoke to said they had also been summoned, but one of them was travelling and the other did not go to the police station. They declined to be named because of the sensitive nature of the issue.

Norway will not participate...

FROM PAGE 01

"For Norway, it is important how this proposal is linked to established structures as the UN, and to our international commitment to peacekeeping," The government representative added that Norway shared Trump's "goal of lasting peace in Ukraine, Gaza and in other situations". Trump has repeatedly said he believes he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. Last year's prize was awarded to Ukrainian politician Oleksandr Motuzenko and his wife, Olena Motuzenko. In a message to Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store published Monday, Trump said having been denied the prize he no longer felt "an obligation to think purely of Peace". Store said in a statement: "I have clearly explained, including to President Trump, what is well-known – the prize is awarded by an independent Nobel Committee.

Syrian forces Enter Al-Hol...

FROM PAGE 01

thousands of their suspected family members from the Al-Hol and Al-Rajah camps. At Al-Hol, the AFP correspondent saw soldiers open the camp's metal gate and enter, while others stood guard. The camp in a desert region of Hasakah province holds around 24,000 people, including some 6,200 women and children, and is around 40 nationalities. The defence ministry said Tuesday it was ready to take responsibility for Al-Hol camp, "and all IS prisoners" after Kurdish forces said they had been "compelled to withdraw" from the site to defend cities in Syria's north, before the truce was announced.

At UN, Pakistan slams...

FROM PAGE 01

water agenda as irreversible damage pushes many basins. The Indus River Basin, the Pakistani envoy said, sustains one of the world's most contentious irrigation systems, provides over 80 percent of Pakistan's agricultural water needs, and supports the lives and livelihoods of over 240 million people, with the time-tested Treaty's framework providing for equitable and predictable management of the waters. "We are a semi-arid, climate-vulnerable, low-elevation country facing floods, droughts, accelerated glacier melt, groundwater depletion, and rapid population growth; all of which are placing immense pressure on already stressed water systems," Ambassador Jafroon said. On its part, he said, Pakistan is strengthening its water resilience through integrated planning, flood protection, irrigation rehabilitation, groundwater replenishment, and ecosystem restoration, including through initiatives such as "Living Indus" and "Recharge Pakistan" to meet the challenges facing it. "Yet systemic water risk cannot be managed by national action alone, particularly in a trans-boundary river basin," the Pakistani envoy said, adding "Predictability, transparency, and cooperation in transboundary water governance are matters of survival for downstream populations."



ISLAMABAD: A view of the broken car in the nullah along the road side at Sector G-10 as the speedy car was over run due to tire blast, the driver and passenger is in extreme injured condition. — Online

Ali Amir hockey club clinches championship

SARGODHA: Ali Amir Hockey Club clinched the 3rd Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Inter-Club Hockey Championship 2024 title after defeating Punjab Hockey Club 5-1 in the final match held at the Sargodha Astro-Hockey Stadium. The match was a high-octane encounter with intense and aggressive gameplay throughout the final encounter, securing a convincing victory over their opponents. The Chief Guest, Colonel (Col) Mohammad Sarfraz Awan, inaugurated the final match and distributed trophies and prizes among the winners, runners-up, and match officials during the concluding ceremony. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Guest lauded the outstanding performances of the players and lauded them as future stars of the nation. The tournament was supervised by professionals and officials, including Mr. Ali Amir, Mr. Aslam, and Aslam Abbasi, who were also awarded prizes in recognition of their technical services. The General Secretary of the District Hockey Association, Chaudhry Fiazaz Ahmed Hanza, expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Army and the Chief of Army Staff for providing a strong platform to promote young talent. He emphasized that such initiatives were crucial for reviving the glory of hockey in the country, while also acknowledging the technical support provided by the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) and Sports Board Punjab. — DNA

World has entered new era of 'water bankruptcy,' UN report

UNITED NATIONS: The world has moved beyond a water crisis and into a state of global water bankruptcy, according to a new UN report released Tuesday by UN researchers. For decades, they said scientists, policymakers and the media warned of a "global water crisis," implying temporary shock — followed by recovery. What is now emerging in many regions, however, is a persistent shortage whereby water systems can no longer realistically return to their historical baselines. "For much of the world, 'normal' is gone," said Kaveh Madani, Director of the Water Center at the University of California, Berkeley, Environment and Health. "This is not to kill hope but to encourage action and an honest admission of failure today to protect and enable tomorrow," he told a press briefing in New York on Tuesday. Madani emphasized that the findings do not suggest worldwide failure — but there are enough bankrupt or near-bankrupt systems, interconnected through trade, migration, and geopolitical dependencies, that the global risk landscape has fundamentally altered. "When borders fall, dependencies on reliable farmlands, infrastructure, people, institutions, urban residents, and women and youth, while the benefits of overuse often accrue to more powerful actors. The report introduces water bankruptcy as a condition

defined by both insolvency and irreversibility. Insolvency refers to withdrawing and polluting water beyond renewable inflows and safe depletion limits. Irreversibility refers to the damage to key parts of water-related natural capital, such as wetlands and lakes, that makes restoration of the system to its initial conditions infeasible. But all is not lost: comparing water action to finance, Madani said that bankruptcy is not the end of action. "It is the start of a structured recovery plan: you stop the bleeding, protect essential services, restructure debts, and then you can start to invest again," he said. The world is rapidly depleting its natural "water savings accounts," according to the study: more than half the world's large lakes have declined since the early 1990's, while around 35 per cent of natural wetlands have been lost since 1970, Madani said. The human toll is already significant. Nearly three-quarters of the world's population live in countries classified as water-scarce or critically water-scarce. Around four billion people experience severe water scarcity for at least one month each year, while drought parts of the world are estimated \$80 billion annually. "If you continue to manage these failures as temporary 'crises' with short-term fixes, we will only deepen the ecological damage and fuel social conflict," Madani warned. — Agencies

Balochistan govt, NBP launch subsidized electric scooter scheme

The MoU signing ceremony was held at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Quetta, attended by Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, Provincial Minister Mir Sadiq Umran, senior provincial officials, and top representatives from the National Bank of Pakistan

DNA



ISLAMABAD: The Government of Balochistan and the National Bank of Pakistan have signed a formal agreement to provide electric scooters on subsidized installments to students, working women, and the general public, aiming to promote mobility and sustainable transportation. The MoU signing ceremony was held at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Quetta, attended by Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, Provincial Minister Mir Sadiq Umran, senior provincial officials, and top representatives from the National Bank of Pakistan.

Chief Minister Bugti described the initiative as a significant step toward ensuring safe, affordable, and dignified commuting options, especially for students and working women. He stated that the scheme will not only reduce daily travel challenges but also encourage the adoption of eco-friendly transport alternatives, contributing to cost-effective and sustainable mobility.

Highlighting the government's focus on public welfare, the Chief Minister emphasized that such initiatives directly improve citizens' daily lives, empower women and youth, and reflect Balochistan's commitment to sustainable development. He reiterated that the provincial government will continue to roll out projects that provide tangible benefits and support long-term economic and social progress across the province.

Briefs

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.90 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.91. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.7 and Rs 282.5, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 0.67 to close at Rs 327.85 from the previous day's closing of Rs 327.18, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.77, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 1.15 and closed at Rs 376.12 compared to the previous day's Rs 377.27.

The price of the Dirham of the Emirates Dirham lost 01 paisa and closed at Rs 76.30, whereas the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged at Rs 74.64.—APP

Gold price surges to all-time high

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices surged to an all-time high in the local market on Wednesday as the price of 24-karat gold per tola jumped by Rs12,700 to Rs106,362. The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also jumped by Rs10,888 to Rs34,123, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs9,981 to Rs397,990, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Silver prices also witnessed an upward trend, with the price of 24-karat silver per tola increasing by Rs64 to Rs9,933, whereas the price of 10 grams of silver went up by Rs54 to Rs8,515. In the international market, gold price closed at \$1,840 to reach \$1,840 per ounce, marking a fresh record, while silver prices rose by \$0.64 to \$84.58 per ounce, the association reported.—APP

Pakistan, China discuss enhanced agri trade, economic coop

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday met with the Chinese Ambassador Jing Zhaogang and discussed ways to enhance agricultural trade and economic cooperation. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the ongoing Pakistan-China Agriculture Investment Conference, underscoring the strategic priority both nations place on strengthening economic ties, said a news release. Pakistan's delegation, led by the Commerce Minister, comprised key stakeholders in the nation's trade ecosystem, including the Secretary of Commerce, the Chief Executive of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDA), and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Minister welcomed the Chinese Ambassador and reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to advancing its exports through a multi-faceted strategy.

He placed particular emphasis on leveraging Government-to-Government (G2G) cooperation in addition to Business-to-Business (B2B) channels, to accelerate trade growth and deepen the economic partnership between the two all-weather friends. The substantive discussions focused on identifying and exploring concrete opportunities to enhance bilateral trade in agricultural products. Both sides engaged in a detailed exchange of the investment landscape and potential avenues for expansion. The Chinese Ambassador acknowledged the critical role of robust agricultural trade. He provided an overview of China's current import regulatory framework. The two sides agreed to maintain positive momentum by continuing their dialogue. The meeting concluded on a cordial note, reflecting the enduring strength and resilience of the Pakistan-China partnership, which continues to evolve to meet new economic opportunities and shared goals.—APP



BEIJING: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq meeting with Chairman Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Wang Huning.

Egypt says it paid \$5b to foreign oil partners, targets arrears cut

CAIRO: Egypt has paid about \$5 billion in overdue bills to foreign oil and gas partners and aims to bring remaining arrears down to \$1.2 billion by June 2024, Energy Minister Mostafa Madbouly said. Arrears stood at \$6.1 billion on June 30, 2024, he said in a statement, adding the government was also meeting the partners' monthly invoices. A foreign currency shortage forced Egypt to delay paying installments to international oil companies operating in Egypt, slowing investment and contributing to a drop in gas output that forced it to rely heavily on imports from Israel or costly LNG cargoes. But following a giant \$35 billion deal in 2021 with the United Arab Emirates, which aims to develop a prime stretch of Egypt's Mediterranean coast, Egypt started paying back oil companies. Egypt produced 3,635 million cubic meters of gas in October last year, up slightly from 3,525 million cubic meters in September but down from 3,851 million cubic meters in October 2021, according to the Joint Organizations Data Initiative.—APP

Haroon links MSME uplift to sustainable growth

The Special Assistant said policy interest rates had been reduced from 22 per cent to 10.5 per cent, inflation had declined to around 4-5 per cent, and power tariffs had been brought down from Rs42 to around Rs34-35 per unit, with further reductions expected

ISLAMABAD: Announcing the launch of Pakistan's first "Made in Pakistan SME Cluster Showcase Expo 2026" to be held in Lahore from January 26-28, the Assistant to the Prime Minister for Planning Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said, the theme of expo will be "Wednesday linked sustainable economic growth to the strengthening of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)." "MSMEs are the backbone of Pakistan's economy and essential for achieving sustainable GDP growth of 6-7 per cent," he said while addressing a press conference here. He was accompanied by Secretary Minister for Planning and Prime Minister's Special Assistant Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. He said, the theme of expo will be held at the Lahore Expo Centre from January 24 to 26 to showcase the country's untapped entrepreneurial and industrial potential and bring together thousands of MSMEs from the country. He highlighted that MSMEs were essential for inclusive growth, employment generation, noting that Pakistan had around seven million MSMEs, compared to only a few thousand large-scale manufacturing units. He said the Expo would feature a wide range of sectors including sports goods, gems and jewellery, surgical instruments, cutlery, textiles, garments, leather goods, apparel, food processing, pharmaceuticals, agribased products, cosmetics, packaging, handicrafts and light engineering, with a separate pavilion dedicated to women entrepreneurs. He described the event as Pakistan's national platform for small businesses, featuring over 30 SME cluster pavilions, participation from 174 representative and special pavilions are being established, working groups and national businesses. International delegations from Azerbaijan, Kenya, and Malaysia will also attend, enhancing global exposure for Pakistan SMEs. He added, the country had successfully achieved macroeconomic stability after a severe downturn and was now entering into a sustainable growth phase. He said multilateral institutions including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and Asian Development Bank (ADB) had acknowledged the stabilisation,

while improved performance of the stock exchange reflected restored investor confidence. The Special Assistant said policy interest rates had been reduced from 22 per cent to 10.5 per cent, inflation had declined to around 4-5 per cent, and power tariffs had been brought down from Rs42 to around Rs34-35 per unit, with further reductions expected. He acknowledged that high interest rates and taxation during the stabilization phase had caused difficulties for businesses, but said these measures were unavoidable to combat the fiscal deficit and to lay the foundation for long-term growth. Hassan Abbar said large-scale manufacturing (LSM) had shown a strong recovery, recording 10.37 per cent year-on-year growth in November 2025, while cumulative growth during the first five months of the fiscal year exceeded six per cent, reversing previous negative trends. He said the government was finalising a comprehensive industrial policy, to be announced soon, focusing on access to credit, bankruptcy reforms, restructuring of sick units, export promotion and ease of doing business. The Special Assistant said several sectoral policies were also in the pipeline, including a National Earthquake Policy, Geospatial policy, Mobile phone manufacturing policy, Vaccine manufacturing policy, Solar and battery storage policy, Auto and home appliances policies, and initiatives for semiconductors and agri-food industries. Highlighting the Prime Minister's special focus on MSMEs, he said micro enterprises had been formally brought into the tax net, the foundation for longer-term growth. Hassan Abbar said large-scale manufacturing (LSM) had shown a strong recovery, recording 10.37 per cent year-on-year growth in November 2025, while cumulative growth during the first five months of the fiscal year exceeded six per cent, reversing previous negative trends. He said the government was finalising a comprehensive industrial policy, to be announced soon, focusing on access to credit, bankruptcy reforms, restructuring

PSX sheds 1,588 points to close at 187,033 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) Wednesday closed, losing 1,588.62 points, a decline of 0.84 percent, to settle at 187,033.27 points compared to 188,621.78 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1,325,597 million shares with a traded value of Rs 69,583 billion, against 1,225,807 million shares valuing Rs 63,908 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization declined to Rs 21,334 trillion from Rs 21,305 trillion a day earlier. On the other hand, companies in the ready market, 189 advanced, 321 declined, while 31 remained unchanged. K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 262,237 million shares, followed by Hasco Petroleum with 100,763 million shares and Fauji Foods Limited with 74,973 million shares. The top gainers included PIA Holding Company Limited (B), which rose by Rs 301.17 to close at Rs 21,267.50, and Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which increased by Rs 100.16 to settle at Rs 28,224.00. On the losing side, Raffhan Matze Products Limited declined by Rs 10.00 to close at Rs 9,500.68, while Khayr Textile Mills Limited fell by Rs 81.05 to close at Rs 1,717.95. In the futures market, turnover stood at 257,227 million shares with a traded value of Rs 15,113 billion compared to 234,020 million shares worth Rs 16,600 billion in the previous session. Out of 316 futures-market companies, 69 recorded gains, while 247 declined and none remained unchanged.—APP

Dar opens Pathfinder group's Pakistan pavilion

DNA

DAVOS: Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar inaugurated the Pathfinder Group's Pakistan Pavilion on the sidelines of the Annual Meeting 2026 in Davos. DPM/FM appreciated the initiative of Pathfinder Group, Pakistan's vast economic potential and emerging opportunities on a global platform, while highlighting the dynamism and innovation of Pakistani startups. He underscored the critical role of startups in advancing socioeconomic development and creating job opportunities in diverse sectors. He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to facilitating and promoting entrepreneurs and startups, particularly those led by youth, to fully realize Pakistan's economic potential.



FASP Magnolia meeting held



ISLAMABAD: The monthly meeting of FASP Magnolia was held at Serena Islamabad. The meeting started with recitation of Quran verse, by Hina Kamran. Then the minutes of previous meeting was read by Bushra Maqsood. This time there was another learning session by our very senior seasonal floral artist Ghazala Abdullah, she is a senior founding member and an ace floral artist. The techniques she taught is called "Monobotanic technique". A monobotanic design is an advanced floral arranging technique where the designer uses multiple parts (Blooms, Stems, foliage Roots, stems, etc.) from plants belonging to only one family or genus. She made very innovative and beautiful designs. It was a very good learning experience for the new comers and the old ones as well. Birthday gifts were given to the members born in January. Tea was served after the programme.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Mrs. Aisha Zahid presenting token of thanks to Mrs. Ghazala Abdullah and President of Magnolia Chapter Naheeda Raza is standing on extreme right DNA

Syria army enters Al-Hol camp holding relatives of Daesh militants

AL-HOL CAMP, Syria: Syria's army on Wednesday entered the country's vast Al-Hol detention camp that houses relatives of suspected Daesh militants, from which Kurdish forces withdrew the day before, according to an AFP journalist at the scene. The correctional facility has been a haven for soldiers open the camp's metal gate and enter, while others guarded the entrance. Al-Hol, located in a desert region of Hasakah province, holds around 24,000 people, including 15,000 Syrians and about 6,300 foreign women and about 6,300 foreign men, mostly Kurdish. Kurdish forces announced on Tuesday that they had been "compelled to withdraw" from the camp to defend cities in Syria's north threatened by the army, before a ceasefire was announced. The camp is the largest for displaced and malnourished people in Syria, maintained by Kurdish forces, who spearheaded the fight against Daesh with help from an international coalition over the past decade before Daesh was defeated in Syria in 2019. The Syrian defense ministry said Tuesday it was ready to take responsibility for Al-Hol "and its detainees." The announcement came as US envoy to Syria Tom Barrack said "the original purpose" of Kurdish forces as the primary anti-Daesh force had "largely expired." The Syrian army deployed on Monday across vast parts of the country's northeastern Syria from which Kurdish forces had withdrawn. An agreement between the two sides stipulates that the Syrian state becomes responsible for Daesh prisoners and that the Kurdish administration be integrated into Syrian state institutions.—APP

Briefs

**Gold crosses
Rs500,000
mark**

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Gold price in Pakistan surged to unprecedented levels on Wednesday, with 24-carat metal crossing the Rs500,000 mark per tola for the first time in the country's history, reflecting growing uncertainty in global financial markets. According to market data, the price of gold rose sharply by Rs12,700, taking it to Rs63,582 per tola. Similarly, the price of 10-carat of gold increased by Rs10,888 to settle at Rs44,123.

The sharp rise in domestic prices came in line with trends in global markets, where precious metals hit fresh peaks as investors sought safety. Gold notched yet another record, an ounce in international trade, while silver touched \$95.89 an ounce, underscoring strong demand for safe-haven precious metals.

Equities were mixed on Wednesday following a rough start to the week fuelled by the US-China trade deal, while the uncertainty rattling through trading floors saw safe-haven precious metals hit fresh record highs. Markets have sunk globally this week, and Wall Street's three main indexes tanked on Tuesday as they reopened after a long weekend.

Gul Plaza
'won't be
demolished
until all missing
recovered'

BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: As the search and rescue operation at Gul Plaza on Wednesday ended fifth day with the death toll climbing to 30 on Wednesday, District South Deputy Commissioner Javed Nabi Khoso said that the building would not be demolished as long as even one person remains missing. Speaking to **DNA**, DC Khoso said that 85 people more missing in the aftermath of the blaze and added, "when everything is complete, the entire building will be demolished". The official noted that location of 39 missing people were traced back to the shopping centre, while 17 bodies recovered from the site are yet to be identified. The DC said 11 bodies had been identified so far.

The port city's biggest fire in over a decade started late on Saturday at Gul Plaza, which houses 1200 shops in a multi-story complex spread across an area bigger than a football field.

The blaze in Karachi's historic centre raged for more than 24 hours before it was extinguished. Expanding on the search operation, DC Khoso stated today that there are parts of the building that rescuers haven't been able to access so far.

Pak delegation
hectic
schedule
in Beijing

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistani parliamentary delegation, led by National Assembly Speaker Syed Fazal Haq, arrived in Beijing had a hectic schedule including high-level talks with Chinese leadership. The delegation was visiting at the invitation of Zhao Leji, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC). The delegation focused on strengthening parliamentary cooperation and deepening bilateral ties. Delegation met with senior leadership, including NPC Chairman Zhao Leji and Wang Huning, Chairman of National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The delegation includes Ms. Romin Khurshid Alam (Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Convener of the Pakistan-China Parliamentary Friendship Group), MNA Muhammad Naseem, Parliamentary Secretary Ms. Baf Jafar, and MNA Maulana Abdul Ghafour Haideri.

UN strongly condemns Israeli demolition of UNRWA HQs

The move represents "a new level of open and deliberate defiance of international law, including of the privileges and immunities of the United Nations, by the State of Israel", the UNRWA Commissioner-General said on X

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: The demolition underway on Tuesday of the headquarters of UN agency UNRWA by Israeli forces in occupied East Jerusalem - reportedly "under the watch of lawmakers and a member of the Tel Aviv Government" - has prompted swift condemnation from the global body. Responding to the dramatic development, head of the UN agency tasked with delivering humanitarian services to millions of refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, described it as an "appalling, calculated attack" against the UN, whose premises are protected under international law. The move represents "a new level of open and deliberate defiance

of international law, including of the privileges and immunities of the United Nations, by the State of Israel", the UNRWA Commissioner-General said on X. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the demolition "in the strongest terms". The UN chief has repeatedly and unequivocally stated that the compound remains UN premises and is "inviolable and immune from any form of interference." The Secretary-General views as wholly unacceptable the continual and escalatory actions against UNRWA, the statement from his office concluded. "We call for the demolition to stop and restore the compound to the UN without delay". Echoing those concerns, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk expressed his "outrage" at the

incident, which marks a sharp escalation of tensions between the Israeli authorities and UNRWA. "It compounds what we've been seeing for a while: attacking aid agencies and UN staff who are trying to help," said Rami Shamash, a spokesman for the High Commissioner. On 14 January, Israeli forces entered an UNRWA health center in East Jerusalem and ordered it to close. At the time of the incident, the agency said its workers were "terrified". In the coming weeks, water and power supplies to UNRWA facilities are scheduled to be cut, according to buildings' owners and a UN spokesman. "This is a direct result of legislation passed by the Israeli parliament in December, which stepped up existing anti-UNRWA laws adopted in 2024," Lazzarini said.

Previously, UNRWA premises have been targeted by arsonists amid a large-scale disinformation campaign against it by Israeli. The agency's Commissioner-General maintained that was done without a court order by the UN. In court, the International Court of Justice, which restated that Israel was obliged "to facilitate UNRWA's operations, not hinder or prevent them. The court also stressed that Israel has no jurisdiction over East Jerusalem," Lazzarini noted. "What happens today to UNRWA will happen tomorrow to any other international organization of diplomats, members, whether the UN or the International Criminal Court or whatever around the world," he added. "International law has come under increasing attack for too long and is risking irrelevance in the absence of response by Member States."

Japan to restart world's biggest nuclear plant

KARIWA: The world's biggest nuclear power plant is set to restart on Wednesday for the first time since the 2011 Fukushima disaster, its Japanese operator said despite persistent safety concerns among residents. The town of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa, where the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant is located, approved its resumption last month, although public opinion remains sharply divided. After receiving the final green light Wednesday, TEPCO said they were "preparing for the restart operations... and plan to remove the control rods after 700 hours today and start up the reactor".

On Tuesday, a few dozen protesters - mostly elderly - braved freezing temperatures to demonstrate in the snow near the plant's entrance, where buildings line the Sea of Japan coast. It's Japan's electricity that is produced in Kashiwazaki, so why should the people here be put at risk? That makes no sense," Yumiko Abe, a 73-year-old resident, told **AP**. Around 60 percent of residents oppose the restart, while 37 percent support it, a survey conducted in September.

Kashiwazaki-Kariwa is the world's biggest nuclear power plant by potential capacity, although just one reactor of seven is restarting Wednesday. The facility was taken offline when Japan pulled the plug on nuclear power after a coastal earthquake and tsunami sent three reactors at the Fukushima atomic plant into meltdown in 2011. However, resource-poor Japan now wants to revive atomic energy to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and meet growing energy needs from artificial intelligence. - **AP**



ISLAMABAD: Richard Lindsay UK Special Envoy to Afghanistan, FCDO Deputy Director for Afghanistan and Pakistan met Ambassador Shakeeb, Taliban representative in Pakistan and discussed regional security issues and the impact of Taliban policies on women and girls. - **DNA**

South Korean ex-PM Han gets 23 years jail for martial law role



SEOUL: Former South Korean prime minister Han Duck-Soone was sentenced to 23 years in prison on Wednesday for aiding and abetting a declaration of martial law that briefly suspended civilian rule and plunged the country into chaos. The defendant "disregarded his duty and responsibility as prime minister until the very end", said Judge Lee Jing-wan of the Seoul Central District Court.

Han, 76, was sentenced to 23 years in prison.

The sentence is eight years longer than prosecutors demanded. The 76-year-old career technocrat was ordered to report to prison immediately after the ruling.

The sentence is eight years longer than prosecutors demanded. The 76-year-old career technocrat was ordered to report to prison immediately after the ruling

Judge Lee said the martial law decree by Han's boss Yoon Suk-yeol in December 2024 was intended with the "aim of subverting the constitutional order" and amounted to insurrection. Yoon's stunning imposition of martial law saw armed troops deployed to the National Assembly and the National Security Commission before it was blocked by the opposition and removed by the Constitutional Court in April, triggering an election two months later. Han is one of many former officials - including Yoon - who have stood trial over their roles in the martial law attempt.

The defendant is deemed to have played a significant role in the insurrectionary acts of Yoon and others by ensuring, at least formally, compliance with the procedural requirement, "Judge Lee said in a televised sentencing. Lee also said Han had "acted in a way that was 'over the top' over the move, he failed to 'explicitly oppose it' or urge other cabinet members to dissuade Yoon from it. During the course of the trial, Han denied wrongdoing, insisting he had never supported or helped the martial law declaration.

Russian strikes kill two in Ukraine

KYIV: Overnight Russian strikes on the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Riz killed two people and injured a woman, authorities said Wednesday, while officials in Russia said a drone strike by a missile had wounded 11. "A 77-year-old man and a 72-year-old woman were killed. A 45-year-old man was wounded" in the Russian strikes on Kryvyi Riz, said Oleksandr Gauzha, the head of the regional military administration, in a statement posted on Telegram. The missile and drone attack also damaged several buildings, he added. Kryvyi Riz, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the frontline and the hometown of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, has been frequently targeted by Russian strikes since Moscow launched its February 2022 invasion.

The town of Rovno, a city in Ukraine's southwest, meanwhile, said a Ukrainian drone strike overnight ignited a fire at a residential building and parking lot in Takiatsky district, outside the city of Krasnohorivka. According to updated information, 11 people were wounded, nine of whom were hospitalized, including two children, the official Murat Kumpul, posted on Telegram. The region, which sits near the strategically important Black Sea and Sea of Azov, is a frequent target of Ukrainian strikes. Ukraine says its strikes target the oil and gas-industry infrastructure that Russia depends on to finance its offensive. - **AP**

Bad news for solar panel users

The shift comes amid ongoing systemic issues, including a backlog of pending net-metering applications that Discos have yet to resolve

MONITORING DESK

LAHORE: Marking a major policy shift with far-reaching implications, the federal government has initiated the process to abolish the net metering system and replace it with a net billing policy. Under the previous system, electricity units imported from and exported to the grid were balanced one-for-one at comparable retail rates. Whereas as per the new policy, electricity will be imported at a differential rate to the full national tariff, while solar electricity exported back to the grid will be credited at a significantly lower differential

rate. The economic impact of this policy is expected to be severe: a consumer exporting 300 units and importing a similar volume could now face a bill of approximately Rs10,000, compared to nearly zero under the outgoing system. The government and power distribution companies (Discos) have defended the change, saying it is necessary to combat electricity theft and reduce the alleged revenue losses. However, critics argue that it effectively penalizes consumers who invested their own funds to strengthen national energy capacity. The shift comes amid ongoing systemic issues, including a backlog of pending net-metering applications that Discos have yet to resolve. Additionally, thousands of installed solar systems remain unconnected to the grid.

Discos have also suspended new solar meter installation cases following directives from the federal ministry.



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Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb highlights economic reforms at WEF

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, highlighted the importance of economic reforms at the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual meeting, focusing on advancing Pakistan's economic reform agenda, strengthening international partnerships, and promoting investment-led growth. The minister met with President of the Asian Development Bank, Masato Kanda, to review Pakistan's ongoing economic reforms and discuss ways to further deepen the long-standing partnership between Pakistan and ADB, while also focusing on the role of ADB in supporting Pakistan's economic development.

Aurangzeb also met with the CEO of the World Bank, Dr. David Malpass, to discuss the Bank's continued support and collaboration with Pakistan. The minister highlighted the importance of private sector participation, noting ADB's focus on ensuring the timely and effective delivery of development outcomes. Earlier, the minister met with Chairperson of Menzies Aviation, Hassan El Houry, to discuss opportunities for enhancing cooperation in the aviation sector.



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