

Islamabad POST

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

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Speakers conference highlighted Pakistan positive image: Tarar

Detailed News On Page-08

Nasir Abbas to be Opp leader in Senate

Detailed News On Page-08

Malaysia keen to expand ties with Pak

Detailed News On Page-02

No final decision yet

Pak faces diplomatic dilemma over Gaza governance boards

Without Palestinian representation at the highest levels, any international effort risks being seen as imposed rather than inclusive a perception that could undermine its effectiveness in the long run

ASNAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The unwilling of two senior boards tasked with shaping the future governance of Gaza has sparked intense debate across the region. While the initiative is being presented as a step toward stabilizing Gaza and attracting international investment, the composition of these boards has raised serious concerns—particularly in Pakistan, which has been invited to participate alongside Qatar, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). So far, no Palestinian names have been included on the two separate senior boards. The first, called the Founding Executive Board, is designed to focus on high-level investment, diplomacy, and strategic direction. The second, the Gaza Executive Board, is responsible for overseeing the on-the-ground work of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAAG). The NCAAG itself is composed of technocratic, apolitical Palestinians, led by Dr. Ali Shaath, a civil engineer by training who has previously held ministerial positions within the Palestinian Authority. While this committee is meant to provide local legitimacy, its limited scope and lack of political representation have raised eyebrows among observers. Despite the existence of the Gaza Executive Board and NCAAG, analysts note that the real power lies with the Founding Executive Board. Of its seven members, six are Americans, including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, and Steve Witkoff, the US Special Envoy to the Middle East and a close friend of President Trump. The only non-American member is former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, who has long been involved in Middle East diplomacy.

The absence of Palestinian representation on this powerful board has been described as a glaring omission, raising questions about the credibility of the governance structure. Critics argue that decisions about Gaza's future are being made without the direct involvement of Palestinians themselves. President Trump has extended invitations to Pakistan, Qatar, Turkey, and the UAE to engage with the boards. However, Saudi Arabia's name is conspicuously missing. For Pakistan, this presents a diplomatic dilemma. Islamabad's foreign policy interests are closely tied to Riyadh, both economically and strategically. Saudi Arabia has historically been a major source of financial support, energy cooperation, and political backing for Pakistan. Any move by Pakistan to participate in a US-led initiative without Saudi involvement risks straining this critical relationship. Diplomatic sources suggest that Pakistan will need to tread carefully, consulting not only with Saudi Arabia but also with Turkey and Qatar, who have their own stakes in Gaza's future. The UAE's inclusion adds another layer of complexity, given its evolving ties with Israel and the United States. Beyond the diplomatic balancing act, the structure of the boards themselves has drawn criticism. The fact that six of the seven members of the Founding Executive Board are Americans, with no Palestinian representation, has fueled concerns about legitimacy. Observers warn that decisions made by a board dominated by US officials and business figures may prioritize investment and geopolitical interests over the needs of ordinary Palestinians. The presence of Tony Blair, while adding international credibility, does little to address the absence of Palestinian voices at the highest level. Pakistan's decision will likely hinge on

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Briefs

French Embassy expresses condolences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The French Embassy in Pakistan has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic fire incident at Gul Plaza, Karachi, which claimed nearly 16 lives and left more than 100 people affected. In a statement, the embassy conveyed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and reaffirmed solidarity with the people of Pakistan during this difficult time. The devastating blaze not only caused a heavy human toll but also inflicted severe economic damage. Traders operating in Gul Plaza reported losses amounting to billions of rupees, as shops and warehouses were reduced to ashes. Authorities are continuing investigations into the cause of the fire, while rescue and relief operations remain underway.

Trump to charge \$1 bn for Peace seat

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's government has asked countries to pay \$1 billion for a permanent spot on his "Board of Peace" aimed at resolving conflicts, according to US media reports. The White House has asked various world leaders to sit on the board, chaired by Trump himself, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Hungarian Premier Viktor Orbán and Canada's Mark Carney. Member countries—represented on the board by their head of state—would be allowed to join for three years, or longer if they contributed more than \$1 billion within the first year, according to Bloomberg, which first reported the sum.

At least seven killed in Kabul hotel blast

Blast occurs in Shahr-e-Naw area, home to foreigners and considered one of most secure areas in capital

NEWS DESK

KABUL: An explosion tore through a hotel in a heavily guarded part of central Kabul on Monday, killing seven people and injuring several others, authorities in the Afghan capital said. Kabul police spokesperson Khalid Zadras said the hotel was in the commercial Shahr-e-Naw neighborhood that includes large office buildings, shopping complexes and embassies. The district is considered one of the safest in Kabul. Videos shared on social media showed debris scattered on the street outside and smoke billowing from a large hole torn into the front of the hotel building. "So far, we have received 20 people at our hospital," Dejan Panic, humanitarian group EMERGENCY's Country Director in Afghanistan, said in a statement. "Among the wounded are four women and a child... Unfortunately, seven people were already dead on arrival. There was no immediate word on the cause of the explosion." Authorities said they were investigating.

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India, UAE agree to boost relations

NEWS DESK

ABU DHABI: India and the United Arab Emirates agreed to double bilateral trade to \$200 billion in six years and strengthen defence ties during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in New Delhi on Monday. The two sides also witnessed the finalisation of a 10-year agreement for the supply of 0.5 million metric tons of liquefied natural gas by Abu Dhabi state oil firm ADNOC to India's Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd, India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Mishra told reporters. "This was a short but extremely substantive visit,

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Two high-speed trains derail in Spain, 21 people killed

Fatal accident leaves 100 injured, with 25 in serious condition, reports state broadcaster

NEWS DESK

MADRID: A high-speed train derailed and smashed into another oncoming train in southern Spain on Sunday, posing the second train off the tracks in a collision that police sources confirmed to Reuters had killed at least 21 people. The accident happened near Adamuz, in Cordoba province. So far, 21 people have been confirmed dead by police, with state broadcaster Television Espanola adding that 100 people had been injured, 25 seriously. The driver of one of the trains, which was travelling from Madrid to Huelva, was among those who died, the TV station added. "The Iryo 6189 Malaga - (to Madrid) train has derailed from the track at Adamuz, crashing onto the adjacent track. The (Madrid) to Huelva train which was travelling on the adjacent track has also derailed," said Adif, which runs the rail network, in a social media post. Iryo is a private rail operator, majority-owned by Italian state-controlled railway group Ferrovie dello Stato. The train involved was a Freccia 1000 train which was travelling between Malaga and Madrid, a spokesperson for Ferrovie dello Stato said. The company said in a statement that it deeply regretted what

had happened and had activated all emergency protocols to work closely with the relevant authorities to manage the situation. The second train was operated by Renfe, which also did not respond to a request for comment. Adif has suspended all rail services between Madrid and Andalusia. Iryo train had more than 300 passengers on board, while the Renfe train had around 180. Parco Carmosa, Cordoba fire chief, told TVE the first train heading to Madrid from Malaga had been evacuated. The other train's carriages were badly damaged, he said, with twisted metal and seats. "There are still people trapped. We don't know how many people have died and the operation is concentrating on getting people out of areas which are very narrow," he said. "We have to remove the bodies to reach anyone who is still alive. It is proving to be a complicated task." Transport Minister Oscar Puente said he was following events from rail operator Adif's headquarters in Madrid. "The latest information is very serious," he posted on X. "The impact was terrible, causing the first two carriages of the Renfe train to be thrown off the track. The number of victims cannot be confirmed at this time. The most important thing now is to help the victims."

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif standing in respect while National Anthems of China and Pakistan are being played during Pak-China Agri Investment Conference in Islamabad. — DNA

Pak and KSA discuss regional issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Farhan. During the discussion, both leaders reviewed regional developments and explored avenues for deeper bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The exchange underscored the enduring partnership between the two brotherly nations and their shared commitment to advancing peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. The two foreign ministers also agreed to continue their dialogue on the sidelines of the upcoming World Economic

Plaza inferno Fatalities jump to 26

NAZIR SIVAI

KARACHI: The death toll in the Gul Plaza blaze continues to rise, with fatalities reaching 26 after the rescuers managed to douse the inferno after around 33 hours of arduous efforts. The number of those missing in the incident has also risen to 73 after three more names were added to the list, said the help desk established by the Sindh government. A large number of people gathered near Gul Plaza and attempted to enter the dilapidated building and protested against the incident while demanding justice for the victims. The authorities have summoned additional police force to disperse the crowd

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Sino-Pak relations

Chinese partnership can help Pak transform Agri sector, says PM

The prime minister said sustainable growth in agriculture required coordinated efforts by the federal and provincial governments, the farming community, and scientists and researchers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that Pakistan, essentially an agrarian economy, held immense and largely untapped potential in agriculture and can transform its agrisector not in years, but in months by adopting modern technologies, improving productivity and strengthening cooperation with China. Addressing the Pakistan-China Agri Investment Conference here, the prime minister noted that nearly 65% of Pakistan's population still lives and works in rural areas, with agriculture remaining the backbone of the national economy. He stressed the need to enhance per-acre yield through modern techniques, efficient water management and optimal use of limited land resources. The prime minister said sustainable growth in agriculture required coordinated efforts by the federal and provincial governments, the farming community, and scientists and researchers.

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Pakistan, WB pledge deeper cooperation

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awan Ahmed Khan Leghari on Monday held meetings with senior delegations of the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to discuss strategies for strengthening Pakistan's energy sector with a focus on sustainability and efficiency. A World Bank delegation led by Ousmane Diou, Vice President for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan Region, called on the minister, while Dr. Rami Ahmad, Vice President (Operations) of the Islamic Development

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA	Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Palestine	Palestine Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Sudan	National Day
Jan 04 / Myanmar	Independence Day
Jan 05 / Iraq	Armed Forces Day
Jan 12 / Tanzania	Armed Forces Day
Jan 14 / Uzbekistan	Armed Forces Day
Jan 15 / Nigeria	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Mali	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Laos	Armed Forces Day
Jan 25 / Thailand	Armed Forces Day
Jan 26 / Australia	National Day
Jan 26 / India	Republic Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494919



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122
& Rescue Services 4451122
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Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270901-20



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Railway Exchange 270831-6
WASA Rawalpindi.....5554489
CAA.....9281092



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MH.....5611116
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DIHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9291170-79
Polyclinic.....9218306-09
Shifa International 4603666



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CDA.....9218301-44
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potstar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Women entrepreneurship central to Pakistan's economic strategy

He addressed the Joint Pakistan-Azerbaijan Women Entrepreneurship Dialogue and highlighted the critical role of women entrepreneurs in driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Monday said Pakistan is preparing to launch its first-ever National Women Entrepreneurship Policy, a landmark initiative that will place women entrepreneurs at the center of economic planning. He addressed the Joint Pakistan-Azerbaijan Women Entrepreneurship Dialogue and highlighted the critical role of women entrepreneurs in driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The National Industrial Policy accords central importance to women entrepreneurs, recognizing them as key drivers of productivity, exports and economic competitiveness. Increased participation of women, he said, will significantly boost production, exports and overall economic resilience. He said that women have transformed limited resources into opportunities, bringing about a quiet but powerful revolution in Pakistan's economy. He noted that from rural areas to urban centers, women are actively contributing to business, industry, and trade, strengthening communities and value chains across the country. SAPM Haroon Akhtar Khan acknowledged the outstanding contributions of women across education, healthcare, business, and public service, stating that Pakistani women have proven their capabilities and leadership in diverse sectors. At the same time, he candidly recognized the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, including limited access to finance, digital tools, and international markets. Despite these challenges, he said, women continue to move forward with patience, creativity, and



resilience. He stressed that the government was transforming women's economic inclusion from a mere aspiration into a national economic strategy, with a clear focus not only on inclusion but on leadership, skills and global competitiveness. He informed that the Ministry of Industries and Production, with SMEIDA as its key implementation arm, is actively strengthening women-led enterprises. SMEIDA was providing training, mentoring, advisory services, market access support, and business development facilitation for women entrepreneurs. His three-year business plan included targeted initiatives specifically designed to support women-owned

businesses, he said adding that SME financing schemes are being aligned to create greater ease for women entrepreneurs in accessing credit and growth capital. Welcoming the collaboration between the Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Azerbaijan Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Haroon Akhtar Khan described it as a positive step toward strengthening bilateral trade and investment through women-led enterprises. He noted that women can play a vital role in expanding cooperation in sectors such as textiles, agriculture, IT, tourism, and creative industries. He also emphasized that

Women Chambers of Commerce are no longer symbolic bodies but have emerged as effective institutions driving economic reform and growth. Today's woman entrepreneur, he said, is not seeking concessions but demanding equal access, fair opportunities, and a level playing field. SAPM reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing an enabling, inclusive, and globally competitive business environment for women. He stressed that for sustainable development and global competitiveness, women entrepreneurship must remain at the core of Pakistan's economic strategy.

Murree admin to remain on high alert as rain, snowfall forecast

RAWALPINDI: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab has directed the Murree Administration to remain on high alert in view of a forecast of heavy rain and snowfall over the coming days, as precautionary measures have been activated across the province.

A PDMA spokesman said on Monday rain was expected in most districts from Monday until January 23, while Murree, the Galyat and other hilly areas were likely to receive heavy snowfall along with rain. The Pakistan Meteorological Department, he said, had forecast intermittent rain in the Lahore, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Multan, Faisalabad, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalpur divisions, necessitating caution in both urban and rural areas.

PDMA's Director General Irfan Ali Khatib directed all relevant departments to complete advance arrangements in line with the chief minister's instructions and remain fully prepared to handle any emergency situation. He placed special emphasis on Murree, instructing the district administration and line departments to remain vigilant. He said emergency control rooms should remain operational round the clock, while Rescue 1122 disaster response teams had also been placed on high alert to ensure a swift response in case of any untoward incident. The PDMA spokesman said facilitation centres had been established at various locations in Murree to provide timely guidance and assistance to tourists. Citizens were advised to avoid unnecessary travel during adverse weather conditions and strictly follow the issued safety advisories. The spokesman said the situation was being monitored continuously.—APP

ICT admin detains 6 violators for blocking GT Road

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Monday arrested six people after placing a container on GT Road to stall construction material, blocking traffic and setting up encroachments. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, the authority launched action on GT Road after receiving complaints that a container had been parked on the road side and was being used for the sale of construction material. The activity not only created encroachments but also caused obstruction to the main road, affecting the movement of vehicles and pedestrians. He said, the container was placed without permission and was being used as an unauthorized sale point. As a result of the operation, six individuals involved in the activity were arrested and shifted to the police lock-up. The container and relat-

ed material were also taken into custody as part of the enforcement drive. Officials stated that GT Road is a major traffic route, and any blockage creates problems for daily commuters, public transport, and emergency services. They said that setting up containers, stalls, or sale points on roadsides without approval is a violation of rules and cannot be allowed. During the action, authorities cleared the area to restore traffic flow and remove obstacles from the road. Officials warned that similar operations will continue against those involved in encroachments and illegal roadside businesses in different parts of the city. The administration appealed to citizens to play their role in discouraging such activities. People were requested not to purchase construction material or any other goods from unauthorized roadside

points, as this encourages illegal setups and leads to traffic problems. Citizens were advised to buy material only from approved and designated sale points operating under legal permissions. Officials further said that public cooperation is essential to keep main roads clear and ensure smooth movement across the city. They added that repeated warnings had been issued in the past, and strict action would now be taken against violators without discrimination. The administration reiterated that encroachments not only block roads but also pose safety risks, especially during peak hours. Authorities urged traders and vendors to follow the law and operate only from approved locations. Citizens were encouraged to report similar violations to the concerned departments so timely action could be taken.—APP

44kg hashish seized in Wah Cantt

WAH CANTT: Wah Sadar Police on Monday arrested a notorious drug peddler and recovered over 44 kilograms of hashish during a targeted operation, officials confirmed. According to police, the suspect was apprehended at a routine checkpoint when officers stopped a suspicious vehicle for inspection. A meticulous search of the car led to the recovery of a huge quantity of hashish, which had been cleverly concealed to evade detection. Police sources revealed that the arrested individual is a record-holder criminal with a history of involvement in theft, house-breaking and drug trafficking. A case has been registered against the accused, while further investigation is underway to unearth his links with broader drug supply networks and identify other facilitators involved in the illicit trade.—APP



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PNCA hosts semi-classical dance workshop

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) successfully hosted a two-day semi-classical dance workshop conducted by renowned dancer and instructor Fatima Anjum, reaffirming its commitment to the promotion of arts, culture, and creative education across the country. Held at the PNCA premises, the workshop brought together participants from diverse age groups, ranging from teenagers to adults. Designed as a business-friendly and inclusive learning experience, the sessions focused on introducing participants to the fundamentals of semi-classical dance, including movement, expression, rhythm, and basic technique, in a structured and engaging environment. The workshop commenced with an introduction to PNCA's mandate and its continued efforts to create accessible platforms for cultural learning and artistic exchange. Organizers emphasized that through such initiatives, PNCA aims to nurture emerging talent, encourage public

participation in the arts, and strengthen cultural appreciation within the community. Fatima Anjum, known for her refined approach to semi-classical dance and pedagogy, guided participants through carefully curated movement sequences, placing special emphasis on technique, expression, coordination, and confidence. Her interactive teaching style and professional expertise were widely appreciated by participants, who remained enthusiastic and actively engaged throughout both days of training. Speaking at the concluding ceremony, the organizers highlighted that the workshop reflects PNCA's broader vision of fostering meaningful cultural experiences and supporting artists who contribute to the preservation and evolution of traditional art forms in contemporary contexts. The successful execution of the workshop underscores PNCA's role as a leading national institution dedicated to arts education, cultural continuity, and community outreach.—APP

Briefs

Gwadar food street, amusement park, water sports in offing

ISLAMABAD: Under the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan, Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) has planned four mega projects—namely "Food Street", "Amusement Theme Park", "Water Sports" and "GDA Club Complex" - to transform Gwadar into a tourism hub. It aims at laying down the foundation of "modern tourism economy" under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode. GDA official told Gwadar Pro that the business-friendly environment in Gwadar is ideal for businessmen for the mentioned ventures, where GDA will facilitate the investors in provision of land for development, long-term arrangements, fast-track approvals under the single window facility. "As per the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan, the west bay - the western part of Gwadar - is dedicated to Recreational & Commercial activities. The spaces near west bay are already in use for traditional boat making, as public space for youth, and for playing local sports, with the scenic view of West Bay & Koh-e-Batal making it a unique and vibrant landscape," he explained. A Ministry of Planning official said that establishment of the proposed Food Street, West Bay Gwadar on PPP Mode will also offer floating platforms & allied facilities for tourists in order to tap into the tourism potential, along this marine drive. —APP

Rain, snowfall ahead, alert issued across Punjab

RAWALPINDI: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Punjab has issued a high alert for rain and heavy snowfall, probably starting from Monday through January 23 and strong western currents. Murree and the Galyat region are expected to experience intense weather conditions. Murree faces the risk of significant snowfall. According to PDMA, a western weather system is influencing the province, bringing intermittent to heavy rainfall across most divisions of Punjab, including Lahore, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Multan, Faisalabad, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Bahawalpur. In the upper hilly areas particularly Murree, Galyat, and other mountainous areas, heavy snowfall combined with rain is forecasted, prompting heightening precautionary measures for residents and visitors. Irfan Ali Kathia, Director General PDMA Punjab, has directed all relevant departments to ensure full preparedness in line with the instructions of the Chief Minister Punjab. "All arrangements must be completed in advance to effectively handle any emergency situations," the DG stressed. Special instructions have been issued to the district administration in Murree and allied departments to remain on high alert. —APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.92 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.95. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.5 and Rs 282.7, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 0.42 to close at Rs 325.48 from the previous day's close of Rs 325.06, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.77, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of 02 paise and closed at Rs 374.90 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.92. The exchange rate of the Emirati Dirham gained 01 paise and closed at Rs 76.22, whereas the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paise to close at Rs 74.64. —APP

Pakistan, Indonesia strengthen cooperation in vaccine product

A key highlight of the meeting was the reaffirmation of their strong resolve to advance girls' education, recognizing it as a cornerstone of inclusive and sustainable development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Haririnaana Patou, High Commissioner of Rwanda to Pakistan, paid a courtesy call on Ms. Wajida Qamar, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training of Pakistan. During the meeting, both sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to further deepen Rwanda-Pakistan cooperation, particularly in the fields of information technology, nursing, health, artificial intelligence, skills development, and teacher training. The discussions underscored the importance of building strong educational and professional linkages between the two countries, with a special emphasis on capacity building and knowledge exchange. A key highlight of the meeting was the reaffirmation of their strong resolve to advance girls' education, recognizing it as a cornerstone of inclusive and sustainable development. Both officials agreed that empowering women through education is essential for driving social progress and economic growth. The meeting reflects the growing partnership between Rwanda and Pakistan, as both nations seek to collaborate in areas that can uplift communities and strengthen human capital.

**China-Pak economy industry-education conference held**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China-Pakistan Low-altitude Economy Industry-Education Integration Conference was held in Beijing. Representatives from various institutions gathered to engage in in-depth discussions on low-altitude economy, technology cooperation, talent cultivation, and industry collaboration. Their goal was to promote pragmatic cooperation between the two countries in the burgeoning field of low-altitude economy. China Economic Net (CEN) reported. The low-altitude economy, as a strategic emerging industry, has been included in China's government work reports for two consecutive years and is a key component of the country's 15th Five-Year Plan. According to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of China, the scale of China's low-altitude economy surpassed 500 billion RMB in 2023 and is projected to reach 2 trillion RMB by 2030, emerging as a significant new driver of economic growth. Currently, Chi-

na holds a global leadership position in areas such as drone research and manufacturing, smart flight control, and innovative applications. Chinese consumer drones account for approximately 70% of the global market share, while industrial drones are being widely used in logistics, agriculture, and emergency rescue. At the conference, both Chinese and Pakistani delegates focused their discussions on drone technology cooperation and talent development. Dr. Gulmina Bilal Ahmad, Chairman of NAVTTC, emphasized that Pakistan has an urgent need for drone technology in sectors such as agriculture, emergency rescue, and firefighting. She pointed out that China's expertise in areas such as intelligent teaching platforms, training systems, and curriculum development provides a solid foundation for future cooperation, and the prospects are vast. Diao Qing, Chairman of the Industry-Education Integration Committee of the China Education Development Strategy Association, emphasized that talent is key to the development of the low-altitude

economy, with education at its core. The China-Pakistan Low-altitude Economy Engineering and Technology Institute, which was established in December 2025, is a joint effort between universities and enterprises from both countries. It adopts a "2+1" model, allowing students to earn dual diplomas and facilitating the integration of education, talent, and industry. All conference participants agreed that Sino-Pakistan cooperation in the low-altitude economy will not only help Pakistan build a drone technology system and cultivate local professional talent but will also serve as a model for the "go-global" expansion of China's vocational education and technical standards. This collaboration will inject new vitality into the industrial upgrades and economic cooperation of both countries. In the future, the two sides will further promote joint textbook development, training certification, technology transfer, and other multidimensional cooperation to create a replicable and scalable model of industry-education integration.

10 broadband connectivity projects completed

ISLAMABAD: The Universal Service Fund (USF) has completed a total of 10 broadband connectivity projects under its 4G Access Program and Tourist Destination Initiatives during 2025. According to a document available with Wafa Pakistan, the completed projects aim to empower underserved and underserved communities by expanding access to high-speed and affordable internet services across remote and less-developed regions of the country. Under the NII&MW Tourist Destination (4G) Program, two projects were completed. The first project, NII&MW Lot-10-M-8, was implemented in Gwadar, Kech, Awaran, Khuzdar, Jhal Magi, Kambar Shahdad Kot, and Larana districts. The project involved 413.81 kilometers of road segments, with a total capital expenditure subsidy disbursement of Rs 3.8 billion. The second project under the tourist initiative, Tourist Destination K2, was executed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, covering Swat, Upper Dir, and Baitagram districts. This project included eight tourist locations, 48.86 kilometers of access routes, and 413.81 kilometers of road segments, with a total subsidy disbursement of Rs 1 billion. In addition, eight projects were completed under the Access Program (4G) across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Punjab, collectively covering 1,092 mauzas and benefiting a population of 1,244,935 people. The total capital expenditure subsidy disbursed for these projects stands at Rs 12.18 billion. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Swat Lot project covered 26 mauzas with a population of 43,520, involving a subsidy of Rs 586 million. In Balochistan, four projects were completed, including Lasbela Lot (218 mauzas, population 149,614, subsidy Rs 1.7 billion), Loralai Lot (143 mauzas, population 81,983, subsidy Rs 2.5 billion), Sibi Lot (43 mauzas, population 38,178, subsidy Rs 1.2 billion), and Killa Sadulshah Lot (109 mauzas, population 120,257, and subsidy Rs 3.3 billion). In Punjab, three projects were completed. The Mianwali Lot covered 190 mauzas with a population of 372,742, and a subsidy of Rs 1.6 billion, while the Nanakana Sahib Lot covered 250 mauzas, serving 294,508 people, with a subsidy of Rs 457 million. —DNA

AIOU expands educational access

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is currently accepting admissions for the Spring Semester 2025, providing students across the country with continued access to affordable and flexible education. Alongside the ongoing admission process, the university has also opened extensive financial assistance opportunities for poor and deserving students. Students who were granted financial assistance during the Autumn Semester 2025 are eligible to apply again for the current semester through the Student Service Request system by January 23. Meanwhile, students seeking financial assistance for the first time may submit their applications by January 30 by contacting their nearest regional campus. In addition to financial aid, the university is offering completely free matriculation-level education to students from the tribal districts (former FATA), Gilgit-Baltistan and across Balochistan. This initiative aims to support children from underdeveloped and remote areas who face financial barriers to education. —APP

Pakistan's Kinnow exports remain on strong trajectory

ISLAMABAD: Under the proactive leadership of Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce, Pakistan's kinnow exports have continued to register strong growth despite the closure of the Afghan market, highlighting the success of timely policy measures and export diversification efforts led by the Ministry of Commerce. Despite the disruption of a traditionally significant export destination, the Ministry of Commerce, in close coordination with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, moved swiftly to facilitate exporters and redirect consignments toward alternative international markets. These efforts ensured continuity in shipments and protected growers and exporters from potential losses. According to official export figures, Pakistan earned approximately USD 40 million from kinnow exports within a span of just 45 days, covering the peak export period of December and the first half of January. The data shows that exports maintained a steady pace throughout December, followed by sustained momentum during the first 15 days of January—an encouraging sign amid regional trade constraints. The Federal Minister for Commerce lauded the collective efforts of the Ministry of Commerce team, TDAP, Pakistan's trade missions abroad, exporters, growers, and logistics partners, acknowledging that the strong performance was the result of close coordination and shared commitment. Jam Kamal Khan emphasized that overcoming the impact of the Afghan market closure required a whole-of-government and whole-of-sector approach, and appreciated the dedication of officers and stakeholders who worked tirelessly to keep export channels open and competitive. Officials attributed this performance to focused market outreach, enhanced trade facilitation, and close engagement with exporters. Under Jam Kamal Khan's direction, priority was given to expanding access to markets in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and other non-traditional destinations, while ensuring compliance with international quality and phytosanitary standards. The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan complemented these efforts through targeted export promotion, coordination with overseas trade missions, and continuous support to exporters in logistics and documentation. Improved coordination between federal authorities and the private sector helped maintain shipment schedules and preserve Pakistan's reputation as a reliable citrus supplier. The sustained export performance has provided critical foreign exchange earnings and reinforced confidence across the kinnow value chain, benefiting farmers, processors, packers, and exporters. Stakeholders noted that the strong trajectory, despite external challenges, reflects the resilience of Pakistan's agri-exports and the effectiveness of government-led export facilitation. The continued momentum in kinnow exports is being viewed as a positive signal for the broader agricultural export sector, reaffirming the government's commitment to exported growth and market diversification under the stewardship of the Federal Minister for Commerce. —DNA

Transparency, accountability in petroleum reforms

ISLAMABAD: As part of a comprehensive reforms agenda, the government has launched a nationwide digitalization drive targeting petrol pumps and the broader petroleum supply chain to curb smuggling, prevent illegal sales, and safeguard the interests of authorized dealers. The core objective of these reforms is to integrate the entire petroleum value chain, from imports and refineries to transportation and retail outlets, through a robust transparency system, enabling real-time monitoring, transparency, and accountability, said a statement issued here Monday. In this regard, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has successfully launched the mobile application "Raahqazari", which provides verified information on legally operating fuel outlets across the country. The application empowers consumers, regulators, and stakeholders by ensuring access to authentic and up-to-date data on authorized petrol pumps nationwide.

Further strengthening oversight, OGRA, in consultation with the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), has developed a unified Track and Trace System for tank lorries. This system will integrate ERP data, tank lorry movement, terminal operations, and retail outlet information into a single digital platform. As the next phase, comprehensive digitalization of petrol pumps will be carried out to ensure seamless monitoring across the downstream sector by installing automatic gauges on tanks and digital dispensing units. In the upstream sector, Pakistan achieved a major milestone earlier this year by successfully conducting an offshore bidding round after a hiatus of 18 years, receiving bids for 23 exploration blocks. The institutionalize transparency and efficiency, the Directorate General of Petroleum Concessions (DGPC) being sector

regulator is launching a new online portal and website for digital bidding of exploration and production (E&P) blocks, transitioning from a manual process to a fully digital system. Through this portal, E&P companies will be able to register, access block details, and submit bids and supporting documents online. The Department of Explosives, Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division), has developed the Explosives Track and Trace System (ETTS) to monitor and regulate the explosives supply chain. Two phases of ETTS have been successfully implemented, covering the supply chain from manufacturers to end users on a real-time basis. The system ensures controlled access, prevents pilferage, and enhances safety and accountability in the handling of explosives. To provide strong legal backing to these reforms, amendments to the Petroleum Act, 1934 have been enacted. —APP

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The two-stage killing of Palestinians in Gaza

DR. RAMZY BAROUD

A COLLEAGUE, an editor at a widely read outlet that centered Gaza throughout the two-year genocide, recently voiced his frustration that the Strip is no longer a main focus in the news.

He hardly needed to say it. It is evident that Gaza has already been pushed to the margins of news coverage – not only by the mainstream Western media, long known for its structural bias in Israel's favor, but also by outlets often described, accurately or not, as "pro-Palestine." At first glance, this retreat may appear routine. During the height of the genocide, Gaza demanded constant attention; after the genocide, less so. But this assumption collapses under scrutiny because the genocide in Gaza has not ended.

According to Gaza's Health Ministry, nearly 500 Palestinians have been killed and hundreds more wounded since the so-called ceasefire was declared in October, despite repeated claims that large-scale massacres had ceased. These are not isolated incidents or "violations" – they are the continuation of the same lethal policies of the last two years. Beyond the daily death toll lies devastation on an almost incomprehensible scale. More than 71,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 2023, with entire neighborhoods erased, infrastructure pulverized and civilian life rendered nearly impossible.

As long as the daily death toll remains below the psychological threshold of mass slaughter, Gaza slips from the headlines. To grasp the depth of Gaza's crisis, one must confront a brutal reality: well over 1 million people remain displaced, living in tents and makeshift shelters that collapse under winter storms, floodwaters or strong winds. Infants have frozen to death. Families are swept from one temporary refuge to another, trapped in a cycle of exposure and fear.

Beneath Gaza's ruins lie thousands of bodies still buried under rubble, unreachable due to Israel's destruction of heavy machinery, roads and emergency services. Thousands more are believed to be buried in mass graves awaiting excavation and dignified burial.

Meanwhile, hundreds of bodies remain scattered in areas east of the so-called yellow line, a boundary claimed to separate military zones from Palestinian "safe areas." Israel never respected this line. It was a fiction from the start, used to manufacture the appearance of restraint while violence continued everywhere. From Israel's perspective, the war has never truly stopped. Only Palestinians are expected to honor the ceasefire – compelled by fear that any response, however minimal, will be seized upon as justification for

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Vol: 06 Issue: 206

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renewed mass killing, fully endorsed by the US and its Western allies. The killing has merely slowed down. On Jan. 15 alone, Israeli attacks killed 16 Palestinians, including women and children, across Gaza, despite the absence of any military confrontation. But as long as the daily death toll remains below the psychological threshold of mass slaughter – below 100 bodies a day – Gaza quietly slips from the headlines.

Today, more than 2 million Palestinians are confined to roughly 45 percent of Gaza's already tiny 365 sq. km area, with only trickles of aid entering, no reliable access to clean water and a barely functioning health system. Gaza's economy has effectively been annihilated. Even fishermen are either blocked entirely from the sea or restricted to less than 1 km offshore, turning a centuries-old livelihood into a daily risk of death.

Education has been reduced to survival. Children study in tents or in partially destroyed buildings, as nearly every school and university in Gaza has been damaged or destroyed by Israeli bombardment.

Israel has succeeded, to a dangerous degree, in systematically dehumanizing Palestinians through mass killing.

Israel has also not abandoned the rhetoric that hid the ideological groundwork for its genocide. Senior officials continue to articulate visions of permanent devastation and ethnic cleansing – language that strips Palestinians of humanity while framing destruction as policy, a strategic necessity.

But why is Israel determined to keep Gaza suspended on the edge of collapse? Why does it obstruct stabilization and delay movement to the second phase of the ceasefire agreement? The blunt answer is that Israel wants to preserve the option of ethnic cleansing. Senior officials have openly advocated permanent occupation, demographic engineering and the denial of any Palestinians returning to the destroyed areas east of the Yellow Line.

And the media? For its part, the Western media has begun rehabilitating Israel's image, reinserting it into global narratives as if collective extermination never occurred. More troubling still, parts of the so-called pro-Palestine media appear to be moving on – as though genocide were a temporary assignment rather than an ongoing moral emergency. One might attempt to justify this neglect by pointing to crises elsewhere – Venezuela, Iran, Yemen, Syria and Greenland, for example. But that argument would only hold if Gaza had truly emerged from catastrophe, which it has not.

Israel has succeeded, to a dangerous degree, in systematically dehumanizing Palestinians through mass killing. Once violence reaches genocidal proportions, lesser – yet still deadly – violence becomes normalized. The slow death of survivors becomes background noise.

This is how Palestinians are killed twice: first through genocide and then through erasure – through silence, distraction and the gradual withdrawal of attention from their ongoing collective suffering.

Palestine and its people must remain at the center of global moral and political solidarity. This is not an act of charity or an expression of ideological alignment. It is the bare minimum owed to a population the world has already failed – and continues to fail every single day.

January 20 – Heydar Aliyev's Political Signature

Fərid Mustafayev



This approach played a significant role in society's acceptance of him as a moral leader. His attention to the families of the victims was a tangible expression of social responsibility. He openly declared that the state is not merely a structure of power institutions; above all, it must be capable of sharing in the suffering of its citizens. This position had a serious influence on shaping the public mood in the...

ONE of the gravest trials endured by the Azerbaijani people in the twentieth century is associated with the events of the night of January 20. That night was not only remembered for the deployment of military equipment against unarmed civilians. It entered history as a moment when the patience, will, and historical memory of an entire nation were deliberately targeted. The scale of the events, the nature of the violence employed, and the subsequent information manipulations demonstrated that the objective was not merely physical control, but also the creation of deep moral and psychological shock. Against the backdrop of these complex and contradictory processes, Heydar Aliyev's position acquired particular significance.

He assessed the events not only in terms of their immediate course, but within a framework of cause-and-effect relationships. For Heydar Aliyev, January 20 was not confined to a single night. It represented the culmination of long-accumulated political contradictions, legal voids, and disregard for national will. He categorically stated that armed intervention could under no circumstances be presented as a means of ensuring public order, because the concept of public order is founded upon law, security, and human dignity. On the night of January 20, all of these principles were trampled.

Heydar Aliyev's stance was formed precisely on this basis, and he substantiated it both politically and legally. The immediate analytical approach to the events was a clear reflection of Heydar Aliyev's political mindset.

He did not limit himself to emotional reactions. On the contrary, he emphasized the necessity of a systematic evaluation of what had occurred. For him, the primary issue was not merely naming those responsible, but correctly identifying the essence of the events themselves. Without an accurate diagnosis, no sound conclusion could be reached. In his position addressed to the Soviet political leadership, Heydar Aliyev placed the concept of responsibility at the center. He believed that evading responsibility only aggravated the situation and further eroded trust between society and authority.

Therefore, he demanded that the events receive an objective legal and political assessment. For that period, this demand was not only courageous, but also deeply principled. The impact of the tragedy on individual human lives did not escape Heydar Aliyev's attention. In his view, those who perished were not statistical figures. Each loss represented a family tragedy, the pain of a generation, and a profound shock to society. From this perspective, he approached the events not solely through a political lens, but with humane and ethical considerations.

This approach played a significant role in society's acceptance of him as a moral leader. His attention to the families of the victims was a tangible expression of social responsibility. He openly declared that the state is not merely a structure of power institutions; above all, it must be capable of sharing in the suffering of its citizens. This position had a serious influence on shaping the public mood in the aftermath of January 20. In his addresses to the domestic audience, the primary objective was to prevent the deepening of panic and chaos within society. Heydar Aliyev emphasized a reasoned stance, patience, and the idea of national unity. He understood that emotional fragmentation could lead to long-term consequences. For this reason, he presented national solidarity as a strategic necessity.

His appeals to the international community, on the other hand, were aimed at ensuring global recognition of the events. Heydar Aliyev understood that an information vacuum could result in the loss of truth. Therefore, he considered it essential that the realities of January 20 be voiced on the international stage. This was an important step both in terms of political responsibility and the preservation of historical memory. A key element in his speeches was the strengthening of national self-awareness. For Heydar Aliyev, January 20 was not merely the pain of the past; it was a serious message regarding how the future should be constructed. He believed that the people must draw conclusions from this tragedy and enter a stage of political maturity. He associated January 20 with the concept of national responsibility. In

his view, freedom is not only an aspiration, but also a responsibility—a responsibility borne by both political leaders and society as a whole. This perspective enabled the events to be perceived not merely as an emotional memory, but as a strategic lesson.

His analytical stance played a significant role in the transformation of public consciousness. Heydar Aliyev demonstrated that it is not enough to approach history solely through mourning; history must shape thought. It was precisely this approach that accelerated the understanding of the January 20 events within the context of national identity. Over time, the historical significance of Heydar Aliyev's position became increasingly evident. The assessment of the events did not change, but society's perception of that assessment deepened. His principles evolved into a model of political conduct. In later periods, became one of the foundational pillars of statehood thinking. The events of January 20 revealed the unbreakable will of the Azerbaijani people, while Heydar Aliyev's response to these events became the political expression of that will. His stance proved that national memory can be further strengthened through a leader's position. Today, when we look back at the January 20 events, it becomes clear that Heydar Aliyev's position was not merely a historical fact, but also a moral compass.

His stance ensured that the events were not forgotten over time, that their essence was not distorted, and that they continued to live on in national memory in an accurate and dignified manner. Thus, the January 20 tragedy remains in the history of Azerbaijan as both a period of pain and a moment of awakening. Heydar Aliyev's assessment of this tragedy became one of the key factors defining its political and historical framework. This position played an important guiding role in the historical path of the nation and continues to retain its relevance today.

—Fərid Mustafayev
Deputy Chairman of the "Progress" Social and Economic Research Public Union, Member and activist of the New Azerbaijan Party, Yasamal District Organization

A Gathering under the Eurasian Sky

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



One of the most anticipated outcomes of the summit was the expected signing of a free trade agreement between the EAEU and Indonesia.

Negotiations for this agreement were concluded earlier in 2025, and its finalization marks a significant step in the Union's outward economic engagement. Indonesia, as Southeast Asia's largest economy, offers access to a dynamic market and strengthens the EAEU's links with the Asia-Pacific region. The agreement also signals the Union's intention to diversify its economic partnerships beyond its immediate neighborhood, reducing reliance on a limited set of trading partners

THE latest summit of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) brought together the leaders of its five member states Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia at a moment when regional economic groupings are seeking greater clarity of purpose amid shifting global conditions. President Vladimir Putin of Russia, President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan, President Sadyr Japarov of Kyrgyzstan, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who represents Yerevan in line with Armenia's constitutional framework, convened to review the bloc's progress and set priorities for the coming years.

Formed in 2015, the EAEU was conceived as a platform for economic integration among post-Soviet states, with the aim of facilitating the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor. A decade later, the organization presides over a combined gross domestic product exceeding \$2.5 trillion, a figure that underscores its potential economic weight. Yet the summit demonstrated that the Union's ambitions are no longer confined to internal coordination alone. Instead, the discussions reflected a broader effort to position the EAEU as a meaningful actor in an increasingly fragmented global economy. At the heart of the agenda was a detailed review of current EAEU activities, particularly the pace and depth of economic integration. Leaders focused on practical matters, including trade facilitation, industrial cooperation, and regulatory harmonization. These issues, often technical in nature, are cen-

tral to the creation of a genuinely unified single market. Persistent barriers ranging from non-tariff restrictions to uneven implementation of agreed standards continue to limit the full realization of the Union's objectives. The emphasis placed on these challenges suggested a recognition that political declarations must be matched by sustained administrative and institutional effort.

One of the most anticipated outcomes of the summit was the expected signing of a free trade agreement between the EAEU and Indonesia. Negotiations for this agreement were concluded earlier in 2025, and its finalization marks a significant step in the Union's outward economic engagement. Indonesia, as Southeast Asia's largest economy, offers access to a dynamic market and strengthens the EAEU's links with the Asia-Pacific region. The agreement also signals the Union's intention to diversify its economic partnerships beyond its immediate neighborhood, reducing reliance on a limited set of trading partners. In his remarks, President Putin described the EAEU as a "self-sufficient center of the emerging multipolar world." This characterization reflects a broader narrative increasingly evident in Moscow's foreign and economic policy discourse. By framing the Union as both economically resilient and strategically autonomous, Russia seeks to underscore the relevance of regional groupings in a world where global governance structures are under strain. While such language carries a clear political message, it also highlights a practical concern shared by other members: the need to shield their economies from external shocks and geopolitical turbulence.

The summit was not solely about multilateral frameworks. On the margins of the meeting, bilateral discussions played a prominent role. Talks between Presidents Putin and Lukashenko focused on defense coordination and economic cooperation, reinforcing the close alignment between Moscow and Minsk. These exchanges illustrated how the EAEU functions alongside, rather than in place of, bilateral relationships that continue to shape the regional political and security landscape. For smaller member states, this dual structure presents both opportunities and challenges, as they seek to balance collective commitments with national interests. The adoption of several documents during the summit further demonstrated the Union's incremental approach to integration. While such documents rarely attract public attention, they form the backbone of policy coordination within the EAEU. Their implementation will determine whether the Union can translate its strategic vision into tangible benefits for businesses and citizens, particularly in areas such as customs administration, digital trade, and infrastructure connectivity. Looking ahead, the EAEU faces a complex set of tests. Internal cohesion remains essential, especially as member states pursue differing economic strategies and external partnerships. At the same time, the Union is expanding network of trade agreements will require careful management to ensure that openness to external markets complements, rather than undermines internal integration. The engagement with Indonesia may well serve as a model for future agreements with other emerging economies.

Briefs

Pak faces diplomatic dilemma over Gaza...

FROM PAGE 01
consultations with Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Qatar. While Islamabad may be tempted to accept the invitation as a way to enhance its diplomatic profile, it cannot afford to alienate Riyadh. Foreign policy experts argue that Pakistan should push for greater Palestinian representation on the boards before committing to participation. Doing so would not only strengthen the legitimacy of the governance structure but also provide Islamabad with a principled justification for its involvement. At the same time, Pakistan must weigh the potential benefits of engaging with the US-led initiative, including opportunities for investment and diplomatic influence. However, any such engagement will need to be carefully calibrated to avoid undermining its long-standing ties with Saudi Arabia. The unravelling of the Gaza governance boards has opened a new chapter in Middle Eastern diplomacy, but one fraught with challenges. For Pakistan, the invitation to join comes with both opportunities and risks. The absence of Saudi Arabia from the initiative complicates Islamabad's decision, forcing it to balance its strategic interests with its alliances. Ultimately, Pakistan's path forward will depend on careful consultation with regional partners and a clear-eyed assessment of the legitimacy of the governance structures being proposed. Without Palestinian representation at the highest levels, any international effort risks being seen as imposed rather than inclusive, a perception that could undermine its effectiveness in the long run.

Chinese partnership can help...

FROM PAGE 01
He underlined the importance of deciding what to grow and export, developing value chains, cold storage, warehousing and value addition to make Pakistani agricultural produce globally competitive. He described Beijing as a friend who had stood by Pakistan through thick and thin and said China had never hesitated in sharing expertise and technologies. He said the dispatch of 1,000 Pakistani graduates, selected on merit, to leading Chinese agricultural universities and research centres was a landmark initiative of the federal government. He said the trained graduates had returned and would now help farmers improve quality, productivity and value addition. Welcoming remarks by Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zailong, the prime minister praised China's achievements in agriculture, IT and AI, efficiency in manufacturing, and export competitiveness. He said Pakistan must aim to generate a trade surplus in agriculture through higher yields, competitive costs and superior quality, with Chinese experts providing support. Referring to improving economic indicators, he said inflation had fallen to 4.5 per cent, the policy rate to 10.5 per cent, and exports were rising, adding that Pakistan must now shift decisively towards growth. The prime minister also reiterated hope that President Xi Jinping will visit Pakistan soon and said that CPRE 2.0 would be a new chapter, focusing on agriculture, IT, AI, mines and minerals, and youth development. Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zailong on the occasion said China wanted to increase the bilateral agriculture trade volume up to \$1 billion with Pakistan achieving trade surplus. He said, he was delighted to see that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan's economy grew by over 3 per cent last year and recorded a growth rate of 3.7 per cent in the first quarter of the current year. He noted that many key economic indicators were showing improvement, with inflation easing to around 4 per cent. He said China was deepening coordination under bilateral action plans and was ready to continue cooperation with Pakistan, particularly prioritising technology-driven agricultural development.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan Mohammad Azhar Mazlan posing for a group photograph along with students during Annual Sports meets of a private school at Sport Complex, in the Federal Capital. — Online

Pakistan Sports Board rejects PHF's unilateral club scrutiny schedule

According to officials, the PHF released the schedule without prior consultation or approval from the PSB, which is the governing authority for sports in Pakistan. The PSB stated that such unilateral actions are creating confusion among stakeholders and could seriously undermine the transparency of scrutiny process

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A fresh controversy has erupted between the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) and the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) over the scrutiny of hockey clubs across the country. The PSB has strongly rejected the unilateral scrutiny schedule issued by the PHF, declaring it invalid and unacceptable. According to officials, the PHF released the schedule without prior consultation or approval from the PSB, which is the

governing authority for sports in Pakistan. The PSB stated that such unilateral actions are creating confusion among stakeholders and could seriously undermine the transparency of the scrutiny process. The PSB emphasized that the scrutiny of hockey clubs falls strictly under its jurisdiction and supervision. Any attempt by the PHF to bypass this authority will not be tolerated. The board further warned that the federation must issue an immediate clarification regarding its actions and align its procedures with the rules and regulations set by the PSB.

Officials highlighted that the scrutiny process is critical for ensuring fair representation of clubs in hockey elections and for maintaining credibility in the sport's governance. They cautioned that unilateral steps by the PHF could damage trust among clubs and stakeholders, ultimately affecting the future of hockey in Pakistan. The dispute reflects ongoing tensions between the PSB and PHF, with governance and transparency issues repeatedly surfacing in recent years. Stakeholders are now calling for urgent dialogue to resolve the matter and safeguard the integrity of Pakistan's national sport.

the national sport. As the situation develops, the spotlight remains on whether the PHF will comply with PSB directives or continue to pursue its own course, risking further confrontation with the country's top sports regulatory body. It is worth mentioning that several clubs had already voiced concerns regarding the scrutiny process conducted a few days ago. According to these clubs, voting rights and in some cases even playing rights have been granted to clubs they believe are undeserving, raising serious questions about fairness and transparency in the procedure.

Real Sociedad end Barca winning streak to tighten Liga title race

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain: Real Sociedad damaged Barcelona's title defense ambitions as Girona's surprise 2-1 La Liga victory on Sunday saw Hans Flick's side fall to a first defeat in 12 matches. The Catalan giants, who hit the woodwork four times and had two goals disallowed, now only lead rivals Real Madrid by a single point at the top of the table after Alvaro Arbeloa's side beat Levante on Saturday. Ilkay Gundogan, now unused in four games under new American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo, had Carlos Soler sent off late on but managed to hold on to triumph and climb up to eighth. "I think we deserved to win today, we had a lot of chances, but in the end you have to put them away," Barca midfielder Franke de Jong told DAZN. "We played well but we didn't win... their goalkeeper had a very good game." Sociedad shotstopper Alex Remiro made several crucial saves. "Three great points and a great game," said Remiro. "We've started this year in great form... this is the energy we have, how we've changed (recently)."

In a frantic start to a compelling game at the raucous Reale Arena, both teams had goals ruled out. La Real had the ball in the net inside 30 seconds when Mikel Oyarzabal headed home Guede's cross, but had Oyarzabal offside. At the other end, Barcelona's Fermin Lopez drilled home from range but Dani Olmo had committed a foul in the build-up and it was ruled out. With teenage winger Lamine Yamal keen to take on defenders, Barca got in often down the right flank. The 18-year-old went off Olmo who fired high over the bar when he might have sent the Catalans ahead. — APP

BCB to make final call on Bangladesh's T20 World Cup participation on Jan 21

DHAKA: A final decision on Bangladesh's participation in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 — particularly regarding travel to India — is expected by January 21, following discussions between ICC and the BCB in Dhaka on Saturday. During the meeting, the second between the two sides in a week, the BCB reiterated its willingness to complete in the tournament but expressed a preference for playing its matches outside India, citing security concerns. Sri Lanka, co-host nation, was proposed as a possible alternative venue. However, ICC maintained its position that the original tournament schedule would remain unchanged, with Bangladesh placed in Group C. — DNA

The Prince Moulay Rachid chaired the 35th Africa Cup of Nations final

RABAT: Marked by artistic shows reflecting Africa's cultural wealth and the vibrant energy of its youth, and embodying the spirit of cooperation, unity, and competitiveness carried by this tournament, this ceremony honours a competition that brought together an entire continent and conquered the whole world. At the close of the match, the Prince Moulay Rachid joined the podium to hand over trophies and medals to the Moroccan finalist team, and to the Senegalese team, winners of this edition of the AFCON. The CAN was a historic event for the country, far beyond a simple sporting challenge. The CAN has been a major political, strategic and symbolic moment for the Kingdom and for the King Mohammed VI. Through its scale, popular success and the quality of its organisation, it has served as a showcase for contemporary Morocco a country that is investing in its infrastructure, its international image and its ability to welcome the world, while already looking ahead to 2030, when it will co-host the World Cup with Spain and Portugal. In this occasion, His Majesty the King

Moulay Rachid, sent a congratulatory telegram to the members of the national football team. His Majesty's telegram read: "On the occasion of your reaching the final of the Africa Cup of Nations (Morocco 2025), we are pleased to send to you, players, coaches, technical, medical and administrative staff, and officials of the Royal Moroccan Football Federation, our warmest congratulations on this honorable continental achievement." His Majesty continued, "Through this distinguished journey, you have proven that perseverance, seriousness, and a collective spirit are the way to achieve accomplishments, and you have presented the world with a model of what Moroccan and African youth can achieve when they are armed with confidence in their talents and abilities." The telegram also stated, "You have provided evidence, through your composure and honorable heroic performance, of the importance of our strategic vision in investing in human capital and in modernizing the Kingdom's infrastructure, which has demonstrated its strength and global readiness in anticipation of hosting the 2030 World Cup." — DNA

Two high-speed trains derail in...

FROM PAGE 01
The mayor of Adamar, Rafael Moreno, told El Pais newspaper that he had been among the first to arrive at the scene of the accident alongside the local police and saw what he believed to be a badly lacerated body several metres from the accident site. "The scene is horrific," he said. "I don't think they were on the same track, but it's not clear. Now the mayors and residents of the area are focused on helping the passengers."

At least seven killed in Kabul...

FROM PAGE 01
The Taliban took control of western Afghanistan in 2021 and said it would restore security, but bomb attacks have continued, many of them claimed by the local arm of the militant Islamic State group.

India, UAE agree to boost...

FROM PAGE 01
His highness was received at the airport personally by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a special gesture that is characteristic of the extremely warm and close relationship the two leaders share. Modi told the briefing, Hindustan Times reported. Modi said that the two leaders held discussions in both restricted and expanded formats, with delegation members engaging with each other, the report said. "A number of documents were also exchanged in the presence of the leaders. The importance of this visit can be gauged by the composition of the delegation accompanying the UAE President," he added.

Pak and KSA discuss regional...

FROM PAGE 01
Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where they are expected to further deliberate on strengthening collaboration across political, economic, and strategic domains. This engagement reflects the strong and historic ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, rooted in mutual trust, shared values, and common vision for regional progress.

Fatalities jump to 26

FROM PAGE 01
and remove them from the vicinity, while announcements were also made warning the people that several hanging pillars had been weakened and could collapse at any time. The fire started late on Saturday at the sprawling, multi-story Gul Plaza shopping centre in the city's business district and burned for more than 24 hours, hampering rescue efforts in the densely packed area. After more than 24 hours of firefighting, crews moved to cooling and debris-clearing, although concerns grew that more victims could still be trapped inside. Firefighters said the lack of ventilation in the building, which houses more than 1,200 shops, caused thick smoke to fill the mall and slowed efforts to reach people trapped inside.

Pakistan, WB pledge...

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Bank, also met him to explore avenues for enhanced cooperation in energy, development initiatives, said a press release. Welcoming the World Bank delegation, the minister expressed gratitude for its historical support in development projects. He referenced his recent visit to the World Bank's headquarters, which highlighted the ongoing need for robust partnerships to address energy challenges effectively. During the discussions, the World Bank team emphasized the value of reliable and affordable energy systems. Dr. Rami Ahmad from the Islamic Development Bank outlined opportunities for joint initiatives in promoting sustainable energy practices.

India Beat Pakistan in SAFF Women's Futsal Championship



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Arch-rivals India defeated Pakistan 5-3 in a thrilling SAFF Women's Futsal Championship 2026 encounter at the Nonthaburi Stadium on Monday, as the high-profile clash unfolded with a powerful display of unity and sportsmanship. The match produced intense action from the outset, with

both teams adopting a cautious approach in the first half, which ended level at 1-1. Pakistan took control early in the second half, scoring two quick goals to establish a 3-1 lead and demonstrating remarkable confidence and composure. However, India staged an impressive comeback, netting four unanswered goals to turn the contest on its head and secure a dramatic 5-3 victory. Despite the loss, Pakistan Women's Futsal Team continued to impress in their maiden appearance at the



SAFF Women's Futsal Championship, earning praise for their fighting spirit and steady improvement against one of the tournament favourites. Before kickoff, Pakistan captain Kaya Bokhari and Indian captain Jyoti Chanzon exchanged a warm handshake, symbolising the true spirit of the game. Bokhari also presented a traditional Sindhi Ajrak to her counterpart as a cultural gesture of respect and goodwill. Pakistan will next face Nepal in their group match on January 21.

Briefs

Indonesia targets illegal mining on 190,000 hectares of forest land

JAKARTA: The Indonesian government could potentially seize mining activities across 190,000 hectares (733.59 square miles) of illegally cleared forest, the deputy forestry minister told a parliamentary hearing on Monday, as authorities tackle what they say is unlawful extraction in the resource-rich archipelago. Indonesia's unprecedented crackdown, which has seen military-led teams take over palm plantations and mines, has unnerved the industry, pushing up global palm oil prices over concerns it will hit output, and more recently, generating rallies in the prices of metals like tin. "There were 190,790 hectares (mines) that do not have forestry use permits, which could be considered illegal," Deputy Forestry Minister Rohmat Muzaki said. He did not name any of the companies involved or say how many were involved. Neither did he elaborate on what was being mined or provide any timeline for the seizures. —APP

Skilled workforce imperative for governance: Dr Zulfikar

FAISALABAD: University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zulfikar Ali said that a skilled and well-trained administrative workforce aligned with modern tools played a pivotal role in smooth governance, transparent decision-making and effective service delivery. He was addressing the concluding session of a five-day national outreach training program for managerial and administrative staff arranged by the UAF in collaboration with National Academy of Higher Education, HEU Dr Zulfikar Ali said that the UAF had implemented e-Filing system, ensuring electronically tracking of files, operational efficiency, cost sustainability, data security and merit-based governance. He said that continuous capacity building equips staff with practical skills, strengthens institutional governance and enhances service delivery. He said that a competent and well-trained administrative staff set up in backbone of a progressive university. By equipping staff with practical knowledge and modern administrative skills, "We are building a progressive, modern responsive university system," he added. Deputy Director Safia Bhattori from National Academy of Higher Education said the HEU initiative of outreach training program at universities doorstep will enhance the skills of officials to work more efficiently. Director Academics Dr Hafiz Shafiq Taseem Gull said that 30 university administrative staff were imparted training. —APP

2 Killed, 84 injured in factory blast in China

BEIJING: An explosion at a factory in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has killed two people, left eight missing and injured 84, local authorities said. The explosion occurred at a plate plant of Baogang Steel in western Baotou City, caused by the blast of a 650-cubic-meter saturated water and steam spherical tank. The incident resulted in a total of 84 injured people being treated in hospitals, and five in serious condition. The government has suspended production of the accident plant and initiated citywide safety overhaul of industrial and trade enterprises. Investigations into the blast's environmental impact are ongoing. Monitoring by environmental protection departments has so far detected no adverse effects on the surrounding air or soil quality. —APP

Trump tells Norway PM no obligation to 'think purely of peace' after Nobel snub

Trump also called on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) to "do something for the United States", saying, "I have done more for Nato than any other person since its founding"

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump said he no longer felt an "obligation to think purely of peace" after not receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, and repeated his demand for control of Greenland, in a letter to Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre seen by Reuters and Bloomberg on Monday. A copy of the text of the letter was posted by the foreign affairs and defence correspondent for PBS News, Nick Schiffrin, on social media platform X, who said he had obtained it from multiple officials. Schiffrin added that the letter had been forwarded

to "multiple European ambassadors in Washington". "Dear Jonas: Considering our Country decided not to give me the Nobel Peace Prize for having stopped eight Wars PLUS, I no longer feel an obligation to think purely of Peace," Trump said in the letter. "Although it will always be predominant, but can now think about what is good and proper for the United States of America." As Bloomberg pointed out, the Nobel Peace Prize is not decided by the Norwegian government but rather awarded by an independent committee. "Denmark cannot protect that land from Russia or China, and why do they have a 'right of ownership' anyway?" the US president added. "There are no

written documents, it's only that a boat landed there hundreds of years ago, but we had boats landing there, also." Trump also called on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) to "do something for the United States", saying, "I have done more for Nato than any other person since its founding". "The world is not secure unless we have Complete and Total Control of Greenland. Thank you!" The publication quoted Støre as saying: "Regarding the Nobel Peace Prize, I have several times clearly explained to Trump what is well known, namely that it is an independent Nobel Committee, and not the Norwegian government, that awards the prize." A

request for comment sent to the White House was not immediately returned. It added, Trump has insisted he will settle for nothing less than full ownership of Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark, threatening tariffs of up to 25 per cent on eight European nations until the purchase of the Danish territory is achieved. Meanwhile, last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado has given her own medal to Trump in recognition of what she called his commitment to the freedom of the Venezuelan people. However, the Norwegian Nobel Institute has said the prize cannot be transferred, shared or revoked even if the medal is given away.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Muhammad Hanif Abbasi chairs meeting to review Pakistan Railways' largest digitization initiative under Railway Advanced Infrastructure Network (RAIN) Project.

Russia jails US man for 5 years for illegally transporting weapons

MOSCOW: Russia has jailed an American man for five years for illegally transporting weapons, a court said Monday, saying that a rifle was found on his yacht after it docked in the port city of Sochi last June. Dozens of Westerners, including Americans, have been imprisoned in Russia, especially after the start of the Ukraine war in 2022, with many of them later expelled as prisoner exchange. "A US citizen was found guilty of illegally transporting and moving firearms," the regional court's press service said in a statement. It identified the man as Charles Wayne Zimmerman, and said he "admitted his guilt in full" and was "sentenced to five years in prison". It did not mention when exactly the man was sentenced but said an appeal against the conviction had been rejected. It was the first time his arrest and conviction has been mentioned in Russian media, which usually covers judicial proceedings of foreign citizens closely. According to the court, the man sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. It cited his saying that he had met a Russian woman online and decided to visit her, and that he did not know he was forbidden to keep a weapon on board his yacht while it was docked in Russia. —APP

UAE exploited coalition legitimacy: Hadhramaut

He affirmed that the southern provinces are experiencing increasing liberation from the oppression and domination imposed on them

RIYADH: The United Arab Emirates "exploited the legitimacy of the coalition of restoring legitimacy in Yemen to achieve its own agenda (in Yemen)", Salam Al-Khazmahi, the governor of Hadhramaut, said today. "We thought the UAE would be a support and aid to us, but we were shocked by its actions," he added. He confirmed that the province suffered from armed groups affiliated with Adnan Al-Zohbi, backed by the UAE. Al-Khazmahi noted that those groups had carried out acts of invasion and terror against citizens, committing crimes of robbery, kidnapping, murder, and displacement, in addition to destroying state property and looting its premises, causing widespread damage to various segments of the province's population. During a press conference, the governor of Hadhramaut confirmed that the Yemeni government had discovered suspicious Emirati equipment and practices at the Rayhan base in Nikhala that are not consistent with the declared goals of the legitimacy support coalition or the principles of brotherhood, Islam, and Arabism. He explained that the equipment included wires, explosives, detonators, and communication devices used to carry out assassinations, murder, and terrorism. He noted that the presence of these tools within the Rayhan airport camp is not consistent with the nature of the camp's tasks and reflects its use as a headquarters for planning and implementing crimes and violations targeting civilians. Al-Khazmahi added that the type of materials discovered and the way they were prepared are not consistent with the tools and equipment used by regular armies in military bases, which confirms that the base was used to carry out criminal acts against civilians. He said that the armed groups loyal to Al-Zohbi had exploited the legitimacy demands and serving as a cover for their crimes against southerners, magnifying their legitimate demands and using what he described as an Emirati revolution aimed at spreading chaos and hindering any practical initiatives to address the southern issue. The Governor of Hadhramaut argued that these recent revolutions explain the UAE's eagerness to smother Al-Zohbi through Somalia to Abu Dhabi, in order to protect him from legal prosecution for the crimes and violations committed against the people of the south, and to prevent him from being exposed as a tool for implementing Abu Dhabi's agenda in Yemen.

Pakistan committed to support Chinese investors: Tanveer

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Inayat on Monday said that Pakistan remained fully committed to strengthening its strategic economic partnership with China by providing a conducive and investment-friendly environment, particularly in the agriculture and food security sectors. Addressing the Pakistan-China Investment Conference, he said the Ministry of National Food Security and Research stood fully committed to supporting Chinese investors, from facilitating regulatory processes to ensuring seamless coordination with all relevant government bodies. He added that the government's goal was to make Pakistan not

merely a destination for investment but a place where Chinese enterprises could grow, innovate and succeed alongside Pakistani partners. Together, Pakistan and China could push the boundaries of innovation, strengthen food security and reshape the economic landscape of the region, he said adding that there was a need to move forward with courage, ambition and unwavering mutual respect. The economic partnership between the two countries was strong, as reflected in trade figures, he said adding that in fiscal year 2024-25, Pakistan's exports to China reached approximately \$2.38 billion, while imports stood at \$16.3 billion, reflecting growing demand

on both sides despite global economic headwinds. This performance, he added, demonstrated resilience and expanding opportunities under the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement framework. He said the completion of CPFC Phase I and the launch of CPFC Phase II marked a decisive shift towards industrialization, technology transfer, renewable energy and people-to-people development. He noted that 11 memorandums of understanding were signed in September 2025, covering modern farming, livestock, fisheries, farm mechanization and advanced technology transfer. "These initiatives are not just projects; they are lifelines of growth, confidence and mutual trust," —APP

AlBaraka forum regional moot proposes landmark reforms

KARACHI: Titled "Islamic Economy in the Digital Age: Innovation Within the Framework of Compliance," the 6th AlBaraka Forum Regional Conference was held at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Karachi, bringing together senior policymakers, financial leaders, scholars, regulators, and industry experts to examine the rapid transformation of the digital economy and its alignment with the principles of Islamic finance. Organized by the AlBaraka Forum for Islamic Economy, in collaboration with the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development, the conference provided a high-level platform for strategic dialogue on digital transformation, financial innovation, and institutional governance within the Islamic economy. Addressing the conference, IIE, Mr. Jameel Ahmed, Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, highlighted the magnitude of change reshaping global finance, stating: "The global financial system is going through a major transformation. Instant payment platforms, evolving distribution models, and artificial intelligence are no longer theoretical concepts—they are now operational realities. Today, more than 70 % of people worldwide use some form of digital financial system, while over 80 % are willing to shift, clearly reflecting a fundamental change in consumer behavior and expectations." The conference featured comprehensive panel discussions on Digital Islamic Banking, the Future of Islamic Investment, Shari'ah Compliance and Governance, Waqf and Zakah, Digital Disruption, and Pakistan's strategic position as a leading Islamic economy in Asia. In his opening remarks, Mr. Yousaf Hassan Khawari, Secretary General of the AlBaraka Forum for Islamic Economy, emphasized the strategic importance of aligning digital innovation with Islamic finance principles, stating: "If Islamic finance effectively facilitates the digital economy within Islamic banking, it will progress in parallel with conventional banking. —DNA

Yemen humanitarian crisis to worsen amid funding cuts

GENEVA: The UN warned on Monday that the humanitarian situation in Yemen is worsening and that gains made to tackle malnutrition and health would go into reverse due to funding cuts. "The context is very concerning... We are expecting things to be much worse in 2026," Juliet Harcourt, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, told reporters in Geneva. Some 21 million people will need humanitarian assistance this year, an increase from 19.5 million the previous year, according to the UN. The situation has been aggravated by economic collapse and disruption of essential services including health and education, and continued insecurity. Funding Yemen traditionally received from Western countries was now being cut back, Harcourt said, pointing to hopes for more help from Gulf countries. The US slashed its aid spending this year, and leading Western donors also pared back help as they pressed to raise defense spending, triggering a funding crunch for the UN. —APP

Syrian president announces deal with Kurds including ceasefire

TARBA: The Syrian government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) agreed on an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire on all fronts on Sunday after days of fighting as the army advanced into Raqqahlibel territories in the northeast. The ceasefire will be in parallel with the withdrawal of all SDF forces from the east of the Raqqahlibel River, according to a document published by the Syrian Presidency on Sunday. The deal entails incoming al-SDF forces into the defense and interior ministries after conducting required security checks, the statement said. After meeting US envoy Tom Barrack, —APP

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Briefs

Putin invited to Trump's 'Board of Peace'

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has been invited to join US President Donald Trump's "Board of Peace" aimed at resolving conflicts globally and overseeing governance and reconstruction in Gaza, the Kremlin said Monday. Moscow has also sought closer relationships with the Gulf states amid growing Western isolation. "President Putin also received an invitation to join this Board of Peace," spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists, including AFP. Russia was seeking to "clarify all the nuances" of the offer with Washington, he said, without adding if the Kremlin chief is inclined to join. The White House has reached out to various figures around the world to sit on the so-called "Board of Peace," chaired by the US president himself. Putin has previously praised Trump's efforts to resolve conflicts. "He's really doing a lot to resolve these complex crises, which have lasted for years, even decades," Putin said last October. — APP

Pakistan's trade deficit widens

BUREAU REPORT
KARACHI: Pakistan's external financing position weakened in December 2025 due to a rise in imports and persistent income outflows that pushed the current account back into deficit. According to data provided by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Pakistan recorded a current account deficit of \$244 million in December, compared with a \$89m surplus in November of the same year. As a result, the cumulative current account position for July to December \$128 rose to a deficit of \$117m compared to a surplus of \$957m during the same time last year. The monthly decline was driven primarily by changes in trade. Imports of goods rose to \$5.74bn in December, while exports stood at \$2.72bn. Trade in services also remained negative. Services exports for the month were \$966m while imports were \$1.31bn, adding \$370m to the deficit. Overall, strong remittance inflow did provide support, with workers' remittances amounting to \$3.59bn in December. Other notable findings were that the financing account posted a net outflow of \$599m in December, while foreign direct investment showed a net outflow of \$135m.

5.8 magnitude earthquake rattles Islamabad

SAMUHLAH ANSAR
ISLAMABAD: A 5.8-magnitude earthquake on Monday rattled Islamabad with the seismic monitor centre reporting that the tremors originated at the depth of 10 kilometres. The tremors were also felt in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Swat and Gilgit-Baltistan's Hunza. Meanwhile, as per the data from the United States Geological Survey, the quake measured 5.9 on the Richter Scale and was located at 50 kilometres North-Northwest of Barishal and at a depth of 35km. An image showing the epicentre of earthquake along with the tectonic faulting on January 19, 2026. — UNGS website The quake, as per local residents, has partially damaged more than 100 homes in Hunza with cracks appearing on the walls. Landslides have also resulted in closed roads, and pathways at various locations. The Karakoram Highway has also been closed at various points due to landslides.

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, Secretary Minister of Information and Broadcasting and PIO Presenting Digital Album of ISC Speaker's Conference to Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at his Residence on January 19, 2026. — DNA

Who is on Trump's 'Board of Peace' overseeing Gaza's reconstruction?

There will also be a separate "Gaza Executive Board" - responsible for overseeing all on-the-ground work of yet another administrative group, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG)

DNA

WASHINGTON: The White House has released the names of the members who will be part of the senior executive working with its new "Board of Peace" for Gaza. With the US president as chair, the founding "Executive Board" will oversee the work of a committee of technocrats tasked with the temporary governance of Gaza and its reconstruction. Each member is expected to be in charge of a portfolio that will be "critical to Gaza's stabilisation," the White House has said. But it is not yet clear who will be responsible for which priorities.

There will also be a separate "Gaza Executive Board" - responsible for overseeing all on-the-ground work of yet another administrative group, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG). Meanwhile, the Board of Peace is expected to sit above these two executive bodies and comprise a number of world leaders. No women and no Palestinians have been announced so far on the Executive Board, but the White House said additional members will be announced over the coming weeks. So, who is on the Executive Board? Sir Tony Blair, BBC/Monica Ghosh An image of former UK prime minister Tony Blair looking at the camera while dressed in a black suit and white shirt in a room with wooden walls. BBC/Monica Ghosh Former UK Prime Minister Sir Tony Blair had long been talked about as a potential member of Trump's "Board of Peace," with the US president confirming back in September that he has expressed an interest in joining the body. The former Labour Party leader was the UK prime minister from 1997 to 2007 and took the ministry into the Iraq War in 2003, a decision which means some may view his presence on the board as controversial. After leaving office, he served as Middle East envoy for the Quartet of international

powers - the United Nations, European Union, US and Russia - from 2007 to 2015. Sir Tony is the only founding member of the executive board who is not a US citizen. He previously described Trump's plan for Gaza as the "best chance of ending two years of war, misery and suffering." In a statement, Sir Tony said he was "honoured" to be named on the executive board, and thanked President Trump for his leadership in establishing the group. He will also serve on the Gaza Executive Board. Marco Rubio: Getty Images An image of the US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, speaking into a microphone while wearing a navy suit and a red tie. Rubio is central to the Trump administration's approach to foreign policy. Before Trump's return to office, Rubio had spoken out against a ceasefire in Gaza, saying that he wanted Israel "to destroy every element of Hamas they can get their hands on". But he has since praised the first phase of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire deal signed in

October as the "best" and "only" plan. Also in October, Rubio criticised a move by the Israeli parliament towards annexation of the occupied West Bank. Steve Witkoff: Reuters An image of the US Special Envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, speaking in front of the American Flag visible to the left. Reuters US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff, a real estate magnate and golf partner to Trump, will also serve on the Gaza Executive Board. Jared Kushner: EPA An image of Jared Kushner dressed in a black suit with a white shirt staring off into the distance. EPA Jared Kushner, the US president's son-in-law, has also played a key role in the Trump administration's foreign policy negotiations. At a talk at Harvard University in 2024, Kushner said "Gaza's waterfront property could be very valuable... if people would focus on building up livelihoods." There is significant overlap between the two senior boards, with Kushner, Witkoff and Sir Tony appearing on both.

Info Minister calls on Chairman Senate

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, met Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, who called on him along with his delegation at the Chairman Senate's official residence. Secretary Information Ashfaq Ahmed Khali and Principal Information Officer (PIO) Mubashir Hasan were also present during the meeting. During the meeting, the Federal Minister for Information presented a digital album of ISC, recently held in Islamabad, to the Chairman Senate. The digital album documents key moments of the conference, including the participation of distinguished speakers and parliamentarians from around the world, various sessions, and related activities. Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani appreciated the excellent media coverage and effective publicity of the conference and thanked the Federal Minister for Information and his entire team for their professional efforts. He remarked that the positive impacts of the conference are now clearly visible and that Pakistan's image at the global level has been further strengthened. He further stated that the participation of distinguished speakers and parliamentarians from across the world made the conference a historic and decisive development, fostering dialogue, cooperation, and mutual trust among nations.

FMs of Egypt, Greece, Cyprus hold prayers

CAIRO: The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Greece, and Cyprus, Constantinos Koukios, met in a meeting on Sunday, within the framework of their Trilateral Cooperation Mechanism. In a statement, Egypt's Foreign Minister said the meeting addressed regional and international issues of common concern, including developments related to the Palestinian cause and the upcoming steps in US President Donald Trump's plan as it enters its second phase, and the Palestinian technocratic committee commenced its work following the announcement of its formation. Discussions also covered the situation in Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia. During the meeting, participants stressed the need to preserve states' unity, territorial integrity, and sovereignty, ensure the security of the Red Sea, and underscore the importance of increasing coordination and joint cooperation to address challenges and support efforts aimed at consolidating security and stability regionally and internationally. — APP

Harry arrives at London court

LONDON: Prince Harry arrived Monday at London's High Court for an anticipated nine-week trial into claims that a UK newspaper group unlawfully gathered information on him. In the latest case after the British royal brought lawsuits against several UK newspaper publishers, Harry is jointly suing Associated Newspapers Ltd (ANL), the publisher of the Daily Mail and The Mail on Sunday tabloids. Harry, who is set to take the stand to give evidence on Thursday, entered the Royal Courts of Justice shortly after 10:00am (10:00 GMT), ahead of the opening of the trial at 10:30am. It is the third and final case brought against a British newspaper publisher by the prince, who is said to see holding the media in account as a personal mission. He has long blamed the media for the death of his mother Princess Diana, killed in a Paris car crash in 1997 while trying to shake off the paparazzi. King Charles III's younger son is bringing the case along with six other suitcases. The plaintiffs including pop icon Elton John and John's husband David Furnish. — APP

Sindh CM announces 10m compensation for deceased families

Chief minister says committee will advise on providing affected traders with shops immediately for restarting businesses

BUREAU REPORT
KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has announced a compensation of Rs10 million each for the families of those who died in the Karachi Gul Plaza fire and pledged that the destroyed building will be rebuilt. Addressing a press conference in Karachi along with other officials on Monday, CM Murad said that the Gul Plaza fire was "major incident," and indicated that the entire building must be demolished due to the extent of the damage. Firefighters and rescue teams are attempting to enter the building from three separate points, but the fire has not yet been fully extinguished, he added. CM Murad while announcing the monetary compensation for the victims' families, said that the aid distribution will begin tomorrow. He emphasised that the focus now is on correcting mistakes and preventing future incidents. An inquiry into the incident will be conducted under the supervision of the Karachi commissioner. The investigation, he said, will not target any individual, though action will be taken if evidence of sabotage is found. The CM also stressed the need to improve emergency access and fire safety standards. "In such incidents, every expert must be allowed to do their job without obstruction," he said. He further confirmed that steps would be taken to compensate shopkeepers who suffered losses in the fire. Reflecting on accountability, the chief minister said, "We all need to reflect on our own responsibilities."

PAF fighter jets arrive in Saudi Arabia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan Air Force (PAF) contingent, including F16 Block52 fighter aircraft and a dedicated air and ground crew, has arrived at King Abdulaziz Air Base in Saudi Arabia to take part in the multinational aerial combat exercise titled 'Spear of Victory-2026', the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Monday. According to the military's media wing, the exercise is witnessing the participation of fighter jets and combat support elements from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, France, Italy, Greece, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. "It exercises offers a robust platform to enhance inter-

operability, operational synergy, mutual understanding and capacity building among participating Air Forces, particularly in large force employment, joint composite air operations, integrated ISR, and operations in advanced electronic warfare environments," the statement read. Through participation in this multinational forum, the military's media wing said that PAF seeks to enhance interoperability with partner air forces and validate its operational preparedness in a contested, technology-driven battlespace. "For this international deployment, PAF fighter aircraft undertook a non-stop flight from their home base in Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, demonstrating the long-range operational reach and expeditionary capabilities of the Pakistan Air Force," the ISPR statement read.

Attack on supreme leader would be declaration of war

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian warned on Sunday that any attack on the country's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei would mean a declaration of war. "An attack on the great leader of our country is tantamount to a false war with the Iranian nation," Pezeshkian said in a post on X in an apparent response to US President Donald Trump saying it was time to look for a new leader in Iran. Limited internet access has returned in Iran, a monitor said

Sunday, 10 days after authorities imposed a communications blackout amid violent protests. Demonstrations sparked in late December by anger over economic hardship exploded into protests widely seen as the biggest challenge to the Iranian leadership in years. The rallies subsided after the crackdown amid a communications blockade that started on January 8 as the protests grew in size and intensity. Iranian officials have said the demonstrations were peaceful before turning into "riots" and blamed foreign influence from Iran's arch-enemies US and Israel. Trump, who backed and joined Israel's 12-day war against Iran in June, had repeatedly threatened new military action against Tehran if protesters were killed. While Washington's posture appeared to have stepped back, Trump hit out at the Iranian supreme leader - in power for 37 years - in an interview with Politico on Saturday, saying it was "time to look for new leadership in Iran". — DNA

Nasir Abbas to be Senate opposition leader

The opposition leader's posts in the Senate and the National Assembly (NA) had fallen vacant in August 2025, following the disqualification of PTI's Shibli Faraz and Omar Ayub, respectively

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PTI Senator Ali Zafar said on Monday that Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani had communicated to him that Majlis Wahdat-Muslimoon (MWM) chief Allama Raja Nasir Abbas would be notified as the opposition leader in the upper house of Parliament by tomorrow (Tuesday). Zafar told Dawn that he had submitted a letter to the Senate chairperson on Monday, seeking the appointment of Abbas to the slot that has been lying vacant since August 2025. According to the PTI senator, Gilani had accepted the opposition's demand of appointing Abbas to the vac-



ant position and said that an announcement about his appointment would also be made in the House. The opposition leader's posts in the Senate and the National Assembly (NA) had fallen vacant in August 2025, following the disqualification of PTI's Shibli Faraz and Omar Ayub, respectively. The PTI had then nominated Abbas as its candidate for the opposition leader's position in the National Assembly and Pakistan's Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai to fill the NA slot. After a months-long delay, Achakzai was notified as the NA opposition leader last week.