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Speakers conference highlighted Pakistan positive image: Tarar

Detailed News On Page-08

Nasir Abbas to be Opp leader in Senate

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Malaysia keen to expand ties with Pak

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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 MAHMUD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The unwinding 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 alleviating the suffering of its people, the composition of these boards has raised serious concerns—particularly in Pakistan, which has been invited to participate alongside Qatar, Türkiye, 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 day-to-day operations of the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG). The NCAG 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 NCAG, the US has remained a key player in the formation of 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 Winkoff, 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.

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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

India, UAE agree to boost relations

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 Zadran said the hotel was in the commercial Shahr-e-Naw neighborhood that includes large office buildings, shopping complexes and embassies. The blast occurred one of the safest areas in the city. Videos showed a suicide bomber shouting death threats on the street outside and smoke spewing 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, several people were already dead on arrival." There was no immediate word on the cause of the explosion. Authorities said they were investigating operations remain underway.

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Trump to charge \$1 bn for Board for Peace seat

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's government has asked contractors to pay \$1 billion for a permanent spot on his "President Donald J. Trump Board of Peace" 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 Orban, 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.

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, causing the second train in the tracks in a collision that police sources said killed 21 people and injured 100. The accident happened near Adra, in Cordoba province. So far, 21 people have been confirmed dead by police, with state broadcaster Televisi6n Espa6ola 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 Iryz 6189 Malaga - (to Madrid) train has derailed from the track at Adra, crashing onto the adjacent track. (The Madrid) to Malaga train which was travelling on the adjacent track also derailed," said Adra's regional rail network, in a social media post. Iryz 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 assist the victims. The second train was operated by Renfe, which did not respond to a request for comment. Adif has suspended all rail services between Madrid and Andalucia. Iryz train had more than 300 passengers on board, while the Renfe train had around 100. Paco Carmona, 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 many people trapped. We don't know how many people died, but the numbers are very serious," he added. "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 impact 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 telephone 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 underlined 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

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Plaza inferno Fatalities jump to 26

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The death toll in the Gul Plaza blaze continues to rise, with fatalities reaching 26 as rescue teams struggled to locate 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 head desk established by the Sindh police.

A large crowd of people gathered near Gul Plaza and attempted to enter the displaced 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

Pakistan, WB pledge deeper cooperation

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that Pakistan, essentially an agricultural economy, had a large untapped potential in agriculture and can transform its agriculture 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 being the backbone of the 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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Construction work on 10 Mohmand Dam's sites at satisfactory pace

PESHAWAR: Construction work continues on 10 key sites of Mohmand Dam Project at a satisfactory pace. After completion of the pit excavation in mid last year, the main dam rock fill has so far reached a height of 362 meters above the bedrock. Construction progress on the spillway currently stands at about 70%. Structure works at the power house have also commenced after completion of surface excavation and rock support for the power intake. In addition, detailed design of the electro-mechanical equipment for the power house has also been completed, leading towards manufacturing of the equipment. Chairman WAPDA Lt Gen Muhammad Saeed (Retd) was briefed to this effect by the project management during his visit to Mohmand Dam Project on Monday. He was apprised of construction activities on all key sites including spillway, main dam, quarry development area and powerhouse. During the sites visit, the GM/PD Asim Riaz Khan along with the project team, the consultants and the contractor, briefs the chairman about progress on each site, the timelines and the plans to achieve the targets. He was also apprised of the milestones to be achieved in 2026. Overall progress on Mohmand Dam Project is about 50%. After completion of the main dam, the project will start electricity generation by early 2028-APP

Mehsud, Khatak, Yousafzai dances defy social media's addiction

PESHAWAR: At a time when smartphones and social media dominate the attention of the younger generation, the centuries-old traditional dances of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) continue to survive-beating drums, swaying swords and firing shots into the air keeping a proud cultural identity that can be observed across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Among these, the Mehsud, Khatak and Yousafzai attain stand as living symbols of beauty, unity and tribal identity of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Historically, these dances were performed during wars and battles for ultimate victory. Today, despite the mushroom growth of information technology and social media over the past two decades, these dances remain an integral part of life in KP, especially during weddings, Eid festivities, birthday celebrations and the like. The VIP and VVIP guests, including the merged tribal districts "Mehsud, Khatak, Yousafzai" are believed to have originated in South Waziristan centuries ago," said Bakhizada Khan, Assistant Director at the Archaeology and Museum Department, in an interview with APP on Monday. "It was performed by the tribes before battle to psychosocially prepare their rivals tribes before battle often after peace jirga negotiations."—APP

ICCI President, Malaysian HC vow to enhance bilateral trade volume to \$3-4b

The ICCI President identified the halal industry as a key area for immediate collaboration, proposing joint halal certification standards, establishment of halal parks, food processing facilities, and expansion of meat exports

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Dato Muhammad Ashraf Mazan, the Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan, has emphasized the importance of further strengthening Pakistan-Malaysia economic relations by expanding cooperation in trade, investment, and people-to-people linkages, particularly in emerging and high-potential sectors. He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), headed by its President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, which held a meeting with the High Commissioner of the Malaysian High Commission here on Monday. The ICCI delegation comprised Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, and Convener ICCI Standing Committee on ASEAN, Chaudhry Mohammad Ali. The Malaysian High Commissioner appreciated the proactive role of ICCI in promoting business-to-business engagement and reaffirmed Malaysia's strong commitment to deepening economic collaboration with Pakistan. He said Malaysia attaches great importance to Pakistan as a key economic partner and stressed the need for closer cooperation between the private sectors of both countries. He also agreed to visit ICCI at the earliest to hold direct interaction with the business community of Islamabad. Both the sides agreed to undertake collaborative efforts to enhance the bilateral trade volume to \$3 to 4 billion. Speaking on the occasion, President ICCI Sardar Tahir Mehmood highlighted the longstanding and cordial bilateral relations between Pakistan and Malaysia. He acknowledged Malaysia's significant commercial presence in Pakistan, particularly in the sectors of telecommunication, banking, and pharmaceuticals. However, he pointed out that despite these strengths, the trade balance remains tilted, underscoring the need to diversify Pakistan's exports toward value-added goods and services. The ICCI President identified the halal industry as a key area for immediate collaboration, proposing joint halal certification standards, establishment of halal parks, food processing facilities, and expansion of meat exports. He further stressed cooperation in the IT and digital economy, real estate, low-cost housing. He highlighted the importance of



joint ventures for value addition in the agriculture sector and proposed structured B2B matchmaking between Pakistani and Malaysian companies to accelerate partnerships. Senior Vice President ICCI Tahir Ayub underscored the need to enhance the export of halal meat products, citrus fruits, and other high-value products through grants, subsidies on value addition, stating that such measures would not only boost export earnings but also generate mutual benefits for the business communities and people of both countries. Vice President ICCI Irfan Chaudhry stressed that stronger institutional linkages and regular business exchanges would help translate goodwill into tangible economic outcomes. The ICCI delegation proposed organizing a Pakistan-Malaysia Business Forum

in Kuala Lumpur and holding sector-specific virtual B2B meetings as effective trade promotion mechanisms. It also proposed signing a Memorandum of Understanding between ICCI and relevant Malaysian chambers and establishing a joint working group to enhance trade and investment and implementation. Both sides agreed to work closely to convert discussions into concrete trade and investment opportunities and encouraged Malaysian entrepreneurs to get registered as ICCI members. The ICCI delegation formally invited the Malaysian High Commissioner to visit ICCI and engage directly with the business community of Islamabad. Convener ICCI Standing Committee on ASEAN, Chaudhry Mohammad Ali also shared his insights on the occasion.

IBCC holds Khuli Kachehri to address public issue

ISLAMABAD: The Inter Board Coordinating Commission (IBCC) on Monday convened an IBCC Public Forum (Khuli Kachehri) at its H-9 Islamabad Office, reinforcing its commitment to transparency, accountability, and public facilitation under the theme "Your Voice, Your Issues, Your Solutions: Let's talk about IBCC!" The forum was chaired by Dr Ghulam Ali Mallah, Executive Director IBCC, and attended by Director Generals, Directors, and Deputy Directors. It was also simultaneously broadcast live on Facebook to ensure nationwide reach. The forum provided a direct, inclusive platform for students, parents, and stakeholders to raise queries, lodge grievances, and share suggestions regarding IBCC services. The participants from IBCC regional offices across Pakistan also joined the session,

ensuring broad geographic representation. All questions and issues were addressed on the spot by the Executive Director and senior management, reflecting the facilitative and solution-oriented approach of IBCC to public service delivery addressing the audience. Dr Ghulam Ali Mallah outlined IBCC's statutory mandate under the IBCC Act, 2023, and shared a brief overview of the Commission's reform trajectory. He highlighted IBCC's role as Pakistan's apex coordinating and regulatory body for examinations, certification, and accreditation, and phasing ongoing reforms in assessment quality, governance, digitalization, and international recognition of qualifications. He underscored major initiatives, including the implementation of the Model Assessment Framework (MAF) nationwide.—APP

SMIT announces admission for fifth batch of 'Free IT Training' for youth

PESHAWAR: Aziz Jan Trust, a renowned philanthropic organization committed to providing quality education to underprivileged children, has announced the Free IT Training Program for the fifth batch of students. The program, which commenced in collaboration with Suyani Welfare Trust, aims to equip youth from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with modern information technology skills. Both Aziz Jan Trust and Suyani Mass IT Training (SMIT) have joined hands in KP for imparting of latest information technology skills free of cost to students. "The on-site training will provide golden opportunity to students who want to build their future in IT, AI, and digital skills, all courses are 100% free," reads the announcement shared by Aziz Jan Trust. The fifth batch offers different courses on Modern Web Application Development, Agentic AI, Cyber Security, Digital Marketing with AI, Video Content Creation with AI and English language. The classes will be held at Mohsin and Huma IT Training Centre in Peshawar where qualified IT experts, locals and visiting faculty from across the country, teaches students. It merits to mention here that the collaborative initiative of Aziz Jan Trust and Suyani Welfare Trust has benefited more than five thousands students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the last around three years by providing them free of cost training on modern IT skills.—APP

KP Governor visits Tank to pay tribute to police martyrs

TANK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi visited here on Monday to pay tribute to police martyrs and laid a wreath at the martyrs' memorial.

He offered prayers for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks and met with the families of fallen police personnel, assuring them of all possible support and assistance.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi paid rich tribute to the sacrifices of police and security forces, saying that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police and other security institutions have rendered unparalleled sacrifices for the country's security and laid down their lives for the honor and integrity of the nation. The nation will never forget.

Upon his arrival in Tank Governor Kundi was warmly received by senior leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), including Provincial Senior Vice President Faisal Sher Khan Mehsud, District President PPP Tank Sardar Ilyasullah Khan Gandapur, South Waziristan President

Shams Mehsud, senior PPP leader Nadeem Awami Dost, Malik Syed Muhammad Khan Ashiq, Sardar Amranullah Mehsud, and other party officials.

Later, the governor visited the residence of Sardar Ilyasullah Khan Gandapur, where a special luncheon was hosted in his honor. On the occasion, Governor

Kundi also addressed senior leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party. Foolproof security arrangements were put in place throughout the district and remained present on site.—DNA



KP CM visits registration center for Tirah affectees

DNA

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mianwali Sohail Afridi visited the registration center established for Tirah affectees in Bara tehsil of Khyber district where he personally listened to the problems of the displaced families and issued directives to the authority concerned for immediate and prompt resolution of facilities and prompt redressal of complaints. The Chief Minister directed that the registration process be made transparent fast and easy and ordered the authorities to ensure immediate assistance including shelter and medical facilities to the affectees. He issued strict instructions that no affected family should be ignored. He acknowledged the sacrifices of the tribal people and reaffirmed the commitment to protect their dignity. Mianwali Sohail Afridi stressed that the education, knowledge and awareness are the only sustainable path forward and announced that the struggle for public rights would continue within constitutional limits.

Govt continues consultations with religious scholars

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has set a target of completing 30 more convenience markets in different cities of the province by June 30, according to a statement issued by the spokesperson of the Punjab Chief Minister. Maryam Nawaz's Sahulat Bazaar has provided cheap and quality goods and services to people, this is a unique and first convenience market project. The spokesperson said that the Punjab Chief Minister's convenience market project has started fighting the stone in the homes of 55 thousand families, 9200 people have got decent employment in 46 convenience markets across the province. Likewise, 85 million people have made purchases worth Rs 1.5 billion in a year. 13 food items, including vegetables and fruits, were provided at wholesale rates in 46 convenience markets and Rs 110 million were saved.—APP

He emphasized that unity among Muslims and harmony among all sects is the need of the hour, adding that following the path of righteousness ensures social welfare and stability. The minister said religious seminaries are playing an important role in the moral training of students. Secretary Home Punjab Dr Ahmed Javed Qazi said that religious seminaries can be registered either under the Societies Registration Act or with the federal government's DG-RE. He said that respected religious scholars always promote peace and harmony and good people towards the true spirit of religion is their great service. Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi welcomed the Punjab government's efforts to promote unity among Muslims and respect for all religious minorities. Religious scholars are a great and honorable segment of society. Consultations regarding the registration of religious seminaries are ongoing and meetings with representatives of other seminaries are also expected soon, he added. The provincial minister said that religious scholars play a vital role in social reform and moral guidance. Salman Rafiq added that CM Punjab has launched a historic honourarium programme for mosque Imams, while the registration process of Imams is continuing on a permanent basis.



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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 major 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 on the 1000 acres of land for development of 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 western part of 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 & Kora-Batla making it a unique and vibrant landscape," he explained. A Ministerial Planning Committee for establishment of the proposed Food Street, West Bay Gondar on PPP Mode will also offer floating platforms & allied facilities for visitors 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 snowfall and heavy rain, probably starting from Monday through January 23 amid strong western currents. Murees and the Galyat region are expected to experience intense weather conditions. Murees 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 hills areas particularly Murees, Galyat, and other mountainous areas, heavy snowfall combined with rain is forecasted, prompting heightened precautionary measures for residents and visitors. Irfan Ali Majeed, Director General of PDMA Pimpah, 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 the emerging situations," said DG stressed. Special instructions have been issued to the district administration in Murees and allied departments to remain on high alert. -APP

Rupee gains 03 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 03 paisa 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 Rupee appreciated by Rs 0.42 against the US Dollar at Rs 325.65 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 paisa and closed at Rs 76.77, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a drop of 02 paisa and closed at Rs 374.90 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.92. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham gained 01 paisa and closed at Rs 76.22, whereas the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paisa to close at Rs 74.64. -APP

Rwanda, Pak vow to strengthen coop in education, IT

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 Haririma Fatou, High Commissioner of Rwanda to Pakistan, paid a courtesy call on Ms. Wajila Qamar, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training in 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 and maintaining strong 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.

**Pakistan, Indonesia strengthen cooperation in vaccine product**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Mustafa Kamal met with the President Director of Indonesia's leading vaccine manufacturer PT Bio Farma, during his visit to Indonesia to enhance bilateral cooperation in vaccine production. Pakistan's postings According to the Ministry of Health on Monday, significant progress was made in advancing vaccine collaboration between the two countries. Discussions focused on technology transfer and potential partnerships between Bio Farma and the National Institute of Health (NIH) Pakistan. The Federal Health Minister highlighted the importance of close and sustained cooperation between Pakistan and Indonesia to achieve self-sufficiency in local vaccine production. He noted that Pakistan to benefit from Indonesia's experience and expertise in the vaccine sector, adding that such initiatives could facilitate indigenous vaccine manufacturing in Pakistan. Mustafa Kamal reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensure the safe, timely, and quality medical facilities for the public, underscoring that international collaboration remains a key pillar. Islamabad Post merchandise. -APP

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, education, entrepreneurship, talent cultivation, and industry collaboration. Their goal was to promote pragmatic cooperation between the two countries in the burgeoning field of low-altitude economics. China Economic Net (CEN) reported. The low-altitude economy, as a strategic economic industry, has been included in China's five-year plan for the 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, environmental research, and other fields. At the conference, both Chinese and Pakistani delegations focused their discussions on drone technology cooperation and talent development. Dr. Golam Bilal Ahmad, Chairman of NAVTC, 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 experience in drone technology is a valuable resource. 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 center certification, technology transfer, and other multi-dimensional 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 2023. According to a document available with Wealth Pakistan, the completed projects aim to empower unserved and underserved communities by expanding access to high-speed and affordable internet services across remote and less-developed regions of the country. Under the NIH&MW Tourist Destination (4G) Program, 10 projects were completed in Gilgit-Baltistan, Kohistan, Khuzdar, Jhelum, Kankar Shahdad Kot, and Larkana districts. The project involved 413.81 Kilometers of road segments, with a total capital expenditure subsidy disbursement of Rs 8.8 billion. The second project under the tourist initiative, Tourist Destination K2, was executed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, covering Swat, Upper Dir, and Bajitram districts. The project included eight tourist locations. 49.86 kilometers of access routes, 113.81 kilometers of road segments, with a total capital expenditure subsidy of Rs 7 billion. In addition, eight projects were completed under the Access Program (4G) across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Punjab, collectively covering 1,092 manzais and benefiting a population of 1,244,935 people. The total capital expenditure subsidy disbursed for these projects stands at Rs 21.8 billion. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Swat Lot project covered 26 manzais with a population of 43,520, involving a subsidy of Rs 586 million. In Balochistan, the Kharan Lot project covered 10 manzais, Lashkar Lot (218 manzais, population 149,614, subsidy Rs 17.7 billion), Loralai Lot (143 manzais, population 81,963, subsidy Rs 2.5 billion), Sibi Lot (43 manzais, population 38,178, subsidy Rs 1.2 billion), and Kaila Sajulai Lot (109 manzais, population 120,257, and subsidy Rs 3.5 billion). In Punjab, three projects were completed. The Mansehra Lot covered 190 manzais with a population of 372,742, and a subsidy of Rs 6.6 billion, while the Nankana Sahib Lot covered 250 manzais, serving 294,509 people, with a subsidy of Rs 457 million. -DNA

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 continued to register strong growth despite the closure of the Afghan market, highlighting the resilience of the industry amidst challenges. 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 mission in Beijing, and the diplomatic corps. The result of close coordination and shared commitment, Jam Kamal Khan emphasized that overcoming the challenges faced by 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. The improved collaboration between federal and provincial governments helped maintain consistent schedules and prevent Pakistan's exports from being held up at foreign ports. The consistent 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 export-led 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 reform agenda, the government has launched a nationwide digitalization drive targeting petro 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 importers and refiners to retail outlets, through a robust track-and-trace 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 "Raahguzar", 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 author-

ized petro 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 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 timely access, preventability, and enhances safety and accountability in the handling of explosives. To implement strong legal backing to these reforms, amendments to the Petroleum Act, 1954 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. In the last two years, 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 war 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

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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 health system that is barely functioning. Gaza's economy is effectively at a standstill. Poor fishermen are either blocked entirely from the sea or restricted to less than 1 km offshore, turning a century-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 laid 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 for continued military operations, even as the door 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.

Palestinians, the people most ravaged at the center of global moral and political solidarity. It 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 the result of a massive and systematic use 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 the principles of law and order must 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 logically and legally.

The immediate reflection of his 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 principles of law and order, which the Azerbaijani people 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 address to the domestic audience, the primary objective was to prevent the deepening of panic and chaos within Azerbaijan. He emphasized the importance of demonstrating 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 appeal 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 Heydar Aliyev to present the events of January 20 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 and, 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. The assessment of the historical 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 moral 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. 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 its network of trade agreements, which 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, Turkey, and Qatar, while Islamabad may be tempted to accept the invitation as a way to enhance its diplomatic profile, it cannot afford to alienate its Western partners. 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. Any such engagement will need to be carefully calibrated to avoid undermining its longstanding ties with Saudi Arabia. The unveiling of the Gaza governance boards has opened a new chapter in Middle Eastern diplomacy, but one with significant 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 moral compass. 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 efforts risks being seen as imposed rather than inclusive, a perception that could undermine its effectiveness in the long run.

Chinese, partner can help...

FROM PAGE 01
He underlined the importance of developing infrastructure to grow and develop, 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. The Chinese Ambassador had been involved in sharing expertise and advanced 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 training given to the students and who will now help farmers improve quality, productivity and value addition. Welcoming remarks by Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong, the prime minister praised China's achievements in agriculture, IT and AI, efficiency in infrastructure and 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 shift decisively towards growth. The prime minister also reiterated hope that President Xi Jinping will visit Pakistan soon and attend the CPEC 2.0. It would be a new chapter focusing on agriculture, IT, AI, mines and minerals, and youth development. Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong on the occasion said China wanted to increase the bilateral agriculture trade volume up to \$1 billion and achieve a trade surplus. He said it 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 most 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. - APP



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan Mohammad Azhar Mazlan posing for a group photograph alone 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 rejected the unilateral schedule issued 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, 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 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 the country. The dispute reflecting increasing 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 Paki-

stan's 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 have already complained to the PSB regarding the scrutiny process conducted a few days ago. According to these clubs, voting 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 Gonzalo Gómez gave them a surprise 2-1 La Liga victory on Sunday as Hans Flick's side fell 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 Álvaro Arbeloa's side beat Levante 2-1 on Saturday. The Spanish title race is now set to come down to a wire between new American coach Pelegrín Matrasso, but Carlos Soler sent off on loan 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 Frenkie de Jong told DAZN. "We played well but we didn't win... their goalkeeper had a very good game." Sociedad shot-stopper Alex Remiro made several crucial saves. "Three great points and a great game," said Remiro. "We started the game in a good way, this is the energy we have, how we've changed [recently]."

In a frantic start to a compelling game at the rainy Reale Arena, both teams had goals ruled out. La Real had the ball in the net inside 30 seconds when Mikel Oyarzabal headed home Gómez's cross, but had strayed offside. At the other end, Barcelona's Fermín López 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 and down the right flank. The 18-year-old teed up 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 2020 will be made on Saturday, following travel to India, as 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 wish to compete 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.

On the occasion of the match, the Prince Moulay Rachid, the political head over from the Kingdom and the Moroccan football 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 organization, the tournament was a show 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 2020, when it will co-host the World Cup with Spain and Portugal.

In this occasion, His Majesty the King

Mohammed VI 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 2020), 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 monarch also stated, "You are an ideal example through your courage and honorable performances 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

India Beat Pakistan in SAFF Women's Futsal Championship



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Arch-rivals India defeated Pakistan 5-2 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. Despite the loss, Pakistan Women's Futsal Team continued to impress in their maiden appearance at the

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 greater confidence and composure. However, India staged a remarkable 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 two of the tournament favourites. Before kick-off, Pakistan captain Kaya Bokhari and Indian captain Jignesh Patel exchanged handshakes symbolising the true spirit of the game. Bokhari also presented a traditional Sindhi Arikar to her counterpart as a gesture of respect and goodwill. Pakistan will next face Nepal in their group match on January 21.

Two high-speed trains derail in...

FROM PAGE 01
The mayor of Adamuz, Rafael Moreno, told El País newspaper that he had been among the first to arrive at the scene of the accident about 15 minutes after it 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 war-torn Afghanistan in 2021 and said it would restore security, but bomb attacks have continued, many of them claimed by the shadowy 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 way the two leaders share the relationship the two leaders share," Misri told the briefing, Hindustan Times reported. Misri said that the two leaders held discussions in both restricted and expanded formats, with delegations members engaging with him, the report said. "A number of statements 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 Doha, 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 a 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 building pillars had been weakened due to fire and could collapse at any time. The fire started late on Saturday at the sprawling, multi-storey 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. About 1,000 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...

FROM PAGE 01
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 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. Ramu Shrestha, from the Islamic Development Bank outlined opportunities for joint initiatives in promoting sustainable energy practices.

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 (733,500 acres) of areas of illegal 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 millions of teams take over oil palm plantations and mines, has uncrossed the industry, pushing up global palm oil prices over concerns it will hit output, and more recently, powering rallies in the prices of metals like tin. "There were 190,799 hectares (mines) that were issued mining use permits, which could be considered illegal," Deputy Forestry Minister Rohmat Marzuki said. He did not name any of the companies involved or say how many were involved. Neither did he elaborate on what the best course of action might be, or provide any timeline for the seizures. —APP

Skilled workforce imperative for governance: Dr Zulfiqar

FAISALABAD: University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF) Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zulfiqar 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 executive outreach training program for management and administrative staff arranged by the UAF in collaboration with National Academy of Higher Education, IEC. Dr Zulfiqar Ali said that the UAF had implemented e-gating 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 delivery of services. He said that a competent and well-versed administrative setup is backbone of a progressive university. By equipping staff with practical knowledge and modern administrative skills, "We are building a progressive and transparent university system", he added. Director Sectoral Affairs Dr Hafiz Syed Iqbal Taseer Gull said that 30 university administrative staff were imparted training.

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 plant of Baotou United Steel in western Baotou City, caused by the blast of a 650-cubic-metre saturated water and steam spherical tank. The incident resulted in a total of 84 injured people being treated in medical facilities, five in serious condition, according to mayor of Baotou. He told a press briefing. The government has suspended production of the accident plant and initiated city-wide safety overhaul of industrial and trade enterprises. The 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, as a letter to Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre seen by Reuters and Bloomberg on Monday. A copy of the letter, the latest in a series of foreign policy outbursts, was signed by US national security adviser Nick Schiffrin, a 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 your Ministry's acceptance of 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 given out, the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Court of Justice. The prize is awarded by an independent committee. "Denmark cannot protect that 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 Denmark has no right to own it," he said. He 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 replying: "Dear Mr. President, I am grateful to you for your letter. 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 is not clear if the US president will call 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 his purchase of the Danish territory is achieved. Meanwhile, last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado had given her own medal to Trump in protest of his policies. "I have a 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 swapped in prisoner exchanges. "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 was the first time 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 Mediterranean Sea. It cited him as saying that he had met a Russian woman online and decided to visit her, and that he did not know how it 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-Khabsi, the governor of Hadhramaut, told 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 Adenous Al-Zubaidi, backed by the UAE. Al-Khabsi noted that these 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 infrastructure, and attacking the legitimate government of the southern provinces. During a press conference, the governor of Hadhramaut confirmed that the Yemeni government had discovered suspicious Emirati equipment and practices at the Rayyan base in Mukalla that are not consistent with the declared goals of the legitimacy support coalition or the principles of brotherhood, Islam, and Arabic. He explained that the equipment included wires, explosives, detonators, and communication devices used to carry out assassinations, murder, and torture. He noted that the presence of these tools within the Rayyan 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. Khabsi added that the type of equipment found in the camp is not consistent with the legitimate government's mission 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-Zubaidi had exploited the just southern cause as a cover for their crimes against southerners, marginalizing their legitimate demands and serving what he described as an Emirati agenda aimed at spreading chaos and hindering any political initiatives to address the southern issue. The Governor of Hadhramaut argued that these recent revolutions explain the UAE's eagerness to strengthen Al-Zubaidi through Somalia to Al-Dhale, 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 Dr Tanveer Hussain said on Monday that Pakistan remained fully committed to strengthening its strategic economic partnership with China by providing a conducive and investor-friendly environment, particularly in the agriculture and food security sectors. The 11th 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 a conducive environment 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 do well. "We are committed to expanding and expanding opportunities under the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement framework. He said the completion of CPEC Phase I and the launch of CPEC Phase II marked a decisive shift towards industrialization, infrastructure development, renewable energy and people-centric development. He noted that 41 memorandum of understanding were signed in 2025, covering modern farming, livestock, fisheries, farm mechanization and agriculture value-chain development. "These initiatives are not just projects; they are life lines of growth, confidence and mutual trust", —APP

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 last year in stabilization 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," Julian Horneis, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, told reporters in Geneva. Some 21 million people in Yemen will still 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 political instability, Horneis said. Funding Yemen has traditionally received from Western countries was now being cut back, Horneis said, pointing to hopes for more help from Gulf countries. The US slashed its aid spending this year, and leading Western donors also turned back help as they tried to raise defense spending, triggering a funding crunch for the UN.

Syrian president announces deal with Kurds including ceasefire

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

AlBaraka forum regional moot proposes landmark reforms

RAJAHAN: Titled "Islamic Economy in the Digital Age: Innovation within the Framework of Conpliance," the 6th AlBaraka Forum Regional Conference was held at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Lahore. The conference was organized by AlBaraka Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development, the conference provided a high-level platform for strategic dialogue on digital transformation, financial innovation, and sustainable governance for the Islamic economy. The conference was attended by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development, the 6th AlBaraka Forum, and the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development. The conference featured comprehensive panel discussions on Digital Islamic Banking, the Future of Islamic Investment, Sharah Compliance and Governance, Wad and Zakah, Digital Disruption, and Pakistan's strategic position as a leading Islamic economy in Asia. In his opening remarks, Mr. Yousaf Hassan Khatri, Secretary General of the AlBaraka Forum for Islamic Economy, emphasized the strategic importance of shaping digital innovation with Islamic finance. "Digital banking is the future of banking and it will facilitate the digital economy within Islamic banking. It will progress in parallel with conventional banking." —DNA

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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 overseas governance and reconstruction in Gaza, the White House said Monday. Moscow for years tried to balance relations with all major players in the Middle East – including Israel and the Palestinians.

But since the Israel-Hamas war and Russia's assault on Ukraine, Putin has moved away from isolating Israel and is closer to its key ally, Iran. 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, adding AFP. "Russia was seeking to 'clarify all the nuances' of the offer with Washington, he said, without adding if the Kremlin chief as included to join. The White House has reached out to various figures around the world to sit on the so-called 'Board of Peace'." The offer 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 the current account and persistent income outflows that pushed the current account 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 \$957 million in November of the same year.

As a result, the cumulative current account position for July to December FY26 rose to a deficit of \$1.174m compared to a surplus of \$957m during the same time last year. The monthly trade deficit, primarily by changes in imports. Imports of goods rose to \$3.74bn in December, while exports stood at \$2.75bn.

Trade in services also remained negative. Services exports for the month were \$836m while imports were \$1.121m, resulting in a \$285m deficit. Overall, strong remittance inflow did provide support, with workers' remittances amounting to \$3.59bn in December. Other notable findings show that the financing account posted a net outflow of \$596m in December, while foreign direct investment showed a net outflow of \$135m.

5.8 magnitude earthquake rattles Islamabad

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A 5.8-magnitude earthquake on Monday rattled Islamabad with the tremors being felt across the city, 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 magnitude 5.9 on the Richter Scale and was located at 50 kilometres North-West of Bariyal and at a depth of 35km.

An image showing the epicentre of earthquake along with the tectonic faultline on the map of Pakistan. USGS 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.



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 Gillani 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 of the executive board working with his 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. 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 Board of Peace?

Sir Tony Blair: BBC/Monika 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/Monika Ghosh

Former UK Prime Minister Sir Tony Blair had long been talked about as a potential member of Trump's "Board of Peace". While the White House has been firming back in September that he had expressed an interest in joining the body, the former Labour Party leader was the UK prime minister from 1997 to 2007 and took the country 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 internation-

al 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 plans for Gaza as "a disaster" and "a recipe for 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, sitting in a black suit and white shirt, smiling and waving at the camera. Getty Images

As US Secretary of State, Marco 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 as 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 Ambassador 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 and tie, smiling. 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 could be very valuable... if people would focus on building my firebreaks." There is significant overlap between the two senior boards, with Kushner, Witkoff and Sir Tony appearing on both.

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 inferno and pledged that 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 might need to be demolished due to the extent of the damage. Firefighters and rescue teams are attempting to extract survivors from the debris. "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 services in line with international standards. "In such incidents, every effort must be allowed to 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 F-16 Block 52 fighter aircraft and a 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 witnessed by the US, UK, France, and other international partners from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, France, Italy, Greece, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. "It [exercise] offers a robust platform to enhance inter-

operability, operational synergy, mutual understanding and capacity building among participating Air Forces, particularly in large force employment, night 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 battlefield. "PAF will conduct a series of flight operations and aircraft-to-airceopter flights 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 Pashayi 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 full-scale war with the Iranian nation," Pashayi said in a post on X in an apparent response to US President Donald Trump's warning 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 Islamic Republic in years. The protests were cracked down and a communications blackout that started on January 8 as the protests grew in size and intensity. Iranian officials said the demonstrations were peaceful before turning into "riots" and blamed foreign influence from Iran's archrivals 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 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

FASIL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PTI Senator Ali Zafar said on Monday that Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani had communicated to him that Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (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 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 va-



cant position and said that an announcement about his selection 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 two were disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan after their convictions in cases related to the May 9, 2023 riots. The PTI had then nominated Abbas as its candidate to fill the Senate post, and the NA post, after Senator and Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai to fill the NA slot. After a months-long delay, Achakzai was notified as the NA opposition leader last week.

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 Ali Khan and Principal Information Officer (PIO) Mabashir 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 the 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 timely and effective coverage 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 international 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.

FM of Egypt, Greece, Cyprus hold parleys

CAIRO: The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus held political consultations in a meeting on Sunday, within the framework of their Trilateral Cooperation Mechanism.

In a statement, Egypt's Foreign Minister said that the meeting addressed regional and international issues of common concern, including developments related to the Palestinian cause, the forthcoming steps in US President Donald Trump's plan as it enters its second phase, and the Palestine-Turkey committee continues its work following the announcement of its formation. Discussions also covered the situations in Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Somalia, and Sudan. During the meeting, participants stressed the need to preserve state unity, territorial integrity, and sovereignty, ensure the security of the Red Sea, and underscore the importance of strengthening 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 his high-profile case against 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. Harry, who is set to take the stand to give evidence on Thursday, entered the Royal Courts of Justice shortly after 10:30am (1000 GMT), ahead of the opening of the trial at 10:30am.

It is the third and final case brought against a British newspaper published by the royal, with the first case being held in 2019. The royal has been holding the media to 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 due to take the stand on Friday, along with other well-known complainants including pop icon Elton John and John's husband David Furnish. – APP