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Uzbek, Pakistan relations set to touch new heights

Detailed News On Page-08

No change in net metering, says Leghari

Detailed News On Page-08



BLA using women as shields: Talal

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Briefs

BNP claims victory in Bangladesh elections

NEWS DESK

DHAKA: Counting was under way on Thursday in Bangladesh's first election since a deadly 2024 uprising and the subsequent student-led revolution, with powerful political heir Tarique Rahman bullish about defeating a coalition. BNP has claimed victory in elections however the election commission has not made final announcement. The 60-year-old said he was "confident" his Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) — which was crushed during the 15 years of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina's autocratic rule — can regain power in the South Asian nation of 170 million people. However, he faces a stiff challenge from a coalition led by Jamaat-i-Islami. Election Commission officials reported "a few minor disruptions" but top party leaders on both sides raised fears of threats, with the BNP's Rahman calling on people to vote so that "conspiracies will not succeed".

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Canada police say 18-year-old carried out mass shooting

TUMBLER RIDGE: Canadian police said Wednesday an 18-year-old carried out a mass shooting in a remote mining town, killing six people at a local school, after slaying her mother and stepbrother. Police commander Dwayne McDonald said authorities still don't know the motive in Tuesday's mass shooting in Tumbler Ridge, but the shooter — who took her own life — was known to have mental health issues. McDonald identified the shooter as Jesse Van Rootselaar, a transgender woman who was born biologically male and dropped out of the targeted high school four years ago. McDonald revised the toll down to eight from nine, due to earlier confusion over the condition of one of the victims. Officers who entered the town's high school found six people dead — a 39-year-old woman teacher and five students — three 12-year-old girls and two boys, aged 13 and 12.

India crush Namibia by 93 runs

SPORTS DESK

NEW DELHI: Varun Chakravarthy and Axar Patel delivered fiery spells to steer India to a convincing 93-run victory over Namibia in the 18th group-stage match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 at Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi, on Thursday. Half-centuries from Ishan Kishan and Hardik Pandya, followed by a collective bowling effort, led defending champions India to a resounding victory today. Set to chase a daunting 210-run target, Namibia could muster 116 runs before getting bowled out in 18.2 overs despite a spirited start. The Eagles were 67/1 after seven overs, but Louren Steenkamp's dismissal on the first delivery of the successive overs derailed their run chase as it triggered a match-defining collapse, which saw them lose their remaining eight wickets for 49 runs.

Friendly bonds

Shehbaz vows to promote partnership with Turkiye

Shehbaz Sharif said nature has blessed Pakistan with immense resources in the agricultural sector and efforts are afoot to fully utilize these resources by incorporating modern technology

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that Pakistan desired to further strengthen its exemplary brotherly relations with Türkiye and enhance bilateral economic partnership, particularly in the fields of agriculture and livestock. The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with a four-member delegation of Türkiye's Agricultural Technologies Cluster (TUME), led by its Board Chairman Abdulkadir Karagöz, here, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. Welcoming the delegation, the prime minister highlighted that there were vast opportunities to expand cooperation with the brotherly country Türkiye in agriculture and livestock sectors. He said Pakistan was committed to modernising its agriculture sector in line with global advancements, particularly by adopting innovative technologies as successfully practiced in Türkiye's agricultural commodities and livestock sectors.

"Allah Almighty has blessed Pakistan with

abundant resources in the agriculture sector. We are striving to fully harness this potential through the use of modern technology and comprehensive planning," the prime minister said. He underscored the importance of enhanced bilateral cooperation to benefit from modern agricultural technologies and expertise, adding that Pakistan and Türkiye could jointly play an important role in the global food value chain. During the meeting, TUME Board Chairman Abdulkadir Karagöz briefed the prime minister on the use of advanced technologies to enhance productivity in his organisation. He also expressed keen interest in expanding cooperation between Pakistan and Türkiye in agriculture and livestock sectors. Karagöz said that the brotherly leadership of both countries served as a guiding force for promoting closer collaboration between the business communities of Pakistan and Türkiye. The meeting was attended by Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Dr İrfan Neziroğlu, Deputy Prime Minister and

Continued on Page 06

Cross border terrorism

Afghan govt supports TTP, blames Pakistan

Pakistan's claims that TTP benefits from freedom of movement and access to resources in Afghanistan, explicitly highlights that Pakistan is the main target of TTP attacks.

It also validates that Pakistan is a victim of terrorism bearing the brunt of violence originating from Afghanistan

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has once again called upon India to return to full compliance of Indus Water Treaty and fulfill its obligations under the treaty, saying that Islamabad will never compromise on its existential water rights. This was stated by the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tahir Andrabi, at his weekly media briefing in Islamabad. He said the interim government in Afghanistan continues to provide a permissive environment to a range of terrorists notably TTP. The Foreign Office Spokesperson said the report corroborates Pakistan's position that TTP resurgence is linked to post 2021 interim Afghan government takeover.

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President, PM review security situation

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari met on Thursday and reviewed Pakistan's political, economic and security landscapes. According to a press release issued by President's Secretariat, the meeting took place at Aiwan-i-Sadr, where the pair also reviewed the "prevailing regional and global environment".

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met with delegation of Turkish Agricultural Technologies Cluster TUME on 12 February, 2026. — DNA

Ramzan likely to fall on Feb 19

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee (RHC) will meet in Peshawar on February 18 (Wednesday) to sight the crescent marking the beginning of Ramadan 1447AH, while zonal committees will convene simultaneously in the federal and provincial capitals. Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabeer Azad will chair the central session in Peshawar, which will determine whether the holy month will commence on February 19 or 20. The Ministry of Religious Affairs issued a formal notification confirming that zonal moon sighting committee meetings will also be held in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and Quetta. Meanwhile, sources within the Ministry of Science and Technology

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PTI founder enjoys more privileges



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar said on Thursday that the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is receiving more privileges than any other prisoner at the Adiala Jail. "The narrative which was being propagated to International Media by Aleema Khan and other members of IK's

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Supreme Court orders

Imran Khan's eye examination must be conducted before 16th

Supreme Court also orders formation of medical team for PTI founder's eye check-up; Imran Khan claims only 15% vision remains in his right eye

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday directed that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan be given access to specialist eye doctors and ordered that a formal eye examination be conducted by a medical team before February 16. The court also ordered that Imran be provided the facility to hold telephone conversations with his sons, Kasim Khan and Sulaiman Khan. The development comes a day after PTI counsel, Salman Safdar, submitted before the Supreme Court a seven-page report regarding his visit to Adiala jail and meeting with the incarcerated former prime minister. The court had appointed Safdar as amicus curiae (friend of the court), directing him to visit Adiala jail and submit a report on February 11. A two-member bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan heard the case.

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SC reserves decision on Toshakhana trial petition

FAIZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on a petition challenging the criminal trial in the Toshakhana case against the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), while directing authorities to ensure his medical examination of his eye and facilitate telephonic contact with his children before February 16. The two-member bench, comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, heard the case. Barrister Salman Safdar appeared as amicus curiae (friend of the court),

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Official denounces Achakzai's 'unfortunate remarks' on Pak Army

Security official stresses military's apolitical role; Khawaja Asif calls remarks "irresponsible"

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: A senior security official has condemned Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly, Mahmood Khan Achakzai's "unfortunate remarks" on the Pakistan Army, saying that his statement was "extremely regrettable and based on

falsehoods". The opposition leader, during the NA session a day earlier, described the Pakistan Army as a "force of four districts", triggering a strong response from the government. "Dialogue was the right of all political parties... and the army had nothing to do with politics," the security official said while speaking to journalists in Lahore. He added that all legal and judicial cases, and matters linked to them, must be decided by courts in accordance with the Constitution and the law. Referring to the security situation, the senior official said recent meetings aimed at restoring peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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French govt honors Ayesha Raza with National Order of Merit award

Taking the floor after receiving the honor, Ms. Farooq became visibly emotional as she thanked the French Government and the French Embassy for recognizing her work. She dedicated the award to her parents, her late husband, and her family members, acknowledging their unwavering support throughout her journey

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a distinguished ceremony at the Residence of France, Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson of Pakistan's National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC) and National Coordinator for Polio Eradication, was awarded the Ordre National du Mérite (Chevalier rank) by the Ambassador of France to Pakistan, Nicolas Galey. The event gathered prominent figures including Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik, senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Human Rights, as well as ambassadors, representatives of international organizations, and members of the diplomatic corps. In his address, Ambassador Galey praised Ms. Farooq's unwavering dedication to human rights, particularly children's rights. He highlighted her distinguished career as a Senator, where she chaired key committees and contributed to legislation on health, justice, economic affairs, human rights, and climate change. Her leadership in Pakistan's polio eradication campaign was noted as a cornerstone of her public service, earning her the Sitara-e-Imtiaz in 2018. The Ambassador emphasized her tireless advocacy for education, pointing to the 25 million children still out of school in Pakistan. He also commended her efforts to ensure universal vaccination against polio, despite resistance from certain groups. France's collaboration with Pakistan in these areas was underscored, including projects against child labor and abuse, initiatives to enroll out-of-school children,

and healthcare programs supported by the French Development Agency and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Recent legislative progress in Pakistan, such as laws prohibiting



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey awarding Ordre National du Mérite (Chevalier rank) to Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq. — DNA

child marriage under 18 in Islamabad, Balochistan, Sindh, and Punjab, was celebrated as a collective achievement. However, Ambassador Galey reminded that challenges remain, particularly in meeting international human rights conventions linked to Pakistan's trade relations with the European Union. Concluding his speech, Ambassador Galey lauded Ms. Farooq's energy, sincerity, and tenacity, qualities that have earned her respect and admiration across communities. He formally conferred upon her the insignia of Chevalier of the National Order of Merit, recognizing her exceptional contributions to children's rights, education, health, and the strengthening of Franco-Pakistani cooperation. Taking the floor after receiving the honor, Ms. Farooq became visibly emotional as she thanked the French Government and the French Embassy for recognizing her work. She dedicated the award to her parents, her late husband, and her family members, acknowledging their unwavering support throughout her journey. She highlighted the progress Pakistan has made in reducing polio cases, noting that collective efforts by the government, international partners, and civil society have brought the country closer to eradication. "This award is not just mine," she said, "it belongs to all those who have stood by me in the fight for children's rights and in the struggle to eliminate polio from Pakistan." Her heartfelt words resonated with the audience, underscoring the human dimension of her lifelong commitment to children's welfare and public health. The ceremony concluded with warm applause, marking a significant moment of recognition for Ms. Farooq's contributions to strengthening human rights, advancing education and healthcare, and fostering Franco-Pakistani cooperation.

160kg adulterated milk discarded in Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD: The district administration on Thursday discarded 160 kilograms of adulterated and contaminated milk during an early morning surprise inspection carried out at the Muslimabad Barrier entry point on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Abbotabad.

The crackdown, aimed at ensuring milk quality and safeguarding public health, was led by Additional Assistant Commissioner Kamran Ali Shah, who inspected along with the Livestock Department team and a mobile laboratory unit. During the operation, more than 25 milk supply vehicles entering the district were inspected, while approximately 50 milk samples were tested on the spot. Laboratory testing revealed that 160 kilograms of milk were unfit for human consumption due to contamination with dirt, dung, and other impurities. The substandard milk was immediately destroyed at the site. The district administration reiterated its commitment to a zero-tolerance policy against food adulteration and emphasized that such surprise inspections would continue to ensure the provision of safe and quality food to the public. _APP

Compensation distribute to Dam affectees

ABBOTTABAD: Compensation cheques worth over Rs 2.46 billion were distributed on Thursday among landowners of Tehsil Harban Bhasha, District Upper Kohistan, whose land was acquired for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam Project.

The cheque distribution ceremony was held at Commissioner House Abbottabad in the presence of Commissioner Hazara Division Fayyaz Ali Shah, RPO Hazara Nasir Mehmood Satti, Chief Engineer (Diversion Works) Diamer-Bhasha Dam Engineer Mumtaz Qazi, DG Social Safeguards Major (R) Tariq Mahmood, Deputy Commissioner Upper Kohistan Tariq Ali Khan, officials of WAPDA and the district administration, and local elders from Harban Bhasha. Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Hazara Division Fayyaz Ali Shah appreciated the cooperation between the administration and local elders for the timely completion of the mega project. He said land acquisition was carried out in accordance with government laws, which required time due to legal procedures. The commissioner assured that any future issues would be resolved in accordance with the law and without unnecessary delay, urging local elders to continue their cooperation with the administration. RPO Hazara Nasir Mehmood Satti emphasized the need for continued collaboration between local elders, WAPDA, and the district administration to address issues through relevant forums in a timely manner. Chief Engineer Mumtaz Qazi stated that WAPDA had always prioritized the legitimate demands of the local population and ensured timely compensation payments. He added that substantial funds were being utilized under a comprehensive program for regional, economic, and social development through various welfare and development initiatives. Deputy Commissioner Upper Kohistan Tariq Ali Khan briefed participants on the land acquisition process and said that future project-related matters would be resolved in consultation with local elders. _APP

Efforts afoot to promote trade in country: Governor

He emphasized that economic challenges can only be addressed through close coordination between the public and private sectors

DNA

LAHORE: Governor of Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider, has said that the government is taking practical steps to promote trade and industry in the country, adding that resolving the issues faced by the business community remains a top priority because a strong economy guarantees a stable Pakistan. He stated that the business community serves as the backbone of the national economy, and the government is serious and proactive in restoring the confidence of traders and providing them with greater facilitation. He expressed these views while addressing, as Chief Guest, a luncheon hosted in Lahore by Chaudhry Haji Muhammad Naeem in honor of a representative delegation of the Islamabad business community. The event was attended by Secretary General of United Business Group (UBG) Zafar Bakhtawari, President Blue Area Traders Welfare Association Yusuf Rajput, Executive Member Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Shamaila Siddiqui, along with other

prominent business figures. In his address, the Governor said the government is striving to encourage investment, increase exports, and create employment

panding the tax net, and actively participating in social welfare initiatives. He emphasized that economic challenges can only be addressed through close coordi-

the business sector but is also actively involved in social welfare activities, setting an example for other industrialists. Speaking on the occasion, Zafar Bakhtawari



opportunities through business-friendly policies. He appreciated the role of the Islamabad business community in strengthening the national economy, ex-

panation between the public and private sectors. Praising Chaudhry Haji Muhammad Naeem, the Governor noted that he has not only contributed significantly to

said that the business community stands shoulder to shoulder with the government for economic stability. However, he stressed that continuous consultation is essen-

tial to resolve taxation and policy-related issues faced by traders. He highlighted that consistency in policies, business facilitation, and transparency are vital for sustainable economic growth. He further stated that the Islamabad business community is playing an active role not only in commercial activities but also in philanthropic and social sectors, and reaffirmed their commitment to contributing positively to Pakistan's economic development. Yusuf Rajput said that the business community has kept economic activities running even during challenging times, ensuring that the wheel of the economy continues to move. He emphasized the need for strong coordination between the government and trade bodies so that ground realities are reflected in policymaking. He also called for a more conducive environment for businesses to thrive. Shamaila Siddiqui highlighted the important role of women entrepreneurs in economic development and stressed the need to provide them with more facilities and opportunities. She stated that only through collective efforts can a strong and self-reliant economy

be built. She termed the event a positive step toward strengthening mutual ties between business leaders. In his concluding remarks, host Chaudhry Haji Muhammad Naeem thanked the Governor of Punjab, the visiting delegation from Islamabad, and all distinguished guests for their participation. He said that the business community is united for the progress and prosperity of the country. "Business is not merely about profit; it is also about service and responsibility," he remarked, reaffirming his commitment to promoting trade, harmony, and social welfare initiatives in the future. Among others present on the occasion were President Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries Owais Satti, Vice President Sardar Zaheer Ahmed, President Talagang Chamber Malik Shabbir Ahmed, ICCI Executive Members Malik Mohsin Khalid, Rohail Anwar Butt, Naveed Satti, Malik Abdul Aziz, former ICCI Vice President Nasir Chaudhry, Secretary General Blue Area Imran Bukhari, Imran Shabbir Abbasi, and other members of the business community.

Historic Milestone for Kalash Community

KP cabinet approves Kalash Marriage Bill

PESHAWAR: In a landmark decision, KP government has approved the Kalash Marriage Bill, marking the first time in Pakistan's history that a dedicated family law has been enacted to recognize and protect the personal law of an indigenous community.

According to a press release issued here on Thursday, the bill establishes formal legal recognition of Kalash marriages, introduces a structured, culturally respectful marriage registration system, and safeguards the Kalash people's unique cultural and religious identity. This bill was a joint effort of Faith Friends and Blue Veins, with the support of NCA, and was initiated by Mr Wazir Zada, a community leader of the Kalash Community. The Kalash community, residing in the valleys of Bumburet, Rumbur, and Birir in Chitral, has preserved its ancient Indo-Aryan heritage, polytheistic faith, distinct language, and vibrant traditions for centuries. Despite their rich cultural legacy, the community lacked a formal legal framework to regulate and protect family and marital rights. The newly approved legislation addresses a longstanding legal gap and represents a significant step

toward inclusion, dignity, and justice. Qamar Naseem, Program Manager, Blue Veins and Drafter of the bill, said, "The approval of the Kalash Marriage Bill is a historic recognition of Pakistan's indigenous diversity. For the first time, the state has formally acknowledged and protected the family laws of the Kalash community in a way that respects their faith, customs, and identity. This law strengthens constitutional guarantees of equality and minority rights and sets an important precedent for inclusive legislation." Mr Rizwan, representative of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), remarked: "This legislation is a significant advancement in protecting the human rights of one of Pakistan's most unique indigenous communities. Legal recognition of Kalash marriages ensures access to documentation, inheritance protections, and social safeguards while honoring cultural autonomy. It is a model of rights-based and culturally sensitive lawmaking." This landmark development signals Pakistan's growing commitment to protecting minority rights and celebrating the country's pluralistic heritage. The Kalash Marriage Bill

stands as a testament to collaborative governance and a shared commitment to justice, dignity, and cultural preservation. Blue Veins and Faith Friends extend appreciation to Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; the Chief Secretary; Minister Local Government, Minister Law Department, Mr. Wazirzada, Focal Person to the Chief Minister on Minority Affairs; honorable Qazis from the Kalsh Community, Current and Ex officials of Local Government Department, the National Commission for Human Rights; the Directorate of Human Rights (DKP-DHR); Law Department; the Minister for Law; the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women and all other who supported. On the directives of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi, the provincial cabinet has approved the Ramadan Relief Package during its 47th meeting to provide financial assistance to deserving families across the province. According to the approved package, 1.063 million families will receive cash assistance at an average rate of Rs 12,500 per family during the holy month of Ramadan. —DNA

RCB conducts anti encroachment operation

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) carried out a major and effective operation against illegal constructions in Westridge, demolishing decades-old encroachments built within residential streets. The action was taken on the special instructions of Executive Officer Aamer Rasheed, while the Deputy CEO personally supervised the operation on-site. According to details, a comprehensive survey of the concerned areas was conducted prior to the operation. The survey revealed that certain residents had constructed permanent structures on public pathways in front of

their houses within the streets. These included additional rooms, boundary walls, verandas, and other structures, which had significantly narrowed the streets and caused serious difficulties for pedestrians and vehicular movement.

Following the survey, formal notices were issued to the residents, directing them to voluntarily demolish their illegal constructions within a specified time. However, despite the given deadline, no cooperation was extended by the local residents. In response to the lack of compliance, the Enforcement Team of Rawalpindi Cantonment Board launched a grand operation with the assistance of heavy machinery. Police personnel were also

present at the site to ensure law and order throughout the operation.

According to Cantonment Board officials, such actions will continue without discrimination, and the writ of law will be strictly enforced across the cantonment area. Executive Officer Aamer Rasheed has clearly stated that illegal constructions on public roads, streets, and government land will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

The Cantonment Board has appealed to citizens to comply with rules and regulations and to refrain from undertaking any construction without approved building plans, so as to contribute to a safe, planned, and well-managed urban environment.

Kundi calls for stronger Parliamentary role to combat terrorism

ISLAMABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Thursday underscored the urgent need to strengthen parliamentary oversight, enhance institutional capacity, and enact robust legislation to effectively combat terrorism and counter terrorist financing (CFT) in Pakistan. He stressed that defeating terrorism requires not only security measures but also a coordinated national strategy rooted in legislative strength and institutional resilience. Governor Kundi was addressing a national dialogue-based workshop titled "Enhancing Parliamentary Oversight and Institutional Capacities for Counter Terrorism (CT) and Countering Terrorist Financing (CFT)", organized by the Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) in Islamabad. Serving as the chief guest, he lauded SSDO for arranging

what he termed a "timely and purposeful" platform for dialogue addressing the evolving security landscape in the country. "These platforms are not just formal events—they create space for collective reflection, national harmony, and informed policymaking," he said, adding that Pakistan continues to face significant threats to peace, social cohesion, and economic stability. The Governor noted that while Pakistan has achieved major gains through extensive security operations and institutional reforms, the resurgence of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa highlights the need for renewed vigilance and strategic adaptation. He emphasized that dismantling extremist structures requires a multi-pronged approach, including the elimination of terrorists' digital communication networks and blocking their financial channels. "Parlia-

ment holds a central role in creating an effective national framework for counter-terrorism and financial oversight. Strong laws, backed by capable institutions, are essential to curb terrorist financing at its roots," he stated. Governor Kundi also paid glowing tribute to Pakistan's law enforcement and security agencies, acknowledging their professionalism, courage, and sacrifices in safeguarding the nation against extremist threats. The workshop brought together policymakers, security experts, and civil society representatives, providing a forum for evaluating current challenges and proposing strengthened legislative and institutional responses to CT and CFT. The dialogue forms part of broader national efforts to coordinate policy, enhance oversight, and reinforce Pakistan's commitment to combating terrorism in all its forms. —DNA

Iranian CG vows to strengthen ties with Pakistan

DNA

KARACHI: The Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Karachi, Akbar Eissazadeh, reaffirmed Iran's commitment to sovereignty, regional peace, and strengthened ties with Pakistan while addressing a ceremony marking the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Welcoming distinguished guests on Wednesday, including Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori, senior officials of the Sindh government, members of the diplomatic corps, and representatives from political and economic sectors, the Consul General described the Islamic Revolution as a living testament to the determination, resilience, and steadfastness of the Iranian nation. He stated that despite rapidly changing regional dynamics over the past five decades, Iran has achieved signifi-

cant progress in various sectors by relying on indigenous capabilities, social cohesion, and sustainable human resources. He noted advancements in science, technology, and healthcare, adding that Iran continues to move forward economically despite what he termed as "unjust sanctions" and global economic pressures imposed by major powers. The Consul General highlighted growth in non-oil exports and said Iran has attained self-sufficiency in infrastructure development, healthcare services, pharmaceutical production, housing projects, provision of clean drinking water, and communications. These developments, he said, have improved the quality of life for ordinary citizens. Referring to recent developments, he said the past year had been marked by challenges. He also addressed the recent protests in Iran, which began on January 7, 2026, citing economic concerns. According to

him, peaceful demonstrations were later infiltrated by "foreign-backed terrorist elements," turning them into armed unrest. He said members of Iran's security forces were martyred or injured during the violence. He maintained that while peaceful protest is a right of citizens, the government exercised restraint while ensuring national security and ultimately thwarted attempts to destabilize the country. Describing Iran as a responsible, independent, and influential country in the region and beyond, he said Tehran supports dialogue and cooperation to ensure peace, stability, and sustainable development. He highlighted Iran's balanced foreign policy, active diplomacy, and expanding engagement with neighboring countries, emerging powers, and key regional and international organizations. Turning to Pakistan, the Consul General termed it a "brotherly country" with a rich history, shared religion, and cultural ties.

He said Iran-Pakistan relations span centuries and hold a special place in the hearts of the Iranian people. He noted growing momentum in bilateral relations in recent years, particularly in economic, political, and cultural cooperation.

He remarked that relations between the two countries have entered a new phase, describing them as more than state-to-state ties but rather a bond between two nations and civilizations rooted in shared history and a common commitment to peace and lasting prosperity. He also acknowledged the important role of Sindh province in strengthening bilateral relations, thanking its people for their contribution. He expressed optimism that Memorandums of Understanding signed between Sindh and various Iranian provinces would enhance economic, technical, and cultural cooperation, creating new opportunities in trade, investment, and tourism.

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Briefs

18 Suspicious Individuals, Including Afghan National held

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police conducted a grand search and combing operation in various areas of the federal capital as part of efforts to strengthen security and curb criminal activities. An official told APP on Thursday that the operation was carried out under the supervision of zonal SPs, with the participation of lady police officials. He said that during the operation, police teams checked 409 individuals and 309 houses. Additionally, 126 motorcycles and 56 vehicles were inspected, with officers focusing on documentation and suspicious movement. The official said that 18 suspicious individuals, including an Afghan national, along with 14 motorcycles, were shifted to relevant police stations for verification. He said that the primary objective of the operation was to identify suspicious elements, prevent crime, and enhance public safety.—APP

Delegation to participate in annual parliamentary hearing at UN

ISLAMABAD: A high-level parliamentary delegation led by Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, will represent the country at the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations. According to a news release, the delegation will participate in several sessions over the course of two days on February 12 and 13, which include "The UN at 80: Renewing trust and purpose through co-operation and partnership; Translating global commitments into national realities; Protecting democracy from within: Parliamentary safeguards responsibilities and renewal in times of democratic erosion and Financing and future-proofing the United Nations. The Chairman Senate will meet with the President of the UN General Assembly as well as the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on the sidelines of the Annual Hearing. Senator Farooq H. Naek, Senator Muhammad Abdul Qadir, Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari, are part of the parliamentary delegation. The Annual IPU Parliamentary Hearing 2026 is a high-level global forum jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations, which brings together parliamentarians from across the world with senior UN officials, diplomats, experts, and civil society representatives.

WAPDA wraps up digital skills training

ISLAMABAD: WAPDA has completed a digital marketing, freelancing and e-commerce training program for youth from project-affected communities in Upper Kohistan under the Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP), the authority said. The six-month program ran from July 2025 to January 2026 at the Government Centennial Model High School in Dasu and was implemented in collaboration with the Abdullah Institute of Technology, Abbottabad. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, it aimed to equip local youth with practical, market-ready digital skills and promote self-employment. The curriculum covered digital marketing strategies, social media marketing, content creation, online advertising, use of freelancing platforms and e-commerce business models, according to the statement. Participants were trained to build online brands, explore freelancing opportunities and manage e-commerce ventures. A certificate distribution ceremony was held at the school to mark the completion of the training. Officials from NESCAP attended the event, while Deputy Director WAPDA Riaz Ahmed was the chief guest. Certificates were awarded to all 80 participants.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Laborers are busy in their working during the construction of flyover of 10th Avenue in Federal Capital.

Pak reaffirms commitment to rural transformation at IFAD Council

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday reaffirmed commitment to rural transformation in order to promote agriculture sector for the development of local economy as well as to attain social prosperity in the country. The minister is on an official visit to Rome where he is leading Pakistan's delegation at the 49th Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The session brought together ministers, development partners, financial institutions, private sector representatives and youth entrepreneurs to deliberate on rural transformation, sustainable agriculture and innovative financing for smallholder communities. On the sidelines of the Governing Council, the Minister held a detailed bilateral meeting with IFAD President Alvaro Lario, said a press release received here today. The discussions

centered on the progress of IFAD-funded projects in Pakistan, future areas of cooperation and Pakistan's continued engagement in IFAD's replenishment cycles.

Rana Tanveer Hussain reaffirmed Pakistan's firm commitment to strengthening its long-standing partnership with IFAD and extended a formal invitation to the President to undertake an official visit to Pakistan. President Lario fondly recalled the signing of the bilateral Home Country Agreement in July 2023 and the subsequent establishment of IFAD's Home Country Office in Islamabad later that year. He appreciated Pakistan's historic role as a founding member of IFAD and conveyed his interest in visiting Islamabad in the near future to further deepen collaboration. The meeting also reviewed Pakistan's expanding portfolio with IFAD, which now exceeds \$1.2 billion. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the steady implementation of projects under the current country strategy, which focuses on rural development, poverty re-

duction, food security and climate resilience across all provinces. The Minister noted that IFAD-supported initiatives are reaching some of the country's most remote and underserved areas, including Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan, South Punjab and other marginalized regions.

During his engagements, Rana Tanveer Hussain also welcomed the forthcoming visit of IFAD Executive Vice President Mr. Donal Brown, expected in March. Mr. Brown recalled his previous interactions with Pakistani leadership and expressed his intention to continue close coordination with Pakistan on future development initiatives. At the high-level roundtable marking ten years of the International Day of Family Remittances, the Minister highlighted Pakistan's position among leading remittance-receiving countries. He emphasized the Government's efforts to promote financial inclusion and channel remittance flows into productive sectors, particularly agriculture and small and medium enterprises. Speaking at a

thematic session on investing in young entrepreneurs, he underscored the importance of connecting farmers to markets and creating opportunities for rural youth through value chain development and agribusiness support. Pakistan's partnership with IFAD dates back to 1978. Over the decades, the Fund has financed 26 projects and programmes in the country with a cumulative portfolio of over \$ 2.3 billion, including government and co-financing contributions. At present, four major projects are under implementation, aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity, supporting women through asset transfers and livelihood schemes, expanding irrigation and market access in mountainous areas, and graduating vulnerable households out of poverty through integrated support programmes.

The Minister observed that IFAD's community-driven model has been particularly effective in empowering rural women, strengthening smallholder farming systems and promoting climate-smart agriculture.

FGP holds high-level meeting

ISLAMABAD: Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) convened a high-level meeting with Dr. Sayad Parastar, a renowned agricultural scientist and Chairman of Henan Pallas Biotechnology Co. Ltd., to explore potential collaboration aimed at improving soil health and boosting agricultural productivity in Pakistan, particularly in climate-stressed and degraded regions. The meeting was held at the FGP office, according to a press release issued here on Thursday. Discussions focused on sustainable soil restoration approaches to address declining fertility, salinity, nutrient imbalances, and long-term land degradation—factors that are constraining crop yields and affecting farmers' livelihoods across large parts of the country. The meeting was attended by Sarmad Hussain, a Pakistani-German scholar; Shafqat Aziz; Dr. Shahbaz Tariq; Dr. Kausar Khan; Atif Saeed of FGP; and Mr. Asad Rafi, CEO of Micronox. Participants described the engagement as a forward-looking step toward structured cooperation, including technical exchanges and potential pilot initiatives. During the session, Dr. Parastar shared international experiences related to soil rehabilitation practices, including the use of S8 (octasulfur)-based applications as one component of a broader soil improvement strategy. He presented insights from arid and salt-affected regions where such approaches have reportedly contributed to improved soil conditions and enhanced crop performance over time. He emphasized that the primary focus should remain on sustainable soil restoration rather than short-term yield gains. Leading the discussion, Muhammad Anwar, CEO of FGP, highlighted the urgency of soil regeneration in the face of climate change, water scarcity, and growing food security challenges. He stressed that restoring soil must be guided by scientific validation, local adaptation, and collaboration with research institutions, government bodies, and farming communities. Sarmad Hussain, who accompanied Dr. Parastar, also contributed to discussions on coordination mechanisms and potential pathways for responsible international cooperation. Both sides described the dialogue as constructive and agreed to move forward in a structured and time-bound manner. In the coming weeks, technical parameters, validation processes, and collaboration modalities will be further examined, including the possibility of pilot demonstrations aligned with Pakistan's agricultural priorities.—DNA

Load-shedding linked to feeder losses

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Energy (Power Division) Aamir Talal Khan informed the National Assembly on Thursday that load-shedding on certain feeders is primarily linked to high transmission and distribution losses. Responding to a question during the Question Hour, he said feeders experiencing 10 hours or more of load-shedding are mainly those with elevated loss ratios. He noted that the issue been raised repeatedly in the House and clarified that the duration of load-shedding is directly connected to the level of losses on individual feeders. To address the problem, he said the government is undertaking multiple corrective measures. The entire cable system is being upgraded, with conventional lines being replaced by Aerial Bundled Cables (ABC) to curb theft and reduce losses. In addition, around 1.6 million Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters have so far been installed, replacing old meters. He added that by the end of 2026, all three-phase meters across the country would be converted to AMI meters, which would help significantly reduce losses and improve monitoring.—APP

Cars' sale, production up by 44.74%

ISLAMABAD: The sale and production of cars in the country witnessed an increase of 44.74 and 57.46 percent respectively during the first seven months of current fiscal year 2025-26 as compared to corresponding period of last year. During the July-January 2025-26, as many as 84,512 cars were sold against the sale of 58,385 units while the production of cars increased from 58,915 units to 92,772 units, showing growth of 44.74 and 57.46 percent respectively, said Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). Among cars, the sale of Honda cars increased by 61.25 percent from 8,389 units during last year to 13,528 units during current year while Toyota Corolla and Toyota Yaris cars sale also grew by 53.74 percent from 11,782 units to 20,798 units. The sale of Suzuki Swift went up from 4,644 units to 8,921 units, showing an increase of 92.07 percent whereas the sale of Hyundai Elantra increased to 1,550 units from 760 units. The sale of Suzuki Cultus surged to 2,963 units from 1,605 during last year whereas the sale of Suzuki Alto also increase to 31,172 units from 24,633 units. The sale of Suzuki Every witnessed an increase of 239.46 percent from 1,467 units against 4,980 units. APP

Pakistan successfully launches Satellite EO-2

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has marked a major achievement in its national space programme with the successful launch of its second indigenous Earth Observation Satellite, EO-2, from China's Yangjiang Seashore Launch Centre, on Thursday Developed by the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), the EO-2 satellite is designed to significantly enhance the country's earth observation and high-resolution imaging capabilities. The officials of SUPARCO said the satellite will provide critical data to support national development planning, natural resource management, environmental monitoring, and urban expansion. It will also strengthen governance,

disaster management, climate analysis, and strategic decision-making by delivering accurate and timely satellite imagery. With the addition of EO-2, Pakistan has expanded its satellite fleet, ensuring improved continuity, coverage, and precision of earth observation data. SUPARCO officials termed the launch a milestone in Pakistan's space journey, noting that the successful indigenous development of EO-2 reflects the country's growing technical expertise and self-reliance in advanced satellite technology. The achievement highlights Pakistan's steady progress in utilizing space-based solutions for socio-economic development, national resilience, and scientific advancement.—APP

Pakistan, Cambodia to explore bilateral technology collaboration

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Cambodia's Minister of Commerce Cham Nimul visited the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) and its flagship National Science and Technology Park (NSTP) in Islamabad to explore avenues for strengthening bilateral cooperation in technology, innovation, and industry-led research. The delegation was received by (Retd.) Air Marshal Rizwan and senior management of NUST, who briefed the two Ministers on the university's integrated model of academia-industry-government collaboration, said a release issued here on Thursday. The leadership presented NUST's vision of building a comprehensive innovation ecosystem that connects education, advanced research, commercialization, and industrial partnerships under one framework. During the visit to NSTP and Techno Park, the delegation was given a detailed presentation

on projects in artificial intelligence, semiconductor design, smart city technologies, robotics, aerospace engineering, biotechnology, and digital infrastructure. The Ministers were informed about Pakistan's growing indigenous capabilities in chip design, high-performance computing, and AI-driven solutions developed according to local requirements and international commercial standards. Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan appreciated the depth of innovation at NUST and lauded the institution's role in strengthening Pakistan's knowledge economy. He remarked that the future of trade diplomacy lies in technology-driven growth and emphasized that Pakistan must position itself not only as a trading nation but also as a technology-producing and exporting economy. The Minister commended the researchers, startups, and industry partners at NSTP for contributing to national capacity building and ex-

pressed confidence that such ecosystems will play a vital role in enhancing Pakistan's global competitiveness. Cambodia's Minister of Commerce Cham Nimul praised Pakistan's structured innovation model and described the NSTP ecosystem as impressive and forward-looking. She noted that the integration of academia, industry, and government under one platform provides a practical blueprint for emerging economies seeking to modernize their industrial and digital capabilities. The Cambodian Minister expressed keen interest in expanding collaboration in digital infrastructure, research exchange, and technology transfer, underscoring her country's commitment to strengthening economic ties with Pakistan. The delegation also visited advanced laboratories, where they observed aerospace control models, AI-based smart city systems, and semiconductor design projects developed by local teams.—DNA

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Yemen charting road to peace and security with new government

DR. ABDEL AZIZ ALUWAISEH

YEMEN turned a new page with the formation of a new government last week. Led by former Foreign Minister Dr. Shaya Al-Zindani, it promised major economic, political and security reforms. Al-Zindani is a veteran diplomat who served in the diplomatic corps of the pre-1990 southern government, then in the unity government post-1990, before he was appointed foreign minister in 2024. As a conciliatory leader who avoids friction and inflammatory rhetoric, he is the man for the moment.

The challenges before the new government are immense. Politically, the main task is to resume the search for a political solution to the Yemen crisis. The UN-mediated talks with the Houthis are at a standstill and need to be jumpstarted. With the dissolution of the Southern Transitional Council, the government has reunited all areas under its authority and is in a good position to lead the negotiations. Yemen needs to strengthen its international support systems. During the eight-year conflict with the Southern Transitional Council, it was nearly paralyzed as the rebel group usurped government authority and pursued its own diplomatic moves. The near-unanimous expressions of support for the new government are a measure of how much the international community is eager for Yemen to resume its rightful place in the region and that it is ready to lend a helping hand.

The Friends of Yemen is one of those support systems. It is a group of 30 major countries that have in the past provided political, economic and security support for Yemen. The G10 group of ambassadors, which grew to become 20 ambassadors from the countries most concerned about Yemen, including the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, provided useful diplomatic coordination. Donors also had their own group to coordinate with the government on aid. These support groups supplemented the work of joint Gulf Cooperation Council-Yemen committees and bilateral relations. As a conciliatory leader who avoids friction and inflammatory rhetoric, Al-Zindani is the man for the moment

Security is a paramount concern for the new government. Internally, it has to deal with the Houthi military threat. Although there has been a tenuous truce for about four years, the rebel group has broken

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it with numerous attempts to annex more land. It also poses a serious threat to maritime security and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, Bab Al-Mandab Strait and Gulf of Aden. The Yemeni government's ability to patrol its territorial waters was hampered by the fragmentation of security forces and the rivalry between them.

The situation improved with the Southern Transitional Council's dissolution last month and especially since the government decided to put all armed groups under a unified command in coordination with the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen. Yemen could now play a larger role in countering Houthi threats, both internal and in Yemeni waters, but it needs support from the rest of the world.

The third major challenge, after the political and security spheres, is the state of the economy, which has hampered the government's ability to provide basic services and humanitarian assistance to the population. The Southern Transitional Council rebellion against the internationally recognized government in 2017 exacerbated an already fragile economy, which nearly collapsed in 2015 following the Houthi takeover of the capital Sanaa the previous September. To bring the economy back, the government needs security, stability and the resumption of economic activity

Yemen's gross domestic product contracted by more than 37 percent in three years, from \$43 billion in 2014 to about \$31 billion in 2016 and \$27 billion in 2017, the year the Southern Transitional Council began its rebellion. During its eight-year control of much of the south between 2017 and 2025, the economy shrank to \$17 billion. Thus, the Houthi insurgency in the north and the Southern Transitional Council rebellion in the south caused a 58-percent contraction from 2014 levels. To bring the economy back from this unprecedented collapse, the government needs security, stability and the resumption of economic activity. There is significant economic potential but the government needs the help of its friends and partners, especially in restoring economic capacity.

There are at least four areas of potential economic growth that could be maximized through international engagement and cooperation. Oil and gas production can bring in fuel for the needed economic recovery and funds for government expenditure. Restoring farmers' ability to grow crops and export surplus could bring life back to the countryside and improve food security. In the past, Yemen had thriving fisheries for both local consumption and export. Tourism also has some potential, especially specialized and ecotourism.

Realizing the significant potential in these four areas requires several steps, which the government could handle with the help of its growing group of friends. Security needs to be restored to jumpstart economic activity. The exchange rate needs to be stabilized to reassure traders. And a sound economic plan is needed to spur investment.

Make America Go Away

Qamar Bashir



The Gaza conflict has intensified that erosion. While Washington frames its position as support for a longstanding ally, public opinion across Europe has grown sharply critical of Israeli military actions. In cities from Berlin to London to Copenhagen, demonstrations have linked U.S. policy directly to the humanitarian crisis. Israel itself has faced a steep reputational decline internationally, and by extension, so has the United States as its principal backer. At home, polarization further complicates America's global image

THE red caps were impossible to miss. In Copenhagen's winter chill, protesters gathered waving Danish and Greenlandic flags, their message stitched in bold white letters across crimson fabric: "Make America Go Away." What began as a satirical play on Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan has become something more serious — a symbol of European unease, even defiance, in the face of escalating rhetoric over Greenland.

The hats were created by Danish vintage shop owner Jesper Rabe Tonnesen. Initially a novelty, they gained traction only after Washington intensified its language about Greenland's strategic value and potential American control. What might once have been dismissed as political theatre began to feel real. "This isn't reality TV," Tonnesen remarked. "It's actually reality." Within a single weekend, thousands of caps were ordered. Protest signs at Copenhagen's city hall declared "No Means No" and "Make America Smart Again," combining humor with unmistakable political intent.

The symbolism extended beyond Denmark. At the Winter Olympics opening ceremony in Milan, Vice President JD Vance was met with audible boos when his image appeared on stadium screens during the Parade of Nations. The U.S. delegation of athletes received cheers, but the mood shifted when the camera cut to the American political contingent. Italian protesters had already marched earlier that day against reports of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel advising on Olympic security. For many Europeans, the moment crystallized a broader frustration — not necessarily with the American people, but with Washington's posture.

The episode in Milan was not isolated. It came amid growing debate in Europe over U.S. foreign policy choices, including the controversial military operation that resulted in the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, heightened tensions with Iran, and Washington's unwavering alignment with Israel during the Gaza conflict. Each event, viewed individually, can be defended by American policymakers as a matter of national security or strategic necessity. But collectively, they are reshaping perceptions abroad. Greenland, long considered a peripheral issue outside diplomatic circles, has suddenly become central to Arctic geopolitics. Its vast mineral reserves, strategic location, and proximity to new shipping lanes have elevated its importance in a world defined by

great-power competition. Yet the tone of Washington's overtures — seen by many in Denmark as coercive — has triggered a backlash. European governments have publicly reaffirmed Denmark's sovereignty and emphasized that territorial integrity is non-negotiable. The Arctic, once framed as a zone of cooperation, now risks becoming a theatre of suspicion.

Relations with Canada have been further strained by controversy surrounding the Gordie Howe International Bridge, a \$6.4 billion infrastructure project linking Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario. The bridge—expected to open in 2026—is jointly owned on a 50/50 basis by the State of Michigan and the Government of Canada. Notably, Canada financed the entire construction cost after Michigan lawmakers declined to contribute upfront funding. However, in January 2026, Trump threatened to block the bridge's opening unless the United States was "fully compensated," suggesting America should own "at least one half" of the asset—despite the existing equal ownership structure. The dispute underscores how a project designed to strengthen bilateral trade—facilitating approximately 25% of total U.S.-Canada goods trade that crosses the Detroit River corridor—has become entangled in broader trade tensions and political leverage, raising concerns about the reliability of cross-border economic cooperation.

Meanwhile, the operation in Venezuela has set a dangerous precedent for unilateral intervention and raised questions about international law. Latin American leaders voiced alarm at the optics of a powerful nation apprehending a sitting head of state. Whether justified or not, the event reinforced a perception among some allies that Washington is increasingly comfortable acting alone.

Soft power — the intangible currency of legitimacy, cultural attraction, and moral authority — depends less on force and more on trust. The United States has historically wielded enormous soft power, built on alliances, democratic ideals, economic partnerships, and cultural influence. But soft power can erode quietly. It does not collapse in a single moment; it thins through accumulated grievances.

The Gaza conflict has intensified that erosion. While Washington frames its position as support for a longstanding ally, public opinion across Europe has grown sharply critical of Israeli military actions. In cities from Berlin to London to Copenhagen, demonstrations have linked U.S. policy directly to the humanitarian crisis. Israel itself has faced a steep reputational decline internationally,

and by extension, so has the United States as its principal backer. At home, polarization further complicates America's global image. Open confrontations between federal and state authorities on immigration, sanctuary policies, and law enforcement create the impression of internal instability. For foreign observers, domestic discord weakens diplomatic leverage. Allies prefer predictability. Strategic partnerships rely on continuity.

The war in Ukraine also looms large. What began as a united Western front against Russian aggression has grown more complex. Questions about burden-sharing, fatigue, and long-term commitment circulate in European capitals. If America appears distracted or transactional, doubts multiply.

What the red caps truly signify is not a desire for American disappearance, but a demand for recalibration. Satire often captures what formal diplomacy cannot. "Make America Go Away" is less a literal plea than an expression of frustration — a shorthand for "we feel unheard." Power exercised without broad consent becomes expensive. Influence sustained through persuasion endures. If Washington is perceived as substituting pressure for partnership, the cost will not appear immediately in treaties or troop deployments. It will surface in subtle ways: in public opinion polls, in parliamentary debates, in hesitant endorsements at multilateral forums. The United States does not deserve to be haunted by slogans calling for its departure, nor should its leaders be booed at global celebrations meant to transcend politics. But neither can those moments be dismissed as trivial. They are signals. They reflect accumulated discontent over tone, method, and alignment.

The challenge now is not whether America should go away. It is whether it can pause, reassess, and restore confidence among those who once viewed it as indispensable. The red caps in Copenhagen may fade from fashion. The deeper question is whether the sentiments they represent will fade as well — or whether they mark the beginning of a more profound shift in the transatlantic relationship. Bridges can connect, or they can become bargaining chips. The choice, ultimately, rests not in slogans, but in statecraft.

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Sportsmanship Spirit

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Contrast that ethos with more recent scenes, where even the courtesy of a handshake after the toss has been denied. When an Indian captain declined to shake hands with his Pakistani counterpart, it signaled more than personal discourtesy; it marked the visible entry of state politics into the arena of sport. What was once a sanctuary from power games has increasingly...

THE word sportsmanship was once spoken with reverence, not as a slogan but as a lived tradition, especially on the playing fields of South Asia. In earlier decades, when tempers between neighbouring states often ran high, sport still retained a rare dignity. Pakistan and India, despite wars, diplomatic breakdowns and enduring political hostility, continued to meet in hockey, cricket and other games under tense circumstances, yet the tension seldom poisoned the spirit of play. Teams travelled to each other's countries, crowds watched with passion but restraint, and the field itself remained a neutral ground where humanity quietly prevailed over hostility.

Those who witnessed that era still recall small but telling gestures that defined sportsmanship. Fielders tying the shoelaces of an opposing batsman, sharing a laugh after a fierce contest, or applauding a good shot regardless of the flag on the jersey were not seen as acts of weakness. They were expressions of confidence, of a belief that sport was larger than politics. A particularly luminous example occurred on December 22, 1989, during a ODI match between Pakistan and India at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium. Waqar Younis appealed to Indian batsman Srikanth to be given out LBW on an in-swing ball, to which umpire Shakoor Rana raised his finger in the air. Srikanth protested and hesitated to leave. At that moment, Pakistan's captain Imran Khan did something almost unthinkable by today's standards; he invited the Srikanth to continue despite the decision of Umpire. Srikanth resumed his innings, only to be dismissed on the very next delivery, caught behind the wicket by Salim Yousaf. The scorecard recorded an ordinary dismissal, but history recorded an extraordinary act of grace.

Contrast that ethos with more recent scenes, where even the courtesy of a handshake after the toss has been denied. When an Indian captain declined to shake hands with his Pakistani counterpart, it sig-

naled more than personal discourtesy; it marked the visible entry of state politics into the arena of sport. What was once a sanctuary from power games has increasingly become an extension of them.

International sport is always governed by federations and councils, each claiming independence, neutrality and adherence to rules that transcend borders. Yet doubts about their impartiality grow louder with each selective decision. The International Olympic Committee provides a striking illustration. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the IOC suspended the Russian Olympic Committee in October 2023, barring Russia from competing as a nation, including at the 2026 Winter Olympics. Funding was withdrawn and athletes were denied the right to participate under their national banner. The message was unambiguous: state actions would carry sporting consequences, regardless of the individual athlete's stance.

Yet in another theatre of human tragedy, after nearly two years of devastating violence in Gaza, the IOC adopted a markedly different tone. It maintained that athletes should not be held responsible for the actions of their governments, a principle that suddenly regained prominence when applied to Israeli athletes. This contrast has fuelled accusations of hypocrisy and bias, with critics arguing that moral principles appear flexible when aligned with Western interests. The IOC insists on complexity and case-by-case judgment, but to many observers, the inconsistency has tarnished its moral authority.

Cricket, too, has not been spared. The International Cricket Council has repeatedly adjusted venues and formats in ways widely perceived as accommodating political pressure from powerful boards, particularly India's. During the 2025 Champions Trophy hosted by Pakistan, India refused to travel, citing security and political reasons. The ICC responded by shifting India's matches to neutral

venues in the UAE under a hybrid model. Similar dynamics have shaped several Asia Cups, relocated or restructured due to India's reluctance to engage bilaterally with Pakistan, even if those tournaments formally fall under the Asian Cricket Council.

The controversy deepened during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh requested that its group-stage matches be moved from Indian venues to Sri Lanka, citing security and political concerns amid strained relations. The ICC rejected the request after assessments found no credible threat. When Bangladesh refused to travel, it was replaced by Scotland, effectively excluding Bangladesh from the tournament. No penalties were imposed, and as a conciliatory gesture, Bangladesh was promised hosting rights for an additional ICC event in the future. Yet comparisons were inevitable: why was India accommodated with neutral venues, while Bangladesh was shown the door?

The episode exposed the fragile intersection of power, politics and principle in modern sport. Pakistan's response, however, stood out. By initially expressing solidarity with Bangladesh and questioning the apparent double standards, Pakistan sought to free the game from monopoly and moral selectivity. Though it later agreed to play for the broader stability of the tournament, the gesture of support was widely acknowledged by Bangladesh as an act rooted in fairness rather than expediency.

Sport, at its best, is a civilising force. It teaches restraint in victory, dignity in defeat, and respect across divides that politics often deepens. When politics colonises the playing field, the game loses not only its innocence but its credibility. The lesson from Lahore in 1989 still resonates; rules matter, but spirit matters more. If international sport wishes to retain its moral claim, it must rediscover the courage to apply principles evenly and allow the game, once again, to breathe free of influence.

Briefs

Afghan govt supports TTP, blames Pakistan

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan's claims that TTP benefits from freedom of movement and access to resources in Afghanistan, explicitly highlights that Pakistan is the main target of TTP attacks. It also validates that Pakistan is a victim of terrorism bearing the brunt of violence originating from Afghanistan. The Spokesperson said Pakistan's legal teams participated in the proceedings of the Court of Arbitration in the Hague early this month. Pakistan requested the court to address the implication and application of the Indus Water Treaty with respect to certain design elements on the run of river's hydroelectric projects. He said India was invited by the court of arbitration to participate in the proceedings. Under the Indus Water Treaty, it was obliged to do so but it chose not to appear. Replying to a question about Sawalkote Hydropower Project on River Chenab by India, the Spokesperson said the matter has been taken up at the level of Indus Water Commissioners for information and consultations as mandated by the Indus Water Treaty of 1960.

Imran Khan's eye examination must be...

FROM PAGE 01
During the hearing, the chief justice observed that the issue of health was the most important and required judicial intervention, adding that the court wanted to know the government's position on the matter of the PTI founder's health. The Supreme Court further directed that a team of doctors be constituted to carry out the eye examination. According to the report read out in court, the PTI founder described the medical facilities being provided to him as "unsatisfactory" and had specifically sought access to specialist eye doctors. The report further stated that he had requested access to expert ophthalmologists.

SC reserves decision on Toshakhana trial petition

FROM PAGE 01
while the Attorney General for Pakistan represented the state. During the proceedings, the court appreciated the government's performance regarding the provision of facilities to the PTI founder in jail, observing that it was commendable for the state to fulfill its responsibilities in an appropriate manner. The bench ordered that the PTI founder's eye examination be conducted before February 16 and also directed authorities to arrange his telephonic contact with his children within the same timeframe. The Attorney General assured the court that all directions would be implemented.

Official denounces Achakzai's...

FROM PAGE 01
were encouraging. He added that visits to educational institutions further showed that the younger generation stood firmly with the Pakistan Army, and no narrative could weaken the bond between the people and the armed forces. The officer underlined that the war against terrorism was not only the responsibility of the security forces, the army, police or the Frontier Corps, but of the entire nation. He also said that India was behind all sponsored terrorism in Pakistan, adding that "Fitna-ul-Hindustan" was an enemy of the Baloch people and a hurdle to the development of Balochistan. Addressing the lower house of parliament a day earlier, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif termed the opposition leader's statement as irresponsible and a deliberate attempt to malign a national institution.

Italy outclass Nepal to secure maiden T20 World Cup victory

Justin, Anthony Mosca complete unbeaten stand to finish 124-run chase

NEW DELHI: Italy recorded their first-ever ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 victory with a dominant 10-wicket triumph over Nepal at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday. Chasing a modest target of 124, Italy cruised to victory without loss in just 12.4 overs, courtesy of a dominant opening partnership between Justin Mosca and Anthony Mosca. The duo stitched together an unbeaten 124-run stand to seal the win in emphatic fashion. Anthony Mosca led the charge with a blistering 62 off 32 deliveries, smashing three fours and six sixes, while Justin Mosca remained unbeaten on 60 from 44 balls, striking five fours and three sixes. Earlier, Nepal were bowled out for 123 in 19.3 overs following an impressive bowling display by Italy. Aarif Sheikh top-scored with 27 off 24 balls, hitting three fours, while captain Rohit Paudel provided a quick 23



off 14 deliveries, including two sixes. Aasif Shaikh contributed a run-a-ball 20 with two boundaries, and Karan KC remained unbeaten on 18 from 11 balls, striking one four and a six. Opener Kushal Bhurtel fell early for five off 10 balls to Ali Hasan. Dipendra Singh Airee made 17 before being dismissed by Crishan Kalugamage, while Lokesh Bam and Gulshan Jha managed three runs apiece. Nandan Yadav was dismissed for a duck, Sandeep Lamichane scored five, and Lalit Rajbanshi was run out without troubling the scorers. Crishan Kalugamage was the stand-out performer for Italy, claiming 3/18 in his four overs. Ben Manenti picked up two wickets, while Ali Hasan, JJ Smuts and Jaspreet Singh claimed one wicket each to complete a clinical all-round performance. – APP

Muhammad Karim a proud story of Pakistan

GILGIT: Coming from a remote mountain village and reaching the world's biggest winter sports event is not easy. Muhammad Karim, who belongs to Naltar Valley in Gilgit-Baltistan and is Pakistan's leading alpine skier, has done it through hard work and patience. Today, he stands as a symbol of hope for young athletes across the country. Muhammad Karim is making history by qualifying for the Winter Olympics for the fourth consecutive time. He is the only Pakistani athlete to achieve this honour in winter sports. He will represent Pakistan at the Winter Olympics 2026 in Milan Cortina, Italy. For a country where winter sports receive little attention, this achievement is very important. Born on May 1, 1995, Muhammad Karim first appeared at the Winter Olympics in 2014. At that time, he was still a teenager. Since then, he has represented Pakistan at every Winter Olympics. He competed in Sochi in 2014, PyeongChang in 2018, and Beijing in 2022. Now he is preparing for his fourth appearance in Italy in 2026. No other

Pakistani athlete has maintained such consistency at the Olympic level. Talking to APP Muhammad Karim recalled his early days with humility, adding that he learned skiing as a child on simple, homemade skis in Naltar. He never imagined that one day he would compete at the Olympics. Reaching the Games four times, he said, feels like a dream. According to him, this success does not belong to him alone but to the whole nation. Muhammad Karim earned his place at the 2026 Winter Olympics through tough international competitions. He took part in Slalom and Giant Slalom races, and later he competed in more qualifying events in Turkey between December 2025 and January 2026. By earning the required points under the rules of the International Ski and Snowboard Federation, he secured Pakistan's qualification. The final quota list issued in January 2026 confirmed Pakistan's participation. Talking about the challenges, Muhammad Karim said that athletes from developed countries enjoy better facilities and longer training seasons. Limited training and funding oppor-

tunities often pose a challenge. Despite this, he believes that strong determination can overcome many obstacles. Muhammad Karim grew up in the snowy mountains of Naltar, where resources were scarce. His natural talent was noticed early. In 2006 with the support of the Pakistan Air Force, he was sent to Japan and Austria for professional training. This exposure played a key role in shaping his international career. His first major international appearance came in 2011 at the South Asian Winter Games. Over the years, Muhammad Karim has competed in 53 international events. He has won 11 international medals, including five gold, four silver, and two bronze medals. At the national level, he has secured 28 gold medals. These achievements make him Pakistan's most successful athlete in winter sports. Senior journalist Abdul Rahman Bukhari, associated with winter sports in Pakistan, praised Karim's achievements. He said Muhammad Karim is a rare talent who has represented Pakistan with consistency and dignity on the global stage. – Agencies

Police in crime-blighted Argentine city stage mutiny

ROSARIO: Police officers demanding better pay and mental health support in the crime-blighted Argentine city of Rosario burned tires on a third day of demonstrations Wednesday, sparked by a spate of suicides within the force. Their protest resulted in authorities agreeing to a wage increase, prompting the officers to call off their action. The officers demanded better pay and more psychological support as they battle drug-related crime in Argentina's third-most populous city, hometown of football star Lionel Messi. The trigger for the protests, which began on Monday, was the death by suicide last week of a 32-year-old officer – the latest in a string of such deaths in Santa Fe province, where Rosario is located. Monday's protest ended in scuffles between the demonstrators and fellow officers sent to disperse them. – APP

Egyptian Salma Badour wins gold in individual rowing

SHARJAH: Egypt's Salma Khaled Badour of Al Maadi and Yacht Club won the gold medal in the singles competition as coastal rowing made its official debut at the 2026 Arab Women's Clubs Games hosted at Al Hamriyah Beach Park the other day. The Egyptian rower clocked 3:09.47 to claim the title and secure Egypt's first-ever rowing gold in the history of the Games. Tunisia's Yeldes Othmani of the Tabarka Association for Marine Sports and Fishing took silver in 3:23.24. Morocco's Marwa Naqiri of Rabat Beach Club claimed bronze after winning the third-place race in 3:04.40, ahead of Saudi Rowing Federation's Mariam Kaaki, who finished fourth in 3:24.57. The singles results followed the doubles competition held the previous day, where Tunisia's Yeldes Othmani and Wala Omri captured gold in 2:42.07. Saudi Arabia's Al Jazi Al Ibrahim and Mariam Kaaki secured silver in 2:55.43. Egypt's Al Maadi and Yacht Club duo Mariam Aboul Wafa and Salma Badour took bronze after winning the third-place race in 2:46.50. The coastal rowing competition featured six teams representing the UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, highlighting the sport's growing presence in women's competition across the Arab world. The medal ceremony was attended by Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Qasimi, Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee of the Games; Hanan Al Mahmoud, Vice Chair of the Committee; Abdulaziz Al Anzi, Secretary-General of the Union of Arab National Olympic Committees; Moza Al Shamsi, Games Director; and Annamarie Phelps, Vice President of the International Rowing Federation. Badour said the competition was highly competitive, noting the narrow margins between athletes made the singles gold particularly valuable and a fitting response after missing out on doubles gold the previous day. The Arab Women's Clubs Games are being held in Sharjah and organized by the Sharjah Women's Sports Foundation through Feb. 12. The event features 65 teams from 16 Arab countries competing in nine individual and team sports, aiming to strengthen women's sports regionally and internationally. – Agencies

Shehbaz vows to promote...

FROM PAGE 01
Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Adviser to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi, Adviser Haroon Akhtar, and senior government officials.

President, PM review security...

FROM PAGE 01
The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, among other officials. The premier and president previously met in November last year, where they discussed the country's security situation in the wake of multiple terrorist attacks. According to state broadcaster PTV, Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq and federal ministers Syed Mush-taq Raza Naqvi, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Khalid Hussain Mag-si, and Abdul Aleem Khan were present during the meeting. "Both leaders reaffirm their resolve that actions against foreign-backed terrorists and their facilitators will continue until the complete elimination of terrorism," the broadcaster reported at the time.

PTI founder enjoys more privileges

FROM PAGE 01
family regarding mistreatment and shabby conditions in prison has fallen flat on its face," wrote the minister on X. Tarar noted that a report detailing the prisoner's daily routine and diet plan has cleared all ambiguity regarding his treatment. "All facilities are available to him and he has privileges more than any other prisoner," he added.

Ramzan likely to fall on Feb 19

FROM PAGE 01
indicated a strong likelihood that Ramadan will begin simultaneously in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia this year. According to the ministry, the new moon of Ramadan 1447AH is expected to be born on February 17. However, the crescent is unlikely to be visible on February 17 in Saudi Arabia, the United States, Africa, Europe and other regions of the world. Scientific projections suggest that the moon will be easily visible on February 18 in Pakistan and several other countries. The crescent is expected to be clearly sighted in Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar and Makkah on that date.

BNP claims victory...

FROM PAGE 01
Jamaat chief Shafiqur Rahman, 67, mounted a disciplined grassroots campaign, hoping to form the government. Jamaat, which has campaigned on a platform of justice and ending corruption, senses its biggest opportunity in decades, with party leader Shafiqur saying it "will do whatever is required" to ensure a fair result. "The early results indicate something positive", the Jamaat chief said, as counting continued. BNP's Tarique has said he is "confident" of victory, and his adviser said the party would "secure a sweeping victory". Many opinion polls give the BNP the lead, although some suggest a knife-edge race. Polls closed at 4:30pm (3:30 PKT), with the first significant results potentially expected overnight. It is the world's first election after a revolution led by under-30s, or Gen Z, to be followed by Nepal next month.



RIYADH: Khalid bin Salman Minister of Defence of Saudi Arabia met with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Asim Munir, to reaffirm our strong bilateral relations and long-standing strategic defense partnership. During the meeting, we discussed our shared commitment to advancing global peace and security, and explored ways to strengthen joint efforts that support our mutual interests. – DNA

PSL makes history with first-ever Player Auction

Mark Chapman was bought for seven crores by United, while they got Shamar Joseph for 1.1 crores. Dipendra Singh Airee will become first Nepal player to feature in HBL PSL as he was picked up for 60 lacs by United

LAHORE: Faheem Ashraf became the first-ever player to be auctioned for HBL PSL 11 and was plucked by Islamabad United for 8.5 crore after fierce round of bids starting from his base price of 4.2 crore. Mohammad Wasim Jnr (4.1 crores), Imad Wasim (2.2 crores), Haider Ali (1.5 crores) and Mehran Mumtaz (1.2 crores) also became part of the inaugural HBL PSL Champions. Pakistan U19 prodigy Sameer Minhas bagged 1.9 crores and will begin his HBL PSL career with Islamabad United. Mark Chapman was bought for seven crores by United, while they got Shamar Joseph for 1.1 crores. Dipendra Singh Airee will become first Nepal player to feature in HBL PSL as he was picked up for 60 lacs by United. Left-hand batter David Warner is set to rejoin Karachi Kings after being released. Kings made the winning bid for their former skipper at 7.9 crores. Azam Khan will also join Karachi Kings for the first time as he was sold for 3.25 crores. Kings also picked up Pakistan T20I captain Salman Ali Agha for 5.85 crores and brought in Australian leg-spinner Adam Zampa for 4.5 crores, who is also set to make his HBL PSL debut. Fast bowler Naseem Shah became the first player to be bought by Rawalpindi as they made the highest bid of the Auction at 8.65 crore. Rawalpindi also made headlines by taking onboard the New Zealand all-rounder Daryl Mitchell for 8.05 crores, setting the tone for a highly anticipated campaign. Among other notable Rawalpindi picks were Mohammad Amir (5.4 crores) and left-arm spinner Asif Afridi (2.4 crores). Rilee Rossouw will play his 10th HBL PSL season and sixth for Quetta Gladiators as he was snapped for 5.55 crores. Rossouw is the leading run-scorer among the foreign players in the history of HBL PSL. Khawaja Mohammad Nafay was one of the most headlined picks by Quetta as he was bought for 6.5 crores, after his price ballooned from 1.1 crore base price. Test fast bowler Mohammad Ali became the first pick of Hyderabad Houston Kingsmen as they put out

2.15 crore for him. Kingsmen later also made some strong picks comprising player of the final in HBL PSL X Kusal Perera (3.1 crores) and Emerging player of HBL PSL 9 Muhammad Irfan Khan (2.9 crores). Harris Rauf will return to Lahore Qalandars as he pocketed a pay cheque of 7.6 crore from defending champions. They also bought back the second-leading run-scorer in HBL PSL history Fakhar Zaman for 7.95 crores. Two other notable picks for Qalandars were of leg-spinner Usama Mir (3.5 crores) and exciting fast bowler Ubaid Shah (2.7 crores). Sialkot Stallionz got Sahibzada Farhan for 5.70 crore. Ashton Turner (4.2 crore), Peter Siddle (2.5 crore), Tabraiz Shamsi (2.2 crores) and Josh Philippe (2.3 crores) form a strong overseas core for the Stallionz. They also made sure to take up left-arm wrist-spinner Momin Qamar for 1.075 crores. Australia pacer Peter Siddle will also make his HBL PSL debut as he was snapped by Stallionz for 2.5 crores. Peshawar Zalmi bought a familiar local core of Aamir Jamal (1.90 crore), Khuram Shahzad (2.7 crore) and Mohammad Harris (2.2 crore) apart from buying Iftikhar Ahmed for 1.8 crores. Their foreign picks included Michael Bracewell (4.2 crores), Kusal Mendis (4.2 crores) and James Vince (3 crores). Final squads: (all values above and below are in PKR) **Hyderabad Houston Kings** Direct signing - Marnus Labuschagne (5.88 crore). Retained - Saim Ayub (12.6 crore), Akif Javed (1.96 crore), Maaz Sadaqat, Usman Khan (4.62 crore). Bought - Mohammad Ali (2.15 crore), Kusal Perera (3.1 crore), Muhammad Irfan Khan (2.9 crore), Hassan Khan (1.85 crores), Shayam Jahangir (60 lacs), Otniel Baartman (1.1 crores), Hammad Azam (60 lacs), Riley Meredith (4.2 crores), Sharjeel Khan (60 lacs), Asif Mehmood (60 lacs), Hunain Shah (60 lacs), Rizwan Mehmood (60 lacs), Saad Ali (60 lacs), Tayyab Arif (60 lacs) **Islamabad United** Direct signing - Devon Conway (6.3 crore)

Retained - Shadab Khan (7 crore), Salman Irshad (1.2 crore), Andries Gous (1.4 crore) Bought - Faheem Ashraf (8.5 crore), Mehran Mumtaz (1.2 crore), Max Bryant (1.9 crore), Mark Chapman (7 crore), Mohammad Wasim Jnr (4.1 crores), Mir Hamza Sajjad (70 lacs), Sameen Gul (60 lacs), Sameer Minhas (1.9 crores), Shamar Joseph (1.1 crores), Imad Wasim (2.2 crores), Richard Gleeson (1.2 crores), Haider Ali (1.5 crores), Mohammad Hasnain (77.5 lacs), Dipendra Singh Airee (60 lacs) **Karachi Kings** Direct Signing - Moeen Ali (6.44 crore) Retained - Hasan Ali (4.76 crore), Mohammad Abbas Afridi (3.08 crore), Khushdil Shah (3.36 crore), Saad Baig (60 lac) Bought - David Warner (7.9 crore), Azam Khan (3.25 crore), Salman Ali Agha (5.85 crore), Shahid Aziz (92.5 lac), Mir Hamza (2.4 crore), Adam Zampa (4.5 crores), Hamza Sohail (60 lacs), Aqib Ilyas (60 lacs), Khuzaima Bin Tanveer (60 lacs), Johnson Charles (2 crores), Muhammad Waseem (1.1 crore), Ihsanullah (1.05 crores), Rizwanullah (60 lacs) **Lahore Qalandars** Direct Signing - Mustafizur Rahman (6.44 crore) Retained - Shaheen Shah Afridi (7 crore), Abdullah Shafique (2.2 crore), Sikandar Raza (2.8 crore), Mohammad Naeem (70 lac) Bought - Harris Rauf (7.6 crore), Usama Mir (3.5 crore), Fakhar Zaman (7.95 crore), Ubaid Shah (2.7 crore), Haseebullah (1.1 crore), Mohammad Farooq (60 lacs), Dasun Shanaka (75 lacs), Parvez Hussain Emon (60 lacs), Asif Ali (60 lacs), Hussain Talat (77.5 lacs), Tayyab Tahir (60 lacs), Gudakesh Motie (1.1 crores) **Rawalpindi** Direct Signing - None Retained - Mohammad Rizwan (5.6 crore), Sam Billings (3.08 crore), Zaman Khan (1.12 crore), Yasar Khan (60 lac) Bought - Naseem Shah (8.65 crore), Rishad Hossain (3 crore), Daryl Mitchell (8.05 crores), Mohammad Amir (5.4 crore), Abdullah Fazal (67.5 lac), Amad

Butt (80 lacs), Dian Forrester (60 lacs), Laurie Evans (1.1 crores), Asif Afridi (2.4 crore), Kamran Ghulam (65 lacs), Fawad Ali (60 lacs), Mohammad Amir Khan (60 lacs), Shahzaib Khan (60 lacs) **Peshawar Zalmi** Direct Signing - Aaron Hardie (6.3 crore) Retained - Babar Azam (7 crore), Sufyan Moqim (4.48 crore), Abdul Samad (2.8 crore), Ali Raza (1.96 crore) Bought - Aamir Jamal (1.90 crore), Khuram Shahzad (2.7 crore), Mohammad Harris (2.2 crore), Khalid Usman (60 lacs), Abdul Subhan (62.5 lacs), James Vince (3 crores), Michael Bracewell (4.2 crores), Kusal Mendis (4.2 crores), Iftikhar Ahmed (1.8 crores), Nahid Rana (60 lacs), Mirza Tahir Baig (60 lacs), Kashif Ali (60 lacs) **Quetta Gladiators** Direct Signing - Spencer Johnson (5.6 crore) Retained - Abrar Ahmed (7 crore), Usman Tariq (5.6 crore), Hasan Nawaz (3.92 crore), Shamyl Hussain (84 lac) Bought - Rilee Rossouw (5.55 crore), Faisal Akram (1.25 crores), Arafat Minhas (1.1 crore), Jahandad Khan (2.5 crore), Khawaja Mohammad Nafay (6.5 crore), Wasim Akram Jnr (77.5 lacs), Khan Zaib (60 lacs), Bismillah Khan (60 lacs), Saqib Khan (60 lacs), Brett Hampton (60 lacs), Sam Harper (60 lacs), Benvon Jacobs (60 lacs), Saud Shaheel (65 lacs), Ben McDermott (1.1 crores), Tom Curran (4.2 crores) **Sialkot Stallionz** Direct Signing - Steve Smith (14 crore) Retained - Mohammad Nawaz (6.16 crore), Mohammad Salmaan Mirza (3.92 crore), Ahmed Daniyal (2.24 crore), Saad Masood (84 lac) Bought - Jahanzaib Sultan (60 lac), Sahibzada Farhan (5.70 crores), Ashton Turner (4.2 crore), Peter Siddle (2.5 crore), Tabraiz Shamsi (2.2 crores), Lachlan Shaw (60 lacs), Delano Potgieter (60 lacs), Josh Philippe (2.3 crores), Shan Masood (65 lacs), Momin Qamar (1.075 crore), Muhammad Awais Zafar (60 lacs). – APP

Briefs

Rupee gains
01 paisa
against US
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.65 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs279.66.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.6 and Rs 282.25, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 1.05 to close at Rs 332.18 from the previous day's close of Rs 333.23, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.82, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 0.99 and closed at Rs 381.43 compared to the previous day's Rs 382.42. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained stagnant to close at Rs 76.13 and Rs 74.56, respectively.—APP

PSX sheds
2,537 points
to close at
180,512 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday witnessed a bearish trend, losing 2,537.16 points, a negative change of 1.39 percent, to close at 180,512.65 points compared to 183,049.81 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 873.996 million shares with a traded value of Rs 41.766 billion, against 734.671 million shares valuing Rs 35.393 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization declined to Rs 20.438 trillion from Rs 20.710 trillion a day earlier. Out of 485 active companies in the ready market, 93 advanced, 342 declined, and 50 remained unchanged. K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 176.912 million shares, followed by Chneryco PK with 52.213 million shares and Amtex Limited with 39.738 million shares. The top gainers included Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which rose by Rs 333.64 to close at Rs 26,900.00, and Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited, which gained Rs 197.76 to settle at Rs 9,772.78. On the losing side, PIA Holding Company Limited declined by Rs 365.71 to close at Rs 17,860.29, while Nestle Pakistan Limited fell by Rs 84.59 to close at Rs 8,012.50. In the futures market, turnover stood at 198.316 million shares with a traded value of Rs 10.287 billion, compared to 149.370 million shares worth Rs 8.556 billion in the previous session. Out of 328 futures-market companies, 41 recorded gains, while 286 declined and one remained unchanged.—APP

SECP
registers
3,881 new
companies
in Jan

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered 3,881 new companies in January 2026; out of these incorporations, 99.9 per cent were completed online through the SECP's eZfile system. According to a press release issued by the SECP here on Thursday, during the month, 82 newly incorporated companies attracted foreign investment from investors representing China, United States, Afghanistan, Australia, Turkey, United Kingdom, Palau, South Africa, Albania, Denmark, Germany, Malaysia, South Korea, Spain, and Ukraine. The newly registered companies were incorporated with a cumulative paid-up capital of Rs. 8.4 billion, bringing the total number of registered companies in the country to 283,540. In terms of corporate structure, private limited companies accounted for 59 per cent of the new registrations, while single-member companies constituted 38 percent. The remaining 3 per cent comprised public unlisted companies, not-for-profit organizations, and limited liability partnerships.—APP

Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosts FTO

FTO assures zero tolerance
against taxpayer harassment

ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, while highlighting issues faced by the business community, including those relating to the real estate sector, acknowledged that tax collection is fundamental to the functioning of the State

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Zafar-ul-Haq Hijazi has reiterated that alleviating taxpayers' difficulties and promoting ease of doing business remain the foremost priorities of his institution. Addressing a well-attended gathering at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), he highlighted the proactive role of the FTO in providing relief to aggrieved taxpayers and addressing maladministration within the taxation system since its inception.

Speaking to representatives of trade and industry, former ICCI Presidents, Executive Committee members, and senior office-bearers including Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub and Vice Pres-

ident Irfan Chaudhry, the FTO made it clear that there would be no compromise on the respect and honour of taxpayers. He stated that taxpayers are the backbone of the government system, as the State runs on their contributions. He emphasized that abolishing the culture of harassment of tax filers is among his top priorities and declared zero tolerance for any form of malpractice, mistreatment, or harassment.

Zafar-ul-Haq Hijazi announced the establishment of three Advisory Committees at the headquarters level: the Income Tax Advisory Committee, Sales and Excise Tax Advisory Committee, and Customs Advisory Committee. These committees will include the President of ICCI, the President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the President

of the Tax Bar, along with other relevant stakeholders. The committees will deliberate separately and advise the FTO on improving service delivery. Similar regional committees will also be formed to ensure effective coordination and facilitation at the local level.

He stated that the primary purpose of his visit to ICCI was to bridge the gap between taxpayers and the FTO and to assure the business community that the institution stands firmly behind them for justice. He urged the attendees to bring their issues directly to his notice, assuring them that they would witness a visible difference in the resolution of their complaints.

Almas Ali Jovindah, Advisor (Legal) to the FTO, encouraged the business community to act as ambassadors of the institution,

emphasizing that the FTO provides free-of-cost and prompt relief to complainants against the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). He informed that the FTO is dispensing justice within 60 days and stressed the need to strengthen this partnership for the larger interest of the community.

ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, while highlighting issues faced by the business community, including those relating to the real estate sector, acknowledged that tax collection is fundamental to the functioning of the State. He appreciated the business community for fulfilling its national responsibility but underscored that a fair, just, efficient, and simple taxation system is essential to build confidence among taxpayers. He noted that the FTO has been playing an effective role in

resolving business-related complaints, which has significantly enhanced the confidence of the business community in the institution. Chairman ICCI Founder Group Tariq Sadiq termed the appointment of Zafar-ul-Haq Hijazi as a "cool breeze" for the business community. Chairman ICCI Standing Committee Mian Mohammad Ramazan moderated the session.

Former Presidents Mian Shaukat Masood, Shakeel Munir, and other participants raised questions regarding their departmental issues. Among those present were former President Khalid Javaid, Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi, Executive Members Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Sanaullah Khan, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Ishaq Sial, Mirza Mohammad Ali, ICCI senior member Isran Mishwani.



Islamabad: The Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) and the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) have formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the implementation of the Financial Accounting and Budgeting System (FABS).

US, Iran showing
flexibility on
nuclear deal, FT
reports

The United States and Iran are showing flexibility on a nuclear deal, with Washington appearing "willing" to tolerate some nuclear enrichment, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told the Financial Times in an interview published Thursday. "It is positive that the Americans appear willing to tolerate Iranian enrichment within clearly set boundaries," Fidan, who has been involved in talks with both Washington and Tehran, told the FT. "The Iranians now recognize that they need to reach a deal with the Americans, and the Americans understand that the Iranians have certain limits. It's pointless to try to force them." Washington has until now demanded Iran relinquish its stockpile of uranium enriched to up to 60 percent fissile purity, a small step away from the 90 percent that is considered weapons grade. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has said Iran would continue to demand the lifting of financial sanctions and insist on its nuclear rights including enrichment. Fidan told the FT he believed Tehran "genuinely wants to reach a real agreement" and would accept restrictions on enrichment levels and a strict inspection regime, as it did in the 2015 agreement with the US and others. US and Iranian diplomats held talks through Omani mediators in Oman last week in an effort to revive diplomacy, after President Donald Trump positioned a naval flotilla in the region, raising fears of new military action. Trump on Tuesday said he was considering sending a second aircraft carrier to the Middle East, even as Washington and Tehran prepared to resume negotiations. The Turkish foreign minister, however, cautioned that broadening the Iran-US talks to ballistic missiles would bring "nothing but another war."—APP

Chinese doctors conduct
first aid training for
UNICEF staff

BEIJING: The 26th batch of Chinese medical team successfully conducted an on-site first aid training program for staff of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Sierra Leone at the UNICEF Head Office in Freetown on Feb. 9, 2026. This vital two-day training aims to equip participants with essential first aid skills, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), trauma first aid, and emergency response techniques, thereby enhancing their preparedness for medical emergencies. The training commenced with a theoretical session where participants learned about the principles of first aid, followed by practical demonstrations designed to reinforce the skills taught. "On behalf of the Chinese medical team, we are delighted to provide this on-site first-aid training to UNICEF Sierra Leone,"

Captain Liu Longfei of the 26th batch Chinese medical team stated, emphasizing the initiative as part of their shared commitment to protecting lives in Sierra Leone. Liu highlighted the significance of equipping UNICEF staff with necessary skills for emergency situations. "This training supports our staff in dealing with emergencies effectively," he noted. Since 2024, the Chinese medical team has collaborated with various organizations and individuals, including students, in offering first aid training across sectors such as mining and healthcare. This collaboration underscores a collective commitment to health and safety within the community. UNICEF Representative to Sierra Leone, Rudolph Schwenk, spoke about the importance of ensuring staff wellbeing and security.

"At UNICEF, the wellbeing, safety, and security of our staff are central to our duty of care," he remarked. Schwenk added that it is crucial to equip colleagues with practical skills to respond effectively in medical emergencies, which helps create a safe and supportive working environment. "This training represents an important investment in staff wellbeing and emergency preparedness. The knowledge and skills shared over the course of this session will strengthen our collective capacity to respond promptly and appropriately should an incident occur, whether in the workplace or in the field," he added. Swapping roles from trainers to participants, both Liu and Schwenk encouraged all attendees to engage fully with the training. Schwenk urged participants to ask questions and actively participate in practical

sessions to maximize the training's value. "We sincerely appreciate the Chinese medical team for their continued partnership and for generously sharing their expertise with UNICEF," he expressed. "Your contribution reflects the strong spirit of collaboration that underpins our work and supports our shared commitment to safeguarding lives and promoting health." The successful collaboration between the 26th batch of Chinese medical team and UNICEF Sierra Leone exemplifies the dedication of both organizations to enhance health safety and emergency preparedness in the nation. As Sierra Leone continues to face various health challenges, such initiatives are critical for building a resilient workforce capable of responding to unforeseen incidents.—DNA

China to
reduce levies
on EU dairy
products

BEIJING: China will reduce duties on "certain dairy products" imported from the European Union but still impose levies of up to 11.7 percent for five years, the commerce ministry in Beijing said on Thursday.

The reduction continues an easing of trade tensions between the two giant markets following agreements in recent months on minimum prices for Chinese electric vehicles exported to the EU and reduced duties for European cognac and pork products sold to China. The "anti-subsidy levies" will be imposed after an investigation found "certain dairy products originating from the EU were subsidised, causing substantial damage to the dairy industry in China", the commerce ministry said in a statement on Thursday. The rates will be applied from Friday and range from 7.4 percent to 11.7 percent, down from the 21.9 percent to 42.7 percent China imposed in December.

They hit a range of items, including fresh and processed cheese, curd, blue cheese and some milk and cream, the commerce ministry said. Thursday's announcement marked the end of an anti-subsidy subsidy probe launched by Chinese officials in August 2024. The EU said last month that Chinese electric carmakers could agree to minimum import prices instead of tariffs, an outcome Beijing welcomed as a "soft-landing" in the bitter dispute over the sector. Beijing reduced levies on EU pork products in December, while it also reached an agreement on minimum prices with EU brandy and cognac makers last year.—APP

NDMA sends
100 tons of
food relief for
Palestinians

ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has dispatched its 29th humanitarian aid consignment to Gaza, comprising 100 tons of food supplies including dates, flour, rice, MREs and cooking oil. Under the Government's patronage, the relief goods were flown from Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, to Al-Arish, Egypt, for onward delivery to the besieged enclave. With this latest dispatch, Pakistan's total humanitarian assistance to Palestine has reached 2,827 tons through 29 consignments. The consignment, arranged in coordination with NDMA and supported by Alkhidmat Foundation, was formally sent off at a ceremony attended by senior officials from NDMA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, government departments, and representatives of Alkhidmat Foundation. The Government and people of Pakistan have reiterated their firm solidarity with the people of Palestine, pledging to continue every possible effort to support them and address their humanitarian needs.—APP

At least 21
drown in Nile
boat sinking
in Sudan: local
govt

KHARTOUM: At least 21 people drowned when a boat sank in the Nile River in northern Sudan, according to the local state government and eyewitnesses interviewed by AFP. River Nile State said Thursday that 21 bodies had been recovered after the accident, listed their names and warned that some passengers were still missing. The boat was crossing the river between the villages of Tayba Al-Khawad and Deim Al-Qarai, according to the local government's statement. The statement did not explain the cause of the accident. Eyewitnesses told AFP the boat was carrying 30 people. The Sudanese Doctors Network said in a statement that six of the boat's passengers survived. The group said the incident exposes "the fragility of river transport and the absence of basic safety requirements, as well as the complete absence of local authorities and civil defense rescue teams in the early hours of the incident." Many Sudanese rely on river transport via single-engine boats captained by solo operators. The country's infrastructure has been collapsing due to a war that has been ongoing for nearly three years.—APP

Turkish, Greek leaders voice
desire to resolve issues

ANKARA: The leaders of Türkiye and Greece voiced their desire to resolve longstanding maritime disputes hobbling ties during discussions in Ankara on Wednesday, as the NATO allies and historic rivals try to build on warming relations. The neighbors have been at odds over a range of issues for decades, primarily maritime boundaries and rights in the Aegean, an area widely believed to hold energy resources and with key implications for airspace and military activity. Following years of heightened tensions, a 2023 declaration on friendly relations prompted a thaw in rhetoric, though their maritime issues have remained unresolved and the two sides still disagree over regional matters. Speaking at a press conference in Ankara with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said they had discussed their issues in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean "in an open and sincere way" during the talks. "While the issues may be thorny, they are not unsolvable on the

basis of international law. I saw that we were in agreement with my friend Kyriakos," Erdogan said. He added that the two countries would continue working to achieve their goal of reaching \$10 billion in bilateral trade. Mitsotakis said he hoped circumstances would allow the sides to solve a dispute on the demarcation of maritime and exclusive economic zones in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean. "It is time to remove any substantial and formal threats to our relations, if not now, when?" Mitsotakis said. "Destiny has appointed us to live in the same neighborhood. We cannot change geography, but we can make it an ally, choosing convergence, dialogue and trust in international law... to build a future of peace, progress and prosperity for our people." Despite the positive tone, Greece's foreign minister earlier said Athens planned to extend its territorial waters further, including potentially in the Aegean. Shortly after, Ankara said it had issued a maritime notice urging Greece to coor-

dinate research activities in areas of the Aegean that Türkiye considers part of its continental shelf. In 1995, Türkiye's parliament declared a *casus belli* — a cause for war — should Greece unilaterally extend its territorial waters beyond six nautical miles in the Aegean, a stance Athens says violates international maritime law. Greece says it wants only to discuss demarcation of maritime zones. Mitsotakis also said the flows of migrants in the Aegean Sea had decreased by almost 60 percent last year due to cooperation between the two countries, adding this should be strengthened. Fifteen migrants died in a shipwreck off the Greek island of Chios last week after their boat collided with a Greek coast guard vessel and sank in the Aegean Sea off the Turkish coast. Türkiye is a transit country for migrants seeking to reach the European Union via Greece. Ankara says the EU has not fully delivered on commitments under a 2016 migration deal and Athens wants Türkiye to do more to curb irregular crossings.—Agencies

Briefs

Principal dies after Thailand school shooting

BANGKOK: A teenage shooter accused of killing the principal of a school in Thailand using a police officer's weapon was in custody on Thursday, authorities said, after an attack that also injured two students. Police shot and arrested the 18-year-old on Wednesday after he stormed into the Phatong Prathan Khirawat School in southern Songkhla province with a gun, police and other authorities said, adding that several shots were fired. School director Sasiphat Sinsamosorn died in hospital early on Thursday after being admitted with gunshot wounds and undergoing surgery, the Songkhla public relations department said in a statement. She was shot before police intervened and apprehended the teenager, Songkhla police chief Teerasak Chaiyotha told AFP. The 18-year-old suspect was being treated in hospital after being grazed by a bullet and had not been charged pending an investigation, Teerasak said. Police had responded to a report of a teenager "acting erratically", he said. Teerasak told reporters on Wednesday that the suspect was hospitalised for psychiatric treatment in December and had been discharged. He said the teen stabbed a police officer with a knife and stole his weapon – a 9mm pistol – just before the incident at the school, which he then used to carry out the attack. – APP

Instagram CEO denies addiction claims

LOS ANGELES: Instagram CEO Adam Mosseri on Wednesday rejected the notion that users could be clinically addicted to social media, as he testified in a landmark California trial over whether his company knowingly hooked children on its platform for profit. Meta – the parent company of Instagram and Facebook – and Google-owned YouTube are defendants in the blockbuster trial, which could set a legal precedent regarding whether social media giants deliberately designed their platforms to be addictive to children. "I think it's important to differentiate between clinical addiction and problematic use," Mosseri said as he was grilled by plaintiff attorney Mark Lanier. "I'm sure I said that I've been addicted to a Netflix show when I binged it really late one night, but I don't think it's the same thing as clinical addiction," he added. Lanier immediately challenged this point, emphasizing that the witness did not have a degree in medicine or psychology. "I've never claimed being able to diagnose addiction clinically," Mosseri responded during the exchange. "I'm sure I was using the word too casually." Facing him, mothers of teenagers who had taken their own lives held back their anger in the public gallery. – APP

Govt debt rises in 1HFY26 to Rs78.5tr

KARACHI: Government debt rose by Rs641 billion, or 0.82%, by end-December, highlighting continued borrowing needs, largely from domestic sources, and the strain on fiscal consolidation, The News reported. Total government debt stood at Rs78.5 trillion as of December 2025, up from Rs77.8 trillion at the end of June, according to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data released on Wednesday. The stock was up 1.3% month-on-month and 9.6% year-on-year. The increase came despite a budget surplus of Rs542 billion, or 0.4% of GDP, recorded in July-December FY26, compared with a deficit of Rs1.5 trillion, or 1.3% of GDP, in the same period last year. The increase in central government debt reflects persistent fiscal needs and rollover of existing obligations, said Saad Hanif, head of research at Ismail Iqbal Securities. – APP

Roundtable on Uzbek President's visit

Pak-Uzbek Partnership: a new chapter in regional connectivity

The roundtable was convened in the backdrop of Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's landmark visit to Pakistan, which was widely hailed as a great success. Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev of Uzbekistan moderated the session, warmly welcoming participants



ASNAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Experts and policymakers have long emphasized that peace and stability in Afghanistan are indispensable for unlocking the full potential of regional connectivity, trade, and prosperity. Afghanistan's geographic position makes it a natural bridge between Central Asia and South Asia, and without stability there, the vision of seamless integration across the region remains incomplete. This consensus was strongly echoed during a recent roundtable discussion organized by the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Islamabad, titled "Uzbekistan and Pakistan on the Path to Strategic Partnership." The roundtable was convened in the backdrop of Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's landmark visit to Pakistan, which was widely hailed as a great success. Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev of Uzbekistan moder-

ated the session, warmly welcoming participants and expressing hope that the presidential visit would open new dimensions in bilateral relations. He underscored that the momentum generated by the visit should be harnessed to elevate ties to unprecedented heights. Joining the session online, B. Alov, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, described the visit as highly fruitful. Having accompanied President Mirziyoyev to Pakistan, he highlighted the Uzbek leader's constructive meetings with Pakistan's President, Prime Minister, and Chief of Defence Forces. Alov noted that both sides had agreed to ambitiously raise bilateral trade to \$2 billion within five years—a target he described as challenging yet achievable, given the strong political will on both sides. Ambassador Jauhar Saleem also addressed the gathering, emphasizing the cultural and historical similarities between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. He

expressed optimism that people-to-people exchanges would deepen, strengthening the social fabric of bilateral ties. Intellectual and academic voices added further weight to the discussion. Professor Zafar Nawaz Jaspal stressed that regional peace and stability were prerequisites for progress, warning that terrorism remained a shared threat. He argued that terrorist groups operate in syndicates, and therefore a syndicate-style collective response was essential. Pakistan, he noted, has long borne the brunt of fighting terrorism, but regional cooperation is vital for lasting peace. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future, highlighted the economic aspects of the visit. He pointed out the strong determination on both sides to expand relations across trade, investment, and infrastructure. Similarly, Asif Tanvir from the Muslim Institute spoke about the deep cultural and religious connec-

tions binding the two nations, suggesting that these ties could serve as a solid foundation for broader cooperation. The roundtable made clear that the Uzbek president's visit was not just a diplomatic milestone but a strategic step toward reshaping regional dynamics. By reaffirming their commitment to peace in Afghanistan, both Uzbekistan and Pakistan signaled their recognition that stability there is the linchpin for regional connectivity. Enhanced trade, cultural exchanges, and security cooperation are all contingent upon this peace. In essence, the dialogue underscored a shared vision: a stable Afghanistan enabling Central and South Asia to connect, trade, and prosper together. With strong political will, ambitious economic targets, and a commitment to collective security, Uzbekistan and Pakistan appear poised to take their partnership to new heights ushering in a future of greater regional integration and stability.

No changes will be made to net metering policy



NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Facing outcry from friends and foes alike over the newly introduced net metering reforms, Energy Minister Awaiz Leghari has said that no changes will be made to the solar net metering policy for existing consumers for now. Leghari blamed "social media trend" for the growing opposition against the newly introduced reforms that effectively ended the net metering regime and replaced net metering with the net billing mechanism. "My wife opposed this policy, saying you had increased my bill after switching to net billing from net metering," the minister said on today's show. He said the prime minister has ordered that the net billing system should not apply to existing consumers for now and has told the Power Division to challenge the regulator's decision. Earlier today, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took notice of the new Prosumer Regulations 2026 issued by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA). According to a statement issued by the PM Office, the premier directed the Power Division to immediately file an appeal with the power regulator to protect the contracts of existing solar consumers. The prime minister, chairing a high-level special meeting on Nepra's new regulations, directed the Power Division to formulate a comprehensive action plan in this regard so that the burden of 466,000 consumers benefiting from solar would not be borne by more than 37.6 million consumers using electricity only from the national grid.

US House votes to rescind Trump tariffs on Canada

WASHINGTON: US House lawmakers voted Wednesday to reject Donald Trump's tariffs on Canadian goods, sweeping aside the president's last-gasp threat of election consequences for Republicans to deliver a rare rebuke on his signature economic policy. The measure brought by Democrats was approved 219-211, with six Republicans joining the effort. It remains largely a symbolic move. The House can consider measures to end the national emergencies Trump declared last year to impose sweeping tariffs on imports from various countries. But any actions aimed at undoing Trump's tariffs on Canada and other trading partners will still need US Senate passage and the president's signature. Even if it clears the Senate, it would face a certain veto by Trump, and Congress would unlikely muster the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto. Trump sought to inject himself into the action at the last minute, issuing a direct political threat to lawmakers from his own Republican Party as the vote was taking place on the House floor. "Any Republican, in the House or the Senate, that votes against TARIFFS will seriously suffer the consequences come Election time," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. "TARIFFS have given us Economic and National Security, and no Republican should be responsible for destroying this privilege," he added. Wednesday's rebuke comes after the expiration of a measure barring any vote on the issue of tariffs in the chamber – a move that has stifled opposition to Trump's trade policy. House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Trump ally in Congress, sought to renew this prohibition on Tuesday but was unsuccessful, as three House Republicans voted alongside Democrats to block the move. Earlier Wednesday, House Republican Don Bacon posted on social media that lawmakers "cannot & should not outsource our responsibilities." "As an old fashioned Conservative I know tariffs are a tax on American consumers," he added, noting that debates and votes on the issue should occur in the House. – APP

US allies at NATO focus on Europe as the Trump administration steps back

DNA

BRUSSELS: European allies at NATO on Thursday brushed aside concerns that the United States has stepped back from its leadership role of the world's biggest security organization, leaving them and Canada to do the lion's share of defending Europe. US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth did not attend Thursday's gathering of defense ministers at NATO headquarters in Brussels. His no-show came after Secretary of State Marco Rubio skipped the last meeting of NATO foreign ministers in December. It's rare for members of a US administration to miss a meeting of the organization's top decision-making body, the North Atlantic Council, at the level of ministers, let alone two meetings in a row. Under Secretary of Defense Elbridge Colby was sent in Hegseth's place. "Sadly for him, he is missing a good party," Icelandic Foreign Minister Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir told reporters. "Of course, it's always better that the ministers attend here, but I would not describe it as a bad signal." "I'm not disappointed," German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said. "Each of us has a full agenda. And one time the American defense minister is here, and one time not, so it's his decision and his duties he has to fulfill." When asked what NATO's purpose was in its infancy in 1949, NATO's first secretary-general, the British general and diplomat Lord Hastings Ismay, was reputed to have replied: "To keep the Americans in, the Russians out and the Germans down." Nowadays, Germany is stepping up. After Russia invaded Ukraine four years ago, it vowed to spend 100 billion euros (\$118 billion) to modernize its armed forces in coming years. A big part of NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte's job is to keep the Americans in. "They have to take care of the whole world. This is the United States,"

Rutte told reporters before chairing the meeting. "I totally accept it, agree with it." "They have always consistently pleaded for Europe doing more, Canada doing more, taking more care of the defense of NATO territory, of course in conjunction with the United States," he said. That means more European spending on conventional weapons and defense, while the US guarantees NATO's nuclear deterrent. But doubts linger, and surprises from the Trump administration cannot be ruled out. Allies still wonder whether more US troops will be withdrawn from Europe. "What for me is the most important is the no-surprise policy that has been agreed between the NATO secretary-general and the US," Dutch Defense Minister Ruben Brekelmans said. Publicly at least, the Trump administration is doing much less at NATO. A year ago, Hegseth warned that America's security priorities lie elsewhere and that Europe would have to look after itself, and Ukraine in its battle against Russia's full-scale invasion. Supplies of US guns and money that were sent to Ukraine by the previous administration of President Joe Biden have dried up under Trump. European allies and Canada are obliged to buy weapons from the United States to donate now. Western backers of Ukraine were also meeting at NATO on Thursday to drum up more military support. A scheme proudly championed by the Pentagon under Biden, the Ukraine Defense Contact Group is now chaired by the UK and Germany. UK Defense Secretary John Healey announced that Britain would provide "an extra half a billion pounds (\$682 million) in urgent air defense to Ukraine. This is Britain being a force for good in the world, building a new deal for European security within NATO." Sweden also intends to fund the purchase of more American weapons. The Netherlands will send more flight simulators to help Ukrainian fighter pilots train to fly F-16 jets.

Deepening Israeli control over Palestinian lands violation

UNITED NATIONS: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk called on Thursday for Israel to rescind recent measures to expand control over Palestinian lands in the occupied West Bank. "This is yet another step by the Israeli authorities towards rendering a viable Palestinian State impossible, in violation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination," he said in a statement issued in Geneva. He warned that if implemented, the decisions "will undoubtedly accelerate the dispossession of Palestinians and their forcible transfer, and lead to the creation of more illegal Israeli settlements." This in turn "will also further deprive Palestinians of their natural resources and restrict their enjoyment of other human rights." On 8 February, the Israeli security cabinet approved a package of measures that would increase Israeli civilian authori-

ty in Areas A and B of the West Bank, which together constitute roughly 40 per cent of the territory. Some of these powers fall under the competence of the Palestinian Authority, according to the Oslo Accords – twin peace agreements signed by Israeli and Palestinian leadership in the 1990s. The measures would change the law to allow Israeli authorities and individuals to acquire land in Areas A and B, violating the law of occupation. "This will further cement Israel's control and integration of the occupied West Bank into Israel, consolidating unlawful annexation," Turk said. The decisions also strip the Palestinian Authority of its planning and building powers in parts of Hebron in the southern part of the West Bank, including the Ibrahimi Mosque – known to Jews as the Cave of the Patriarchs and a holy site for Islam, Judaism and Christianity. – APP

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