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Detailed News On Page-08

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PTI Chairman to be shifted to Islamabad jail

Detailed News On Page-01



Briefs

PM talks to Tarique Rahman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif spoke with Mr. Tarique Rahman, Chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), on telephone earlier tonight, and conveyed heartiest felicitations to him, on behalf of the people as well as the Government of Pakistan, on his party's historic and resounding victory in the general elections.

The Prime Minister also congratulated the people of Bangladesh on the successful conduct of the general elections, that reflected the democratic ideals and values espoused by the Bangladeshi nation. Recalling the historic, brotherly relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Prime Minister affirmed his resolve to work together with the Bangladesh leadership to further strengthen mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in all areas of mutual interest as well as for regional peace and progress, with full respect for each other's sovereign equality.

Over 5,000 ISIL detainees transferred

NEWS DESK

BAGHDAD: More than 5,000 ISIL-linked (ISIS) detainees have been transferred from Syrian jails to a prison in neighbouring Iraq so far, according to Iraq's Ministry of Justice. In comments to the Iraqi News Agency on Friday, ministry spokesperson Ahmed Laibi said the transfers and ongoing detention of the prisoners had been carried out at the request of an international coalition led by the United States to combat ISIL, of which Iraq is a key member. In separate comments on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein gave a lower figure, telling Reuters that about 3,000 ISIL-linked detainees had been transferred. He told the news agency that the process was ongoing and that Baghdad was in discussions with various countries about repatriating their nationals who had been transferred. Iraq would need more financial assistance to deal with the intake, he said, adding that there had been a recent up-tick in ISIL activity in Syria.

Ex-army chief Bajwa stable after treatment

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Former Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen (retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa did not slip, but fainted after suffering a heart block caused by a problem in the heart's electrical system, according to a family source. The condition led to a sudden loss of consciousness, resulting in a fall and a head injury. He is currently receiving medical care. Source said that a lot of false information about the former army chief was being spread in the media and on social media. The source urged people to avoid rumours and respect Gen Bajwa's medical privacy during this time. "Gen Bajwa was feeling unwell on the evening of Monday, February 9, but he still went for his usual evening walk and exercise. Later that night, he felt nauseous and went to the washroom. After vomiting, he fainted and fell.

Bangladesh elections

Pro-Pakistan BNP wins two-thirds majority

Latest counts give the BNP and its allies at least 212 of the 299 seats up for grabs; Jamat e Islami vows to be a responsible opposition

DNA

DHAKA: The Bangladesh National Party (BNP) won a decisive two-thirds majority on Friday in general elections, a result expected to bring stability after months of tumult following the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a Gen Z-led uprising. Latest counts in an election seen as the South Asian nation's first truly competitive in years gave the BNP and its allies at least 212 of the 299 seats up for grabs, domestic TV channels said. The opposition Jamaate-Islami and its allies won 70 seats in the Jatiya Sangsad, or House of the Nation.

The BNP, which returns to power after 20 years, thanked the people soon after winning a majority in the overnight vote count and called for special prayers on Friday for the nation and its people. "Despite winning ... by a large margin of votes, no celebratory procession or rally shall be organised," the party said in a statement calling for prayers nationwide. A clear outcome had been seen as key for stability in the Muslim-majority

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan seeks to bolster 'brotherly' ties with Bangladesh

PM Shehbaz says looking forward to working closely with new leadership in Bangladesh

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Top Pakistani leaders have congratulated the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) on its historic victory in Dhaka and sought to strengthen historic brotherly ties. Relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh became better following the Gen Z-led ouster of Sheikh Hasina in 2024. Both nations have also started sea trade and began expanding

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Pak-India clash tomorrow

Zimbabwe shock Australia in huge upset at T20 WC

Zimbabwe bowl out a depleted Australia for 146 in 23-run win to humble one of the favourites for the 2026 T20 World Cup

SPORTS DESK

COLOMBO: Zimbabwe beat a depleted Australia by 23 runs in Colombo to pull off the biggest shock of the T20 World Cup so far. After posting 169-2 in their 20 overs on Friday, thanks mainly to Brian Bennett's classy 64 not out, Zimbabwe had Australia 29-4 before dismissing them for 146 in 19.3 overs. The Zimbabweans, ranked 11th, were always in control against their second-ranked opponents in the Group B game at R Premadasa Stadium after opening bowlers Blessing Muzarabani and Brad Evans ripped out Australia's top order. There were sensational scenes at the venue as a group of Zimbabwe fans dressed in

their team jerseys celebrated the win with a traditional dance. Muzarabani was the pick of the bowlers, finishing with 4-17. Australia retained hope of a rear-guard victory when Glenn Maxwell and Matt Renshaw put on 77 for the fifth wicket. But once part-time leg-spinner Ryan Burl induced one of the short game's great players, Maxwell, to drag one on to his stumps for 31, they were never in the hunt and tumbled from 106-4 to 146 all out. Opening batsman Bennett's unbeaten 64 off 56 balls was an exercise in controlled aggression as he rarely went the aerial route and found the boundary seven times. It was the 22-year-old's 10th half-century in T20 internationals.

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United Nations extends Taliban sanctions mandate

Pakistan, which supported the resolution, stressed the ongoing threat posed by Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K), Majeed Brigade, and Al-Qaeda

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously adopted a resolution extending by one year the mandate of the Monitoring Team that supports the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee, which oversees sanctions imposed on the Taliban. All 15 council members voted in favor of the US-drafted resolution, renewing the Monitoring Team's mandate until February 17, 2027. The extension comes amid mounting international concern over Afghanistan's deteriorating security situation, the growing influence of multiple terrorist groups, and the potential for regional destabilisation. Pakistan, which supported the resolution, stressed the ongoing threat posed by Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K), Majeed Brigade, and Al-Qaeda. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, said these groups "have been responsible for some of the most heinous terrorist attacks against Pakistan,"

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Trump to announce security force for Gaza next week

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump will announce a multi-billion dollar reconstruction plan for Gaza and detail plans for a UN-authorised stabilisation force for the Palestinian enclave at the first formal meeting of his Board of Peace next week, two senior US officials said on Thursday. Delegations from at least 20 countries, including many heads of state, are expected to attend the meeting in Washington, D.C., which Trump will chair on February 19, the officials told Reuters on condition of anonymity. The details on Trump's plans for the first meeting of his Board of

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NEW YORK: Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations Asim Iftikhar Ahmed hosted Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani and his delegation, on Friday. – DNA

Imran Khan health

Islamabad Red Zone sealed as Opp 'stages' sit-in outside Assembly

Barrister Gohar warns of nationwide demonstrations if opposition not allowed to hold protest outside parliament

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad's Red Zone was sealed on Friday, with police preventing law-makers from approaching Parliament House amid Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) sit-in. The PTI had announced a sit-in outside the building in the high-security zone, protesting the alleged negligence in the treatment of jailed former prime minister and party founder Imran Khan's eye ailment. Police contingents have been deployed and barriers placed at Radio Pakistan Chowk to stop movement towards Shahrah-e-Dastoor and Parliament House. The fresh protest comes following a report submitted by PTI counsel Salman Safdar before the Supreme Court regarding his visit to Adiala jail and meeting with the former premier. 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, after the former premier informed that he had been left

with only 15% vision in his right eye. Speaking to the media outside the Parliament House, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said he had "barely managed" to reach the building. "Parliamentarians are being stopped; I somehow managed to reach parliament," he said, adding that the party's sit-in has begun. Barrister Gohar warned that if the party was not allowed to hold its protest at the designated site, demonstrations would be staged across the country. "We want to steer matters in the right direction. If the situation slips from our hands, the government will not be able to control it," he warned. The PTI chief further said that the party founder had authorised Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Mehmood Khan Achakzai and Senate Opposition Leader Alama Raja Nasir Abbas to lead the protest. Speaking to the media, Achakzai said the sit-in would remain peaceful, urging that the PTI founder's personal physician and

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Aleem calls for boosting connectivity with Russia, Iran

Both ministers agreed on the need to further improve border parking facilities, bilateral arrangements, and matters related to relevant institutions—particularly the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the Ministry of Commerce, and Customs Authorities

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Friday held separate high-level meetings with the transport ministers of Russia and Iran, focusing on enhancing transport, logistics, and bilateral connectivity among Pakistan, Iran, and Russia. The meetings took place on the sidelines of the 2nd OIC Transport Ministers' Conference in Istanbul, where the State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Stanislavovich Zverev, and Iran's Minister for Roads and Infrastructure, Ms. Farzaneh Sadegh, met with Abdul Aleem Khan, said a press release. During talks with the Russian deputy minister, both sides agreed that expanding direct land and air connectivity between Pakistan and Russia would significantly enhance regional trade and economic activity. They emphasized initiating practical steps, including the launch of direct Moscow-Islamabad flights, without delay. During the meeting, Russian Deputy Minister Dmitry Stanislavovich Zverev formally invited Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan to participate in the International Transport and Logistics Forum, scheduled to be held from April 1-3, 2026, in the historic Russian city of Saint Petersburg. Federal Min-

ister Abdul Aleem Khan underscored the need for concrete measures to enhance cooperation in the transport sector, stating that Pakistan is keen to collaborate with Russia in the development of road networks and logistics corridors. The two sides also expressed a firm commitment to resolving visa and related issues faced by Pakistani freight truck drivers. In addition, detailed discussions were held on expanding banking channels and removing financial bottlenecks between the two countries. Abdul Aleem Khan stated that Pakistan has a strong interest in establishing land corridors through China and other countries, enabling effective connectivity with Russia via Central Asian States. He noted that forums such as the 2nd OIC Transport Ministers' Conference in Türkiye provide valuable opportunities for regional countries to benefit from shared experiences. Deputy Minister Dmitry Zverev expressed keen interest in enhancing transport and highway connectivity with Pakistan, highlighting the significant potential for broader cooperation in this sector. The meeting was held in a cordial and friendly atmosphere, reaffirming the commitment of both countries to further strengthen their economic and trade relations. Meanwhile, in a significant meeting between Iran's Minister for Roads and Infrastruc-

ture, Ms. Farzaneh Sadegh, and Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan, both sides held detailed discussions on the movement of commercial transport across the Pak-Iran border. They addressed current challenges and measures to enhance facilitation, highlighting that the daily border crossing capacity could be increased from 200 trucks to between 800 and 1,000 trailers. Both ministers agreed on the need to further improve border parking facilities, bilateral arrangements, and matters related to relevant institutions—particularly the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the Ministry of Commerce, and Customs Authorities. Ms. Sadegh noted that conditions at the Pak-Iran border have improved, though there remains room for further progress. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan reaffirmed the commitment to strengthening deep fraternal ties, stating that every Pakistani holds sincere goodwill for Iran's security and prosperity. The meeting also covered the Iranian Minister's recent visit to Islamabad and the Regional Transport Ministers' Conference held in Pakistan, and the promotion of positive engagement through the OIC platform. Minister Sadegh appreciated the efforts of the Pakistani government.—APP



ISLAMABAD; Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry chairing a high-level review meeting on the Sea-to-Steel initiative at Port Qasim.

KP launches digitized billing system

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Public Health Engineering, Fazal Shakoor Khan, on Friday officially inaugurated a Digitized Billing System, shifting 10 divisions to the new digital framework in the first phase. The department's manual billing system has now been converted into a fully digital system. Out of 23 divisions, digitized billing has been initiated in 10 divisions during the first phase, including Peshawar One, Peshawar Two, Swat One and Swat Two. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the provincial minister stated that divisions including Mardan, Charsadda, Swabi, Malakand, Lower Dir and Haripur have also been included in the digital billing system. He said the new digital billing initiative will ensure greater transparency, boost revenue collection and provide consumers with timely and accurate bills. The minister further added that consumers will now be able to pay their bills through JazzCash, Easypaisa, and 1Link. He also announced that the department's mobile application will be launched in March, allowing users to check bills and register complaints online. Fazal Shakoor Khan emphasized that online monitoring will strengthen financial accountability, while the digital system will reduce human interference and irregularities. He termed the launch of the digitized billing system a major step forward towards promoting E-Governance in the province.—APP

PRCS strengthens humanitarian response in Bajaur

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) national headquarters, with the help of PRCS Merged Areas branch, organized a Media Engagement Session on the Bajaur Humanitarian Response in Peshawar, bringing together journalists to strengthen collaboration and enhance public awareness of ongoing humanitarian initiatives. The session was conducted with the support of the Norwegian Red Cross and funded by the European Union. During the session, participants were briefed on key initiatives underway in Bajaur, including interventions in Health, WASH and Cash Assistance programs aimed at supporting vulner-

able families in the merged districts. Chairman PRCS Merged Areas branch, Adv Imran Wazir, and Chairman PRCS Khyber Pakhtunkhwa branch, Farzand Ali Wazir, addressed the gathering. They appreciated the constructive role of journalists in highlighting humanitarian challenges and the needs of vulnerable communities. They expressed hope for continued media support in future PRCS initiatives, emphasizing that strong media partnerships are vital for promoting humanitarian values and ensuring that the voices of affected communities are heard. The leadership of PRCS KP and Merged Areas thanked the support from PRCS Na-

tional Headquarters under the visionary leadership of Chairperson PRCS Mrs Farzana Naek. Representatives from the PRCS National Headquarters Communication Department also participated in the session, including Sher Zaman, Deputy Director Media & Communication, and Rehan Ali, Assistant Director Media & Communication. Sher Zaman delivered a comprehensive presentation on the history of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, providing participants with an overview of the organization's humanitarian mandate and principles.—DNA

Kohat averts major tragedy

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Kohat district narrowly escaped a major disaster after security forces and police intercepted and successfully defused a suspicious pickup truck loaded with explosives before it could reach its intended target. According to District Police Officer (DPO) Kohat Shahbaz Lahri, upon receiving intelligence about the vehicle, security agencies and police responded swiftly. The DPO personally arrived at the scene and placed police units across the district on high alert. A heavy contingent of police, along with the Pakistan Army and other security agencies, cordoned off the area and launched a comprehensive search operation. The Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS), demonstrating exceptional skill and professionalism, neutralized the explosive material, preventing what could have resulted in large-scale loss of life and property. According to BDS, hundreds of lives were potentially saved due to the timely operation. Following the incident, the DPO directed district police to further tighten security across the district, strengthen check posts, and enhance monitoring at all entry and exit points. It was noted that had the pickup reached its target, Kohat could have faced irreparable human and financial losses. However, the prompt and coordinated action by police and the Pakistan Army successfully foiled the hostile plan. Further investigation into the incident has been initiated.

SCCI, DHA Peshawar to launch joint initiatives

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and DHA Peshawar embarked on a journey to strengthen collaboration and facilitate the business community SCCI has shown keen interest to establish a state of the art, business-commercial complex, as well as education, health facility under a joint venture in DHA housing society Peshawar. A highly productive meeting was held between SCCI President Junaid Altaf and DHA Peshawar Administrator Brigadier Haroon Rasheed Khan at the chamber house, said a press release issued here on Friday. SCCI and DHA Peshawar have agreed to frame modalities to work together and launch joint initiatives to facilitate the business community. Meeting was attended by SCCI senior vice president Muhammad Nadeem, vice president Sabir Ahmad Bangash, leader of Businessman Forum and former FPCCI president

Ghazanfar Bilour, former presidents Haji Muhammad Asif, Fuad Ishaq, Zahidullah Shinwari and Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former senior vice president Shahid Hussain, former vice president Haris Mufti, members of the executive committee Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Sajjad Zaheer, Abbas Fuad Azeem, Aftab Iqbal, Saifullah Khan and Sadder Gul, Fazal e Wahid, WCCIP President Qurtul Ain, senior vice president Zarra Intiaz and vice president Zareen Akhtar, members and others. On the occasion, Col (retired) Mudassir presented a detailed presentation, highlighting the various phases of under-construction DHA Peshawar, ground-work and completion of various sectors, construction activities, procedure and number of facilities in the housing society. Administrator Brig Haroon Rasheed Khan enlightened comprehensively about the under-construction DHA Peshawar, a fully secured and equipped with

all facilities of life, stating that the project has formally initiated in 2017 and tremendous progress made in the last nine years as development work is being carried out on fast-track basis. Brig Haroon Rasheed invited SCCI to become a partner to establish health, education and other facilities in the DHA housing society. The DHA administrator agreed with proposals tabled by President Junaid Altaf and called for formalizing the agreement with mutual consensus. Earlier, President Junaid Altaf speaking on the occasion presented a comprehensive proposal to strengthen collaboration with DHA Peshawar. He added SCCI is intending to enter a collaboration with DHA for which a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be signed. The SCCI president sought special concessions and plots on easy installments for the staff members of the chamber.—DNA

KU seminar emphasizes linking research with social issues

KARACHI: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not merely a technology of the future but has already become an unavoidable reality of the present, with its impact being strongly felt across all spheres of life. AI is playing an effective role in fields such as engineering, medicine, and healthcare, and administrative affairs, redefining the ways of thinking, planning, and execution. These views were expressed by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Karachi Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi while addressing a seminar organized by the Department of Chemical Engineering titled "Application of AI in Chemical Process Industries", at the departmental seminar hall on Friday. He stressed that scientists and researchers must use AI tools effectively and responsibly. He remarked that while the impact factor of research papers is often given importance, the true value of research lies in its practical application and its ability to solve societal problems. "Research should not remain confined to publications or statistics; rather, its outcomes must be utilized for the betterment of society," he said. He said that the industrial sector is undergoing rapid changes and competition is increasing. Referring to global trade, he mentioned that former U.S. President Donald Trump used trade as a weapon for peace. He added that although one may disagree with his approach, during times of tension between India and Pakistan, trade served as an effective means of fostering peace between the two nations. The KU VC Professor Dr Khalid Iraqi emphasized that neither missile technology nor military might proved successful in establishing peace, but trade played a pivotal role. Since trade is directly linked with industry, he underscored that industrial development and economic stability require the adoption of modern technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence. The KU's Director of the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences Professor Dr Muhammad Raza Shah said that the dissemination and promotion of knowledge is the fundamental mission of the university. He mentioned that the institution is committed to ensuring the transfer of knowledge in modern and emerging research fields to further enhance academic and research standards. He remarked that the seminar holds great significance and would prove intellectually stimulating and enlightening for the participants. The former VC of the Women University Swabi Professor Dr Shahana Urooj Kazmi appreciated the scholars of the Department of Chemical Engineering for their keen interest and hard work in organizing the event successfully. She highlighted that students participated in the arrangements with responsibility and enthusiasm, and the long list of volunteers reflected the fact that a large number of students actively contributed to the success of the program. — APP

Providing quality education to youth cornerstone of Govt policy: Amir

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, here Friday said that providing quality education, science technology, and better facilities to youth particularly female students is the government's foremost priority and the landmark Prime Minister's laptop scheme is aimed to open educational and employment opportunities for them. He said that strong leadership and national unity have elevated Pakistan's stature in the world. Emphasizing that the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme is entirely merit-based, with no room for recommendations and students of all provinces of Pakistan are facilitating of it. Addressing a ceremony as the chief guest at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar, where laptops were distributed among female students under the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme, the Federal Minister paid tribute to the talent, hard work, and determination of the students. He said that if daughters and sisters are provided timely opportunities, they can excel in every field and bring honour to the nation. The university being named after Benazir Bhutto Shaheed reflects a shining example of women's leadership, democratic struggle, and national service, he said. He urged students to

make service to humanity and the spirit of Pakistani identity an integral part of their lives alongside education. Highlighting the transparency of the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme, he reiterated that the program is completely merit-based and allows no recommendations or political affiliations. He said the landmark scheme was first launched by the then Chief Minister Punjab Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in 2011 and later expanded nationwide by former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif to the entire country. It remained discontinued for long time during PTI Govt but has now been relaunched vigorously by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to provide digital facilities to students. The Federal Minister emphasized the need for healthy competition among provinces in education and development. Referring to initiatives taken in Punjab under CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif, he said other provinces should also move forward with the same spirit and facilitates its students. He stressed that competition in areas such as educational facilities, laptops, and scholarships should be encouraged to maximize opportunities for youth. Speaking about national security and leadership, he said that in challenging circumstances, the professional leadership of Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim

Munir and the timely decisions of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif have strengthened the atmosphere of confidence in the country. He added that strong leadership and national unity have enhanced Pakistan's global prestige. Referring to his recent foreign visits, he said that a positive perception of Pakistan is emerging internationally and that the dignity of Pakistani citizens is visibly increasing. He said that due to an effective national stance, the respect for the Pakistani passport has also improved. Addressing the university's development needs, he announced a grant of 600 million rupees for the completion of the proposed hostel for female students and other projects. Engr Amir Muqam assured that he would personally contact relevant authorities to ensure approval of PC-1 and release of funds so that issues faced by students and faculty could be resolved at the earliest. The Federal Minister said that the government's top priority is to provide youth especially female students with education, technology, and improved facilities so they may serve Pakistan in the future as doctors, engineers, scientists, pilots, teachers, and leaders. At the end of the ceremony, he distributed laptops among the students, congratulated them, and advised them to uphold the principles of hard work, merit, and national service.—DNA

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atives and fostering confidence, teamwork, and leadership among girls with hearing impairment.

Beas, and Sutlej. Meanwhile, Chairman of the Pakistan Economic and Political Forum (PEPF), Noor Muhammad Kasuri, said that the World Bank, as a guarantor of the Indus Waters Treaty, should be urged to intervene in the matter. He added that following Pakistan's success against Indian aggression in May 2025, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif achieved notable diplomatic gains, and friendly countries should now also play a role in resolving the issue. He emphasized that under the treaty, neither party has the right to suspend it unilaterally and described India's actions as an act of war against Pakistan. Agricultural and water experts have also warned that any reduction in Pakistan's share of water by India would be tantamount to an act of war. They stated that Pakistan has the full right to respond to any Indian violations of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). Terming India's actions an attempt to "weaponize water," the experts described them as a serious threat to regional stability.

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has vowed continued development and support for business community. He expressed these views while addressing the oath-taking ceremony Alkhidmat traders group here on Thursday. He congratulated Raja Fazal Zaid and his entire team on their electoral success, describing the process as democratic and dignified. At the outset, the minister appreciated Raja Fazal Zaid's remarks during his speech, particularly his statement that even those traders who did not vote for him were equally honourable and important. The minister termed this spirit the true beauty of traders' politics and congratulated him for demonstrating maturity and inclusiveness. He also acknowledged the contributions of various members of the traders' community and union representatives, praising their role in strengthening democratic traditions within market bodies. He remarked that such elections, especially in areas like Dhok Kala Khan, where he said the first traders' election in 76 years had recently taken place, reflect growing political awareness and unity among business leaders. The minister emphasized the importance of loyalty and steadfastness in political struggle. Referring to challenging periods in the past, he said true leadership is tested in difficult times, and those who remain loyal to their cause ultimately succeed. He added that constructive politics is based not on personal attacks but on service delivery and performance. Highlighting development work in Rawalpindi, he said visible improvements in infrastructure, hospitals, educational institutions, sports grounds, and technical training centers stand as evidence of the government's commitment. He noted that several major projects have been completed, while others are near completion, including funding allocations for long-pending hospital projects in the city. The minister stated that development and welfare should benefit all citizens rather than specific groups, emphasizing that public resources must be distributed transparently and fairly. He underscored that unity among traders is essential for protecting their rights and strengthening their collective voice. Paying tribute to Pakistan's armed forces, he honored the sacrifices of soldiers who laid down their lives for the country, particularly in challenging regions. He said national security and respect for martyrs rise above all political differences, adding that no political affiliation is greater than loyalty to Pakistan. The minister said that the government was committed to stabilizing the economy, promoting employment, and facilitating business growth. He expressed optimism that economic conditions would improve, industries would expand, and new employment opportunities would be created. —APP

The spokesperson stated that the commencement of development activities in Sector F-14/F-15 marks a significant milestone in the project aimed at providing housing facilities to federal government employees.

The National Incubation Center Islamabad (NIC Islamabad) has opened applications for Cohort 5, calling on serious, execution-focused founders to apply before the February 20 deadline. The program stands out with a 0% equity, founder-first model, allowing startups to scale without giving up ownership. Designed as a high-growth launchpad rather than a traditional incubator, NIC Islamabad supports founders building scalable ventures in AI, DeepTech, HealthTech, ClimateTech, Fintech, SaaS, and Women-led Tech. NIC Islamabad's impact is already visible on global stages. Naajoomi, an AI-driven customer support platform, scaled through the NIC ecosystem and showcased internationally at LEAP KSA and GITEX Dubai. HealthTech startups such as EMRChains and EKKO are using AI to improve patient communication and deliver accessible healthcare solutions across borders. Backed by a proven global roadmap and internationally connected mentors, NIC Islamabad continues to shape fundable, market-ready startups from Pakistan. With applications closing soon, founders building real, ambitious solutions are encouraged to apply. —APP

Under the government's 'Look Africa Policy,' five flagship Single Country Exhibitions have been organized across different African regions.—DNA

Briefs

Gwadar Airport, free zone to boost Balochistan trade access, Senate told

ISLAMABAD:The government on Friday informed the Senate that the New Gwadar International Airport, operational since Jan 20, 2025, along with the Gwadar Free Zone and improved highway connectivity, is expected to facilitate access for Balochistan's agricultural, mineral and fisheries sectors to national and international markets. Responding during the Question Hour on behalf of Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said the airport and related infrastructure formed part of broader efforts to strengthen trade logistics and economic activity in the province. He told the House that a fully developed Gwadar Free Zone, spread over approximately 2,281 acres at Gwadar Port, is operational and designed to support trade, re-export, warehousing, distribution and industrial activities. The zone also offers opportunities for processing, packaging and value addition of agricultural, mineral and fisheries products originating from Balochistan. The minister said investors in the free zone are being offered incentives including a 23-year tax holiday on federal, provincial and local taxes, lease options of up to 99 years, and exemption from import duties and sales tax on machinery and equipment. One-window facilitation, ready warehouses, office space and industrial units, along with security arrangements and internal infrastructure, have also been put in place.—APP

Naqvi inspects Islamabad model jail

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the under-construction Islamabad Model Jail and the new trainee officers' hostel at the National Police Academy on Friday, reviewing progress on major security and training infrastructure projects. Officials briefed the minister that the Islamabad jail project—pending for 15 years since its launch in 2011—has now achieved over 85 percent completion in Phase One and is expected to become functional in just two months. The facility will feature dual security walls, a digital monitoring system, and a centralized control room. During his inspection, Mohsin Naqvi visited the barracks and expressed satisfaction over the pace and quality of construction. He emphasized that establishing a modern model jail in the capital is essential for security and directed authorities to accelerate work through double-shift operations. The interior minister also inspected the model room of the hostel being built for under-training ASPs, issuing key instructions to ensure high-standard accommodation for police officers.—APP

PM vows to integrate Radio Pakistan

ISLAMABAD:As the international community observes the World Radio Day today, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed his government's commitment to integrate Radio Pakistan with modern technologies—particularly artificial intelligence—to transform it into an even more effective instrument for public service, education, health, and national development. The prime minister, in his message on the Day, said that since the creation of Pakistan, Radio Pakistan had served as a powerful medium of communication that had united the nation, created awareness, and promoted the accessibility of information. He said that Pakistan's radio history was remarkably illustrious in many ways, particularly for its pivotal role in advancing agricultural development, environmental awareness, cultural promotion, and public enlightenment. He said that as the world rapidly entered the digital era, radio too was adapting to modern day requirements and evolving accordingly.—DNA

NUML and Korea University sign LoI to promote linkages

The visit and signing of the LoI mark an important milestone in strengthening educational and cultural relations between Pakistan and the Republic of Korea, reaffirming NUML's commitment to international collaboration and academic excellence

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Letter of Interest (LoI) was signed between the National University of Modern Languages, Department of Korean Language and Culture, and Korea University to promote academic exchange, research collaboration, and cultural cooperation between the two institutions. In this connection, a three-member delegation from The Korea University, led by Dr. Lee Hyung-dae, Director, Institute of Korean Language and Literature, visited NUML and called on the Rector, Maj Gen Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI (M) (retd.), at his office. During the meeting, both sides expressed their strong commitment to strengthening bilateral academic ties. The LoI aims to enhance cooperation in key areas including faculty and staff exchange, student exchange, academic material sharing, and joint programs



such as collaborative teaching, research, conferences, and cultural activities. Later,

the visiting delegation participated in a vibrant event showcasing Korean culture, organized by the Department of Korean Language and Culture at Iqbal Hall. Students presented colorful performances reflecting various aspects of Korean language and culture, which were highly appreciated by the guests.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Lee Hyung-dae commended NUML for its active role in promoting the Korean language and culture in Pakistan. He announced that students of NUML's Department of Korean Language and Culture who wish to pursue studies at Korea University would be granted a waiver of tuition fees, terming it a significant step toward encouraging academic mobility and international exposure. The visit and signing of the LoI mark an important milestone in strengthening educational and cultural relations between Pakistan and the Republic of Korea, reaffirming NUML's commitment to international collaboration and academic excellence.

Jam calls for engineering-led industrial transformation

ISLAMABAD:Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday emphasized the urgent need for aligning academia with industry and preparing Pakistan for the fast-evolving global technological landscape, while addressing a gathering at National University of Technology (NUTECH) as the Chief Guest.

The event was attended by senior faculty members, students, industry representatives and policymakers. Senator Nauman Wazir also addressed the audience and highlighted the importance of innovation-driven growth and policy consistency for sustainable industrial development, said a release issued here on Friday.

In his keynote address, Jam Kamal Khan underlined that the world is undergoing an unprecedented technological transformation driven by artificial intelligence, data analytics, quantum computing, automation and digital platforms. He stated that nations that invest in engineering, research and technical human capital are shaping the future global economy.

"Technology is no longer optional; it is foundational," the Minister said, adding that a single smartphone today empowers individuals with access to global knowledge. He observed that artificial intelligence tools are transforming decision-making, research, governance and business models, and Pakistan must position itself proactively within this emerging AI-driven ecosystem. Drawing international comparisons, the Commerce Minister noted that countries that prioritized engineering and technical skills at scale have rapidly advanced in industrial competitiveness. He cited the rise of technology-based manufacturing economies and stressed that Pakistan must strengthen its engineering base, technical institutions and industry-academia collaboration to remain competitive. He further highlighted the global expansion of data centers, digital infrastructure and advanced manufacturing, explaining that the future economy will depend heavily on energy efficiency, semiconductors, critical minerals, and high-skilled engineers. Referring to Pakistan's mineral resources — including copper and rare earth elements — he said the country holds significant untapped potential that must be strategically utilized through modern technology and policy reforms. The Minister stressed that policy frameworks must evolve with technological change. "Reforms cannot be delayed," he said, comparing economic reform to timely medical intervention — warning that postponement increases long-term costs.—APP

Iqbal's vision of awakened East resonates in Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: "The East rises from its deep sleep, and the sun appears, A new caravan arrives, and the old age disappears," about a century after Allama Muhammad Iqbal wrote these words in "Zabur-e-Ajam", his vision of an awakened East led by China has largely taken shape, as Asia emerges as a center of global economic and intellectual gravity. In Gwadar, the flagship hub of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), that vision is reflected not only in infrastructure and connectivity but also in a renewed focus on knowledge and scholarship, says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Friday. The University of Gwadar on Thursday inaugurated an "Iqbal Corner" at its central library, marking a milestone in promoting Iqbal's philosophy and fostering academic engagement in Pakistan's strategic port city. The inaugural ceremony was chaired by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Abdul Razzaq Sabir. Director General of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, Dr. Abdul Rauf Rafiqi, and Director General of the National Language Promotion Department, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, attended as distinguished guests. Scholars and academic representatives from Allama Iqbal Open University, Turbat University and other institutions also participated. Speaking at the ceremony, Sabir said the establishment of the Iqbal Corner would help introduce students to Iqbal's intellectual legacy and promote research and academic excellence. "The Iqbal Corner will provide students and scholars with an opportunity to engage deeply with Iqbal's philosophy and contribute to intellectual development in the region," he said. Rafiqi and Mazhar praised the university's leadership for promoting higher education and national languages in Balochistan, describing the initiative as an important milestone in academic and literary advancement. They said such efforts would strengthen intellectual ties and inspire future generations.—DNA

Pakistan, China explore partnership

ISLAMABAD: Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) hosted a high-level meeting with Dr. Sayad Parastar, Chairman of China-based Henan Pallas Biotechnology Co. Ltd., to explore collaborative strategies aimed at restoring soil health and enhancing agricultural productivity in Pakistan's climate-stressed regions. The meeting, held here at FGP's office brought together leading experts and stakeholders, including Pakistani-German scholar Sarmad Hussain, Shafqat Aziz, Dr. Shahbaz Tariq, Dr. Kausar Khan, Atif Saeed of FGP, and Asad Rafi, CEO of Micronox. The discussions focused on addressing critical challenges facing Pakistan's agricultural sector, particularly soil degradation, salinity, nutrient imbalance, and declining fertility, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Friday. Participants described the engagement as a constructive step toward structured and science-driven cooperation between Pakistan and China in sustainable agriculture. With climate change, water scarcity, and land degradation increasingly threatening food security, both sides emphasized the need for long-term soil restoration strategies rather than short-term yield enhancement measures. Dr Parastar shared international experiences from arid and salt-affected regions, highlighting the application of S8 (octasulfur)-based solutions as part of integrated soil rehabilitation approaches. He underscored that soil restoration must be rooted

in scientific validation, careful adaptation to local conditions, and continuous monitoring to ensure sustainable outcomes. Leading the dialogue, FGP CEO Muhammad Anwar stressed that Pakistan's agricultural revival depends on restoring soil resilience through research-based interventions and cross-border knowledge exchange. He emphasized the importance of engaging research institutions, government bodies, and farming communities to ensure responsible and transparent implementation. Sarmad Hussain also contributed to discussions on coordination mechanisms, potential pilot projects, and pathways for structured international cooperation, pointing to the value of combining Chinese technological expertise with Pakistan's local agricultural knowledge. Both sides agreed to proceed in a phased and time-bound manner, examining technical parameters, validation processes, and collaboration modalities in the coming weeks. The possibility of pilot demonstrations aligned with Pakistan's agricultural priorities will also be explored. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to advancing practical, evidence-based solutions that strengthen soil resilience, enhance farm productivity, and promote long-term food security, further broadening the scope of China-Pakistan cooperation beyond infrastructure and trade into sustainable agricultural innovation.—DNA

131 lawyers get licenses of Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD: The 131 lawyers have been given fitness certificates to get licenses of Supreme Court, said General Secretary Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA). The IHCBA General Secretary Manzoor Ahmed Jaja held a farewell meeting with the Islamabad High Court Journalists Association. On this occasion, Manzoor Ahmed Jaja said that he held the post of General Secretary of the Islamabad High Court Bar in the year 2025/26. He is here today to express his special gratitude to the media. The media cooperated fully throughout the year. The media gave the most coverage to our bar. Time passed without realizing it. He tried to work for the welfare of the lawyers. He was very

happy about the transfer of the Islamabad High Court Bar to a new building under his patronage. Chief Justice Sarfaraz Dogar inaugurated the library and health card of the High Court Bar. He also inaugurated the ambulance and bar room provided by the Ministry of Health to the High Court Bar. Manzoor Jaja said that Ahsan Bhawan and Federal Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar are representatives of the lawyers. I pay tribute to them. He said that judges and lawyers cannot be friends. During our time, 131 lawyers were interviewed for Supreme Court licenses, and all 131 received fitness certificates. An ambulance has also been arranged for the bar's lawyers, and it will be handed over in the presence of the Chief Justice.—APP

Islamabad, Beijing coop advanced space technologies

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has achieved another major milestone in its space journey with the successful launch of its second indigenous Electro-Optical satellite, EO-2, from the Yangjiang Seashore Launch Centre (YSLC) in China, underscoring the deepening strategic cooperation between Islamabad and Beijing in advanced space technologies. The satellite was launched by the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) in collaboration with Chinese space authorities, reflecting the strong technical partnership between the two countries in satellite deployment and launch services, SUPARCO said here, according to Gwa-

dar Pro. EO-2 was conceived, designed, engineered, and integrated at SUPARCO's Satellite Research and Development Centre (SRDC) through indigenous research and systems engineering. The project highlights Pakistan's growing expertise in satellite architecture, payload integration, environmental testing, quality assurance, and mission readiness. The Gwadar Pro's report further stated that designed to operate in conjunction with EO-1, the newly launched EO-2 satellite is capable of observing Earth under varying illumination conditions, thereby enhancing the interpretation of surface features and improving change detection analysis.

The combined capabilities of EO-1 and EO-2 will ensure imaging continuity, higher temporal resolution, and more reliable data acquisition for national applications. Officials noted that the strengthened Earth observation fleet will significantly enhance Pakistan's capacity in urban planning, disaster management, environmental monitoring, agricultural assessment, water resource management, and infrastructure development. The satellite's data is expected to support evidence-based policymaking and sustainable development initiatives across multiple sectors. The launch also reflects the broader trajectory of China-

Pakistan collaboration in science and technology under the framework of their strategic partnership. Over the years, Beijing has supported Islamabad's space ambitions through launch opportunities, technical exchanges, and capacity-building initiatives, enabling Pakistan to steadily build domestic expertise in advanced aerospace systems. With EO-2 now in orbit, Pakistan has reinforced its commitment to developing reliable, domestically engineered space systems while leveraging trusted international partnerships, particularly with China, to advance national development goals and technological self-reliance.—DNA

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The Tianjin Moment and the SCO



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

WHEN leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation gathered in Tianjin in September 2025, the scale of the meeting itself told a story. It was the organisation's 25th summit and the largest in its history, bringing together heads of state from China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia, alongside observers and dialogue partners. Yet size alone does not confer significance. The real question is whether the Tianjin Declaration marks a turning point for the SCO, or merely restates familiar ambitions in an increasingly fractured world. The declaration leans heavily on the language of continuity. It reaffirms the "Shanghai Spirit" — a phrase that has become shorthand for mutual trust, equality, respect for sovereignty and non-interference. These principles have long distinguished the SCO from Western-led groupings that often combine cooperation with conditionality. In Tianjin, the emphasis on a multipolar international order and the primacy of the United Nations Charter echoed long-standing positions of both Beijing and Moscow. For many member states, especially those wary of external pressure, this insistence on sovereign equality remains the SCO's central appeal. At the same time, the document reflects a shared unease about the global environment. References to security threats, economic uncertainty and technological disruption suggest an organisation trying to define its role amid shifting power balances. The commitment to counter terrorism, separatism and extremism — the so-called "three evils" — remains a core pillar. Yet the security landscape confronting SCO members today is more complex than when the grouping was formed in the early 2000s. From Afghanistan's unresolved instability to the ripple effects of conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, regional security can no longer be neatly compartmentalised. One notable feature of the Tianjin Declaration is its expanded focus on economic and developmental cooperation. The approval of an SCO Development Strategy extending to 2035 signals an attempt to give the organisation a longer horizon. Trade facilitation, industrial cooperation, energy connectivity and sustainable growth feature prominently. This reflects a recognition that security without development is fragile and the economic grievances often feed political unrest. It is in this context that Russia's proposal for a dedicated SCO

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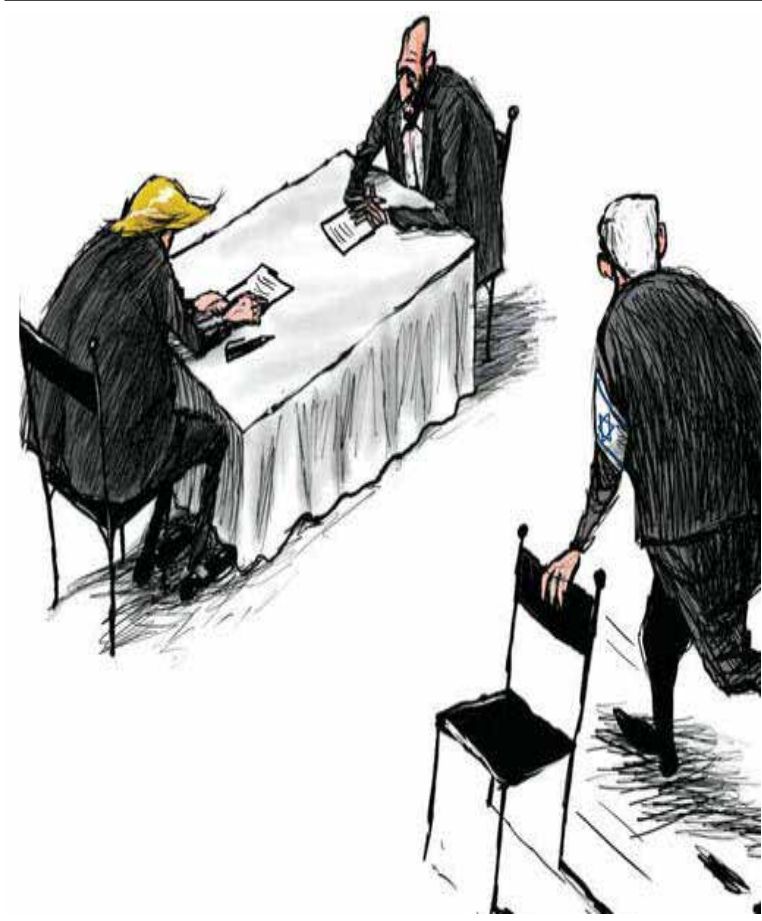
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Council on Sustainable Development assumes importance. First floated during Russia's chairmanship activities in 2025, the idea gained traction through a series of forums, including the inaugural Sustainable Development Forum hosted in Omsk. By the time of the Heads of Government meeting in Moscow later that year, the proposal had been formally placed on the SCO agenda, drawing positive remarks from the organisation's secretary-general. The Tianjin Declaration does not explicitly announce the council's formal establishment, but it clearly endorses deeper cooperation on sustainable development, energy transitions and industrial modernisation. This alignment suggests that Moscow's initiative fits comfortably within the broader direction the SCO is trying to set. For Russia, facing prolonged economic pressure from the West, such platforms offer a way to remain engaged in shaping regional norms. For others, including Pakistan and Central Asian states, the emphasis on development resonates with domestic priorities of growth, energy security and poverty reduction. Yet ambition and implementation are not the same. The SCO has often been criticised for producing lofty statements with limited follow-through. Institutional capacity remains thin and internal divergences persist. India and Pakistan share the same table but not the same strategic outlook. China's economic weight dwarfs that of most other members, raising quiet concerns about asymmetry. Iran's recent inclusion adds geopolitical heft but also new complications, given its strained relations with the West. Moreover, the call for "fair global governance" and a multipolar order raises practical questions. Can the SCO move beyond rhetoric to offer credible alternatives, or will it remain primarily a forum for coordination rather than action? On issues such as technology governance and trade, member states have differing levels of capacity and competing interests. Bridging these gaps will require more than declarations; it will require sustained political will and resources. For Pakistan, the Tianjin summit underscores both opportunity and challenge. As a founding member, Islamabad has consistently viewed the SCO as a platform to diversify partnerships and reinforce regional connectivity. The renewed focus on development and energy aligns with Pakistan's own economic needs. However, translating regional cooperation into tangible gains will depend on domestic stability and the ability to engage proactively within SCO mechanisms. The Tianjin Declaration is best read as a statement of intent rather than a decisive break from the past. It reflects an organisation aware of global turbulence and eager to assert relevance, yet still constrained by its diversity. Whether the SCO can evolve from a consensus-driven forum into a more effective vehicle for cooperation will be tested in the years ahead. Tianjin may not have provided all the answers, but it has at least clarified the questions the SCO can no longer avoid.

Trump Defies Israel on Iran Strategy

Qamar Bashir



Netanyahu's urgency reflects Israel's own vulnerability calculations. From Jerusalem's perspective, Iran's missile program and regional alliances create encirclement risk. Israel's security doctrine prioritizes preemption and dominance. But Washington's calculus is broader: preserving global stability, economic balance, and strategic bandwidth across multiple theaters — including Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific. Nuclear containment through verifiable inspection may be imperfect, but it is far less costly than war

BENJAMIN Netanyahu's recent rush to Washington was not routine diplomacy. It was a geopolitical stress test. Since President Donald Trump resumed office, the Israeli prime minister has maintained close coordination with Washington. Yet this visit carried an urgency that signaled concern — perhaps even anxiety. The core question hovering over the meeting was unmistakable: Would the United States once again expand confrontation with Iran under Israeli pressure, or was Washington beginning to assert strategic independence? The regional environment is tense. The United States has reinforced its military posture across the Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean, citing deterrence and stability. Iran's nuclear enrichment levels — reportedly reaching up to 60% purity according to the International Atomic Energy Agency — remain the focal point of Western concern. Tehran insists its program is peaceful and reversible, while Israel views it as an existential threat. Netanyahu arrived seeking expansion of the negotiation framework. Israel has long argued that any agreement must go beyond uranium enrichment to include limits on Iran's ballistic missile program and restrictions on its regional alliances. In Israeli strategic doctrine, Iran's missile range and regional deterrence network form a unified threat architecture. Yet post-meeting signals from Washington were restrained. President Trump indicated that nuclear talks would continue — but remain confined to the nuclear file. No immediate commitment was made to incorporate missile restrictions or regional dismantlement demands. That silence spoke volumes. For decades, Washington's Middle East posture closely mirrored Israeli security framing. This time, the United States appeared to draw a boundary. Why now? First, domestic opinion is shifting. The Gaza war has deeply polarized American society. Estimates from humanitarian agencies suggest total Palestinian fatalities — direct and indirect — have surpassed 80,000 since the conflict's escalation. The scale of destruction has fueled sustained protests across American universities and major cities. Younger voters increasingly question unconditional military assistance and open-ended strategic alignment. Organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee remain influential, but the en-

vironment has changed. Campaign contributions and policy alignments are scrutinized in real time through digital media ecosystems. Lawmakers now face direct public questioning regarding foreign aid allocations and lobbying relationships. Second, the economic calculus is sobering. A full-scale war with Iran would dwarf previous Middle Eastern interventions. The Iraq War cost the United States an estimated \$2–3 trillion over two decades. Iran is geographically larger, militarily more advanced, and strategically integrated into regional networks. Disruption of the Strait of Hormuz — through which roughly 20% of global oil supply flows — could send crude prices above \$150 per barrel. Inflationary shocks would ripple through American households already burdened by high interest rates and federal debt exceeding \$34 trillion. Third, the geopolitical landscape is no longer unipolar. China and Russia maintain strategic partnerships with Tehran. Europe has little appetite for another Middle Eastern war. The Global South increasingly resists Western military adventurism. Any unilateral escalation risks diplomatic isolation rather than coalition-building. In this context, "America First" takes on new meaning. Strategic restraint becomes not weakness, but prudence. Netanyahu's urgency reflects Israel's own vulnerability calculations. From Jerusalem's perspective, Iran's missile program and regional alliances create encirclement risk. Israel's security doctrine prioritizes preemption and dominance. But Washington's calculus is broader: preserving global stability, economic balance, and strategic bandwidth across multiple theaters — including Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific. Nuclear containment through verifiable inspection may be imperfect, but it is far less costly than war. The International Atomic Energy Agency remains central to any enforceable framework. If Iran restores comprehensive inspection access and caps enrichment levels, escalation logic weakens. Tehran frequently references a religious decree prohibiting nuclear weapons, though Western governments demand technical verification over theological assurances. Washington increasingly recognizes that unqualified alignment with Israel carries reputational costs. In a world where emerging powers challenge U.S. moral authority, stra-

tegic overreach erodes influence. There is also the question of sustainability. Continuous regional fragmentation — Iraq, Syria, Libya — has not produced durable stability. Military decapitation strategies have often created power vacuums rather than order. Iran, unlike those states, possesses cohesive national institutions and deep historical identity. Attempting regime destabilization would carry unpredictable consequences. The emerging signal from Washington is not abandonment of Israel. It is recalibration. Conditional partnership rather than automatic escalation. In geopolitical terms, this is subtle but profound. For the first time in decades, the United States appears willing to define its own negotiation parameters, even when they do not fully align with Israeli maximalist positions. If diplomacy holds, several outcomes become possible. Nuclear transparency reduces immediate escalation risk. Multilateral engagement on Gaza diffuses regional tension. Economic stabilization limits energy shocks. Strategic focus remains distributed rather than concentrated in one volatile theater. But if negotiations collapse, pressure will return — from hawkish factions in Washington and from Israeli leadership advocating preemption. The durability of this recalibration will then face its true test. History rarely pivots on dramatic declarations. It turns on measured refusals — on lines quietly drawn. Netanyahu's urgent visit may ultimately be remembered not for what was demanded, but for what was declined. If Washington sustains its current posture, it signals a new doctrine: partnership without submission, deterrence without recklessness, and diplomacy before dominance. In a region long defined by escalation cycles, even strategic restraint can reshape history. The question is no longer whether America supports Israel. The question is whether America will define its Middle East policy by Israeli urgency — or by American interest. The answer to that question may determine the next decade of regional stability.

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Pakistan and Kazakhstan: New Horizons of Stability and Development

M. Abdullah Hamid Gul

The ties between Kazakhstan and Pakistan blossomed when Pakistan recognized Kazakhstan in 1991, and since then, this relationship has only strengthened. Conversely, Kazakhstan, being the largest country in Central Asia and rich in natural resources including oil, gas, uranium, and other mineral reserves, holds a significant position in the global economy. Kazakhstan's robust economic potential and dynamic leadership are paving the way for new avenues in economic relations and developmental partnerships

PAKISTAN and Kazakhstan have always enjoyed exemplary and friendly relations, rooted in mutual understanding and strong cultural and religious ties. The visit of Kazakhstan President Kassym Jomart Tokayev to Pakistan, after 22 years, marks a significant milestone in the strengthening of relations between the two states and represents a vital step towards deepening historical connections with Central Asian countries. Both nations share several values in their culture and lifestyle. President Tokayev's designation of Pakistan as a reliable friend and strategic partner, along with the recognition of Pakistan's progress in the defense sector on a global platform, is a considerable diplomatic achievement for our country. During this visit, a five-year trade roadmap was announced, which is promising. The two countries have also committed to raising their limited trade volume to one billion dollars, with both parties aiming to achieve this target within the next two years. Although the overall economic cooperation capacity between the two countries is estimated to be around 14 billion dollars, the signing of 37 memoranda of understanding and agreements to enhance cooperation across various sectors including trade, investment, energy, education, health, sports, railways, environmental change, artificial intelligence, and digital development—serves as a practical demonstration of this sincere commitment. With a historic presence on the ancient Silk Road, Pakistan and Kazakhstan are eager to assert their strong presence together in light of the region's new emerging realities, particularly in economic development projects. The landlocked Central Asian region, bordered by major countries such as China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey, holds significant historical importance in a multi-dimensional context. It is looking towards Pakistan for access to the sea, making Pakistan's political, economic, and military partnership with Central Asian states extremely important. While Pakistan serves as a gateway for Central Asian states to reach South Asia, the Central Asian states can provide Pakistan with access to Eurasia. Pakistan's active participation in the One Belt One Road initiative has played a crucial role in bringing Central Asia and South Asia closer together. Furthermore, a key highlight of the visit was the review of a railway project valued at approximately 7 billion dollars, designed to connect Kazakhstan to Pakistani ports through Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. If implemented, this pro-

ject could become the largest means of connectivity in the region, integrating into Pakistan's extensive transport network that stretches to Chaman. This rail corridor is not merely an infrastructure project; it is set to bring about a railway revolution. The completion of this historic project will connect Kazakhstan with the ports of Karachi and Gwadar, enabling Pakistan to become part of the North-South International Transport Corridor and the Trans-Caspian Middle Corridor's logistical routes. If the ports of Gwadar and Karachi are made truly accessible for Central Asia, Pakistan can not only earn substantial revenue from transit trade but also establish itself as a central hub for regional commerce. Connecting Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and other Central Asian countries to Pakistan via an integrated railway and road network has been a long-discussed dream, yet tangible progress has remained limited for decades. However, with serious planning, ensured investment, and removal of security and administrative barriers, this endeavor could prove to be a game changer for Pakistan's economy. The establishment of peace and political stability in Afghanistan could transform this transport corridor, altering the fate of the entire region, including Pakistan. Following Kazakhstan, the visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Pakistan heralds a new regional alliance. The Euro-Bus Falcon company, founded in Almaty in 2018, has also signed a deal with Pakistan for the supply of 600 electric buses. This agreement stands as one of the largest export contracts for Kazakhstan's engineering industry in the public transport sector, with the buses valued at \$108 million. By 2027-2028, the company intends to increase exports to Pakistan to as many as 2,000 buses, including vehicles designed for transporting school children. The Alaman Group of Kazakhstan has also expressed a commitment to invest \$20 million in Pakistan's mineral sector, especially in placers gold mining projects in Gilgit-Baltistan. The relationship between Pakistan and Kazakhstan is based on economic, cultural, and security cooperation, along with strategic partnership. For Kazakhstan, Pakistan is not just a market in South Asia but also provides access to the ports of the Arabian Sea, especially at a time when relying on one or two routes is becoming increasingly difficult for the world. Kazakhstan is not alone in recognizing Pakistan's significance as a trading hub; at the intergovern-

mental commission meeting with Uzbekistan, Pakistan expressed its commitment to expanding bilateral cooperation, with the potential for trade turnover to increase more than fourfold to \$2 billion annually over the next two years. Both Pakistan and Kazakhstan are situated at the geoeconomic heart of Central and South Asia. Undoubtedly, in the context of their growing economies and special relations, these two important middle powers are poised to shine in the global geopolitical landscape. The ties between Kazakhstan and Pakistan blossomed when Pakistan recognized Kazakhstan in 1991, and since then, this relationship has only strengthened. Conversely, Kazakhstan, being the largest country in Central Asia and rich in natural resources including oil, gas, uranium, and other mineral reserves, holds a significant position in the global economy. Kazakhstan's robust economic potential and dynamic leadership are paving the way for new avenues in economic relations and developmental partnerships. As a key member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Organization of Turkic States, and the CICA, Kazakhstan is emerging as an important global power. If a portion of the agreements discussed and signed during President Kassym Jomart Tokayev's visit transforms into active infrastructure, trade facilitation, and institutional cooperation, it will not only have positive effects on bilateral relations but will also signal that middle powers in Central and South Asia possess the ability to shape their economic destiny despite global turmoil. Currently, Pakistan needs to enhance trade relations with Kazakhstan, as well as with other Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Maintaining cultural ties is also crucial for building and developing stable, long-term relations in the economic, political, and security sectors. Strengthening interactions among people through tourism, educational scholarships, and cultural exchange between the two countries is a demand of the times. The growing cooperation in the educational field is promising as well. However, there are some challenges regarding coordination and trade infrastructure between the two nations. The leadership's seriousness is a clear indication that these issues can be overcome. By leveraging existing capacities, Kazakhstan and Pakistan can indeed play a significant role in the economic development of Central and South Asia.

Briefs

Pro-Pakistan
BNP wins
two-thirds...

FROM PAGE 01
nation of 175 million after months of deadly anti-Hasina unrest disrupted everyday life and industries such as garments, in the export of which Bangladesh is No.2 globally. Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus, 85, held office as interim head after Hasina fled to neighbouring India in August 2024. Now in exile in New Delhi, Hasina long dominated Bangladesh politics along with Rahman's mother, Khaleda Zia, while his father was a leading independence figure who ruled from 1977 to 1981 before he was assassinated. Manual counting of paper ballots will run until at least noon on Friday, officials said, since starting on Thursday immediately after polls closed. The BNP win with more than 200 seats is one of its biggest, surpassing its 2001 victory with 193, although Hasina's Awami League, which ruled for 15 years and was barred from contesting this time, secured a bigger tally of 230 in 2008. But bigger tallies for both parties in elections of other years were widely seen as one-sided, boycotted or contentious. Jamaat promises positive opposition

Pakistan
seeks to
bolster...

FROM PAGE 01
government-to-government commerce last year. In his congratulatory message, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said: "I extend my warmest felicitations to Mr. Tarique Rahman on leading the BNP to a resounding victory in the Parliamentary elections in Bangladesh." He also congratulated the people of Bangladesh on the successful conduct of the elections. "I look forward to working closely with the new Bangladesh leadership to further strengthen our historic, brotherly multifaceted bilateral relations and advance our shared goals of peace, stability, and development in South Asia and beyond," the PM added. President Asif Ali Zardari, meanwhile, felicitated Rahman on BNP's landslide victory and congratulated the people of Bangladesh on their successful, peaceful polls. "Pakistan reaffirms strong support for democratic partnership and shared progress ahead," he added. The BNP won a decisive two-thirds majority on Friday in general elections, a result expected to bring stability after months of tumult following the ouster of former prime minister Hasina in a Gen Z-led uprising.

Zimbabwe
shock
Australia...

FROM PAGE 01
Bennett and Ryan Burl put on 70 for the second wicket, a record stand for Zimbabwe in T20 World Cups after an opening stand of 61 with Tadiwanashe Marumani. Australia beat Ireland on Wednesday, but with matches to come against co-hosts Sri Lanka and Oman, another defeat could see them on the plane home after the group stage. Without their captain Mitchell Marsh for the second match, and the previously ruled out pace spearheads Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, Australia's campaign in the 20-nation tournament is in danger of falling apart at the first hurdle. The former champions were left with more to worry about as Marcus Stoinis was struck on his left palm attempting a return catch halfway through his third over. The all-rounder was accompanied off the field in pain and did come out to bat, but scored only six. One bright spot was power batter Tim David being named in the team, however, after missing the Ireland win. But he made a two-ball duck in his first game since suffering a hamstring injury in the Big Bash League. Pakistan will take on each other on Sunday. Pakistan, as experts believe has edge over India in all fields.

Rain threat looms over
Pakistan vs India T20
World Cup blockbuster

Possibility of rain-curtailed encounter prompts team management to consider tactical reshuffle

COLOMBO: As rain-bearing clouds linger over Colombo with showers predicted later on Sunday evening, Pakistan are keeping a close eye on the conditions ahead of their blockbuster T20 World Cup showdown against arch-rivals India, The News reported. The possibility of a rain-curtailed encounter has prompted team management to consider a tactical reshuffle, with conditions likely to dictate the final combination. Well-placed sources have confirmed to The News that Pakistan may bolster their pace arsenal if overcast and damp conditions prevail. Express pacer Naseem Shah and left-arm quick Salman Mirza are firmly in contention for inclusion. Salman, who did not feature against the USA, could be draft-

ed in alongside Naseem to exploit any assistance on offer from a moist surface. "Nothing has been finalised as yet. It is too early to talk about the final combination for the match against India. Everything depends on the conditions. If it stays wet and soggy and there are chances of a rain-shortened match, we may have to shuffle our resources and bring in those best suited to the occasion," a source within the camp revealed. While the team management has kept its cards close to the chest, indications are that up to four changes in the playing XI are under consideration. Fakhar Zaman, known for his fearless approach and past heroics against India, is strongly tipped for a return. Youngster

Khawaja Nafay is also being discussed as a potential inclusion to add depth and flexibility to the batting unit. If Pakistan opt for a pace-heavy attack, at least two spinners could make way, depending on how the pitch shapes up closer to match time. Usman Khan's place may also come under scrutiny as management weighs experience, form, and tactical balance. The big question remains: who will be sidelined from the side that comfortably defeated the USA? Meanwhile, Pakistan's preparations have remained measured. The players stayed indoors for the second consecutive day on Thursday, engaging in optional gym sessions rather than outdoor practice. "Team members had some indoor gym

training on Thursday, but it was optional. From tomorrow onwards, the squad will begin full-fledged training at the nets and at the R Premadasa Stadium," an official confirmed. The Premadasa Stadium is already buzzing with activity. Australia are set to face Zimbabwe there on Friday morning, while both Pakistan and India are expected to train under lights later in the evening, a rehearsal for what promises to be a blockbuster showdown. Zimbabwe were seen fine-tuning their preparations at the venue ahead of their clash, but all eyes in Colombo remain fixed on Sunday's epic encounter, where weather, strategy, and nerves could prove just as decisive as skill. – Agencies

North Korea warns of
'terrible response' if
South sends more drones

SEOUL: North Korea threatened on Friday a "terrible response" if it detects any more drones buzzing across the border from the South. South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has sought to repair ties with North Korea since taking office last year, criticising his predecessor for allegedly sending drones to scatter propaganda over Pyongyang. But North Korea claims it shot down a surveillance drone just last month, an incident which threatens to blight Lee's efforts to patch things up. Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, warned of severe repercussions if the drones did not stop. "I give advance warning that reoccurrence of such provocation as violating the inalienable sovereignty of the DPRK will surely provoke a terrible response," Kim said in a statement carried by Pyongyang's official Korea Central News Agency. "We don't care who the very manipulator of the drone in-

filtration into the airspace of the DPRK is and whether it is an individual or a civilian organization," she added, using the acronym for North Korea's official name. Seoul initially denied any official involvement in the January drone incursion, with officials suggesting it was the work of civilians. But a joint military-police task force announced earlier this week it was investigating three active-duty soldiers and one spy agency staffer in an effort to "thoroughly establish the truth". Seoul's unification minister Chung Dong-young expressed "deep regret" earlier this week. Any government involvement in the January drone incursion would run counter to Lee's efforts to lower the temperature with Pyongyang. Chung has previously suggested the drone may have been the work of government staffers still loyal to former hardline leader Yoon Suk Yeol. Kim Yo Jong said that Chung's concilia-

tory remarks were "quite sensible behaviour". South Korea's unification ministry responded to Kim's statement, vowing to "immediately implement preventative measures to prevent similar incidents from recurring." "Whenever the opportunity arises, we have reaffirmed three principles – recognising and respecting the other side's system, refraining from any hostile acts, and not seeking unification by absorption," it said. The statement by Kim Yo Jong suggests that Pyongyang is "closely monitoring the latest developments in the South Korean side", Yang Moo-jin, former president of the University of North Korean Studies, told AFP. The North Korean military downed a drone carrying "surveillance equipment" in early January, according to a statement published by the state-run KCNA. Photos showed the wreckage of a winged craft scat-

tered across the ground next to a collection of grey and blue components that allegedly included cameras. The drone had stored footage of "important targets" including border areas, a military spokesman said at the time. South Korea's disgraced ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol was accused of using unmanned drones to scatter propaganda leaflets over North Korea in 2024. Lee has vowed to mend ties with North Korea by stamping out such provocations, and has even suggested a rare apology may be warranted. A UN Security Council committee recently approved exemptions allowing fresh flows of food and medicine into North Korea. Analysts said this could kickstart efforts to lure Pyongyang into nuclear negotiations with US President Donald Trump. North Korea is preparing to hold a landmark party congress at the end of February. – Agencies

Tearful Canadian
mother mourns
daughter

TUMBLER RIDGE: A grieving Canadian mother whose daughter was murdered in a mass school shooting addressed the public on Thursday, ahead of Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to a community in mourning. Sarah Lampert's 12-year-old daughter Ticaria was among the six people shot dead at the secondary school in Tumbler Ridge, a remote mining community in a stunning Rocky Mountain valley. "She just wanted to bring sunshine to everything and everyone she ever touched," Lampert, overcome with emotion, told reporters at the Tumbler Ridge community center. "I now have to figure out how to live life without her." The 18-year-old shooter, a transgender woman named Jesse Van Rootselaar, killed her mother and stepbrother, in addition to five students and a teacher at the school. She died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Such violence is rare in Canada, which has strict gun control laws unlike the neighboring United States. Near the school, a bouquet of flowers and stuffed animals were placed at the foot of a tree. Yellow police tape surrounded the school buildings and a snow-covered volleyball court. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police on Thursday named the victims, and some families have released testimonials about the slain children. "Seeing you leaving the house with that beautiful smile while going to Tumbler Ridge High School was so refreshing," the father of 12-year-old Abel Mwansa Jr. said on Facebook. "I saw a bright future, a leader, an engineer, also a scientist in you," said the post written by Abel Mwansa Sr., who wrote that he was "broken" seeing his son's body "lifeless." The family of 12-year-old Kylie Smith said in a statement: "Kylie was the light in our family... She was a talented artist and had dreams of going to art school in the big city of Toronto. Rest in paradise, sweet girl." The initial death toll was reported to be nine before being revised down to eight, with a young girl "fighting for her life," according to British Columbia Premier David Eby. Van Rootselaar, who dropped out of the school four years ago, was known to have mental health issues. – Agencies

Inter-Divisional
Talent Hunt
Boxing Starts Today

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Boxing Federation (PBF) has commenced the Inter-Divisional phase of the National Talent Hunt Boxing Championship from today (Saturday) under its ongoing nationwide talent hunt program. According to PBF President Lieutenant Colonel (R) Nasir Ijaz Tung, the initiative is being organized in collaboration with the Pakistan Army with the primary objective of identifying and promoting emerging boxing talent across the country. In Punjab, the competitions are being held at the Sports Complex of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, where around 300 male and female boxers are competing in three age categories: Under-17, Under-19, and Under-22. Nasir Tung stated that two teams will be selected from Punjab following the four-day competition, while similar selection trials will be conducted in other provinces to identify top-performing boxers for the next stage. He expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Army for its full support, noting that their cooperation is playing a vital role in introducing fresh talent and strengthening boxing at the grassroots level. Following the divisional round, successful boxers will advance to the Provincial Championships in the third phase, where they will further showcase their abilities. The National Talent Hunt Program is designed to reinforce grassroots boxing and produce future national and international champions.

AI's bitter rivalry heads to Washington

The group -- whose funders can remain anonymous -- plans to back 30 to 50 candidates from both parties in state and federal races during the midterm cycle

WASHINGTON: Anthropic's major donation to a political group that competes with an OpenAI-backed organization has highlighted a bitter rift over AI regulation – a key issue heading into the US midterm elections. With the artificial intelligence industry rapidly advancing, Democrats and Republicans alike have found themselves squeezed between a powerful tech lobby flush with cash and a broadly wary public. Leading the charge on the industry side is Leading the Future, a pro-AI super PAC backed by OpenAI's Greg Brockman, venture capital behemoth Andreessen Horowitz, Palantir co-founder Joe Lonsdale, and AI search company Perplexity. Brockman, OpenAI's longtime president, and his wife Anna are also among the largest recent donors to President Donald Trump's political coffers, to the tune of \$25 million last year. Super PACs are political organizations in the United States that can raise and spend unlimited funds for media campaigns, but not give directly to candidates. Leading the Future raised \$125 million in the second half of 2025, according to official filings, and is co-led by Josh Vlasto – a former adviser to Fairshake, the crypto-aligned super PAC whose playbook Leading the Future is looking to repeat. That playbook proved

devastatingly effective in the 2024 election cycle, when Fairshake poured money into races against candidates skeptical of cryptocurrency. Now spooked by the prospect of a repeat in AI, Anthropic has entered the fray. On Thursday, the company gave \$20 million to a competing super PAC, Public First Action, which supports AI guardrails – effectively setting up a direct fight against Leading the Future. The group – whose funders can remain anonymous – plans to back 30 to 50 candidates from both parties in state and federal races during the midterm cycle. Founded in 2021 by former AI researchers, Anthropic has grown into a world-leading AI company focused on businesses and software developers. The company, led by CEO Dario Amodei, is disdained by some in Trump's Washington for its outspoken focus on AI safety and its warnings about the job losses that generative AI could unleash. The Trump administration has pushed back forcefully, championing a light regulatory touch and giving AI companies free rein to release their latest models without guardrails or pre-release vetting of their products. White House AI and crypto czar David Sacks recently accused the "left-wing" company of "running a sophisticated regulatory capture strategy based on fear-mongering." He also accused Anthropic of retaining Democratic-aligned staffers to "lobby for the old Biden AI agenda." The two groups are also clashing over the Trump administration's repeated – and so far unsuccessful – efforts to ban AI legislation at the state level. In the absence of federal action, dozens of states have introduced hundreds of proposals to regulate the technology. – DNA

Pak stresses implementation of Kashmir resolutions

Gilani said that such actions threaten the lives and livelihoods of over 240 million Pakistanis and set dangerous precedents, particularly at a time when climate stress and water scarcity demand cooperation and strict respect for international agreements

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: The visiting Pakistan's Parliamentary Delegation, which is led by Senate Chairman Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, met Thursday with the United Nations General Assembly President, Annalena Baerbock, amid growing challenges the UN faces, including persistent Charter violations and non-implementation of Security Council resolutions. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the Annual Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Hearing 2026 at the UN Headquarters in New York. A press release of the Pakistan Mission to the UN said that the Senate chairman reiterated Pakistan's firm and principled support for the UN as the central pillar of multilateral cooperation. Recalling Pakistan's longstanding policy for a friendly neighbourhood and peaceful

settlement of disputes, Gilani termed the resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in line with the relevant UN Security resolutions as essential for durable peace and stability in South Asia. While the UNSC resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir remained unimplemented, he said that India has taken further destabilizing actions in unilaterally holding the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, arguing that this unlawful action constituted a blatant violation of the Treaty's provisions and established principles of customary international law. Gilani said that such actions threaten the lives and livelihoods of over 240 million Pakistanis and set dangerous precedents, particularly at a time when climate stress and water scarcity demand cooperation and strict respect for international agreements. Drawing UNGA president's attention to the terrorist threats faced by Pakistan, the Chairman said that terrorist organi-

zations like TTP, BLA, Al-Qaeda, ISIL-K are using the Afghan soil for cross-border attacks with impunity. The chairman underscored that the people of Pakistan strongly support the UN's mission of promoting international peace and security, sustainable development, and the protection of human rights. He said that at a time of multiple and overlapping global crises, the multilateral system is facing serious challenges, including persistent violations of the UN Charter and the continued non-implementation of long-standing UN Security Council resolutions. Highlighting a broader erosion of adherence to international law and established legal instruments, Gilani warned that such trends undermine the international order. Highlighting the adverse impacts of climate change, he said that countries like Pakistan remain among the most severely affected and underscored the urgency of collective

action, climate justice, and strengthened international cooperation. He emphasized that the United Nations provides an indispensable platform for addressing these interconnected challenges. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Baerbock, the UNGA chief, conveyed her condolences to the government and people of Pakistan on the loss of lives in the recent terrorist incidents in Pakistan, according to the press release. She said that it is in the interest of all countries to fight terrorism together. Welcoming the Pakistan's Parliamentary Delegation, she praised the high-level participation comprising senior lawmakers in the IPU Hearing. She also appreciated the commendable role Pakistan is playing at the United Nations. Senator Saleem Mandviwala, Senator Farooq H. Naek, Senator Muhammad Abdul Qadir, and Senator Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari, were present in the meeting. – Agencies

Islamabad
Red Zone
sealed as
Opp...

FROM PAGE 01

family should be allowed to meet him. "Earlier, I was told that the PTI founder's health was better. We want him to be treated by competent doctors available in the country," Achakzai said. Meanwhile, police shut the gates of the Parliament Lodges as PTI parliamentarians attempted to leave to participate in the sit-in.

Trump to
announce
security...

FROM PAGE 01

Peace for Gaza have not been previously reported. Deployment of the International Stabilization Force is a key part of the next phase of Trump's Gaza plan, announced in September. Under the first phase, a fragile ceasefire in the two-year-old war began on October 10 and Hamas has released hostages while Israel has freed detained Palestinians. Trump will announce that several countries plan to provide several thousand troops to the stabilization force that is expected to deploy in Gaza in the months ahead, the officials said.

How Afghan
siltation
can affect
Pakistan

FROM PAGE 01

Participants observed that while Afghanistan continues to face complex challenges with regional implications, there remains a shared interest in stability and cooperation. They emphasized the importance of sustained dialogue and constructive engagement between Pakistan and Afghanistan to address concerns and manage differences. Recognizing the interdependent nature of the bilateral relationship, participants stressed that cooperation and mutual understanding are essential for long-term regional stability. The meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule.

UAE rolls
over \$2bn
loan

FROM PAGE 01

top official sources said, adding that formal approval from the concerned quarter was awaited and expected to be received anytime. Replying to a query, the Foreign Office spokesperson said that he was not aware of the context or content of the statements made at the Standing Committee on Finance by officials of the Ministry of Finance. He could only confirm that the deputy premier was seized of the matter and was playing a very positive role in coordination and consultation with relevant authorities in the UAE. "The tenure of the rollover is the prerogative of the depositor. Through the positive role of Dar, we can say that the rollover is assured and the tenure is not linked. Since the rollover continues, this matter remains in control," the spokesperson said.

United
Nations
extends...

FROM PAGE 01

citing recent attacks that killed 80 people this month alone. "Once again, Afghan soil was used by these groups to plan and orchestrate attacks against neighbouring countries," he said, urging the Taliban to prevent the use of Afghan territory for terrorist operations. "It is for the Taliban to decide what path they wish to choose for Afghanistan: whether the path to isolation or the path to peace and prosperity as a responsible member of the international community," he said. The ambassador also highlighted the council's concerns over the wider humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. "The resolution rightly emphasises the dire human rights conditions, particularly for women and girls, economic collapse, political exclusion, and the challenges posed by drug trafficking," he said.

Briefs

PSX sheds 908 points to close at 179,603 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Friday witnessed a bearish trend, losing 908.92 points, a negative change of 0.50 percent, to close at 179,603.73 points compared to 180,512.65 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data.

During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 708.968 million shares with a traded value of Rs 38.887 billion, against 873.996 million shares valuing Rs 41.766 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization declined to Rs 20.359 trillion from Rs 20.438 trillion a day earlier.

Out of 481 active companies in the ready market, 194 advanced, 231 declined, and 56 remained unchanged.

K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 131.137 million shares, followed by Pak Int. Bulk with 34.704 million shares and WorldCall Telecom with 33.828 million shares. The top gainers included PIA Holding Company Limited, which rose by Rs 834.70 to close at Rs 18,694.99, and Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which gained Rs 354.50 to settle at Rs 27,254.50.

On the losing side, Sapphire Textile Mills Limited declined by Rs 66.32 to close at Rs 1,303.68, while ZIL Limited fell by Rs 48.75 to close at Rs 505.48.

In the futures market, turnover stood at 163.081 million shares with a traded value of Rs 8.262 billion, compared to 198.316 million shares worth Rs 10.287 billion in the previous session. Out of 328 futures-market companies, 114 recorded gains, while 209 declined and five remained unchanged.—APP

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.62 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.65. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.5 and Rs 282.15, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 0.61 to close at Rs 331.57 from the previous day's close of Rs 332.18, 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 0.66 and closed at Rs 380.77 compared to the previous day's Rs 381.43. 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

Gold prices plunge Rs 8,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs 8,600 and was sold at Rs 519,962 on Friday against its sale at Rs 528,562 the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 7,373 to Rs 445,783 from Rs 453,156, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 6,759 to Rs 408,649 from Rs 415,408.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver decreased by Rs 501 and Rs 430 to Rs 8,324 and Rs 7,136, respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$86 to \$4,972 from \$5,058, whereas that of silver went down by \$5.1 to \$78.40, the Association reported.—APP

President directs to advance Pak, Uzbekistan coop in healthcare

The meeting was chaired by Dr Asim Hussain, Personal Physician to the President. The Uzbek side, joining virtually, was represented by Mr Babayev Alisher, First Deputy Minister of Health; Mr Alizhanov Abror; Prof Yusupalieva Gulnora; and Prof Gulyamov Surat

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of President Asif Ali Zardari, following his meeting with the Ambassador of Uzbekistan, a meeting was convened at Aiwan-e-Sadr to deliberate on practical avenues of bilateral cooperation in healthcare, medical education and recognition of medical institutions and qualifications in both countries. The meeting was chaired by Dr Asim Hussain, Personal Physician to the President. The Uzbek side, joining virtually, was represented by Mr Babayev Alisher, First Deputy Minister of Health; Mr Alizhanov Abror; Prof Yusupalieva Gulnora; and Prof Gulyamov Surat. The meeting was informed that during the recent state visit to Pakistan by the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a broad set of 28 memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements were exchanged between Pakistan and Uzbekistan across diverse sectors including health, education and pharmaceuticals, reaffirming both countries' intent to strengthen bilateral collaboration. Pakistan's side included Secretary to the President, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission,



the President of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination. The meeting noted that more than 1,200 Pakistani students are currently studying in Uzbekistan in various disciplines, and that Uzbekistan has registered over 180 types of Pakistani pharmaceutical products, reflecting expanding people-to-people and commercial links. Dr Asim Hussain emphasised the potential to further expand cooperation in medical education, scientific research and the practical

training of doctors. Uzbekistan officials provided an overview of their healthcare sector, noting the presence of approximately 9,000 private clinics, with half of surgical procedures conducted in private facilities, and expressed interest in providing job opportunities to Pakistani doctors and allied professionals.

The meeting concluded with an understanding to continue consultations and to examine modalities for moving forward in line with the President's direction. It was agreed that a delegation of Pakistani health professionals would soon visit Uzbekistan to follow up on the discussions and decisions made today.

Second US aircraft carrier sent to Middle East

WASHINGTON: The world's largest aircraft carrier has been ordered to sail from the Caribbean Sea to the Middle East, a person familiar with the plans said Thursday, as US President Donald Trump considers whether to take possible military action against Iran. The move by the USS Gerald R. Ford, first reported by The New York Times, will put two carriers and their accompanying warships in the region as Trump increases pressure on Iran to make a deal over its nuclear program. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military movements. The USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and three guided-missile destroyers arrived in the Middle East more than two weeks ago. It marks a quick turnaround for the USS Ford, which Trump sent from the Mediterranean Sea to the Caribbean last October as the administration build up a huge military presence in the leadup to the surprise raid last month that captured then-Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. It also appears to be at odds with Trump's national security strategy, which put an emphasis on the Western Hemisphere over other parts of the world. Trump on Thursday warned Iran that failure to reach a deal with his ad-

ministration would be "very traumatic." Iran and the United States held indirect talks in Oman last week. "I guess over the next month, something like that," Trump said in response to a question about his timeline for striking a deal with Iran on its nuclear program. "It should happen quickly. They should agree very quickly," Trump told Axios earlier this week that he was considering sending a second carrier strike group to the Middle East. Trump held lengthy talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday and said he insisted to Israel's leader that negotiations with Iran needed to continue. Netanyahu is urging the administration to press Tehran to scale back its ballistic missile program and end its support for militant groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah as part of any deal. The USS Ford set out on deployment in late June 2025, which means the crew will have been deployed for eight months in two weeks time. While it is unclear how long the ship will remain in the Middle East, the move sets the crew up for an usually long deployment. The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.—DNA

Morocco to spend \$330m on flood relief plan Follow

The exceptional rainfall has ended a seven-year drought that had prompted the country to ramp up investments in desalination

RABAT: Morocco plans to spend 3 billion dirhams (\$330 million) to upgrade infrastructure and support flood-hit residents, farmers, and businesses in its northwestern plains, the prime minister's office said on Thursday. Weeks of torrential rain and releases from overflowing dams have inundated villages, farmland, and the city of Ksar El Kebir in the northwest of the North African country. Floods have displaced 188,000 people and submerged 110,000 hectares of farmland, according to official figures. The government has declared the hardest-hit municipalities disaster areas, the prime minister's office said in a statement carried by state media. It said 1.7 billion dirhams of the relief budget would be allocated to repairing basic infrastructure, including roads and hydro-agricultural networks. The remainder would fund rehousing, reconstruction of destroyed homes, support to small businesses, and assistance to farmers and livestock breeders. Moroccan authorities, backed by the army, have set up camps for evacuees and deployed helicopters and rescue boats, state television reported. Access to the largely deserted city of Ksar El Kebir remains banned after the Loukkos River burst its banks earlier this month, inundating several neighbourhoods. Water Minister Nizar Baraka said on Thursday that the Oued Makhazine dam, which had reached 160 percent of capacity, was forced to gradually release water downstream due to exceptional inflows. Rainfall this winter was 35 percent above the average recorded since the 1990s, and three times higher than last year, he said. Snow cover in the Atlas and Rif mountains reached a record 55,495 square km this winter before shrinking to 23,186 square km, he said, adding that melting water would further replenish dams. Morocco's national dam-filling rate has risen to nearly 70 percent from 27 percent a year earlier, with several large dams being partially emptied to absorb new inflows. The exceptional rainfall has ended a seven-year drought that had prompted the country to ramp up investments in desalination.—DNA

Air Chief Marshal Sidhu meets with Indonesia President

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, during his official visit to Indonesia, called on President Prabowo Subianto on Friday. During the meeting, the Air Chief underscored the shared values and longstanding brotherhood between Pakistan and Indonesia, said a press release issued here by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). President Prabowo expressed keen interest in leveraging PAF's state-of-the-art training ecosystem and aerospace development infrastructure to enhance Indonesia's defence capabilities. Earlier, the Air Chief held separate high-level meetings with Defence Minister Lieutenant General (Retd) Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, Commander of the Indonesian National Armed Forces and Indonesian Air Marshal. He was accorded Guard of Honour at all venues. During the discussion with the Indonesian Air Chief, both sides discussed enhanced Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation, joint training from basic to advanced levels, professional exchanges, and collaboration in emerging aerospace domains. The Indonesian Air Chief sought PAF's support in advancing operational and flying training, acknowledging PAF's rich combat experience. The Air Chief was conferred the Medal of Honour, the highest award of the Indonesian Air Force, in recognition of his role in strengthening bilateral air power cooperation. The Air Chief also held a joint meeting with the Indonesian Defence Minister and Chief of Defence Forces, where a wide range of defence and security matters were discussed.

The Indonesian leadership appreciated PAF's professionalism, modernization drive, and lauded the advanced techno-

logical infrastructure of the National Aerospace Science & Technology Park.



Dubai, Cyprus chambers discuss strengthening economic ties

DUBAI: Dubai Chambers recently hosted a high-level delegation from the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral trade and investment ties.

The meeting was attended by Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, President and CEO of Dubai Chambers, and Stavros Stavrou, President of the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"We see significant potential for growth in areas of shared interest. Dubai Chambers is dedicated to providing all necessary support to facilitate trade and investment, helping Cypriot companies tap into regional and international markets through Dubai, and enabling our local businesses to explore the promising opportunities in Cyprus," Lootah said. Dubai Chamber of Commerce saw a total of 101 new companies from Cyprus joining the chamber's membership last year. By the end of 2025, the total number of Cypriot companies registered as active members of Dubai Chamber of Commerce had reached 639 reflecting an annual growth rate of 17.7 percent. Non-oil trade between Dubai and Cyprus reached AED588 million in 2024. Dubai Chamber of Commerce recently launched the Cyprus Business Council to strengthen cooperation between the two business communities, deepen bilateral trade and investment relations, and foster partnerships across various sectors.—APP

Economic recovery continues despite uncertainties

SEOUL: South Korea's economy continues to be on the path to recovery, supported by stronger domestic demand and a solid performance in the semiconductor sector, despite ongoing uncertainties, the finance ministry said Friday. The Ministry of Economy and Finance made the assessment in its monthly economic report, known as the Green Book, marking the fifth consecutive month it has used the term "recovery" to describe the economic situation. "Recently, our economy has continued its recovery trend, driven by improved domestic demand, including consumption, and strong exports led by semiconductors," the report said. Still, uncertainties remain, the ministry noted, citing ongoing employment difficulties in vulnerable sectors, such as construction. The report also cited the continued impact of U.S. tariff measures and other external risks as sources of concern. "The global economy faces ongoing volatility in international financial markets and energy prices, along with slowed trade and growth, due to worsening trade conditions from tariffs by major countries and geopolitical uncertainties," the report said. In January, exports expanded 33.9 percent from a year earlier to US\$65.85 billion on strong demand for semiconductors amid a global artificial intelligence (AI) boom.—APP

Iran releases on bail two reformists

TEHRAN: Iranian authorities have released on bail two senior reformist figures who were arrested in recent days following anti-government protests in January, local media reported. "Javad Emam and Ebrahim Asgharzadeh were released a few minutes ago after posting bail," their lawyer, Hojjat Kermani, said in an interview with the ISNA news agency published on Thursday evening. Asgharzadeh is a former member of parliament and Emam is the spokesman of the Reformist Front, the main coalition of the reformist camp. They were accused of "undermining national unity" and "coordinating with enemy propaganda," the Fars news agency reported at the time of their arrests. Reformists traditionally call for more social freedoms and the establishment of a civil society and backed current president Masoud Pezeshkian during his 2024 campaign. The lawyer expressed hope that the release of Azar Mansouri, head of the Reform Front since 2023 could come "in the next few days when her arrest warrant is revoked.—APP

Briefs

Shooting
kills two at
US university

WASHINGTON: Gunfire killed two people and wounded one on Thursday at a university in the southern United States, officials said, as the facility remained on lockdown. South Carolina State University said the campus went into lockdown at 9:15 pm Thursday (0215 GMT Friday) after receiving a report of a shooting in an apartment at the Hugine Suites student residential complex. "University officials have not yet confirmed the victims' identities or the condition of the wounded person," the school said in a statement. "The campus remains on lockdown." School officials did not say whether anyone was in custody in connection with the shooting. It said local law enforcement agencies were assisting the university "in patrolling on and around the campus." Friday classes have been cancelled, the school added. The shooting comes just days after an 18-year-old shooter killed eight people at a secondary school in British Columbia, Canada. It is the latest in a long line of school attacks in the United States, where attempts to restrict access to firearms face political deadlock. — Agencies

Ukraine,
China FM's
discuss
'peace efforts'

MUNICH: Ukraine's foreign minister said Friday he met his counterpart from China — a close partner of Moscow — at the Munich Security Conference, where the pair discussed ending the Russian invasion of Ukraine. China and Russia are close partners and while Beijing has said it takes a neutral stance on the war in Ukraine, it has never condemned the invasion. "We discussed peace efforts and China's important role in facilitating an end to the war," Andriy Sybiga said of his meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. "I reiterated Ukraine's interest in contacts with China at the highest level," Sybiga added, referring to a push for a meeting between President Volodymyr Zelensky and China's leader Xi Jinping. Western governments and Kyiv accuse Beijing of providing Russia with crucial economic support for its war effort, notably by supplying military components for its defence industry. Sybiga said the conversation was "meaningful and productive" and that he had updated Wang on the status of fighting and on Russian attacks that had damaged facilities linked to Chinese companies. He also said China would supply humanitarian energy assistance to Ukraine, in the wake of systematic Russian strikes on Ukraine's energy grid. The foreign ministers exchanged invitations to visit their respective countries, Sybiga added. — APP

Pakistan Navy Ship visits
Aksaz Naval Base, Türkiye

The successful conduct of bilateral Exercise TURGUTREIS-XIII and CORPAT stands as a testament to the enduring strategic partnership and brotherly ties shared between Pakistan and Türkiye



DNA

RAWALPINDI: The newly commissioned, state-of-the-art Pakistan Navy Ship KHAIBAR, during its maiden voyage from Türkiye to Pakistan, visited Aksaz Naval Base, Türkiye, and participated in Exercise TURGUTREIS-XIII and joint patrols

with ships of the Turkish Navy. During the stay at Aksaz, the Commanding Officer of PNS KHAIBAR called on the Turkish Southern Sea Area Commander. During the meeting, discussions focused on enhancing bilateral naval cooperation and fostering regional stability through collaborative efforts. Later, Southern Sea Area Commander, and Commander Aksaz Naval

Base, along with other Turkish Naval Forces officers, visited PNS KHAIBAR. Following the port visit, PNS KHAIBAR participated in the PN-TN bilateral Exercise TURGUTREIS-XIII with Turkish Naval Forces ship TCG HEYBELIADA and a TNF SH-70 helicopter. The exercise featured a variety of sea evolutions to rehearse joint maritime operations and enhance interop-

erability. Upon culmination of the exercise, PNS KHAIBAR and TCG HEYBELIADA conducted a Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The successful conduct of bilateral Exercise TURGUTREIS-XIII and CORPAT stands as a testament to the enduring strategic partnership and brotherly ties shared between Pakistan and Türkiye.

Children cannot
use social media
in Portugal

France's lower house last month backed legislation to ban children under 15 from social media amid growing concerns about online bullying and mental health risks. Australia's world-first ban for under-16s on social media platforms including Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube came into force in December

LISBON: Portugal's parliament on Thursday approved a bill, on its first reading, requiring explicit parental consent for children aged 13 to 16 to access social media, in one of the first concrete legislative moves in Europe to impose such restrictions. Authors of the draft legislation from the ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD) say it is needed to protect children from cyberbullying, harmful content and predatory individuals. A public system known as Digital Mobile Key (DMK) will be used by parents to give consent, also helping to enforce the existing ban for children under the age of 13 to access digital social media, video- and image-sharing platforms, or online betting sites. Tech providers are also required to implement an age verification system compatible with the DMK. The bill, approved by 148-69 votes with 13 abstentions, can still be modified before the final vote. France's lower house last month backed legislation to ban children under 15 from social media amid growing concerns about online bullying and mental health risks. Australia's world-first ban for under-16s on social media platforms including Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube came into force in December. The Portuguese bill says it will fill a regulatory gap that has allowed "multinational digital platforms to set rules unilaterally, affecting children's cognitive and emotional development, particularly with early or excessive exposure. It says that over the past two decades, social media have assumed roles long held by families and schools without regulation. "We have to protect our children...we don't intend to prohibit for the sake of prohibiting, we intend to create a norm to give more power to parents and families, to accompany and control," PSD lawmaker Paulo Marcelo said before the vote. He said that tech companies ignoring the restrictions could face fines of up to 2 per cent of their global revenue. — DNA

Natalie Baker Connects
United States Companies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: US Chargé d'Affaires (CDA) Natalie A. Baker hosted a webinar on February 12, connecting 25 representatives from US information and communication technology (ICT) companies with senior Pakistani government officials to explore commercial opportunities in Pakistan's growing IT sector. Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication Zarar Hasham Khan, Chairman of the Special Technology Zones Authority Azfar Manzoor, and Project Director of Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council Syed Hadi joined CDA Baker to discuss investment opportunities, regulatory frameworks, and partnership potential in Pakistan's ICT sector. In her remarks, CDA Baker said, "The U.S. Mission in Pakistan is committed to fostering strong economic ties between our nations." She added, "We believe that by working together, we can unlock the full potential of Pakistan's IT sector, create new opportunities for American business-



es, and contribute to Pakistan's economic development." She reinforced the U.S. Embassy and consulates are here to support American companies as they navigate the Pakistani market by connecting them with local partners and ensuring they have the resources and information needed to succeed. "We are committed to facilitating investment, promoting trade, and advocating for policies to improve the business environment," she said. The webinar highlighted growth opportunities in cloud computing, data centers, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence — important areas where U.S. companies offer proven expertise and innovation.

During the webinar, Pakistani officials outlined government initiatives to advance digital policies, expand broadband connectivity, promote technology parks, and support innovation through regulatory reforms and incentives. CDA Baker also emphasized the timeliness of strengthening U.S.-Pakistan technology cooperation, saying, "This year in the United States, we are celebrating America's 250th anniversary, which presents us with an opportunity to celebrate American innovation and leadership in the technology sector."

Pakistan
wants end of
Yemen conflict

UNITED NATIONS: Amid Yemen's protracted, interlocking political, security and humanitarian crises, Pakistan has called for the UN Security Council's "united action" to end the country's long-running conflict.

"A stable and unified Yemen is also essential for regional peace and security," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member Council during a debate on the situation in Yemen. He reaffirmed Pakistan's principled support for Yemen's unity and sovereignty and stressed that all efforts must preserve national cohesion and respect state institutions. Since 2014, Yeme-

ni government forces, who are backed by a Saudi-led coalition, and Houthis rebels have been fighting for full control of the fractured country. The internationally recognized authorities are largely based in the southern city of Aden while the Houthis, officially known as Ansar Allah, control the capital Sana'a and large areas of the north and west. A UN-brokered truce in April 2022 helped reduce violence, but after more than a decade of conflict, Yemen continues to face a complex crisis. Welcoming last month's Saudi-facilitated consultations in Riyadh, the Pakistani envoy urged all Yemeni stakeholders to engage in good faith and with flexibility. "A credible, inclusive and constructive dialogue, within agreed parameters, with a forward looking approach, remains the only viable path toward a negotiated political settlement that reflects the aspirations of the Yemeni people," Ambassador Asim Ahmad said. He also welcomed the formation of the new Cabinet under the Presidential Leadership Council, hoping it will strengthen governance, improve service delivery and reinforce institutional coherence. Pakistan, he added, supports a Yemeni-owned and Yemeni-led political process, facilitated by the UN. — DNA

Rubio warns
Europe of
new era in
geopolitics

DNA

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has spoken of a defining moment and a "new era" as he travels to Europe for a major speech to the Munich Security Conference. Rubio will lead the US delegation at the first major global event since President Donald Trump threatened Danish sovereignty with a pledge to annex Greenland. French President Emmanuel Macron has insisted Europe must prepare for independence from the US, while Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte has stressed that transatlantic bonds are as close and important as ever. The war in Ukraine, tensions with China and a potential nuclear deal between Iran and the US are also on the agenda as the security conference gets under way. "The world is changing very fast right in front of us," Rubio told reporters, when asked if his message to Europeans would be more conciliatory than a year ago. "We live in a new era in geopolitics, and it's going to require all of us to sort of re-examine what that looks like and what our role is going to be." At last year's conference, US Vice-President JD Vance attacked Europe, including the UK, for policies on free speech and immigration. His speech triggered a year of unprecedented transatlantic tension.

Earthquake
jolts
Balochistan

QUETTA: A 5.6-magnitude earthquake was recorded 86 kilometres northeast of Balochistan's Khuzdar on Friday, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). According to PMD's National Seismic Monitoring Centre, the earthquake struck at 6:30am at a depth of 13 km, 86km northeast of Khuzdar. It was preceded by another earthquake — magnitude 3.8 — that struck 75km southeast of Khuzdar at 5:52am at a depth of 33km. Tremors were felt in several districts of Sindh as well, APP reported, including Sukkur, Qambar, Shahdadkot, and Dadu, while Jhal Magsi, Jaffarabad and Nasirabad in Balochistan reported tremors as well. Last month, an earthquake of magnitude 5.8 jolted parts of Pakistan, including Gilgit-Baltistan, Peshawar and adjacent areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. A 5.8-magnitude earthquake jolted parts of the country in January. Tremors were felt in Islamabad and parts of KP. Pakistan falls on three major tectonic plates — the Arabian, Euro-Asian and Indian — which create five seismic zones under the country. The intersection of multiple fault lines means that tectonic movements remain a frequent occurrence in the region. In October 2025, a 5.0-magnitude earthquake was recorded in Quetta. — APP

CDWP, approve development
projects worth Rs160.2 billion

Under the transport and communications sector, the Government of Sindh presented the Hyderabad Urban Infrastructure Development Package, with an estimated cost of Rs5bn

ISLAMABAD: The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) on Wednesday considered and approved a portfolio of development projects worth Rs160.2 billion at a meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof Ahsan Iqbal in Islamabad. The forum reviewed proposals relating to the health, physical planning, housing, transport, and communications sectors, approving two projects with a cumulative cost of Rs8.5bn and recommending four major projects amounting to Rs151.7bn for consideration by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), said a release issued here on Friday. Presiding over the meeting, Prof Ahsan Iqbal underscored the importance of aligning development interventions with national priorities, stating that public investment must deliver measurable improvements in human development, urban services and connectivity, particularly in regions affected by climate-induced shocks. He said that the government remained committed to ensuring that federally sup-

ported and provincially implemented projects were designed for long-term sustainability and tangible socio-economic impact. In the health sector, the CDWP examined the Sindh government's project titled "Sindh Human Capital Investment: 1,000 Days — Integrated Health and Population Programme," with a total cost of Rs55,078.535 million, which was recommended to ECNEC. The project focuses on improving key indicators related to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, nutrition and family planning. It will be implemented by the Sindh Health Department in collaboration with the Population Welfare Department and is proposed to be financed through foreign funding. The initiative is aimed at strengthening human capital outcomes during the critical early life cycle period, which is widely recognised as essential for sustainable economic growth. Under the transport and communications sector, the Government of Sindh presented the Hyderabad Urban Infrastructure Development Package, with an estimated cost of Rs5bn. — DNA

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