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Indian forces fail to suppress voices of Kashmiri people

Detailed News On Page-03

Gilani calls for multilateral ties with Cambodia

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British HC celebrates Pak, Scottish ties

Detailed News On Page-08



TRADE TARGET \$ 2 BILLION

Uzbek President Mirziyoyev gets a red carpet welcome

Pakistan and Uzbekistan signed multiple accords and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to deepen bilateral cooperation, marking a significant push to expand collaboration in trade, defence, education, and other fields

ASNAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Uzbekistan on Thursday signed multiple accords and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to deepen bilateral cooperation, marking a significant push to expand collaboration in trade, defence, education, and other fields. The bilateral trade shall be enhanced to USD two billion in the coming days. The present trade volume between the two countries stands at \$ 446 million.

The agreements were signed during Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's visit to Pakistan, reflecting a shared resolve to elevate the relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership. A ceremony was held at the Prime Minister's House where the wide-ranging pacts were formally signed in the presence of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Mirziyoyev. The event was also attended by ministers and senior officials from both sides.

The accords were signed between the two countries in diverse fields, including defence, agriculture, trade, industry, culture, education, disaster management, pharmaceuticals, and more.

- Exchange of MoU between the foreign ministries of both countries to enhance diplomatic cooperation
- Protocol exchanged to expand the list of goods under the Preferential Trade Agreement
- Agreement reached on the establishment of an Inter-Regional Forum between the two countries
- Action plan finalised for cooperation in the defence sector
- MoU exchanged on cooperation in climate change mitigation and disaster management
- Agreement on food security and MoU for collaboration in agricultural research

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PM reaffirms unwavering support for Kashmir cause

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, on Thursday, reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering political, diplomatic and moral support for the Kashmir cause and stated that the Kashmiri people's struggle for the right to self-determination would continue until its logical conclusion in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and announced a special development package for the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

Addressing a special session of the AJK Legislative Assembly held on Kashmir Solidarity Day, the prime minister paid tribute to the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people, and underlined that history bears witness that Kashmiris can sacrifice their lives and children but will never compromise on their freedom.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed profound grief over the demise of former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry. He recalled the late leader's lifelong dedication to the Kashmir freedom movement and acknowledged the political services of his father,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Presenting the Honorary Degree of Doctorate to President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev conferred upon him by NUST. Islamabad, 5 February 2026. – DNA

Special protection unit for Chinese citizens

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said on Thursday that the government was establishing a dedicated Special Protection Unit in Pakistan aimed at strengthening the security of Chinese nationals involved in various ongoing projects across the country. In a meeting with Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong, Naqvi reaffirmed the enduring Pakistan-China strategic partnership. The minister welcomed Ambassador Zaidong upon his arrival and received strong condemnation from China over the recent terrorist attacks targeting civilians and security forces in Balochistan. The ambassador expressed

Continued on Page 06

Train service restored in Balochistan

STAFF REPROT

QUETTA: Train services were restored in Balochistan on Thursday, after five days of suspension, as the tense security situation eased following a series of counter-terrorism operations in response to a spate of attacks in the province. However, mobile data services remained suspended for the sixth day in Quetta and some other districts. "Train services within Balochistan and to other provinces have been," Muhammad Kashif, spokesperson for Pakistan Railways' Quetta division, confirmed to Dawn.

216 terrorists killed

Security forces conclude Operation 'Raddul Fitna-1' in Balochistan

22 security personnel and 36 civilians, including women and children, embraced martyrdom, says ISPR

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Security forces have successfully concluded Operation Raddul Fitna 1, eliminating at least 216 terrorists in various coordinated engagements and clearance operations, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Thursday. "A series of coordinated, swift, and intelligence-driven operations were conducted against India-sponsored terrorist elements seeking to disrupt peace and development by targeting innocent civilians, including women and children," read the statement issued by the military's media wing. However, 36 innocent civilians, including women and children, along with 22 security and law enforcement agencies personnel embraced martyrdom in these operations, it added. The anti-terror operations come in the aftermath of recent attacks by India-backed Fitna al-Hindustan —

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Pakistan urges UNSC to sanction BLA

UN's 1267 sanctions regime requires countries to adopt measures including freezing of assets, travel ban and arms embargo

DNA

NEW YORK: In the aftermath of the deadly attacks carried out by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) in Balochistan, Pakistan has urged the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to sanction the militant group. "We hope the Council will act swiftly to designate

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Gold, Silver rates further plunge

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Gold and silver prices fell sharply in a broader market selloff on Thursday, as an advance in the dollar to a near two-week high and signs of easing US-China trade tensions added further pressure on the precious metals. Spot gold declined 2.5 per cent to \$4,838.81 per ounce, as of 05:35am GMT (10:35am PST), retreating from a near one-week high hit earlier in the session. US gold futures for April delivery dropped 1.9pc to \$4,855.60 per ounce. "The dollar received a new lease of life with the (Kevin) Warsh nomination (as Federal Reserve chief), and the currency has been able to keep making forward progress ... traders are more circumspect now on gold in light of recent extreme volatility," Tim Waterer, KCM chief trade analyst, said.

Section 144 imposed on Basant

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: The Punjab government has finalised arrangements for the safe celebration of Basant in Lahore from February 6 to 8, enforcing Section 144 to prevent provocation, maintain religious harmony and ensure public order. According to a spokesperson for the Punjab Home Department, certain restrictions have been imposed during Basant to uphold peace and respect religious sentiments. The spokesperson said that kites carrying images or symbols of holy books, religious places, personalities, political parties or national flags have been completely banned. Furthermore, under Section 144, the manufacture, sale, purchase and use of kites with religious or political inscriptions or images are strictly prohibited, said the Home Department.

Countrywide rallies

Pak reaffirms unwavering support for IIOJK on Kashmir Solidarity Day

President Zardari expresses concern over post-August 2019 situation; CDF Munir condemns rights abuses in IIOJK

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: People across Pakistan are observing Kashmir Solidarity Day on Thursday, reaffirming unwavering support for the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in their just cause to achieve the right to self-determination as enshrined in relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Pakistan stands in solidarity with the people of IIOJK, with a renewed commitment to their just struggle against Indian occupation. The day is marked by a public holiday on February 5, with solidarity walks taking place across the country and in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

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Pakistan assumes chairmanship of DCO

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday took over the chairmanship of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) at its fifth General Assembly held in Kuwait. Senior officials from 16 member countries attended the meeting. Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja represented Pakistan and formally assumed the chair.

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Law & order: govt, army on same page

The KP CM made the remarks while chairing the provincial apex committee meeting, attended by provincial ministers, the Peshawar Corps commander, the chief secretary, the IG police, and other senior officials

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Thursday said that the government, Pakistan Army and other law enforcement agencies are on the same page for upholding law and order in the province. The KP CM made the remarks while chairing the provincial apex committee meeting, attended by provincial ministers, the Peshawar Corps commander, the chief secretary, the IG police, and other senior officials. Referring to the ongoing military operations against terrorists in the violence-hit province, the chief minister said: "This is a collective war and it can only be won through joint efforts." The meeting also paid tribute and offered Fatima for civilians and security personnel who embraced martyrdom in the fight against terrorism. The meeting discussed rising incidents of terrorism, strategies to eliminate anti-Pakistan elements, and measures to restore peace and stability in the province, read a declaration issued by the KP government. The meeting stressed the need for "practical cooperation" and consultation among all political parties and public representatives, tribal elders and the federal government for the success of a comprehensive anti-terrorism policy. It was decided in the meeting that the KP government would spare no effort or resources — including the army, police, CTD, and other institutions —

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FEBRUARY 2026

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Section 144 enforced for safe Basant celebrations in Lahore

The spokesperson said that Basant has been permitted by the Punjab government strictly as a recreational festival, and no violation of the law will be tolerated. Restrictions have been imposed to maintain public order and safeguard religious harmony during the celebrations

LAHORE: The Punjab government has finalized arrangements for the safe celebration of Basant in Lahore from February 6 to 8, enforcing Section 144 to prevent provocation, maintain religious harmony and ensure public order.

According to a spokesperson for the Punjab Home Department, certain restrictions have been imposed during Basant to uphold peace and respect religious sentiments. The spokesperson said that kites carrying images or symbols of holy books, religious places, personalities, political parties or national flags have been completely banned.

The spokesperson added that under Section 144, the manufacture, sale, purchase and use of kites with religious or political inscriptions or images is strictly prohibited. However,

during Basant in Lahore, the use of plain single-colour or multi-colour kites without any images will be allowed.

The spokesperson said that Basant has been permitted by the Punjab government strictly as a recreational festival, and no violation of the law will be tolerated. Restrictions have been imposed to maintain public order and safeguard religious harmony during the celebrations.

The spokesperson added that under the Punjab Kite Flying Act 2025, the use of metallic wire and nylon string is completely banned, while the use of safety rods on motorcycles has been made mandatory during Basant in Lahore.

The Home Department has also issued special security guidelines for Basant, directing the district

administration and police to ensure strict implementation of all notified rules and regulations. It has been instructed that vehicles entering and leaving the city be subjected to strict checking and scanning, and only legally permitted kite-flying material be allowed into Lahore, while prohibited items will be confiscated immediately.

The spokesperson further said that aerial firing and display of weapons are completely banned, with strict legal action to be taken against violators. Additionally, Rescue 1122 has been placed on full alert to handle any emergency situation, while all hospitals have been directed to ensure the availability of specialists, medical staff and essential medicines during Basant, added spokesperson.—DNA

Crime control, law and order top priorities: IGP Kareem

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police Punjab Rao Abdul Kareem chaired the first meeting of Punjab Police at the Central Police Office after assuming charge, and outlined his priorities with a focus on crime control, law and order and improved public service delivery.

The meeting was attended by additional inspectors general, managing director Safe Cities, DIGs, AIGs and other senior police officers, while Additional IG South Punjab, all RPOs, CPOs and DPOs joined via video link. Senior police leadership congratulated Rao Abdul Kareem on assuming the office of IG Punjab.

Addressing the meeting, the IGP said that discipline, rules and procedures must be strictly followed while performing official duties. He stressed that achieving the targets set by Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif regarding improvement in police station culture and traffic management was a top priority. He said the Chief Minister's Safe Punjab Vision would be achieved through teamwork, merit and an integrated policing system.

The IGP made it clear that the performance of district officers would be reviewed regularly, particularly with regard to follow-up of heinous crime cases. He directed senior officers to ensure accessibility for the common man and to personally oversee public grievance redressal. Rao Abdul Kareem declared zero tolerance for corruption, misuse of authority, violation of the code of conduct and misconduct with citizens, saying these were red lines. He emphasised that strict and indiscriminate accountability would be ensured for any disciplinary violations. He further directed RPOs and DPOs to accelerate efforts for crime control and the eradication of narcotics, reiterating that crime fighting, law and order and security remained the core objectives of policing.—APP

KP ministers highlight Pakistan's support for Kashmir

ABBOTTABAD: Kashmir Solidarity Day 2026 was observed across the Hazara Division with national spirit, as district administrations organized rallies, walks, flag-hoisting ceremonies, seminars, and prayer gatherings to reaffirm Pakistan's unwavering support for the people of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

KP Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Arshad Ayub Khan condemned Indian atrocities in occupied Kashmir and reiterated Pakistan's steadfast backing for the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination.

In Tehsil Ghazi, a dignified ceremony was held under the leadership of Assistant Commissioner Ghazi Junaid Aftab, alongside the Tehsil Chairman, SDPO, and TMO. The event began with a one-minute silence to honor the martyrs of Kashmir, followed by a flag-hoisting ceremony and a solidarity walk from the TMA Complex. Participants raised slogans supporting the Kashmiri free-

dom struggle and offered prayers for their freedom, safety, and success. In Khanpur, similar events were organized under the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner, with a minute of silence, flag hoisting, and a solidarity walk from TMA Khanpur to the Assistant Commissioner's Office. Students delivered speeches highlighting the Kashmiri struggle and calling on the international community to take notice of grave human rights violations in occupied Kashmir.

At the divisional level, KP Minister Arshad Ayub Khan represented the province at the central ceremony and rally held at Kohala Bridge. Addressing the gathering, he condemned Indian atrocities and reaffirmed Pakistan's moral, political, and diplomatic support for the Kashmiri cause, stressing that the KP government will continue to raise the issue at every forum.

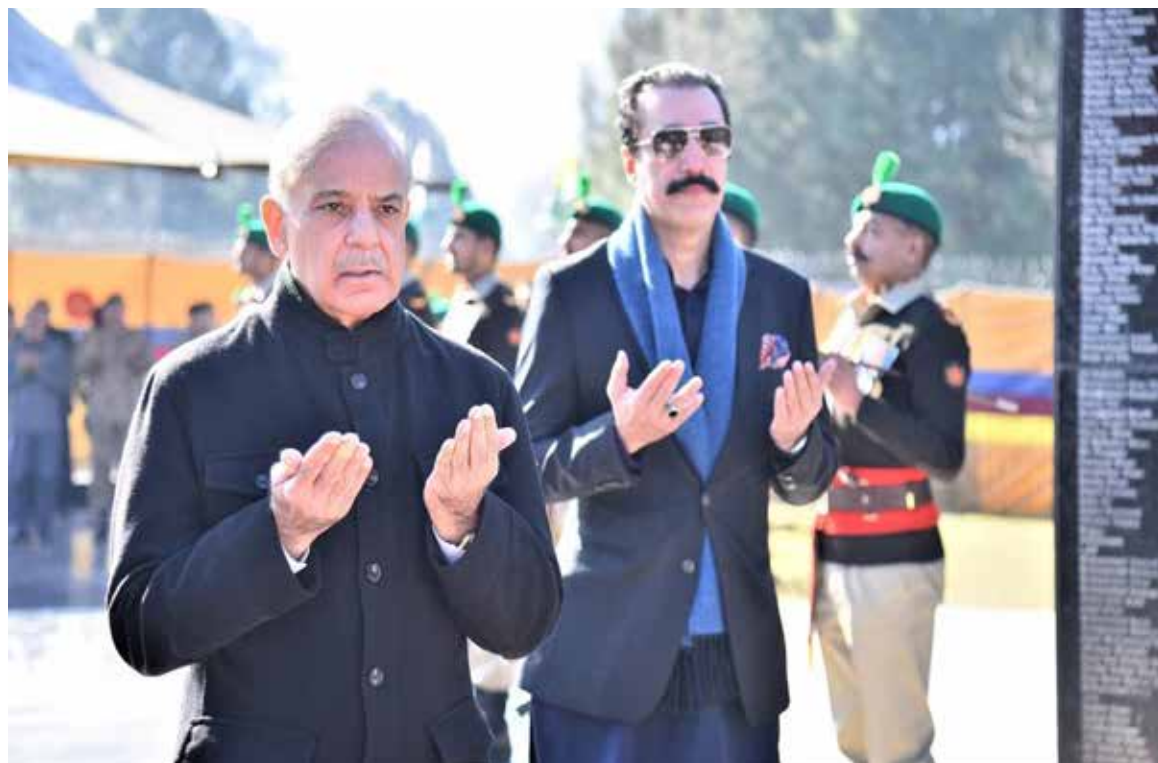
In Upper Kohistan, Deputy Commissioner Tariq Ali Khan led district-wide events, including a peaceful

walk from the DC Secretariat in Dasu to China Bridge, where participants formed a human chain to show unity with the Kashmiri people.

Citizens, religious scholars, youth, and government officials actively participated, chanting slogans for Kashmir's freedom.

In Battagram, an awareness seminar at Government Centennial Model High School highlighted Indian atrocities, enforced disappearances, and human rights violations in occupied Kashmir. Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Zia-ur-Rehman reaffirmed Pakistan's ongoing support for the Kashmiri people, followed by a solidarity rally to Kacheri Chowk.

In Lower Kohistan, a rally and symbolic walk were organized under the supervision of Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning Fida-ul-Kareem, with participants carrying banners supporting the Kashmiri right to self-determination and condemning Indian oppression.—DNA



MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore laying floral wreath at Azad Jammu and Kashmir Yadgar-e-Shuhada on the occasion of Kashmir solidarity day.

Nation united in solidarity with Kashmir: Zamurd

ISLAMABAD: Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Sweet Home Zamurd Khan said on Thursday that the Pakistani nation stood united under the flags of Pakistan and Kashmir, expressing solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (ILOJK).

Addressing a Kashmir rally, held in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day, he said this year's observance of Feb 5 reflected renewed national spirit and unity, sending as a clear message of support to Kashmiris.

Khan said children and youth across Pakistan were actively expressing solidarity with Kashmiris, particularly women and young people in the region, adding that they wished to assure them they were not alone.

Referring to the slogan "Kashmir will become Pakistan," he said many Pakistanis viewed it as an expression of emotional and historical connection with Kashmir, while expressing hope that the dispute would ultimately be resolved. He also referred to the first United Nations resolution on Kashmir adopted in 1947, noting that its implementation remained pending decades later, which he termed a continuing injustice to the Kashmiri people. Paying tribute to those who lost their lives in the conflict, Khan said their sacrifices symbolised as a lasting bond between Pakistan and Kashmir. He added that Pakistani youth would continue raising awareness about the Kashmir issue at national and international forums.—APP

AI seen as strategic tool to deepen Pakistan-China ties

ISLAMABAD: Artificial Intelligence can serve as a strategic tool to strengthen Pakistan-China media integration by fostering bilateral communication, quality journalism, economic cooperation and cultural connectivity. Speaking at a seminar, China International Press and Communication Center media fellow Muhammad Zameer, Asadi said that both countries are undergoing a phase of digital transformation, and AI-driven media cooperation could become a strong pillar of mutual engagement. He noted that AI is helping remove linguistic and communication barriers. Advanced AI-based translation, speech recognition, and real-time subtitling technologies allow Chinese and Pakistani media professionals to communicate seamlessly, enabling journalistic content, doc-

umentaries, interviews, and breaking news to be shared instantly in multiple languages. He added that this process not only enhances efficiency but also allows narratives to be presented with greater nuance and cultural sensitivity. As a result, the people of both countries gain direct access to each other's perspectives, leading to improved mutual understanding. Muhammad Zameer Asadi said AI could also promote joint journalism between Pakistani and Chinese media organizations. Intelligent data analysis can help journalists collaborate on issues such as economic development, climate change, public health, and regional connectivity.—APP

Feb 5 symbolises Pak's solidarity with Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said that February 5 symbolised the strong solidarity of the Pakistani nation, parliament, and state institutions with the people of Kashmir.

In his special message on Kashmir Solidarity Day, he said the day reaffirms Pakistan's firm commitment to stand with the Kashmiri people in their just struggle for the right to self-determination. The chairman said the people of Kashmir have made great sacrifices over several decades in their struggle for freedom. He added that serious human rights violations and continued Indian actions in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (ILOJK) remain a major test for the conscience of the

international community, and its silence is deeply disappointing. Gilani reiterated that Pakistan has always supported, and will continue to support, the legitimate right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people at diplomatic, political, and moral levels.

He urged the United Nations and other international forums to ensure the implementation of their resolutions and play an effective role in allowing the Kashmiri people to exercise their basic rights.

Referring to past leadership, he said Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto raised the Kashmir issue at the United Nations with courage and vision, setting an important example. He added that Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto also strongly

highlighted the Kashmir issue at international forums. Gilani said PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and President Asif Ali Zardari continue to maintain a clear and principled stance on Kashmir, in line with UN resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

In his concluding remarks, the chairman said all political parties, the people of Pakistan, and state institutions are united on the Kashmir issue. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to a just solution in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and United Nations resolutions. He added that Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan and said Pakistan will never abandon the Kashmiri people in their struggle.—APP

Visually impaired kids lead Solidarity Walk for Kashmir

ISLAMABAD: At D-Chowk on Shahrahe-Dastoor, a powerful message of Kashmir's freedom rose from voices that do not depend on sight. Visually impaired special children, deprived of physical vision but guided by inner light, gathered to show solidarity with the people of Kashmir. Their presence carried a clear message: freedom cannot be suppressed, and light cannot be imprisoned. The children took part in a peaceful walk from China Chowk to D-Chowk, turning Shahrahe-Dastoor into a symbol of unity and hope. With glowing faces and hearts lit by the belief in freedom, they explained to the world that liberty is a basic human right—one that no force, border, or darkness can deny. Speaking after the introductory remarks, Director Special Education Amir Khan said the children's awareness and courage reflected the true spirit of humanity and patriotism. He said special children are known not by limitations, but by strength, understanding, and moral clarity. He added that such activities help the world recognize their voice and their role in standing for justice. Guide Tariq Khan, who accompanied the visually impaired children, told APP that the excitement among the children began early in the morning. "All the children woke up very early today," he said. "They were full of energy and happiness because they knew they were going to stand in solidarity with the people of Kashmir. They kept saying that we have to give a message to the nations of the world—that freedom cannot be imprisoned." During the walk, Waleed and Abdullah spoke to APP with quiet confidence. Abdullah, a Class 6 student, said freedom belongs to every human being. "No one has the right to cage human souls," he said. "Freedom is a light that cannot be locked away." Muhammad Waleed and Asad, close friends, held each other's hands firmly as they shared their dream. They said that one day, God willing, they would go together to Kashmir. "It is living in darkness today," they said, "but one day it will be welcomed with the light of freedom." The emotions of Shehzeb and Nokar Ali were equally moving. They said the right to freedom belongs to Kashmiris. "We cannot see," they explained, "but we live in a free country. Because of that, we understand the value and the price of freedom better than many others." At D-Chowk, all the children formed a strong human chain, standing shoulder to shoulder. They pledged to keep raising their voices for Kashmir and to carry its message to the nations of the world. Their collective message was simple yet powerful: light cannot be silenced, and freedom cannot be caged. The walk proved that patriotism does not depend on sight. Even without vision, these children showed the world that the brightest light of freedom lives in the heart—and no prison can ever hold it.—DNA

Kundi vows to raise former FATA, PATA business concerns with authorities

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday held a meeting with the delegation comprising former FATA and PATA chambers' presidents and representatives of the business community at the Governor's House. The delegation included President Malakand Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inam Khan, Muhammad Shoaib, President Bajaur Chamber of Commerce Haji Lali Shah, President Mohmand Chamber of Commerce, Ameer Muhammad Khan, Khalid Khan from Khyber Chamber of Commerce, along with other members. Provincial President of Paki-

stan Peoples Party Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha was also present on the occasion. During the meeting, the delegation apprised the Governor of serious concerns of the business community regarding the frequent imposition of excessive taxes in the former FATA and PATA regions. They urged the Governor to take up these issues with the relevant federal authorities and play an effective role in resolving their problems. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said that the business community is the backbone of the national economy and addressing its issues on a priority basis is among the government's top responsibilities. He

assured the delegation that concerns related to taxes and other hurdles faced by businesses in the former FATA and PATA areas would be forcefully raised before the federal government and concerned institutions to ensure timely relief. Meanwhile, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi also held another meeting with the delegation of transporters from Islamabad, Punjab, and various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, led by President Mini Mazda Association Pakistan Tanveer Ahmed Jatt, at the Governor's House. During the meeting, the delegation informed the Governor that vehicles traveling from Punjab to Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa are facing difficulties from the Excise Department. They said that fines are being imposed on transporters on the pretext of route permits, passing, vehicle fitness, and overloading. The delegation added that old Mazda vehicles have been rehabilitated to ensure the smooth transportation of commercial goods and to avoid disruption to business activities.

The transporters requested the Governor to play his role in resolving the issues faced by the transport community. On the occasion, President Tanveer Ahmed Jatt also proposed holding a road safety seminar at the Governor House, Peshawar.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi listened attentively to the delegation's concerns and said that while the rule of law is essential, it is equally the responsibility of the government to facilitate transporters. He assured the delegation of his full cooperation in addressing their problems. Agreeing to the proposal of the Mini Mazda Association Pakistan, the Governor said that the Governor House is always available for positive and public-interest initiatives. He assured full support for the organization of a road safety seminar, terming it a constructive step towards promoting public safety and awareness.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

Feb 04/Sri Lanka National Day

Feb 06/N. Zealand National Day

Feb 06/Uganda Army Day

Feb 11/Iran Revolution day

Feb 16/DPR Korea National Day

Feb 16/Lithuania National Day

Feb 18/Gambia National Day

Feb 19/Nepal Democracy Day

Feb 23/Uzbekistan National Day

Feb 23/Brunei National Day

Feb 23/Guyana National Day

Feb 23/Russia National Army Day

Feb 23/Tajikistan Armed Forces Day

Feb 25/Kuwait National Day



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Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Uzbek President visits Global Industrial & Defence Solutions

The visit underscored the shared commitment of Pakistan and Uzbekistan to deepen collaboration in defence, technology, and industrial sectors. Both sides emphasized the importance of enhancing partnerships, knowledge exchange and joint ventures

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev along with senior ministers paid an official visit to Global Industrial & Defence Solutions (GIDS) as part of his visit to Pakistan. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF warmly received the Honourable President and the delegation and conducted them during the visit to the facility. During the visit, the President was briefed on the diverse portfolio of GIDS encompassing advanced defence solutions, industrial capabilities, and technological innovations. The delegation toured key facilities and witnessed various



defence products reflecting Pakistan's growing expertise in indigenous defence production and industrial development. The visit underscored the shared commitment of Pakistan and Uzbekistan to deepen collaboration in defence, technology, and industrial sectors. Both sides emphasized



the importance of enhancing partnerships, knowledge exchange and joint ventures. The visit marked a significant step toward strengthening bilateral ties and exploring multifarious avenues of cooperation between Pakistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Speakers urge global push to resolve Kashmir dispute

ISLAMABAD:Speakers at a webinar on 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' highlighted the deepening humanitarian crisis in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and called for a stronger international response to resolve the dispute in line with the Kashmiris' right to self-determination. The webinar titled "5th February, Kashmir Solidarity Day: Humanitarian Perspectives on Kashmir" was organized by Kashmir Media Service (KMS) in collaboration with the United Kashmir Journalists Association (UKJA) and moderated by senior journalist Dr Muhammad Ashraf and human rights activist Rais Ahmed Mir. Speaking on the occasion, Former Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Abdul Rashid Turabi, traced the historical background of Kashmir Solidarity Day and said it conveyed a clear message of Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the Kashmiri cause. He said the current global environment was conducive for raising the Kashmir issue and cited his participation in an international conference in Turkey attended by representatives from 60 countries as an example of growing global receptivity. He stressed the need to effectively present Kashmir's case at world forums despite challenges in securing

recognition of Kashmiris' right to self-determination. Senior All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader Sheikh Abdul Mateen said February 5 symbolized that Kashmiris were alive and steadfast, while Pakistan continued to act as their voice at every level. He termed Kashmir a nuclear flashpoint and emphasized the urgency of resolving the dispute to ensure regional peace, adding that Pakistan and Kashmir were inseparably linked. Another senior APHC leader, Syed Faiz Nagsbhandi, expressed gratitude to Pakistan for its consistent political, diplomatic and moral support. He said that despite the presence of around one million Indian troops, Kashmiris continued to express their affiliation with Pakistan by celebrating Pakistan Day and observing Indian Independence Day as a Black Day. He said Kashmir Solidarity Day was not a symbolic gesture but a continuous condemnation of Indian occupation, highlighting that the dispute originated in 1947 following the end of British rule and remained unresolved due to denial of Kashmiris' right to decide their future. Former AJK minister Farzana Yaqoob said Pakistan continued to pursue the legal battle based on UN resolutions. She said the Kashmiris' decision of July 19, 1947, to accede to Pakistan remained valid. She also stressed the importance of highlighting historical and contemporary human rights violations, including the 1947 Jammu massacre, and urged effective use of social media to expose Indian atrocities. Researcher on Conflict Dynamics, Soma Aslam, said Kashmir was an issue of colonization and denial of the right to self-determination, with India continuously violating international law through demographic engineering and repression. She said the issue had once again gained international attention, particularly in the humanitarian context, noting that hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris had lost their lives over decades due to massacres, suppression and economic and social crackdowns. Human rights activist Naila Kiyani emphasized the need to document and share Kashmiri stories, particularly those of women, through short films, dramas and digital media. She highlighted the mental health crisis in occupied Kashmir, citing international reports pointing to a shortage of medical professionals, and said solidarity reassured Kashmiris that they were not alone.

RMU Oncology Clinic marks three years of service

RAWALPINDI: As the world observed World Cancer Day under the theme "United by Unique", the Oncology Care Clinic at Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) is quietly completing three years of dedicated service, exemplifying the power of collective effort to bring quality cancer care to underserved communities. Launched in 2022 under the vision of Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Mohammad Umar, the Oncology Care Clinic (OCC) was established to serve as a dedicated facilitation center and help close the wide gap in accessible oncology services across Rawalpindi and adjoining regions, including Northern areas and Southern Punjab. Since its inception, the RMU Oncology Care Clinic has provided several essential services entirely free of cost, including biopsies, baseline laboratory investigations, and diagnostic imaging. These services have significantly lowered financial and logistical barriers, enabling earlier detection and timely intervention for many patients. The clinic is staffed by a compact but highly

committed team comprising a qualified medical oncologist, a medical officer, and dedicated nursing staff, delivering comprehensive supportive and ancillary care. A spokesman for Rawalpindi Medical University said that since its inception, the facility has served 962 patients, with over 95% of cases confirmed as malignancies. "The most frequently diagnosed cancers include hematological malignancies as the leading category, followed by gynecological cancers and breast cancer", he said. The spokesman added that every patient receives care through a structured multidisciplinary approach. "Regular Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings bring together specialists from surgery, radiology, gynecology, and other relevant disciplines. The clinic also maintains close collaboration with the Nuclear Oncology & Radiotherapy Institute (NORI) Hospital to ensure evidence-based, coordinated, and holistic treatment planning," he added. Although the Oncology Care Clinic is not yet formally recognized as a government-approved department, it

continues to function effectively under the umbrella of Rawalpindi Medical University. Its ongoing operations have been made possible through generous financial support and donations from RMU alumni and philanthropic partners, notably the Tahseen Sheikh Memorial Foundation, Dr Usman Azhar Sheikh, and Dr Sohail Aman. "On this World Cancer Day, the RMU Oncology Care Clinic stands as a living example of the 2026 theme "United by Unique", demonstrating how institutions, clinicians, donors, alumni, and communities can unite to deliver individualized, compassionate, and high-quality cancer care to every patient, regardless of their economic or geographic circumstances", the spokesman said. University officials emphasized that the clinic's journey over the past three years clearly shows how collaborative action can meaningfully reduce barriers, improve early diagnosis rates, and enhance outcomes for cancer patients in underserved regions of Punjab and beyond.—APP

Masood reiterates Kashmir central to Pakistan's identity

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Masood Khan, said Thursday that Pakistan was incomplete without Kashmir, asserting that the people of Jammu and Kashmir possessed an inalienable right to self-determination grounded in history, international law, and decades of sacrifice. According to press release, speaking at a Kashmir Solidarity event in Muzaffarabad, Ambassador Khan paid tribute to Qazi Hussain Ahmed for institutionalizing Kashmir Solidarity Day in the early 1990s and thanked the organizers for sustaining global awareness of the Kashmiri cause. He emphasized that solidarity with Kashmiris must be continuous, as Kashmir is not a peripheral issue but an integral part of Pakistan's national identity and historical destiny. Ambassador Khan underlined that Pakistan's legal claim to Jammu and Kashmir rested firmly

ly on the Indian Independence Act of 1947 and multiple UN Security Council resolutions, which mandate that the people of the territory decide their future through a UN-supervised plebiscite. He recalled that Kashmir met both criteria for accession to Pakistan—geographical contiguity and demographic composition—while also reflecting the clear aspirations of its Muslim majority population. Highlighting historical injustices, Ambassador Khan recalled the Jammu massacre of 1947, in which over 237,000 Muslims were killed and hundreds of thousands displaced through orchestrated violence involving RSS cadres, Dogra forces, and allied militias. He noted that this demographic engineering drastically altered the population balance in Jammu and laid the foundation for prolonged occupation and repression. He stressed

that even in the absence of international legal instruments, Kashmiris possess an inherent right to freedom, having resisted tyranny for nearly 200 years—from Dogra rule to modern Indian governance. He cited landmark sacrifices, including the martyrdom of 22 Kashmiris on July 13, 1931, as evidence of a long-standing struggle for dignity, liberty, and self-rule. Turning to developments after August 5, 2019, Ambassador Khan described the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir as "horrendous," marked by intensified militarization, political disenfranchisement, and systematic repression. He noted that nearly one million security personnel have been deployed across the territory, a posture consistent with occupation rather than integration.—APP

NA Speaker salutes sacrifices in counterterrorism drive

ISLAMABAD:National Assembly (NA) Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday lauded the security forces for successfully conducting the counterterrorism operation Radd-ul-Fitna-One in Balochistan. In his statement, the Speaker paid glowing tribute to the personnel who embraced martyrdom during the operation, saluting their supreme sacrifices for safeguarding the country's security. He said their supreme sacrifices for safeguarding the country's security would always be remembered. Expressing deep sorrow and grief over the loss of innocent civilian lives in terrorist attacks, the Speaker extended heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the bereaved families. He affirmed that the sacrifices rendered by the security forces in the war against terrorism were unforgettable. Ayaz Sadiq said the entire nation stood shoulder to shoulder with its armed forces in the fight against terrorism. He vowed that operations against terrorist elements would continue until their complete elimination, and declared that the nefarious designs of Pakistan's enemies would be thwarted on every front. The Speaker also prayed for the elevation of ranks of the martyrs and for patience and fortitude for their families.—APP

Rawalpindi hospitals put on high alert during basant

RAWALPINDI: In line with directives issued across Punjab, the Punjab Health & Population Welfare Department has ordered all government hospitals and health facilities in Rawalpindi to ensure special emergency medical arrangements from February 5 to 8 to effectively handle any potential emergency during this period. Instructions have been issued to all Chief Executive Officers of District Health Authorities, as well as Medical Superintendents of DHQ and THQ hospitals across the province. According to the official letter issued by the Health Department, special shift-wise duty rosters must be prepared and strictly implemented at all health facilities during the said dates. Separate duty rosters will also be prepared for consultants. The department has directed that all Emergency Departments remain fully operational 24 hours a day. Adequate stocks of essential medicines and supplies, including intravenous fluids, ORS, antibiotics and antipyretics must be ensured well in advance. Clear instructions have been given to make complete arrangements for handling trauma and surgical emergencies. The availability of specialist doctors, particularly physicians, surgeons and orthopedic surgeons along with paramedical and support personnel, must be guaranteed at all times. Operation Theatres and Radiology Departments have also been instructed to remain fully functional around the clock. The letter further states that Clinics on Wheels will be activated if required. Close coordination must be maintained with the district administration and Rescue 1122 services. Additionally, District Health Authorities have been directed to conduct regular visits to health facilities to ensure uninterrupted delivery of services during the specified period.—APP

Naqvi hails forces for 'Major Victory' in Rad-ul-Fitna 1

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday lauded Pakistan's security forces for successfully completing Operation Rad-ul-Fitna 1 in Balochistan, calling it a significant achievement in the fight against terrorism. In a statement, Naqvi said the forces had thwarted a major attempt to destabilize the province. He praised their professionalism and operational capability, noting that 216 militants linked to what he described as Fitna-e-AI-Hindustan had been eliminated during the operation. "The security forces have secured a major victory against these terrorists and foiled their conspiracy to spread unrest in Balochistan," he said. Naqvi added that the militants met a "humiliating end" as a result of the operation. The interior minister also paid homage to the security personnel and civilians who embraced martyrdom during the campaign. "Our martyrs are our pride, and their sacrifices will always be remembered," he said. Operation Rad-ul-Fitna 1 is being described by officials as part of a broader national effort to dismantle networks involved in violence and subversion in the region. Meanwhile, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday reiterated Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the people of Indian-occupied Kashmir, paying tribute to their decades-long struggle for freedom on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day. —APP

'Kashmir is Pakistan' ISPR releases new song on Solidarity Day

LAHORE: To express solidarity with the people of Kashmir, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) of the Pakistan Army has released a stirring new anthem titled, "Kashmir is Pakistan" on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day. The anthem is a powerful expression of unwavering love and support for the Kashmiri people. Its deeply moving lyrics convey the belief that Kashmir is the lifeblood of Pakistan, while highlighting the unparalleled sacrifices, resilience, and unwavering determination of the Kashmiri people. The song effectively captures their enduring spirit, patriotism, and quest for freedom, paying tribute to the courage, hope, and steadfast struggle of the oppressed Kashmiris.—APP

Pakistan to raise Kashmir's voice at every forum until justice is served: Rana

ISLAMABAD :Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as the country marked Kashmir solidarity day, pledging continued diplomatic, moral and political support for their just struggle for freedom, dignity and the right to self-determination. In a statement issued on the occasion, Rana Mashhood said the courage and resilience of the Kashmiri people in the face of prolonged oppression continue to inspire not only Pakistan but the world at large. He stressed that Pakistan remains firmly committed to raising the Kashmir issue at every national and international forum until justice is served. "On Kashmir Day, we stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of IIOJK in their legitimate struggle for freedom and dignity," he said, adding that Pakistan's support for Kashmiris is rooted in principle, conscience and international law. The chairman said the right to self-determination is a fundamental and inalienable right of the Kashmiri people, as enshrined in United Nations resolutions, and called upon the international community to play its role in ensuring peace and justice in the region. Rana Mashhood expressed hope that peace, freedom and justice would ultimately prevail in Kashmir, reiterating that Pakistan would continue to advocate for the Kashmiri cause until their voices are heard and their rights are realized.—APP

Briefs

China,
Pakistan
to lead by
example

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong said China is ready to work closely with Pakistan to lead by example on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) platform, strengthen multilateral cooperation and advance the Global Governance Initiative. Speaking at a seminar titled "25 Years of SCO: Towards Fair Global Governance, Shared Sustainable Development, and Multipolar Cooperation", the ambassador said safeguarding the rights and interests of the Global South requires aligning vision with concrete action. The seminar was jointly organised by the NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS) and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China. —APP

Gwadar
Airport sets
up Aeroplane
refuel station

DNA

ISLAMABAD: New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) established Aeroplane refuel station on temporary basis in collaboration with Pakistan State Oil (PSO), Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. Airport refueling station is a critical facility that ensures the timely and safe refueling of aircraft. It involves a complex system of equipment and processes that manage the delivery, storage, and dispensing of fuel. NGIA official told Gwadar Pro that efficient refueling operations are essential for maintaining flight schedules and ensuring passenger satisfaction. The station includes fuel delivery processes, equipment and facilities and general operation. Fuel delivery process involves the transport of fuel to the airport, testing, storage, and delivery to aircraft. Fuel can arrive by truck. Equipment and facilities include the infrastructure needed to receive, transport, store, and pump fuel. General operations are responsible for human interaction and environmental regulations. —APP

Prominent
cricket fan
'Chacha
Cricket'
hospitalized

SIALKOT: During Kashmir Solidarity event organized by the district administration in Sialkot, Sufi Abul Jalil, famously known as 'Chacha Cricket' became emotional and his condition deteriorated. According to Rescue-1122 here on Thursday, Chacha Cricket's health deteriorated during the ceremony held to express solidarity with the people of Kashmir. Rescue 1122 responded immediately and shifted him to Civil Hospital. His close friend and social worker, Abdul Shakoor Mirza, said that Chacha Cricket's condition has now improved and would be discharged shortly. —APP

SSP
Operations
Qazi rallies
commanders

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza on Thursday chaired an important meeting with zonal SPs, SD-POs and SHOs of relevant police stations to review policing matters and public service delivery. A police spokesperson told APP that the meeting focused on strengthening law and order, improving policing performance and ensuring effective service to citizens across the federal capital. During the meeting, the SSP Qazi issued special directives to officers regarding the discharge of official duties, stressing effective crime prevention, enhanced patrolling, transparent and quality investigations, and indiscriminate action against drug peddlers and illegal arms. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Roads of the Capital decorated with flags of Pakistan and Uzbekistan to welcome the Uzbek President on his two-day visit to Pakistan. Online

Kashmir solidarity
day marked at the
Viqar-un-Nisa college

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The District Administration Rawalpindi organized a ceremony at Government Viqar-un-Nisa College for Women to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering support for the Kashmiri people in their struggle for self-determination. Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi (DC) Dr Hassan Waqar Cheema, officers from various government departments, faculty members, prominent social figures, students and members of the college community. The program commenced with a one-minute silence observed in solidarity with the Kashmiri people and to express sympathy with

their ongoing suffering. This was followed by the rendition of the Pakistani national anthem. Students presented powerful tableaux highlighting the atrocities and human rights violations committed by Indian forces against the Kashmiri population. A special documentary was also screened, detailing the situation and Indian actions in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In his address, DC emphasized the enduring commitment of Pakistan and its people to the Kashmiri cause. "5th February is a day of renewed pledge. Pakistan will continue to extend its political, diplomatic, and moral support to our Kashmiri brothers", he said. He also reminded the audi-

ence of the quote by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, 'Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan'. He expressed confidence that the time is not far when Kashmir will become Pakistan. "The Pakistani nation has always stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Kashmiri people and will continue to do so forever", he said, reaffirming that every Pakistani will continue raising their voice for the just rights of the Kashmiri people. He called upon the United Nations and the international community to play their due role in enabling the Kashmiri people to achieve freedom in accordance with their aspirations. "The sacrifices of the Kashmiri people for freedom will never go in vain", he added.

He highlighted the severe restrictions imposed on Kashmiris. "Kashmiris are not even allowed to speak about their freedom," he said, adding that for the past 78 years, they have faced uncertainty in every sphere of life, business, education, and social activities. The ceremony concluded with a rally in which participants chanted slogans of "Kashmir Bane-ga Pakistan," demonstrating strong public solidarity with the Kashmiri struggle. The event served as a powerful reminder of Pakistan's consistent stance on the Kashmir issue and the collective resolve of the nation to stand with Kashmiris until they achieve their inalienable right to self-determination as promised by relevant United Nations resolutions.

PNCA marks
Kashmir Solidarity
Day with art

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) hosted a day-long program of cultural activities on Thursday to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, drawing a large number of visitors to exhibitions, performances and screenings focused on the region's people and heritage. Organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and States and Frontier Regions, the events aimed to highlight Kashmir's cultural narrative alongside Pakistan's political support for the cause. A photography exhibition in PNCA's main lobby, which opened on Wednesday and runs through Thursday, featured images documenting human rights violations in daily life, cultural traditions and social conditions in Kashmir. Ayesha Malik, a university student from Rawalpindi, said the visual format made the issue more relatable. "Reading about it is one thing, but seeing actual photographs of people and places gives you a different perspective," she said while viewing the exhibition "These events remind people that Kashmir has a rich cultural heritage beyond the political dimension," she said. Mohammad Aslam, who brought his grandson to the event, said he wanted the younger generation to understand the significance of the day. "It's important they know this isn't just a holiday but about real people and their struggles," he said. The exhibition included work by renowned photographers capturing landscapes, cultural events and community life. A documentary screening in PNCA traced Kashmir's history and contemporary situation through archival footage and personal accounts. Fatima Qureshi, a visitor, noted the documentary's focus on ordinary Kashmiris. "It presented the human side of the issue, which often gets lost in political discussions," she said. The program also included a puppet show for schoolchildren that used traditional puppetry to convey themes of peace and resilience. The performance proved popular with young audiences, many of whom were experiencing puppetry for the first time. Teacher Sadia Rehman, attending with her third-grade class, appreciated the age-appropriate approach. "It introduces complex themes in a way children can understand and remember," she said. The afternoon's main event was "Laho Rang-e-Kashmir," a theatrical production depicting individual and family experiences against the backdrop of Kashmir's recent history. —APP

Kashmir not
dispute but
a nuclear
flashpoint

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mulick, wife of incarcerated Hurriyat leader Muhammad Yasin Malik, on Kashmir Solidarity day warned that Kashmir is not merely a political dispute but one of the world's most dangerous nuclear flashpoints, as she issued a video message on Kashmir Solidarity Day urging the international community to end its silence over she described as systematic repression in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In her message, Mushaal Mulick said that Yasin Malik is currently confined to a death cell, alleging that the Indian government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is attempting to execute him in a bid to silence the Kashmiri leadership and suppress the freedom movement. She stressed that the issue was not limited to one individual or one family, but reflected a broader attempt to collectively punish and silence the entire Kashmiri nation. "Kashmir is not just a territorial issue; it is a nuclear flashpoint with serious implications for regional and global peace," she said, adding that keeping Yasin Malik in a death cell was tantamount to sentencing an entire people for demanding their legitimate rights. —APP

RCB organizes Kashmir
solidarity walk

RAWALPINDI: On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) organized a large Kashmir Solidarity Walk on Bank Road, which saw enthusiastic participation, including Deputy Executive Officer Nasir Kamal, nominated Cantonment Board member Zahid Iqbal Bakhtawari, representatives of the Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Cantonment Board officers and staff and a large number of citizens. The primary purpose of the walk was to express strong solidarity with the Kashmiri people and to raise a voice against the ongoing Indian atrocities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Participants carried banners and placards inscribed with slogans in support of the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination. The atmosphere echoed with powerful slogans in support of the Kashmiri people. Addressing the participants, Deputy Executive Officer Nasir Kamal said that February 5 is a day for the entire Pakistani nation to renew its firm resolve to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Kashmiri people in their legitimate struggle for freedom.

He highlighted that for several decades, Kashmiris have been enduring Indian oppression, violence, and grave violations of human rights, and expressed regret over the silence of the international community on these atrocities. He reaffirmed that Pakistan will continue to extend its moral, political, and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people at every level. He emphasized that Pakistan will keep highlighting the Kashmiri struggle for the right to self-determination on all international forums. He also urged the younger generation to play an active role in keeping the Kashmir issue alive and in shaping global public opinion in favor of justice for Kashmiris. At the conclusion of the walk, special prayers were offered for the martyrs of Kashmir, seeking elevation of their ranks, patience and solace for their families, and early freedom for the Kashmiri people. The participants expressed their unwavering commitment to continue supporting the Kashmiri cause at every level and to stand firmly with them until the realization of their just demands. —APP

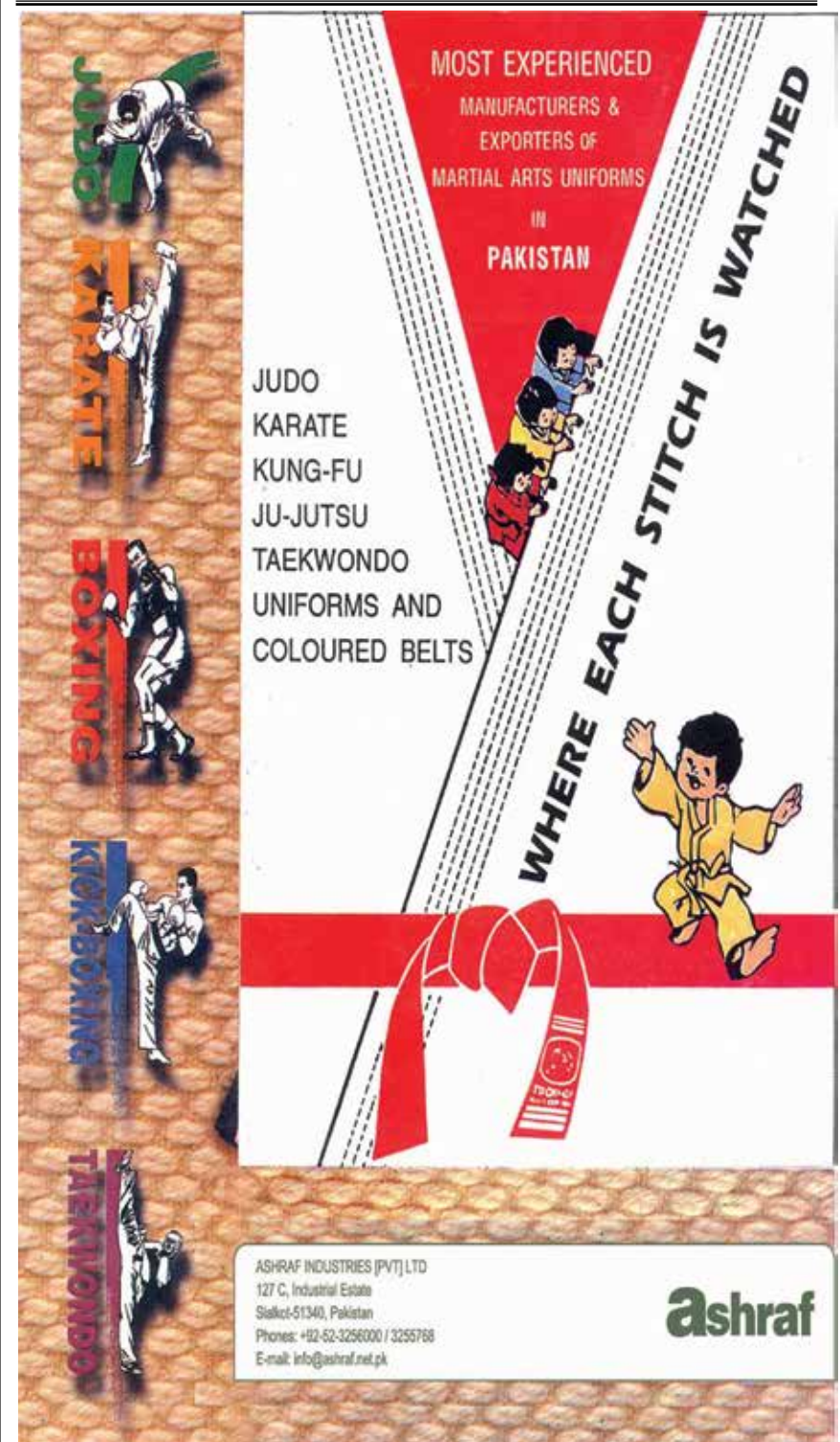
First Lady highlights
resilience of Kashmiri women

ISLAMABAD: First Lady, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, on Kashmir Solidarity Day, paid tribute to the resilience of Kashmiri women and youth living under occupation, reaffirming Pakistan's solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and their right to self-determination. In her message, the first lady drew particular attention to the suffering and strength of Kashmiri women. She said women remain at the frontline of the occupying force's war on fundamental rights. The mass graves of their families

represent only one part of a much larger reality. The silence imposed on entire communities is enforced through premeditated violence and brutal assaults against the women of the occupied valley. Despite this, the women of IIOJK continue to stand firm as leaders at the forefront of what remains the longest resistance to the brute colonisation of a disputed region in the world. The first lady expressed concern over persistent human rights violations in IIOJK, especially their impact on women and children. She noted that while women face intimidation and loss, children

are growing up under conditions of prolonged hardship that continue to shape their lives. Addressing the youth of Kashmir, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari acknowledged their central role in sustaining the freedom movement and urged them not to lose hope. She reaffirmed that the youth of Pakistan would continue to raise their voice internationally in support of their Kashmiri counterparts. The first lady also recalled that the observance of 5 February as a national day of solidarity was initiated 36 years ago by her mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir

Bhutto, and said that the people of Pakistan continue to stand firmly with the Kashmiri people in their just struggle. Reiterating Pakistan's moral, diplomatic and political support, she called upon the international community and the United Nations to honour their commitments and implement relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. She stressed that durable peace in South Asia remains linked to a just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. —APP



Iran must transform without triggering regional turmoil

HASSAN AL-MUSTAFA

SAUDI Defense Minister Prince Khaled bin Salman’s White House meetings with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Middle East Special Envoy Steve Witkoff last week addressed several key issues. The discussions included strategic bilateral relations, the trajectory of the Saudi-American partnership and mechanisms for its enhancement, alongside examining efforts to establish peace regionally and globally. The senior Saudi delegation arrived at a critical juncture, with American warships deployed across the Arabian Gulf and escalating possibilities of coordinated US-Israeli military strikes against Iran. Through this visit, Riyadh aimed to cement its alliance with the US within crisis-management parameters, while establishing firm boundaries against any escalatory trajectory that could ignite a “Gulf theater” with unmanageable consequences that potentially jeopardize vital energy interests and supply chains. Two days prior, on Jan. 27, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman received a call from Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. The crown prince declared that “the Kingdom will not permit its airspace or territory for any military operations against the Islamic Republic of Iran,” while reaffirming Saudi support for “resolving differences through dialogue.” Pezeshkian reciprocated with “gratitude to the Kingdom for its steadfast stance” and recognition of “the crown prince’s contributions toward achieving security and stability.” This transparent, energetic Saudi diplomacy stops short of offering Tehran’s regime a kiss of life or complimentary lifeline

This transparent, energetic Saudi diplomacy stops short of offering Tehran’s regime a kiss of life or complimentary lifeline absent fundamental, structural shifts in its foreign policy, particularly regarding Riyadh’s paramount concerns: Iran’s meddling in internal affairs, its backing of sleeper cells and armed militias, its ballistic missile program, and its nuclear ambitions. Through the 2023 Beijing Agreement framework, the Kingdom has pushed Iran toward policies grounded in good neighborliness, positioning it among the regional powers contributing to development, economic well-being and collective security. Riyadh’s approach substitutes isolation with direct engagement – dialogue intended to be candid and results-oriented rather than superficial courtesy or image management. Consequently, these four dossiers represent, sequentially, Riyadh’s fundamental stance toward Tehran. According to distinguished Saudi political commentator Abdulrahman Al-Rashed in his Asharq Al-Awsat piece “What will Iran become?” there are condi-

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tions, which include the hard-line faction aligned with the Revolutionary Guards ceasing interference in internal Saudi matters, terminating support for “armed cells,” and fundamentally recalibrating relationships with regional “substate actors.” In addition, Iran should construct a “political and military doctrine” not predicated on threatening neighboring nations and commit to civilian nuclear programs without developing nuclear weapons capacity. Then, “once objective conditions emerge in subsequent phases, substantial room exists for both nations to forge productive, constructive relations enhancing regional stability,” Al-Rashed wrote. In that same article, Al-Rashed observed that “Saudi Arabia and Iran are neighboring powers representing the region’s two pivotal axes,” arguing that “Iran under ‘normal circumstances’ possesses the potential to achieve wealth comparable to Gulf states without plundering Iraqi resources or extorting the West.” He continued: “It will rival us in energy markets, which should spur us to advance our economy, output and scientific and educational capacities.” Realizing Al-Rashed’s prospective vision demands an adaptable, enduring transformation in the Tehran regime’s inflexible political outlook. Iran should assess the power dynamics pragmatically and work to persuade the US of its partnership capacity. This should be manifested through concrete actions and reformed approaches toward Arab neighbors and the US, because “today’s developments represent neither transient escalation nor sudden crisis,” according to specialist Iranian affairs journalist Ali Hashem. Hashem contends we face “a moment in which a confrontation spanning the Iranian revolution’s entire existence is intensifying. Across nearly five decades, relations have fluctuated between open conflict and temporary thaw, yet the fundamental disagreement has remained constant.” He maintains “the dispute was never technical regarding nuclear matters, missiles or even regional sway, but political and ideological concerning Iran’s regional positioning and the limits of its acceptance within the international order, with its Israel stance at the core. “The other issues have functioned, across most periods, as tools for exerting pressure and managing conflict, not as its ultimate cause.” These circumstances demand Iran assess the power dynamics pragmatically and work to persuade President Donald Trump’s administration of its partnership capacity, enabling it, through direct channels and via intermediaries, to tip Trump’s calculus toward negotiation over military engagement. Warfare will probably not dislodge Iran’s regime, though it would substantially debilitate it and generate acute social fractures, potentially yielding counterproductive outcomes, as some predict. What remains certain, however, is universal interest in a change that leads to regional relaxation and internal reform, without chaos, the disintegration of state infrastructure or the ascendance of an extremist leadership that launches aggression against Arab neighbors. Will Tehran’s governing elite, particularly Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, execute audacious decisions that avert the threats to Iran and the region, while stripping justifications from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu? Will Trump offer the Iranians an arrangement preserving state prestige while declawing the wounded lion without destroying it, compelling Iran’s integration into a regional framework upholding security, peace and development? The answers are likely in the coming days.

Iran’s Strategic Victory without a Battlefield

Qamar Bashir

Economically, the calculus is equally unforgiving. Iran’s strength lies not in its economy but in its ability to disrupt the global economy. The Strait of Hormuz remains the world’s most sensitive energy chokepoint, and even limited instability there would send oil prices soaring. At a moment when global supply chains are already strained and inflation remains politically toxic in Western democracies, voluntarily triggering an energy shock would be an act of strategic self-harm. Europe, already grappling with immigration pressures, industrial...

WAR is not always decided by the side that fires the first missile. Sometimes it is decided by the side that convinces its adversary that pulling the trigger would cost more than standing down. In the current standoff between the United States and Iran, this quieter form of victory is precisely what Tehran has achieved. Despite overwhelming American military superiority, despite aircraft carriers moving into the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean, and despite the familiar language of deterrence and coercion, Iran has so far prevented a direct U.S. attack. This outcome is not accidental, nor is it a product of fear or retreat on Iran’s part. It is the result of a calculated, multidimensional strategy that exploits global fatigue with war, fractures within Western alliances, domestic pressures inside the United States, and the irreversible shift toward a multipolar world. If one were sitting in the Oval Office today, faced with the question of whether to strike Iran or step back, the decision would be far more complex than the raw military balance suggests. Iran is not Iraq in 2003, nor Libya in 2011. It is a large, populous, geographically fortified state with deep historical memory, layered alliances, and a proven capacity to absorb pressure while slowly turning it back on its adversaries. From a purely military perspective, the United States could inflict serious damage on Iranian infrastructure. But timing matters. Any attack launched in the midst of an ongoing Gaza war would instantly fuse multiple theaters into a single regional confrontation. Hezbollah’s posture in Lebanon, Hamas’s survival despite months of bombardment, and the latent activation potential of Iraqi, Syrian, and Yemeni fronts mean escalation would not remain contained. A strike on Iran would not be a discrete operation; it would be a spark in a room filled with gas. Target selection presents an even deeper dilemma. Hitting nuclear facilities risks regional environmental catastrophe and global economic shock. Targeting leadership would validate Iran’s long-standing narrative of external regime-change attempts and almost certainly unify the population rather than fracture it. Striking conventional military assets might satisfy tactical logic but would fail strategically, as Iran’s doctrine relies on dispersion, redundancy, and asymmetry rather than centralized command structures. In every scenario, the United States would be initiating a conflict whose second and third-order consequences are unknowable, but whose costs are guaranteed. Economically, the calculus is equally unforgiving. Iran’s strength lies not in its economy but in its ability to disrupt the global economy. The Strait of Hormuz remains the world’s most sensitive energy chokepoint, and even limited instability there would send oil prices soaring. At

a moment when global supply chains are already strained and inflation remains politically toxic in Western democracies, voluntarily triggering an energy shock would be an act of strategic self-harm. Europe, already grappling with immigration pressures, industrial decline, and political fragmentation, has made it clear it will not sign up for another Middle Eastern war that destabilizes markets and fuels domestic unrest. NATO’s reluctance is not ideological; it is existential. The geopolitical environment further constrains Washington. China views Iran not as a client, but as a critical node in its energy security and Belt-and-Road connectivity. Russia, locked in its own confrontation with the West, has every incentive to see American attention and resources diverted. Neither power needs to intervene militarily to shape outcomes; their diplomatic backing and economic engagement alone raise the cost of American escalation. The Islamic world, meanwhile, is no longer passive. Iran’s framing of resistance, sovereignty, and selective engagement resonates across Muslim societies that see double standards in how nuclear weapons, occupation, and self-defense are judged. Perhaps most underestimated is Iran’s mastery of narrative warfare. While Washington mobilizes fleets, Tehran mobilizes legitimacy. Iran’s leadership has projected calm, consistency, and defiance without theatrical bravado. There have been no panic signals, no evacuations, no visible fear. This composure matters. It signals confidence not only to allies but to adversaries, suggesting that Iran has already priced in escalation and prepared accordingly. In contrast, the United States has struggled to manage its own information environment. The most sustained criticism of a potential war with Iran has not come from foreign governments but from within American society itself. Journalists, academics, activists, and digital influencers have shaped a narrative that questions priorities, hypocrisy, and moral credibility. Protests in cities like Minneapolis are not isolated events; they are symptoms of a deeper crisis of legitimacy. When citizens see naval armadas deployed abroad while domestic grievances remain unresolved, the contrast becomes politically explosive. This internal pressure fundamentally alters presidential decision-making. Any move toward war would have to be justified not only to Congress and allies but to a skeptical public that remembers Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya all too well. The optics of defending foreign demonstrators or foreign governments while struggling to reconcile divisions at home weaken the moral authority required for sustained military action. Recent American actions elsewhere have only amplified this skepticism. Aggressive posturing toward Venezuela, including overt regime-change rhetoric and economic coercion, has drawn condemnation both internationally and domestically. Instead of reinforcing U.S.

leadership, these actions have reinforced perceptions of overreach and selective application of international norms. Each such episode chips away at the credibility needed to rally support for another confrontation. Against this backdrop, Iran’s refusal to accept externally imposed limits on its missile range or to hand over uranium stockpiles is not mere obstinacy; it is a defense of sovereign equality. The contrast with Israel, which possesses an undeclared nuclear arsenal outside international inspection regimes, is not lost on global audiences. The inconsistency in demands underscores Iran’s argument that the issue is not nonproliferation, but power hierarchy. Iran’s internal resilience also matters. The Iranian political system was born from mass mobilization, not foreign installation. This history shapes both governance and resistance. The leadership understands that legitimacy flows inward, not outward. That same awareness explains why Iran has focused on endurance rather than provocation, on patience rather than panic. If one were advising a U.S. president today, the pressures would converge toward restraint. Escalation risks regional war, economic shock, alliance fracture, and domestic backlash. De-escalation risks a perceived loss of face, but that loss is temporary and largely symbolic. War, by contrast, would be irreversible. This is where Iran’s success becomes evident. By refusing to be baited, by maintaining strategic calm, by aligning itself with broader global trends toward multipolarity, and by allowing the contradictions of American power to surface on their own, Iran has so far won without firing a shot. The fleets can linger, statements can harden, but as long as the trigger is not pulled, the outcome speaks for itself. In the end, power is not only the ability to destroy, but the ability to compel restraint in an adversary who possesses far greater destructive capacity. By that measure, Iran’s achievement is significant. It has transformed imminence into hesitation, pressure into paralysis, and threat into debate. For a superpower accustomed to dictating terms, hesitation itself becomes the story. And for a regional power long assumed to be on the defensive, survival without submission becomes a form of victory. The greatest irony is that Iran’s success exposes a deeper truth about the current world order: brute force no longer guarantees compliance, and credibility cannot be enforced by aircraft carriers alone. In a world shaped by narrative, networks, and multipolar constraints, restraint can be the most powerful weapon of all. – Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France Former Press Attaché to Malaysia Former MD, SRBC Macomb, Michigan

Gaza victims deserve day in court

Osama Al-Sharif

Israel is already facing two international legal challenges: a charge of genocide is being investigated by the International Court of Justice and arrest warrants have been issued against Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes. But the former may take many months and even years to make a final ruling. So far, Netanyahu has evaded capture and is unlikely to be handed over to The Hague. In addition, the Trump administration and the US Congress have imposed sanctions on International Court of Justice judges and on...

AS Israel’s war on Gaza continues, a new battleground is emerging – not in bombed-out streets but in courtrooms across Europe, Latin America and beyond. From Brussels to Berlin, a growing number of legal activists are building what they hope will become an unstoppable wave of accountability for the 70,000-plus Palestinians killed and countless others displaced, injured or traumatized. The question is no longer whether Israel will face legal consequences but when – and from how many directions. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is doing his best to sabotage US President Donald Trump’s peace plan for the embattled enclave. But as various interlocutors work to pave a path forward – one that would install a Palestinian committee to run Gaza, deploy a multinational stabilization force there and push Israeli forces out of the Strip – an end to the war should not mean allowing Israel to walk away from the bloodbath it has inflicted on more than 2 million Palestinians. On the contrary, there has to be a process that holds Israel accountable for the tens of thousands of war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed and sadly continue to take place on a daily basis, even after a ceasefire agreement came into effect last October. To be precise, an international effort must be launched to bring to justice every person in the Israeli political and military establishments who has either enabled or been directly responsible for every documented crime that has taken place in Gaza since Israel waged its war. After much resistance and many attempts to distort the facts, Israel’s military has finally admitted that Gaza’s death toll has surpassed 70,000. That figure coincides with Gaza Health Ministry estimates, which now stand at more than 71,000, with an important caveat: there remain thousands of Palestinians missing, believed to be under the rubble or in Israeli detention facilities. This figure includes more than 20,000 children who have been killed by Israel. There has to be a process that holds Israel accountable for the tens of thousands of war crimes committed in Gaza. Israel is already facing two international legal challenges: a charge of genocide is being investigated by the International Court of Justice and arrest warrants have been issued against Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes. But the former may take many months and even years to make a final ruling. So far, Netanyahu has evaded capture and is unlikely to be handed over to The Hague. In addition, the Trump administration and the US Congress have imposed sanctions on In-

ternational Court of Justice judges and on the International Criminal Court prosecutor, in addition to issuing direct threats against all those involved. Israeli war crimes and brazen violations of international laws and the Geneva Conventions extend throughout the Occupied Territories, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Palestinians have been killed, imprisoned without trial or even charges, terrorized, tortured, raped, had their homes destroyed, lands confiscated, and deported illegally for decades. Human rights organizations, including Israeli ones, have tens of thousands of documents incriminating successive Israeli governments. It is now time for individual cases to be brought to light and pursued through legal channels. The Palestinian Authority has been intimidated into sitting on the sidelines and not lodging cases on behalf of thousands of Palestinian victims. But there are many other ways in which legal cases can be brought against Israel: inside Israel, in Europe and in the US. Israeli victims of Palestinian attacks have filed cases against the PA in American courts. Palestinian American victims of Israeli crimes must do the same in American courts and beyond. The Gaza war provides ample evidence for tens of thousands of Palestinian victims to seek accountability and compensation. While the vast majority of victims lack access to legal advice and the financial means to seek justice in Western courts, there are cases where civic coalitions can provide both. In the aftermath of the horrific killing of the young Palestinian girl Hind Rajab, along with her family, in Gaza by Israel, a group of European activists formed the Hind Rajab Foundation in Brussels in 2024. The foundation is a nonprofit legal initiative that focuses on documenting and litigating alleged Israeli war crimes and broader violations in Palestine, particularly Gaza. It is described as the legal arm of the March 30 Movement, a transnational activist network focused on confronting what it calls Israeli apartheid and genocide. It is devoted to “breaking the cycle of Israeli impunity” by researching, documenting and building legal cases on war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against Palestinians. The Hind Rajab Foundation specializes in “offensive litigation” – filing complaints under universal jurisdiction laws and before international bodies. It has submitted dossiers on hundreds of named Israeli soldiers and officials in multiple jurisdictions (including the International Criminal Court and courts in Europe, Latin America and Asia). The Gaza war provides ample evidence for tens of thousands of Palestinian victims to seek accountability. While there is no public record yet of an Israeli soldier

or official being arrested or indicted solely because of a complaint by the foundation, many complaints have been formally registered and forwarded to prosecutors or investigative judges, meaning the cases have cleared the first hurdle of admissibility and registration, rather than being summarily rejected. What is encouraging is that several small but growing similar initiatives are forming, especially in Europe. These include Global 195, a worldwide legal coalition launched in March 2025 by the UK-based International Centre of Justice for Palestinians. The European Legal Support Center, Law for Palestine and the Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy have jointly filed criminal complaints (for example, in Germany), accusing Western officials of aiding and abetting genocide in Gaza, using similar lawfare and universal jurisdiction strategies. A number of Palestinian and solidarity organizations (such as Al-Haq, International Centre of Justice for Palestinians branches and regional “justice for Gaza” platforms) now run specialized “accountability units” focused on building war crimes cases and complicity files for domestic courts and international bodies, often coordinating with or paralleling the Hind Rajab Foundation’s approach. But the pace must be picked up, with governments and international media bodies moving to pressure Israel to allow foreign journalists into Gaza, as well as human rights and war crimes experts. Academics must also work together to bring cases against Israel’s destruction of all of Gaza’s universities, as well as the cold-blooded murder of professors, doctors, medics and others. Israeli crimes in Gaza have not stopped. Israel continues to shell shelter centers while weaponizing the delivery of aid and medicines to this day. Each incident provides legal grounds for investigation and indictment under various laws and conventions. In a just world, Israel would be facing an international tribunal for its criminal behavior in Gaza, specifically, and elsewhere in the Occupied Territories. That may come true one day. But meanwhile, the rights of tens of thousands of Palestinian victims can still be presented to various courts. Thanks to many organizations, there is substantial documentation of Israeli crimes and those who stood behind them. The message must be clear: the time for Israeli impunity has elapsed and, sooner or later, it will be held accountable. The question now is not whether accountability will come, but if the international community has the courage to ensure it does – case by case, court by court, until justice is no longer optional. – Osama Al-Sharif is a journalist and political commentator based in Amman. X: @plato010

Briefs

Law & order: govt, army on same page

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to combat terrorism. The agenda of the KP government is that only good governance and public interest can unite the nation against terrorism,” read the statement. In the first phase, the areas affected by terrorism will be transformed into model good governance districts, it added. The meeting vowed to tackle the province’s deprivations through development and social services, using all government resources, read the declaration. The forum decided that in areas where temporary displacement has taken place, the government will ensure full care, rehabilitation and provision of basic needs to the affected people. Dignified return of the IDPs is the government’s top priority, it added.

Pakistan reaffirms unwavering support...

FROM PAGE 01
In his message, President Asif Ali Zardari said the people of Pakistan stand united with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their ongoing struggle. The president recalled that the observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day was initiated 36 years ago by Shaheed Mohatma Benazir Bhutto following the historic Kashmiri uprising of 1989, a movement that continues to this day. He paid tribute to what he described as the indomitable spirit and resilience of the Kashmiri people, stating that for nearly eight decades they have remained steadfast in the face of illegal Indian occupation and have rendered immense sacrifices for their fundamental rights and freedoms. President Zardari expressed deep concern over the prevailing situation, saying the unilateral and illegal actions of August 5, 2019, have further aggravated the plight of the Kashmiri people.

Pakistan assumes chairmanship of DCO

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She said Pakistan would work to strengthen global cooperation in digital development, cybersecurity, digital inclusion and artificial intelligence during its term. The DCO is an international platform that promotes cooperation among member states in the digital economy, digital infrastructure and data governance. During Pakistan’s chairmanship, the organization will focus on digital education, online safety and equal access to technology. Shaza Fatima said Pakistan would ensure that the benefits of digital progress reach youth, women and all member countries. She said Pakistan’s leadership role would improve the country’s standing in global digital policymaking and create new opportunities for cooperation in advanced technology sectors.

Security forces...

FROM PAGE 01
Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) terrorists in different parts of Balochistan over the last weekend. Terrorists struck civilians in Quetta, Mastung, Nushki, Dalbandin, Kharan, Panjgur, Tump, Gwadar, and Pasni on January 31. The attacks, since then, have drawn condemnations from countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Türkiye, Iran, UAE, France, Canada, the European Union, the OIC, the UNSC and others. Expanding on the counterterror operations, the military’s media wing said that operations were initiated in Panjgur and the outskirts of Harnai district on January 29 2026 after credible and verified intelligence confirmed the presence of terrorist elements posing an imminent threat to local public.

FEDMC leasing model may hurt exports, warns PHMA

Ahmad Afzal Awan further stressed that any increase in the price of industrial plots would be unacceptable to the exporter community

DNA

FAISALABAD: The proposed plan by the Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Company (FIEDMC) to allocate industrial plots under a leasing model could adversely affect exporters and slow industrial growth, warned Ahmad Afzal Awan, Senior Vice Chairman of Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PHMA), North Zone on Thursday. In a statement, Awan said exporters require ownership security and long-term stability to make substantial investments in machinery, infrastructure and compliance with international standards. He expressed concern that a leasing model would create uncertainty, discourage long-term planning and weaken the confidence of exporters already facing high energy costs, financial constraints and tough global competition. He said Faisalabad remained the backbone of the country’s textile and hosiery exports, adding that any policy limiting industrial ownership could negatively affect export volumes, employment and foreign exchange earnings. “Instead of facilitating industrialists, such bureaucratic measures may push investors away and could force some export-



that both countries would achieve new milestones through cooperation in education, science and technology. He said detailed discussions had been held on various aspects of bilateral relations, including trade, investment and overall economic cooperation. He noted that as a result of constructive dialogue, the two sides had signed a protocol aimed at increasing bilateral trade volume. Describing Pakistan as a close friend and reliable partner, the Uzbek president appreciated the efforts of PM Shehbaz for economic stability and development, saying his leadership and initiatives were commendable. Earlier, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on Thursday arrived here to a red carpet welcome for a two-day state visit to Pakistan, at the invitation of PM Shehbaz Sharif. As the Uzbek president, accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising senior cabinet ministers and business leaders, landed at Nur Khan Airbase from his special aircraft, he was warmly welcomed by President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar and Special Assistant to the PM Haroon Akhtar were also present.

Rising euro, falling inflation in focus at ECB meeting

FRANKFURT: A rising euro and falling inflation will present fresh challenges for the European Central Bank at its meeting Thursday, potentially reviving debate about if and when policymakers should start cutting interest rates. There is little doubt that the central bank for the 21-nation single-currency area will keep its benchmark rate on hold at two percent for its fifth straight meeting. But a marked strengthening of the euro last week, followed by news that eurozone inflation eased to 1.7 percent in January – below the ECB’s two-percent target – will invite questions about whether rate cuts are on the horizon. A stronger currency makes imports cheaper, which could drive inflation down even further – potentially leading consumers to delay purchases, with negative ripple effects across the economy. But a strong euro can also weigh on the eurozone’s crucial exporters, particularly Germany, as it makes the cost of companies’ goods pricier overseas. – Agencies

Undav pokes Stuttgart past Kiel into German Cup semis

KIEL: An unconventional Deniz Undav toe-poke put Stuttgart on track for a 3-0 win at Holstein Kiel on Wednesday and the semi-finals of the German Cup. With Stuttgart leading 1-0 and Kiel chasing an equaliser in the dying stages, Undav set up Chris Fuehrich’s final-minute goal to put the match out of reach. Stuttgart added another in slapstick fashion when Atakan Karazor fell in the box and squeezed the ball over the line with his hip in stoppage time. “The conditions were very, very difficult – difficult pitch, difficult weather and an opponent who made us uncomfortable, but all that counts is we made it to the next round,” Fuehrich told ZDF. “That was our objective, that’s what we prepared for.” It is the third time in four seasons that Cup holders Stuttgart, winners on four occasions, have reached the semi-finals of the competition. In subzero conditions in Germany’s frozen north, Kiel impressed against their heavily fancied opponents but were unable to make it count in a match with few clear chances for either side. “We knew what awaited us with the cold. It was a hard game. The Kielerers are used to the cold – not us,” Undav said. With 56 minutes gone, Angelo Stiller swung in a free-kick and Undav made space in a crowded box before getting his toe to the ball, which drifted over the defence and under the crossbar. Kiel had a late chance to level things up when Aldin Jakupovic broke free with just Stuttgart goalkeeper Alex Nuebel to beat, but scuffed his shot wide. Fuehrich and Karazor’s late goals added Stuttgart gloss to the victory. Winners in 2025, Stuttgart join 2024 winners Bayer Leverkusen in the final four. Next week, 2022 and 2023 winners RB Leipzig travel to 20-time champions Bayern Munich, while Hertha Berlin host Freiburg. The draw for the semi-finals will be held in Dortmund on February 22, with the final to take place at Berlin’s Olympic Stadium on May 23. – Agencies

Pakistan urges UNSC to sanction BLA

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BLA under the 1267 sanctions regime, according to the listing request that is currently under consideration,” said Pakistan’s Permanent Representative Ambassador Asim Iftikhar while speaking at UNSC briefing titled “Threats to International Peace and Security caused by Terrorist Acts”. The UNSC’s 1267 sanctions regime covers terrorist organisations such as Daesh and Al-Qaeda and requires UN members to adopt measures including freezing of assets, travel ban and arms embargo concerning individuals associated with the designated organisation. Pakistan’s stance is to be taken in the context of recent coordinated attacks by India-sponsored Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists across parts of Balochistan, which resulted in the martyrdom of at least 22 security personnel and 36 civilians. Terrorists struck civilians in Quetta, Mastung, Nushki, Dalbandin, Kharan, Panjgur, Tump, Gwadar, and Pasni on January 31. A sweeping counterterrorism crackdown has since left 197 militants dead in the province.

PM reaffirms unwavering support...

FROM PAGE 01

Chaudhry Noor Hussain, among the founding political figures of AJK. The house observed Fateha for the departed soul. The prime minister saluted martyrs of the Kashmir struggle from Burhan Wani to veteran leader Syed Ali Geelani and paid homage to leaders, activists, journalists, women and children, including Asiya Andrabi, Yasin Malik and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. He said the blood of innocent Kashmiris had exposed India’s narrative before the world. PM Shehbaz Sharif said Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had declared Kashmir as Pakistan’s jugular vein, which continues to form the basis of Pakistan’s foreign policy. He maintained that durable peace in South Asia was not possible unless India abandoned its hegemonic ambitions and respected the fundamental rights of Kashmiris.

Special protection unit for...

FROM PAGE 01

deep sympathy for the affected families, underscoring that China “stands in complete solidarity” with Pakistan during this difficult time. Ambassador Zaidong reiterated China’s firm stance against terrorism in all its forms and assured continued cooperation in Pakistan’s counter-terrorism efforts. Briefing the envoy, Minister Naqvi said the attacks in Balochistan were “organised and premeditated,” but security forces responded swiftly and effectively. He outlined ongoing operations as well as enhanced protective measures for Chinese citizens and projects across the country, emphasising that “a special protection unit is being established exclusively for the security of Chinese nationals,” Naqvi said, adding that modern Chinese technology will further strengthen coordinated counter-terrorism operations.

Ukraine and Russia exchange...

FROM PAGE 01

EPA/Shutterstock A hand-out screenshot from a video released by the Russian defence ministry shows Russian soldiers – draped in Russian national white-blue-and-red flags – riding on a bus after a prisoner exchange with Ukraine. Photo: 5 February 2026EPA/Shutterstock. The exchanged Russian soldiers were currently staying in Belarus, the Russian defence ministry said. Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In a post on social media, Zelenskyy wrote that Thursday’s prisoner exchange “took place after a long pause” – referring to the previous such swap last October.

Google-parent revenue tops \$400 billion as AI spending surges

SAN FRANCISCO: Google parent Alphabet said Wednesday that it brought in \$113.8 billion in the final three months of 2025, powered by its core search business and cloud computing, as it ramped spending on artificial intelligence. The tech giant said revenue jumped 18 percent year-on-year in the quarter, and overall annual revenue topped \$400 billion for the first time at the company founded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin in 1998. “We’re seeing our AI investments and infrastructure drive revenue and growth across the board,” said Alphabet chief executive Sundar Pichai. Alphabet reported profit of \$34.5 billion in the recently ended quarter as revenue from cloud computing soared 48 percent to \$17.7 billion. The strong earnings came as Alphabet ramps up capital spending to meet surging demand for AI infrastructure. The company expects capital expenditures between \$175 billion and \$185 billion in 2026, double its 2025 spending, to meet customer demand for AI products. Google’s core search and advertising business remained the primary revenue driver, generating \$82.3 billion, up from \$72.5 billion a year earlier. YouTube advertising revenues also grew strongly to \$11.4 billion from \$10.5 billion. Google said it now counts over 325 million paid subscriptions across consumer services, including Google One and YouTube Premium. The cloud division, which competes with Amazon Web Services and Microsoft Azure, has become a key growth engine for Alphabet. Google’s Gemini AI continued to grow quickly, ending the year with 750 million monthly users. – Agencies

UN experts condemn Moscow court’s convictions

GENEVA: UN human rights experts on Wednesday condemned a Moscow court’s conviction in absentia of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and eight sitting judges, calling the move “a flagrant violation of international law.” On Dec. 12, the Moscow City Court sentenced ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan and eight judges on charges linked to what Russian authorities described as the “unlawful prosecution of Russian citizens.” The officials were handed prison terms ranging from 3.5 to 15 years, with Khan receiving 15 years, and were declared internationally wanted. “These convictions are legally null and void under international law,” the experts said in a statement. “It is an unprecedented attempt to criminalize the exercise of independent judicial and prosecutorial functions of an international court.” – APP

Sony shares soar after forecast hike

Trade officials in July reached a deal that saw Washington lower tariffs on Japanese goods to 15 percent from a threatened 25 percent. The upbeat message about its gaming business comes despite the fact that Sony’s PlayStation 5, which launched in 2020, is beginning to get old

TOKYO: Shares in Japanese giant Sony gained almost six percent on Thursday after it hiked its full-year sales and profit forecasts, as the weaker yen helped its PlayStation video games division. The firm expects net profit of 1.13 trillion yen (\$7.2 billion) in the 2025-26 fiscal year, up from its previous projection of 1.05 trillion yen given in November, and a six-percent rise on last year. It also increased its revenue forecast to 12.3 trillion yen from 12.0 trillion yen and its operating profit projection to 1.54 trillion yen from 1.43 trillion yen, a statement said. In the previous year, Sony posted a net profit of 1.07 trillion yen, sales of 12.0 trillion yen and operating profit of 1.28 trillion yen. Its forecast for the estimated impact of tariffs imposed on Japanese imports by US President Donald Trump’s administration remained at 50 billion yen. Trade officials in July reached a deal that saw Washington lower tariffs on Japanese

goods to 15 percent from a threatened 25 percent. The upbeat message about its gaming business comes despite the fact that Sony’s PlayStation 5, which launched in 2020, is beginning to get old. While it increased its forecast for revenues for its Games and Network Services (G&NS) division to 4.6 trillion yen, this is down from last year’s 4.7 trillion yen. Important for the PlayStation’s continued sales is the hotly anticipated upcoming release of “Grand Theft Auto VI”. GTA’s creators Rockstar Games last year again delayed the launch, this time until November. Sony’s announcement comes a day after shares in Nintendo, maker of the rival Switch 2, dived 11 percent on concerns over software sales and the impact of a memory chip shortage on its consoles. The AI boom has pushed up prices and shipments of conventional NAND and DRAM memory chips, while demand for high-bandwidth memory (HBM) chips used in AI servers has soared. – DNA

Dallas deals Davis to Wizards in blockbuster NBA trade: report

The Cleveland Cavaliers made their deal for James Harden official on Wednesday, a day after multiple reports revealed the 11-time NBA All-Star guard was leaving the Los Angeles Clippers for the Cavs in exchange for guard Darius Garland

WASHINGTON: Anthony Davis, a 10-time NBA All-Star forward, was traded by the Dallas Mavericks to Washington in a blockbuster deal involving eight players and five NBA Draft picks, ESPN reported on Wednesday. Davis, the top overall pick in the 2012 NBA Draft, was traded to the Mavs last February by the Los Angeles Lakers in the deal that sent Luka Dončić in the opposite direction. On Wednesday, ESPN cited unnamed sources in reporting the Mavericks sent Davis, Jaden Hardy, D’Angelo Russell and Dante Exum to the Wizards. In exchange, Washington sent Dallas Khris Middleton, AJ Johnson, Malaki Branham,

Marvin Bagley III plus two first-round draft picks and three second-round selections, according to the report. The swap will give the Mavericks a first-round pick from Oklahoma City in this year’s NBA Draft and a 2030 first-round pick from the Wizards plus second-round choices in 2026, 2027 and 2029 obtained in prior deals with other clubs. Several deals came ahead of Thursday’s NBA trade deadline, with Milwaukee’s Greek star big man Giannis Antetokounmpo and Ja Morant of Memphis the biggest names also expected to be on the move. The Cleveland Cavaliers made their deal for James Harden official on

Wednesday, a day after multiple reports revealed the 11-time NBA All-Star guard was leaving the Los Angeles Clippers for the Cavs in exchange for guard Darius Garland. “James Harden has cemented himself as an all-time great in this league and he adds another elite playmaker and All-NBA talent to our roster,” Cavs president of basketball operations Koby Altman said. “We’re excited about the impact he will have on our group and our championship aspirations. His presence will elevate our offense, create opportunities for teammates and bring valuable playoff experience at both ends of the floor.”

Davis, 32, has struggled with injuries over many years. He has averaged 20.4 points, 11.1 rebounds, 2.8 assists, 1.7 blocked shots and 1.1 steals in 20 games for Dallas this season. His career averages are 24.0 points, 10.7 rebounds, 2.6 assists 2.3 blocks and 1.3 steals per contest. The Wizards, second-worst in the Eastern Conference at 13-36, add Davis to a lineup that includes four-time NBA All-Star guard Trae Young, obtained last month in a deal with Atlanta. The Mavericks, 19-31 and on a five-game losing skid, add financial flexibility plus future draft picks to help rebuild the squad around star rookie Cooper Flagg. – Agencies

Briefs

**Gold prices
rise by
Rs14,800 per
tola**

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices witnessed an increase in the local market on Thursday, as the price of 24-karat gold per tola rose by Rs14,800 to settle at Rs 529,162, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Likewise, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs 12,689 to Rs 453,671, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up by Rs 11,632 to Rs 415,880. The price of silver also recorded an upward trend, with per tola silver increasing by Rs 109 to Rs 9,255, whereas the price of 10 grams of silver rose by Rs 93 to Rs 7,934. In the international market, gold prices surged by \$148 to \$5,064 per ounce, while silver prices increased by \$1.09 to \$87.80 per ounce. —APP

**China's
gold output
increases,
investment
demand
surges**

BEIJING: China's gold production edged up in 2025 while overall consumption declined, amid a shift from jewelry toward investment products.

The country produced 381,339 tonnes of gold last year, up 1.09 percent year on year, while output from imported raw materials rose 8.81 percent to 170,681 tonnes, data published by (Xinhua) from the China Gold Association showed on Thursday.

The association said that a number of exploration, development and technology projects had achieved phased breakthroughs in 2025. On the consumption side, gold consumption totaled 950,096 tonnes last year, down 3.57 percent from a year earlier, as jewelry demand fell sharply while purchases of gold bars and coins jumped, marking the first instance of annual investment gold levels overtaking jewelry consumption in China. Trading activity related to gold surged across domestic markets, with total gold turnover rising strongly on both the Shanghai Gold Exchange and the Shanghai Futures Exchange, reflecting heightened participation within a context of elevated prices. Higher prices also drove robust inflows into gold exchange-traded funds (ETF), which added 133,118 tonnes during the year, surging 149.91 percent from the volume recorded in 2024 and lifting total ETF holdings to 247,852 tonnes by the end of December, according to the data. —APP

**CJ to cut
sugar, flour
prices to help
curb inflation**

SEOUL: CJ Cheiljedang Corp., a major South Korean food company, said Thursday it will lower retail prices of sugar and flour products by up to 6 percent this week to help ease inflationary pressure. The company said prices of its Baek-sul-brand white and brown sugar, as well as flour products, will be reduced by up to 6 percent starting Friday.

"The price cuts reflect recent declines in international raw sugar and wheat prices, and are in line with the government's efforts to stabilize consumer prices," a company spokesperson said. The move is also aimed at easing household financial burdens ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday later this month, he said. CJ Cheiljedang said it will notify convenience stores, discount chains and supermarkets of the price cuts Friday, adding that the timing of retail price adjustments for consumers will depend on individual retailers' decisions. Last month, the company lowered its business-to-business (B2B) prices for sugar and flour by an average of 6 percent and 4 percent, respectively. On the same day, Samyang, the country's third-largest sugar producer after CJ Cheiljedang and TS Corporation Co., said it would cut consumer prices for sugar and flour by up to 6 percent this month. —APP

Gilani calls for multilateral Pakistan–Cambodia ties

Gilani also highlighted the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC) held in Islamabad in November 2025, describing it as a landmark initiative in parliamentary diplomacy. He welcomed Cambodia's participation and interest in hosting a future ISC conference



ISLAMABAD :Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, Senator Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, met with Samdech Maha Rathsapheathika Thipadei Khuon Sudary, President of the National Assembly of Cambodia, to reaffirm the strong and friendly relations between the two countries. The chairman is in Cambodia on an official visit. Gilani conveyed warm greetings on behalf of the Senate of Pakistan and expressed deep respect for the National Assembly of Cambodia, said a news release. He congratulated Khuon Sudary

on her historic election as the first woman President of Cambodia's National Assembly, calling it a milestone for gender equality and inclusive leadership. He also praised Cambodia's socio-economic progress and political stability, noting the long-standing bilateral ties based on mutual respect, shared interests, and close cooperation in multilateral forums. Gilani appreciated Cambodia's active role in regional cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy and thanked the country for supporting Pakistan's UN

Security Council membership for 2025–26. Emphasizing parliamentary cooperation, the chairman reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening exchanges through Parliamentary Friendship Groups, institutional dialogue, and inter-parliamentary forums, including the Asian Parliamentary Assembly. He highlighted his personal engagements with Cambodia, including his participation in the Asia Pacific Cambodia Conference 2019, meetings with former Prime Minister Hun Sen, his visit in July 2023 as an international election

observer, and recent interactions with senior Cambodian leadership at international forums. He said these engagements reflect Pakistan's strategic outreach to Southeast Asia. Gilani also highlighted the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC) held in Islamabad in November 2025, describing it as a landmark initiative in parliamentary diplomacy. He welcomed Cambodia's participation and interest in hosting a future ISC conference. Both sides stressed the need to expand cooperation in trade, investment, climate resilience, defense dialogue,

people-to-people exchanges, and cultural diplomacy, including their shared Buddhist heritage linked to Pakistan's Gandhara civilization. The chairman reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to deepening bilateral ties with Cambodia and welcomed continued high-level parliamentary engagement to advance peace, connectivity, and inclusive development. Senators Dr Zarqa Suharwardy Taimoor, Abid Sher Ali, Zameer Hussain Ghumro, and Advisor to the Chairman and ISC Ambassador Misbah Khar accompanied Gilani during the meeting.—DNA

GCC, India relaunch negotiations on free trade deal

NEW DELHI: The Gulf Cooperation Council and India relunched negotiations for a free trade agreement by signing the terms of reference for the talks on Thursday, about two decades after a first attempt stalled. India already has a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with two GCC members, Oman and the UAE, signed last year and in 2022, respectively. Its trade negotiations with the GCC — members of which also include Saudi Arabia — stalled following a framework agreement signed in 2004 and two rounds of talks held in 2006 and 2008. "It is most appropriate that we now enter into a much stronger and robust trading arrangement which will enable greater free flow of goods, services, bring predictability and stability to policy, help encourage greater degree of investments and

take our bilateral relations between the six-nations GCC group and India to greater heights," India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said in a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. GCC-India bilateral trade was worth more than \$178 billion in the 2024-25 fiscal year, accounting for more than 15 percent of India's global trade. The region is also home to about 10 million Indians who live and work in the Gulf. The relaunched negotiations with Gulf countries came as Delhi accelerated discussions to finalize several trade agreements in recent months. Earlier this week, India reached a trade deal with the US after months of friction, following recent conclusions of similar negotiations with New Zealand and the EU. "As, I believe, the GCC and India come closer together, we will become a

force multiplied for global good," Goyal said. Food processing, infrastructure, petrochemicals and information and communications technology are sectors that will benefit from India-GCC FTA, he added. The free trade negotiations are taking place at a time when globalization was "under attack," said GCC's chief negotiator, Dr. Raja Al-Marzuqi. "It's a message, a signal for the whole globe and it's important for us at this time to try and be more cooperative," he told reporters in New Delhi, adding that the first round of talks was likely to take place at the GCC headquarters in Riyadh. "When we agree, we will contribute as long as possible to the stability of the global economy.—APP

France tells Syria anti-Daesh fight is its 'absolute priority'

DAMASCUS: France's foreign minister said Thursday that sustaining the fight against the Daesh group is an "absolute priority" for Paris, after meeting his Syrian counterpart in Damascus. Jean-Noel Barrot is on the first stop of a regional tour as France reassesses how to tackle militants after Kurdish allies in Syria, who were guarding detained Daesh militants, were forced to disband under pressure from Damascus. Barrot will move on to Iraq on Thursday afternoon before heading to Lebanon on Friday, according to the French foreign ministry. In the Syrian capital, he met his counterpart Asaad Al-Shaibani, with the pair discussing how to prevent a resurgence of Daesh fighters after the Kurdish forces' withdrawal from swathes of northern Syria. "For 10 years, France has fought relentlessly and mercilessly against the terrorists of Daesh in Iraq as well as in Syria," said Barrot, using an Arabic acronym for Daesh. "I have come to reaffirm this absolute priority of France here in Syria." Until now, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces had been the main partner on the ground of a western anti-militant coalition, but under military pressure from Damascus they are to integrate into the Syrian army. "This tour stems from the convergence of two crises," a French diplomatic source told AFP, referring to Barrot's trip. "One that erupted very recently in northeastern Syria, with clashes between the Syrian authorities in Damascus and the Kurdish-dominated SDF, and the ever-present threat of a military escalation between the United States and Iran." Western powers must now work with Syria's government to contain Daesh, the source said, but "there is not the same history, the same reflexes developed together, or the same bonds of trust," alluding to Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa's past. Sharaa, who overthrew former Syrian president Bashar Assad in December 2024, has been seeking to impose his authority over all the country including Kurdish-controlled areas. Other issues on Barrot's agenda will be the question of integrating Syria's myriad minorities into its new political landscape. France has positioned itself as an advocate of Kurdish rights and will be pushing Damascus to comply with an agreement announced last week aimed at integrating Kurdish institutions and forces into the Syrian state. The agreement dashed the Kurds' hopes of retaining an autonomous zone they had established in northern and northeastern Syria during a civil war that ravaged Syria between 2011 and 2024.—APP

Transforming research into industrial application vital for uplift

ISLAMABAD:The National Centre for Physics (NCP) concluded its first-ever Industrial Expo 2026, a landmark event that highlighted Pakistan's growing ability to transform scientific research into industrial solutions and strengthen its knowledge-driven economy. The two-day Expo, inaugurated, attracted policymakers, entrepreneurs, industrialists, academics, researchers, and young innovators. It showcased NCP's achievements in applied science, commercialization, and entrepreneurship, reflecting the institution's evolution from a pure research body into a multidisciplinary hub of innovation. Among the successes presented were advanced physics instrumentation, detector development, and materials synthesis, alongside specialized training in computational physics. NCP's IT Directorate and Centres of Excellence unveiled prototypes and products tailored for industry and startups, including artificial intelligence systems for health management, drone-based yield estimation, cloud seeding technologies, cyber-security solutions, and wire bonding facilities for electronics manufacturing. The exhibition also featured breakthroughs in 3D printing and vacuum science, offering ready-for-industry solutions developed through years of research. These technologies are now available for adoption, positioning Pakistan to commercialize and export homegrown innovations. In his address, NCP Director General Dr Qaisar Ahsan hailed the Expo as a milestone in building stronger industry-academia linkages. He said the platform united government, industry, academia, and youth—the pillars of Pakistan's innovation ecosystem—and emphasized that collaboration is the cornerstone of sustainable growth and technological self-reliance. The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry played a key role in facilitating B2B matchmaking and networking sessions. ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood said the Expo enabled live demonstrations, technical discussions, joint project planning, and exploration of long-term partnerships, stressing that economic progress depends on effective collaboration between research, entrepreneurship, and industrial application. The Expo gave industries, students, professionals, and the public a rare opportunity to witness Pakistan's tech-driven research in action, connect with cutting-edge technologies, and explore the future of innovation at the National Centre for Physics.—DNA

Morocco, Pakistan agree to strengthen defence coop

This dynamic confirms the two countries' desire to consolidate their military relations and jointly address regional security issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Morocco and Pakistan are strengthening their defence partnership through a memorandum of understanding signed in January 2026 covering military production, cybersecurity, training and military health. This strategic agreement aims to diversify security alliances and promote South-South cooperation, capitalising on Pakistan's military industry. Key points of Morocco-Pakistan cooperation (2026) are Defence Production and Industry: The partnership aims at co-development and exchange of expertise in



the defence industrial sector. Cybersecurity, A crucial part of the agreement, strengthening cyber defence and information security between the two armies. Training and Exercises, The agreement includes training programmes, joint exercises and the exchange of military expertise. Geostrategic Context, Signed in Rabat, this agreement underscores Morocco's desire to diversify its strategic partners as part of a South-South cooperation approach. This dynamic confirms the two countries' desire to consolidate their military relations and jointly address regional security issues.

**British
tourists
ordered to
leave India
over 'free
Palestine'
stickers**

NEW DELHI: Two British nationals have been ordered to leave India after their visas were canceled for pasting Palestine stickers in a popular temple town in the western state of Rajasthan.

Ajmer district police, who oversee Pushkar, one of the oldest Hindu pilgrimage sites, issued on Feb. 2 "leave India" notices to a British man and woman for violating tourist visa regulations "by pasting stickers against another country."

Photos of the stickers, which were shared by the local media, read: "Free Palestine," "Boycott Israel," and featured the Palestinian flag.

According to the police, they were plastered at "two or three locations" in Pushkar, and on Jan. 21 a complaint was filed with the local police.

"In Pushkar lives an Israeli religious guru, and they have a prayer house. Pushkar is a tourist place and if people start indulging in such activities, then the message goes wrong," Additional Superintendent of Police Rajesh Meena, who issued the "leave India" notice, told Arab News on Thursday.—APP

Call for improving lives of N. Koreans

SEOUL: Vice Unification Minister Kim Nam-jung on Thursday highlighted the need to improve the lives of North Koreans through inter-Korean exchanges during his meeting with the U.N. rapporteur on North Korean human rights, the unification ministry said.

Kim made the remarks while speaking with Elizabeth Salmon, U.N. special rapporteur on North Korea's human rights situation, as he explained Seoul's policy on North Korea's human rights and peaceful coexistence on the Korean Peninsula.

"The vice minister underscored the importance of making substantive improvements to the lives of North Korean people through inter-Korean exchanges and the establishment of peace," the ministry said. He also outlined various policy measures for humanitarian solutions to separated families, abductees, detainees and prisoners of war. Salmon voiced concerns over the continued isolation of North Korea, saying she is willing to cooperate with Pyongyang on areas where possible, such as technical assistance, according to the ministry. She echoed the importance of mutual recognition and respect between the two Koreas, and called for working with Seoul to achieve the shared objective of enhancing the lives of the North Korean people.—APP

**AGP Gondal
reviews
institutional
reform
initiatives
in KPK**

ISLAMABAD: The Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP), Maqbool Ahmed Gondal, visited Peshawar on Thursday, where he reviewed the performance, administrative matters, and ongoing reform initiatives of the Accounts and Audit Offices in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to press release, he was received by the Accountant General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khalid Mahmood, Deputy Auditor General (North), Shah Rehman, and other officers of the Pakistan Audit and Accounts Service. He was briefed on ongoing and proposed reform initiatives aimed at modernizing the public financial management system in the province and improving governance. Emphasizing the importance of reforms, the Auditor General stated that the transition to a cashless system, implementation of e-Office, complete digitalization of office processes, promotion of transparency, and establishment of a robust accountability mechanism are the fundamental pillars of the reform agenda, and effective implementation of these measures is essential.—APP

Briefs

Trump declines to take sides between Vance, Rubio in 2028 successor debate

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Wednesday declined to take sides in the debate over whether his vice president, JD Vance, or his secretary of state, Marco Rubio, would most likely be his successor in the 2028 Republican presidential campaign. Vance, a former Republican senator from Ohio, has said he will talk to Trump about the possibility of running after the November midterm elections. There is also speculation among Republican insiders that Rubio, a former senator from Florida who ran for the Republican Party's presidential nomination in 2016 and lost to Trump, could seek the presidency. Rubio has not closed the door to running in 2028, but has praised Vance as a strong potential candidate. Trump said he would "be inclined" to endorse a successor when asked about Vance and Rubio during an interview with NBC News, but added that he did not want to get into the subject now. "We have three years to go. I don't want to, you know, I have two people that are doing a great job. I don't want to have an argument with, or I don't want to use the word 'fight' – it wouldn't be a fight. But look, JD is fantastic, and Marco is fantastic," Trump said.

Pakistan must create 30m jobs over next decade

BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: Pakistan must create up to 30 million jobs over the next decade to turn its youth bulge into an economic dividend or risk instability and outward migration, World Bank President Ajay Banga said. Pakistan is entering the implementation phase of a 10-year Country Partnership Framework (CPF) deal agreed with the World Bank last year, while also working with the International Monetary Fund to stabilise its economy. But Islamabad is still facing mounting pressure to deliver sustained growth and jobs. "We're trying to move the bank group as a whole from the idea of projects to the idea of outcomes," Banga told Reuters in Karachi during a visit this week to Pakistan. "Job creation is the North Star." Pakistan needs to generate 2.5m to 3m jobs a year – roughly 25m to 30m over the next decade – as millions of young people come of age, Banga said. Failure to do so could fuel "illegal migration or domestic instability".

Israeli strikes kill 24 in Gaza

DNA

TEL AVIV: Israeli tank shelling and airstrikes killed 24 Palestinians, including seven children, in Gaza on Wednesday, health officials said, the latest violence to undermine nearly four-month-old ceasefire in the enclave. Among the dead was a medic who rushed to help victims of a strike in the southern city of Khan Younis and was then killed by a second attack on the same location, health officials said. Other strikes hit Gaza City in the north, where health officials said a 5-month-old boy was killed. Tents in Mawasi, a coastal area near Khan Younis crowded with Gazans displaced by the conflict, had been ripped apart by the strikes. The Israeli military said it launched the strikes in response to Palestinian fighters opening fire on Israeli troops operating near its armistice line with Hamas. It said an Israeli soldier was severely injured by the fire, which it described as a violation of the ceasefire agreement.

INDEPENDENCE DAY OF KUWAIT



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Ahsan Iqbal Federal Minister for Planning, Ambassador of Kuwait Nassar Abdulrahman Almutairi and others cutting cake to celebrate the 64th Anniversary of the Independence Day and 35th Anniversary of the Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait. – DNA

'New Start' Russia-US nuclear treaty expires

"Relations between nuclear weapon states are likely to be more crisis prone," says expert

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russia and the United States are no longer bound by any limits on the size of their strategic nuclear arsenals after their last arms control treaty expired on Thursday with no agreement between them on what should come next. The New Start treaty, which set limits on each side's missiles, launchers and strategic warheads, was the last in a series of nuclear agreements stretching back more than half a century to the depths of the Cold War. Security experts say its expiry risks ushering in a new arms race that will also be fuelled by China's rapid nuclear build-up. Russian President Vladimir Putin had proposed that Moscow and Washington agree to adhere to the treaty's key provisions for one more year, but US President Donald Trump did not make any formal response. Trump says he wants a better deal that will also bring in China. But Beijing refuses to negotiate with the other two countries because it has only a fraction of their warhead numbers - an estimated 600, compared to around 4,000 each for Russia and the US. In a statement late on Wednesday, hours before New Start lapsed, Russia criticised what it called the "mistaken and regrettable" US approach. It said Moscow's assumption now was that the treaty no longer applied, and both sides were free to choose their next steps.

Russia "remains prepared to take decisive military-technical countermeasures to mitigate potential additional threats to national security". But it will act responsibly and is open to diplomacy to seek a "comprehensive stabilisation of the strategic situation," the statement said, striking a balance between assertiveness and restraint. Trump made no statement as the treaty expired. The White House said this week that Trump would decide the way forward on nuclear arms control, which he would "clarify on his own timeline".

Strategic nuclear weapons are the long-range systems that each side would use to strike the other's capital, military and industrial centres in the event of a nuclear war. They differ from so-called tactical nuclear weapons that have a lower yield and are designed for limited strikes or battlefield use. In the absence of a treaty framework that provides stability and predictability, analysts say each side will find it harder to read the other's intentions. That could lead to a spiral in which each feels the need to keep on adding weapons, based on worst-case assumptions about what the other is planning. Within a couple of years, each could deploy hundreds more warheads beyond the New Start limit of 1,550, experts say. "Transparency and predictability are among the more intangible benefits of arms control and underpin deterrence and strategic stability," said Karim Haggag, director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Pakistan team to seek govt's advice in potential India T20 finals clash

Captain also expresses disappointment over Bangladesh's absence from T20 World Cup

SPORTS DESK

COLOMBO: Captain Salman Ali Agha said the team Pakistan will seek advice from their government if they reach the knock-out phase of the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 and meet arch-rival India. The tournament has been marred by an acrimonious political buildup after Bangladesh were kicked out, and Pakistan refused to face co-hosts India in their Group A match. However, a semi-final or final show-

down between the arch-rivals is still a possibility. "The India game is not in our control. It was the government's decision, and if we have to play them in the semi-final or the final, we will go back to them and act on their advice," Agha told reporters at the captains' press conference in Colombo on Thursday. Agha said the team aims to play positive cricket throughout the tournament and is not focusing on factors beyond its control. His remarks followed the government's decision to boycott the mega event's match against India scheduled for February 15.

British High Commission celebrates Scottish-Pakistani ties



DNA

LAHORE: Held at the historic Sir Ganga Ram Residence, Wednesday's Caledonian Ball featured traditional bagpipe music, songs from the 'When Mountains Meet' collaboration between Scottish and local artists, and couture fashion from renowned designer HSY's previous work with Harris Tweed. The event celebrated the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the twinning agreement between Lahore and Glasgow. Links include a partnership between the Children's Hospitals in each city, and support provided to Rescue 1122 during its establishment in Punjab. Senior Minister, Government of Punjab, Maryam Aurangzeb was the Chief Guest at the event and was joined by politicians, government officials, senior business, media representatives, and cultural leaders. Athletes representing Pakistan also attended, ahead of their appearance at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. The event was held with the support of principle sponsors Gerry's Group, Atlas Group, and Abacus. British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, said: "Scotland's heritage and creativity are woven deeply into the UK's identity, but here in Pakistan they feel especially alive. There is something moving about seeing Scot-

land's traditions resonate so naturally with Pakistan's own rich and generous culture. The Caledonian Ball celebrates our stories, our art, and people with warmth and genuine affection." Head, British High Commission Lahore Office, Ben Warrington said: "From Sialkot producing more bagpipes than anywhere outside Scotland, to a Pakistani Scottish chef creating Chicken Tikka Masala – now one of the UK's favourite dishes – our vibrant cultures shape one another in remarkable ways. But these ties also have much wider impact, on trade, on education and on development." Scotland and Pakistan share longstanding cultural ties, from Sialkot's global reputation as a leading producer of bagpipes to the "Spirit of Pakistan" tartan woven into Scotland's official register. Robert Gordon University (RGU), one of Scotland's top institutions for graduate employability and student experience, is expanding its Transnational Education partnerships in Pakistan through new agreements and joint research. Since 2013, the Scottish Government-funded scholarship programme has enabled over 25,000 young Pakistani women and girls to access education. Pakistani student numbers in Scotland have grown tenfold, from 500 in 2014 to almost 5,500 in 2024, studying across 14 universities including Glasgow Caledonian, UWS, Stirling, Edinburgh Napier, and Heriot Watt.

SERENA HOTELS

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For more Information, please contact: 0355 4899913