



# Islamabad POST

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**Pak urges Sudan parties to recommit to peace accord**

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**Aurangzeb takes up financial issues with firms**

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**Japan extends support for KP projects**

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## Poland Hosts Ceremony

# EU, team Europe stand with Ukraine on War Anniversary

In a joint statement, the EU Delegation, Team Europe, and the Ukrainian Embassy strongly condemned Russia's continued aggression, particularly the deliberate targeting of Ukraine's energy infrastructure during winter.

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The European Union Delegation, Team Europe, and the Embassy of Ukraine jointly commemorated the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine with a solemn ceremony hosted at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland. The event featured a documentary screening and a photographic exhibition depicting the human toll of the war. Diplomats, politicians, journalists, think-tank representatives, human rights activists, NGOs, and civil society leaders attended to express solidarity with Ukraine and reaffirm support for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In a joint statement, the EU Delegation, Team Europe, and the Ukrainian Embassy strongly condemned Russia's continued aggression, particularly the deliberate targeting of Ukraine's energy infrastructure during winter. They called such actions unacceptable and a violation of international humanitarian law, urging Russia to cease hostilities, withdraw forces, and engage in meaningful peace talks.

The EU reiterated its commitment of €90 billion in aid and ongoing sanctions to hold Moscow accountable.

Ukrainian Ambassador H.E. Markian Chuchuk reflected on "Four Years of Ukraine's Struggle for Freedom," highlighting the immense human cost of the war, including Russian casualties, Ukrainian deaths, child abductions, and mass displacement. He thanked Pakistan for its principled support and urged Islamabad to play a proactive role in advancing peace through its position on the UN Security Council.

EU Ambassador H.E. Raimundas Karoblis, speaking on behalf of Team Europe, praised Ukraine's resilience and condemned Russia's attacks on civilians and infrastructure. He emphasized Europe's determination to continue economic pressure on Russia and highlighted Pakistan's role in multilateral efforts.

German Ambassador H.E. Ina Lepel reaffirmed Europe's support, citing the EU's €90 billion aid package and condemning Russia's war crimes. Polish Ambassador H.E. Maciej Pisarski denounced Russia's strikes on residential areas and critical infrastructure, stressing Poland's full solidarity with Ukraine. Speakers collectively underscored that ending Russia's war of aggression requires sustained diplomatic and practical support for Ukraine, accountability for war crimes, and coordinated global action to prevent further destabilization.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors / Heads of Missions of the European Union posing for a group photo to show solidarity with Ukraine. — DNA

**PM Shehbaz Sharif takes notice of new Nepra rules**

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday took notice of the recent changes made by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) regarding solar consumers and directed the Power Division to file a review appeal against it.

The power regulator on Monday changed the terms of contracts for all existing and future net-metered solar consumers — known as prosumers — to contain rising solar energy penetration and protect an expensive and inefficient state-owned power network.

The notification effectively terminated the existing net-metering regime and replaced it with net-billing for all.

A statement from the PM Office (PMO) issued today said the premier had taken "immediate notice" of the matter. The development follows outcry

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**Ex-COAS Bajwa admitted to ICU**

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Former army chief Gen (retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) after sustaining a head injury in a fall at his residence early Tuesday morning, according to family sources. "Qamar Bajwa fell in the bathroom of his house at around 4:30am on Tuesday," the family sources added.

They said that the former army chief sustained head injuries and is currently under treatment in the ICU. General (retd) Qamar Bajwa served as Chief of Army Staff (COAS) from 2016 to 2022 and retired from office on November 29, 2022.

Prior to his appointment as COAS, he served at the General Headquarters (GHQ) as

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## Briefs

**Tension with Afghanistan mounts as diplomatic efforts falter**

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have escalated sharply following a series of retaliatory measures that have strained diplomatic ties, disrupted trade and deepened mistrust between the two neighbouring countries. Despite official justifications from Pakistan's security establishment regarding the closure of border crossings, suspension of trade routes and tightening of travel restrictions, analysts suggest Islamabad may have misjudged Kabul's response.

According to a senior Afghan journalist, Pakistan appeared to assume that the Taliban administration, like previous governments in Kabul, would eventually yield under economic and diplomatic pressure. However, the Afghan authorities have responded with what analysts describe as an unusually firm and uncompromising stance. In recent weeks, Pakistan sealed key border crossings, halted bilateral trade and intensified

## National Assembly debate

### Asif terms opposition leader's remarks on army "highly irresponsible"

Says "Political differences are natural in a democracy. We may disagree on policies and ideologies, but targeting a national institution in this manner is inappropriate"

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday said that the opposition leader's remarks in the National Assembly the other day regarding the Pakistan Army were "highly irresponsible," as such statements undermined a national institution that has rendered immense sacrifices for the country. Addressing the National Assembly, he said, "Political differences are natural in a democracy. We may disagree on policies and ideologies, but targeting a national institution in this manner is inappropriate."

He said that the Pakistan Army represented the entire federation and all provinces and highlighted their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism, particularly over the past several years as thousands of officers and soldiers had embraced martyrdom in the line of duty.

He explained that 3,141 officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army had embraced martyrdom from 2021 to February 2026 in the ongoing war against terrorism.

The minister strongly rejected claims that the Army represents any single province or region, terming it a "federal force" with personnel from across the country, including Punjab, Sindh,

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DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq has accepted the resignation of Balochistan National Party (BNP-M) chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal, sources told Geo News on Wednesday. His resignation, the sources added, was accepted last night after a months-long delay and will take effect from the date it was given. The politician, during this time, had been enjoying the perks of an MNA, along with having the possession of a flat in the Parliament Lodges.

Mengal, who was elected as a member of the lower house from Khuzdar's NA-256 in the February 2024 elections, had tendered his resignation on September 3, 2024, citing the worsening situation in the province and declaring no confidence in the state.

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**SHO among four police cops martyred**

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: At least four police personnel, including a station house officer (SHO), were martyred during an operation against terrorists in Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan) on Wednesday. Police were conducting an operation in the Wanda Badsh area of DI Khan when an exchange of fire took place between police personnel and militants. SHO Faheem Mumtaz was among those martyred, while three other officers, including a deputy superintendent of police, were injured in the encounter.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi strongly condemned the terrorist attack on police in DI Khan, during which four police officers were martyred and three others injured.

## Syria and Pakistan tied in a timeless bond

Dr. Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Syria to Pakistan talks to daily Islamabad POST

### EXCLUSIVE

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In an exclusive conversation with Dr. Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Syria to Pakistan, the story of Syria unfolds not as a mere nation but as a living archive of human civilization. "Syria is a museum under the open sky," he reflects, evoking the grandeur of Damascus and Aleppo—cities that have carried the pulse of humanity for over 11,000 years. From Roman arches to Islamic minarets, Byzantine mosaics to Ottoman courtyards, Syria's stones speak in the languages of countless civilizations.

Damascus, the world's oldest continuously inhabited capital, is described as a city where time folds on itself. Its Old City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, holds more than 125 archaeological landmarks. At its heart lies the Umayyad Mosque, a masterpiece of early Islamic architecture, where golden mosaics shimmer with paradisiacal gardens and the shrine of John the Baptist rests in reverence. Around it, souqs hum with centuries-old rhythms—the clatter of cobblers, the fragrance of spice merchants, and the famed pistachio ice cream of Bakdash. From the slopes of Mount Qasioun, the city unfurls in a tapestry of minarets and courtyards, its resilience evident in the way families, artisans, and

worshippers continue traditions that have endured empire shifts and modern conflict.

Aleppo, crowned by its hilltop Citadel, tells another chapter of Syria's endurance. Once a mercantile hub on the Silk Road, its caravanserais, mosques, and vaulted souqs testify to a city of craft, cuisine, and music. Homs, meanwhile, stands as a crossroads of faith, its skyline marked by the Mosque of Khalid ibn Al-Walid and the formidable crusader fortress Krak des Chevaliers. Palmyra, set in the desert, remains a world treasure—a caravan stop between East and West, with colonnaded streets and Roman temples that echo Syria's grandeur.



Religious heritage, Dr. Alraee emphasizes, is central to Syria's identity. The shrines of Sayyida Zainab and Sayyida Ruqayyah draw pilgrims from across the Muslim world, while Christian monasteries in Maaloula and Saydnaya, along with the earliest-known house-church at Dura-Europos, remind us of Syria's role in early Christianity. "Our religious heritage is a symbol of coexistence," he says, underscoring Syria's spiritual depth.

Turning to Pakistan, Dr. Alraee describes the relationship as brotherly, rooted in shared values and mutual respect. Pakistan's unwavering support for Syria's sovereignty has reinforced trust, and both nations are committed to expanding cooperation in tourism, education, culture, archaeology, and trade. He warmly invites Pakistanis to visit Syria, promising not only history but hospitality—guests treated as family, embraced by the warmth of Syrian tradition.

Looking ahead, Syria is charting a new path of economic development. With sanctions easing and international exhibitions returning, Damascus is preparing to host "NASTEX 2026," the largest textile exhibition in the region, from April 1 to 4, 2026. For Pakistan, a global leader in textiles, this event offers a unique opportunity to engage directly with Syrian institutions and entrepreneurs, strengthening economic ties and opening new avenues of cooperation.

In his closing words, Dr. Alraee portrays Syria as a nation of resilience. "Every stone in Syria tells a story, every city carries the memory of civilizations that shaped the world," he says. He extends a heartfelt invitation to Pakistanis to walk through Damascus, marvel at Palmyra, feel the spirit of Aleppo, and witness the rebirth of a nation that continues to inspire. Syria, he insists, is not only rebuilding its monuments but revitalizing its cultural and spiritual life, welcoming scholars, pilgrims, tourists, and explorers alike. It is a land where history began—and where hope for a brighter tomorrow is being written anew.

**CM opens Bara Bypass road, mother-child nutrition facility**

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohaib Afridi, on Wednesday inaugurated the Bara Bypass Road, marking a significant step toward resolving longstanding traffic congestion issues in the area. According to an official briefing, the Bara Bypass Road is 7 kilometers long and includes a 152-meter-long bridge. The total cost of the project is Rs 1.32 billion, out of which Rs 1.21 billion has already been spent. The project has been completed to improve regional connectivity and facilitate smoother transportation. Speaking on the occasion, the CM said the bypass road would significantly reduce traffic pressure in Bara Bazaar and nearby residential areas. He added that the project would also promote local trade and boost economic activities by improving access and mobility. Earlier, the CM also inaugurated a special nutrition facility for mothers and children at the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Khyber district. During the inauguration ceremony in Jamrud, Sohaib Afridi stated that the facility would provide screening, diagnosis, and treatment services for malnourished women and children. Under the nutrition program, mothers, children, and other patients will receive quality nutritional support at the hospital. He emphasized that the new nutrition facility would directly benefit the local population of Khyber district by providing hospital-level nutritional care, contributing to improved maternal and child health outcomes in the region.—APP

**We Exhibit 2026 to empower women entrepreneurs**

SIALKOT: Dr. Mariam Siddiqua, President of the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCI), announced that the fourth edition of the "We Exhibit 2026" trade and industrial exhibition will take place on February 13–14 at Heritage Club. The event provides a platform for women entrepreneurs to showcase their products and elevate their businesses. Dr. Siddiqua highlighted that "We Exhibit 2026" will feature around 170 exhibitors, including local and national participants, and offers various stall categories such as Export, Gold, Silver Premium, and Gazebo packages to support businesses of all sizes. A special Export Pavilion with 28 stalls will focus on showcasing export-quality products and connecting with international buyers. The exhibition is supported by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and the local business community, including Syed Ahtesham Mazhar, President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce. Recognized as Pakistan's first major trade exhibition dedicated to women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises, "We Exhibit" has become a flagship event since its launch in 2023. This year's exhibition will cover a diverse range of sectors.—APP

# Aurangzeb discusses Venture Capital Support with Gobi partners

The Finance Minister reaffirmed the Government's resolve to maintain macroeconomic stability, improve the business climate, and advance reforms in tax policy and investment facilitation. He emphasized that mobilizing domestic capital alongside foreign investment remains central to building a resilient and sustainable innovation-led growth model

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting today at the Finance Division with a delegation of Gobi Partners led by Thomas Tsao, Chairman, along with Mr. Naeel Ikram, Managing Partner, and Mr. Abraiz Abdullah, Investment Associate. Welcoming the delegation, the Finance Minister appreciated Gobi Partners' interest in Pakistan's venture capital ecosystem and acknowledged the firm's presence across Asia. He underscored the Government's commitment to strengthening Pakistan's venture capital and innovation landscape as part of its broader strategy to promote private sector-led growth, deepen financial markets, and support technology-driven economic diversification. He emphasized that access to risk capital is critical for the scaling startup entrepreneurial landscape, fostering innovation, and generating sustainable employment opportunities. The delegation briefed the Minister on Gobi's regional footprint and its investments in Pakistan through Techxila Fund I, launched in 2020, which has supported startups across fintech, e-commerce, and digital infrastructure. It was noted that venture capital participation has helped mobilize additional foreign investment into Pakistan and contributed to job creation, financial inclusion, and digital transformation. Gobi Partners also shared plans regarding Techxila Fund II, with a proposed target size of USD 50 million, aimed at investing in high-potential sectors including fintech, logistics, health technology, and software services. The firm expressed its intention to anchor the fund with its own capital and mobilize participation from domestic and international institutional investors. During the discussion, the delegation highlighted the importance of further strengthening the enabling framework for venture capital in Pakistan. In this regard, they suggested encouraging greater participation by domestic financial institutions in



venture capital and private equity, as well as considering tax pass-through status for venture capital and private equity fund investments to facilitate local investor participation. The Finance Minister reaffirmed the Government's resolve to maintain macroeconomic stability, improve the business climate, and advance reforms in tax policy and investment

facilitation. He emphasized that mobilizing domestic capital alongside foreign investment remains central to building a resilient and sustainable innovation-led growth model. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to continued engagement in support of Pakistan's evolving venture capital and technology-led financial ecosystem.

## Govt committed to empowering youth thru jobs: Mashhood

LAHORE: Prime Minister's Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan on Wednesday said the government was taking comprehensive measures to provide dignified employment to the young and enable them to become self-reliant. He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held in Gulshan-e-Ravi for the distribution of relief goods among deserving people with the support of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Rana Mashhood said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the Youth Programme was being further strengthened to equip young people with world-class education and modern skills. He said serving the people of his constituency remained his top priority. He added that Pakistan was observing its first-ever AI Week, which would open new avenues for the youth in the field of emerging technologies. Despite economic challenges, he said, the country's situation was improving day by day, and the government was expanding partnerships with friendly countries to create more opportunities for education, training and employment for youth. He said that under the prudent leadership of prime minister, Pakistan was achieving diplomatic successes, the economy was moving in the right direction and the international community viewed Pakistan with respect. He said the era of darkness had ended and the country was moving towards progress and prosperity. Owing to the good governance of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, Lahore was witnessing a new phase of development and prosperity after two decades, while the province was advancing rapidly on the path of growth. He added that Pakistan's role in regional and global affairs had become indispensable, and the international community looked towards Pakistan at important junctures. Rana Mashhood said some elements were attempting to promote politics of chaos instead of performance, but the nation had rejected such attitudes. He said the prime minister was visiting the United States to attend a peace conference, reflecting Pakistan's positive global role. He further said that through better strategy and modern technology, Pakistan had responded effectively to aggression, and had also played a constructive diplomatic role in supporting Bangladesh in international forums.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits the residence of Auon Abbas Shaheed, martyr of terrorist attack on Imam Bargah Khadija-ul-Kubra, and offers condolence.

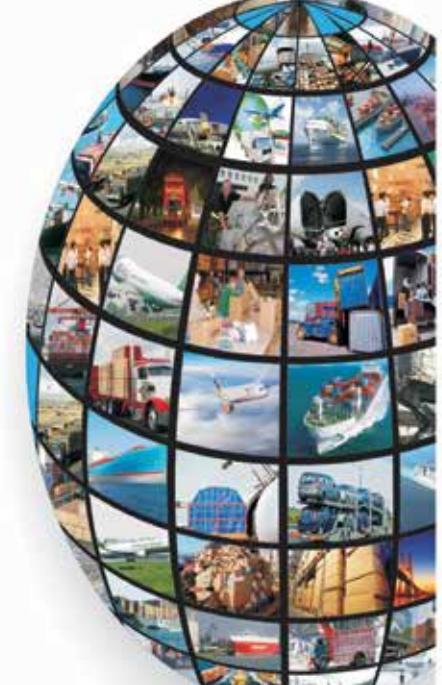
## 'Laptops under PM program distributed on merit'

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, said here Wednesday that the world has accepted Pakistan as a champion ruling the skies "To take the country forward, we must adopt merit. Laptops under PM scheme are being distributed purely on merit, and the youth are Pakistan's bright future," he said while addressing, as the chief guest at Khyber Medical University under the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme for the distribution of laptops among students. In his address, Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam said that the Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University, Hilal-e-Imtiaz Professor Dr Zia-ul-Haq, present at the ceremony, is a source of pride for us, and he was pleased to be among the students. He reiterated that the youth are Pakistan's bright future and that laptops are being distributed on the basis of merit. The Federal Minister said that the laptop scheme was first launched in

2011 by then Chief Minister of Punjab, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. When Muhammad Nawaz Sharif became Prime Minister of Pakistan in 2013, the scheme was expanded across Pakistan and continued successfully. Unfortunately, it was discontinued in 2018, but after remaining suspended for four years during PTI rule, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif restarted this landmark program in 2022. He emphasized that the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme is being run purely on merit. If the country is to progress, merit must be adopted. He congratulated the students who received laptops and their parents, saying that their children earned them on merit and that the scheme is 100 percent merit-based. Addressing the students, he said that they are the future of the country and will be responsible for running it; therefore, investing in youth is investing in the nation's future. He strongly condemned the recent incidents of terrorism in Islamabad and earlier in Balochistan, saying that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has itself been a victim of terrorism and its people understand the importance of peace. "The memory of the APS tragedy is still fresh. Therefore, everyone must play a role in ensuring peace. With peace, education and employment will flourish, and there should be no compromise on peace." He said that in May last year, India attacked Pakistan, but by the grace of Allah, the defense of Pakistan was in strong hands. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, the Pakistan Armed Forces defeated an enemy ten times larger in such a way that even their children will remember it. At that time, a remarkable spirit was witnessed among the people. If that spirit of faith exists, no one can compete with Pakistan. He added that their intentions are sincere and that it is not possible to deprive students of facilities like laptops. He said he never had a personal desire to become a minister, but considered service as worship. Despite facing life-threatening attacks, he never stepped back from serving the people.—DNA

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**Head Office**

3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.  
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 227373, 2822711, 2874289 - Fax: (+92 51) 2825132, 2274227.

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**Branch Offices**

Karachi: Room No. 14 & 15, 3rd Floor, Kahanian Mall, Main Tariq Road, 172-A, Block-2, P.C.H.S. Kachhi. Tel: (+92 21) 34530028, 3519479  
Fax: (+92 21) 34531747  
E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com

Lahore: F-4, Gulberg Center, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Tel: (+92 42) 3573881, 35711885.  
Fax: (+92 42) 3571428  
E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com

Kabul: House #4, Street #4, Charabi Amanat Road, Shah-e-Rawal, Kabul - Afghanistan.  
Tel: +93 79 2021 773, 80 77956 808, 93 77948 266.  
E-mail: kabul@freelinemovers.com

## RCCI President highlights boosting Pak-U.S. trade ties

**DNA**

RAWALPINDI: A delegation of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), led by President Usman Shaukat, visited the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, D.C., and held a fruitful and meaningful meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, and Mr. Mohammad Hanif Channa, Minister (Trade & Investment). The RCCI delegation included Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi and members representing diverse sectors of trade and industry. During the meeting, Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh lauded RCCI's proactive role in promoting trade and investment opportunities and appreciated its continued efforts to strengthen economic engagement between Pakistan and the United States. He highlighted the unprecedented positive momentum in bilateral relations and emphasized the importance of transforming this goodwill into a strategic, economically entrenched partnership based on mutually beneficial opportunities. The Ambassador underscored Pakistan's improving economic indicators, including single-digit inflation, upgraded credit ratings by all



three major international agencies, and continued engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), describing these developments as strong signals of stability and investment potential. RCCI President Usman Shaukat briefed the Ambassador on the Chamber's key initiatives and pro-

grams aimed at promoting trade, facilitating investment, and exploring new and non-conventional sectors. He emphasized RCCI's commitment to promoting a wide range of Pakistani products in the U.S. market and strengthening meaningful engagement between the business communities of both countries. The

meeting also provided an opportunity to exchange views on challenges in bilateral trade and to enhance coordination for effective interaction with policymakers. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening economic cooperation and expanding Pakistan-U.S. trade and investment relations.

## 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/Brununei National Day
Feb 23/Guyana National Day
Feb 23/Russia National Army Day
Feb 23/Tajikistan Armed Forces Day
Feb 25/Kuwait National Day

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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Bomb Disposal.....15
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Motorway Police.9270601-20
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## Hospitals

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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 927015-13



Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

## Commissioner orders time-bound disposal of cases

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Engineer Aamir Khattak on Wednesday paid a surprise visit to the Raja Bazaar Tehsil Office, inspected various sections and reviewed arrangements for public facilitation. During the visit, he met citizens present at the office, listened to their complaints and sought feedback on the facilities being provided, staff conduct and pace of work. The commissioner said revenue offices were among the most frequented public offices and, therefore, must be upgraded to state-of-the-art standards to ensure efficient service delivery. He observed that public service was the fundamental responsibility of government officers and staff, and directed that offices be made genuinely citizen-friendly to strengthen public trust. Emphasising accuracy of record, transparency and strict adherence to merit, he said all official matters must be handled in accordance with prescribed rules and regulations. He directed the officials not to keep applications and files pending without justification, and to ensure that each case was decided within the stipulated timeline. The commissioner instructed the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) to maintain a complete tracking record of cases so that responsibility could be fixed in instances of delay. He further directed that the standard of public service be improved, staff should treat visitors with courtesy and respect, and citizens' matters be resolved promptly without causing unnecessary inconvenience. He also called for ensuring essential facilities at public offices and establishing an effective mechanism for redress of complaints.—APP

## SECP facilitates foreign direct investment in insurance sector

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved the acquisition of a controlling stake in TPL Insurance Limited by Jazz International Holding Limited. This partnership between a digital insurer and a major digital operator is expected to increase insurance penetration and foreign investment, said a press release issued by the SECP on Wednesday. The SECP's facilitation of this deal aligns with the goals to foster a transparent, efficient, and investor-friendly environment that encourages both domestic and foreign investment. As part of its commitment to market development, the SECP is actively implementing structural reforms, including the recently introduced regulatory framework for digital-only insurers and microinsurers. By vetting this acquisition for adherence to sound corporate governance and prudent management standards, the Commission is paving the way for further innovation in financial services and products.—APP

## HR body backs over 1,000 RWMC workers regularisation

RAWALPINDI: The Human Resource (HR) Committee of the Board of Directors of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) on Wednesday agreed to a proposal for regularisation of more than 1,000 workers and forwarded the matter to the Board for final approval. The decision was taken in line with the labour-friendly policy of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and her directives aimed at the workers' welfare, an RWMC spokesman said. Following successful negotiations between HR Committee Chairman Javed Anwar Mughal and the Municipal Labour Union, the union partially withdrew its strike call. The meeting, chaired by Javed Anwar Mughal, was attended by former Member of the National Assembly Malik Shakeel Awan, RWMC Secretary Muhammad Farooq, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Bilal Khawar, Municipal Labour Union Chairman Changez Bhatti and other members. After detailed deliberations, the committee unanimously approved the recommendations and referred them to the Board. Speaking to the media, Mughal said the proposals, including the long-standing demand for regularisation of workers, had been approved in accordance with the chief minister's instructions. He added that approval had also been granted for the honararium already disbursed to workers. He thanked Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi, Senior Punjab Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Tahira Aurangzeb, Sardar Muhammad Naseem Khan and MPA Raja Muhammad Hanif for their support and said the Board would continue to work alongside RWMC and the government for the welfare and progress of workers. He made it clear that neither exploitation of workers nor negligence in cleanliness duties would be tolerated. Malik Shakeel Awan said the chief minister was following the labour-friendly vision of former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and taking all possible measures for public welfare.—APP

## Ex-GB governor, CM among key leaders join IPP

ISLAMABAD: Former Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan, Ex Chief Minister, former Leader of the Opposition and several ex Ministers, along with other prominent political leaders, on Wednesday announced their decision to join the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP). The announcement was made during a press conference at the residence of IPP President and Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan, who warmly welcomed the new entrants and presented them with the party flag. Those who joined IPP include former Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon, former Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan, former Leader of the Opposition Captain Shafiq, former Ministers Fateh Ullah Khan, Shamas Ullah Haq, Haji Shah Baig and Dilshad Bano. Khan Akbar Khan, Maulana Sultan Raees and Eemaan Shah also included in those who announced their inclusion in the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party. Addressing the press conference, Abdul Aleem Khan expressed best wishes towards the newly inducted leaders and stated that the IPP is formally entering the political arena of Gilgit-Baltistan for the first time. He emphasized that the people of the region deserve equal opportunities for development, prosperity and employment. He added that Gilgit-Baltistan is rich in immense natural resources and tourism potential, which, if properly developed, could generate billions of dollars in foreign exchange and transform the region into the "Switzerland of Pakistan." He reiterated the Party's commitment to prioritizing employment opportunities for youth and improving the economic conditions of the local population. Abdul Aleem Khan further stated that the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party will run a vigorous election campaign in Gilgit-Baltistan and present its manifesto before the masses. He clarified that the Party's objective is not merely political participation but to bring practical change to the destiny of the region through concrete measures. The party leadership reaffirmed its commitment to public welfare, particularly the sustainable development of Gilgit-Baltistan, will remain its top priority and that every possible effort will be made to honor the public's trust. On this occasion, leaders of the like-minded group from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf who joined IPP, including former Governor Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon and former Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan, expressed full confidence in the leadership of Abdul Aleem Khan. They stated that the IPP is playing an effective role in the progress and stability of the country and is committed to the genuine representation of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

## Japan, UN-Habitat and JICA for boosting disaster resilience in KP school

Due to the geographical characteristics, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is prone to climate-driven hazards. The 2025 cloudbursts and flash floods damaged 437 schools, severely disrupting education services especially in Swat and Buner among the hardest-hit districts



ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed an Exchange of Notes and a Grant Agreement during a signing ceremony held, for the project on 'Strengthen the disaster resilience of educational infrastructure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province'. The initiative is supported through a grant of JPY 427 million, equivalent to approximately USD 2.7 million, from the Government of Japan.

Due to the geographical characteristics, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is prone to climate-driven hazards. The 2025 cloudbursts and flash floods damaged 437 schools, severely disrupting education services especially in Swat and Buner among the hardest-hit districts. The grant will support the rehabilitation and retrofitting of schools damaged by the 2025 floods in Swat and Buner districts. The project aims to restore safe, resilient and functional learning environments by strengthening school structures and improving ventilation and lighting. It will also reinstate gender-sensitive WASH facilities, ensuring dignity, privacy and accessibility for girls and children with disabilities.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Ambassador of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, appreciated the collaborative partnership and reaffirmed Japan's continued support to Pakistan's resilience agenda. Ambassador Akamatsu emphasized that strengthening school infrastructure is a critical investment in protecting children and ensuring continuity of education in the face of climate induced disasters. Ms. Kazuko Ishigaki, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UN-Habitat, highlighted UN-Habitat's

leadership in delivering safer learning environments. She noted that the retrofitted schools will provide structurally stable classrooms, improved ventilation, and essential WASH services, enabling children to learn with confidence, safety and dignity. By positioning schools as hubs for disaster preparedness and response, the project will extend preparedness and first-aid benefits to surrounding communities, strengthening local resilience and emergency response capacities.

Mr. Sugawara Takayuki, Senior Representative of JICA, emphasized that this project addresses the JICA's approach to disaster

risk reduction principally by "Promoting Build Back Better". He mentioned that JICA promotes this concept to ensure that the country as a whole including the affected areas can rebuild in a way that is more resilient to future disasters. It is crucial not to repeat the same damage in a similar disaster to ensure sustainable economic and social development.

Mr. Mohamed Yahya, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, expressed appreciation to the Government of Japan and JICA for their partnership with Pakistan and the United Nations. He highlighted that the initiative aligns with

the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and supports Pakistan's implementation of the Sendai Framework, advancing resilience for the most vulnerable communities.

Through the construction and rehabilitation of disaster-resilient schools, along with the provision of disaster resilience training, this collaborative effort will contribute to the implementation of the Sendai Framework by reducing loss of life, the number of people affected, and economic damage caused by natural disasters, while advancing human security in flood-affected communities.

## Siddiqui stresses edu reforms focus on nurturing critical thinking

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Federal Education & Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, stressed that Education reform must go beyond textbook revision and focus on nurturing critical thinking, ethical grounding, creativity, and responsible citizenship. He made these remarks while addressing a two-day national summit opened on Wednesday under the theme "New National Curriculum of Pakistan." The first day of the two-day Summit witnessed participation from distinguished members of Parliament and Provincial Assemblies, Vice Chancellors of universities, representatives of provincial and area education departments, development partners, curriculum experts, and education leaders from across the country. Addressing the participants, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, highlighted the urgent need to transform Pakistan's curriculum in light of contemporary challenges. The Minister emphasized implementation fidelity, coordination with provinces, and the importance of preparing learners for emerging global realities while remaining rooted in Pakistan's cultural and ideological foundations. Earlier, the proceedings of the Summit were commenced with the National Anthem and recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by a welcome address by Mr. Nadeem Maheen, Secretary, MoFE&PT. The Secretary warmly welcomed the distinguished guests, UNESCO, and UNICEF, and underscored the importance of a nationally coherent, future-oriented curriculum aligned with Pakistan's constitutional values, cultural identity, and developmental aspirations. Subsequently, the Director, NCC Wing, MoFE&PT, presented the objectives of the Summit and shared the vision and mission of the proposed new curriculum framework. The Summit featured keynote addresses by leading international expert Mr Alonso Sanchez (World Bank), who shared global perspectives on curriculum transformation and instructional reform. His insights emphasized evidence-based policymaking, strengthening classroom practices, and building coherent systems linking curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. In his keynote address, Mr Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, reflected on the historical evolution of education and curriculum in Pakistan and underscored its significance for national progress. He described curriculum reform as a mission close to his heart and highlighted the role of education in restoring Pakistan's intellectual and civilizational excellence. Referring to historical periods when Muslim civilizations led global knowledge, he stressed the need to revalue a culture of inquiry, innovation, and scholarship. He emphasized the importance of

strengthening conceptual learning in local languages to ensure deeper comprehension and inclusivity. Furthermore, he strongly highlighted the need to integrate Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) within the national curriculum framework, underscoring that skill-based education must be embedded from early stages to equip youth with practical competencies aligned with market needs and national development priorities. He proposed key features for effective implementation of the new curriculum, including competency-based frameworks, focus on science, technology and innovation, civic responsibility, and structured mechanisms for phased and sustainable implementation. The first day concluded with an engaging panel discussion on "National Curriculum of Pakistan (NCP): Issues, Challenges and Way Forward," followed by breakout group discussions where participants deliberated on thematic areas and proposed practical recommendations for systemic reform. The deliberations of Day One have set a strong foundation for consensus-building on a transformative, inclusive, and future-ready National Curriculum that aims to nurture empathy, creativity, teamwork, collective competence, and responsible citizenship across Pakistan's diverse education landscape.—DNA

## Kamal opens 1 Megawatt Solar Power System

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, on Wednesday inaugurated a 1 megawatt solar power system at the EPI Warehouse in collaboration with UNICEF, marking a significant milestone towards building a sustainable and resilient health system in Pakistan. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Federal Health Minister stated that the project reflects the government's firm commitment to promoting a modern and sustainable healthcare infrastructure in the country. He emphasized that the primary objective of the initiative is to further strengthen Pakistan's cold chain system and ensure uninterrupted storage of life-saving vaccines. "With the generation of 1 megawatt of electricity, vaccines will remain safe even in emergencies or power outages," said Mr Mustafa Kamal. He highlighted that maintaining an uninterrupted cold chain is essential for safeguarding millions of children across the country. The Minister acknowledged the support of Gavi and other international development partners in operationalizing the solarization system, terming the project a prime example of effective collaboration between the Government of Pakistan and its development partners. Mr Mustafa Kamal reiterated that improving Pakistan's health system remains a top priority of the government. "We aim to transform the system from sick care to true healthcare. Vaccination is the first and most effective step toward preventing future diseases," he stated. He noted that globally, up to 50 vaccine-preventable diseases are covered through immunization programmes, while Saudi Arabia provides protection against 47 diseases. In contrast, Pakistan currently vaccinates against 13 diseases under its national immunization programme, all of which are provided free of cost by the government. He also highlighted that the cervical cancer (HPV) vaccine has been included in the immunization

schedule. The Minister informed that currently 49 percent of vaccine financing is borne by Pakistan, while 51 percent is supported by global donors. However, global vaccine assistance is expected to end by 2030, which would increase Pakistan's vaccine expenditure from USD 400 million to approximately USD 1.2 billion. He cautioned that the country's economy may not be able to fully absorb this financial burden by 2030 without strategic planning and sustainable investment. "Health is a matter of national security," the Minister stressed, recalling how developed nations from the United States to China struggled to cope with the burden of patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Citing World Health Organization estimates, he noted that approximately 13 million Pakistanis were pushed below the poverty line due to illness-related expenses. He underscored that healthcare begins at birth.—DNA

## Briefs

**Sheikh gang behind bars as Police arrest 2 members**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have arrested two members of the notorious "Sheikh gang" involved in multiple incidents of robbing citizens after withdrawing cash from banks, and recovered Rs2.2 million looted money from their possession. An official told APP on Wednesday that Khanna police carried out a successful operation against the organized gang, apprehending its two members who were allegedly involved in several armed robbery incidents in the twin cities. The official said that during the operation, police recovered Rs2.2 million in looted cash along with weapons and ammunition used in the crimes. During interrogation, the arrested suspects reportedly confessed to committing multiple robberies at gunpoint, targeting citizens outside banks. They also revealed that they had injured victims who resisted during the incidents. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq said that all legal requirements would be fulfilled to ensure strict punishment for the accused. He reiterated that indiscriminate action against those depriving citizens of their hard-earned money would continue, adding that large-scale operations against organized and active criminal gangs are underway across the federal capital.—APP

**CDA union calls for formal dialogue with administration**

ISLAMABAD: The inauguration ceremony of the new office of the CBA Committee Fire Brigade was held under the auspices of the Fire Brigade Directorate. The event was attended by central office-bearers of the CDA Mazdoor Union, representatives of various CBA committees and a large number of CDA employees. Addressing the ceremony, Secretary General of CDA Mazdoor Union Chaudhry Muhammad Yaseen congratulated the newly elected office-bearers and expressed hope that they would perform their responsibilities diligently for the strengthening of the organization and the welfare of employees. He stated that the fundamental mission of the CDA Mazdoor Union is to serve employees without discrimination and safeguard their rights. Owing to these consistent efforts and by the grace of Almighty Allah the employees have elected the Union for the fifth consecutive time in the referendum. He further stated that during its tenure, the Union has played a significant role in securing numerous benefits and incentives for employees and will continue its struggle to ensure the protection of their legitimate rights in the future.—DNA

**AI, tech govt's top youth priority**

RAWALPINDI: The Government of Pakistan has placed artificial intelligence (AI) and cutting-edge technology in IT field at the center of national progress, emphasizing the need to equip young people with the skills and opportunities to compete on the global stage.

This was remarked by the Minister of State for Law and Justice, Barrister Aqeel Malik, during his address at a significant event titled "Automating the Backend: AI for Internal Ops & Customer Success" at National Incubation Center for Aerospace Technologies (NICAT), Rawalpindi, on Wednesday. The minister expressed confidence that Pakistan's IT sector already surpasses many neighbouring countries in capabilities and skills in IT sector, and stressed that the real gap lies in fully owning and refining those skills. "The government's priority is to promote national-level platforms and initiatives that build self-confidence and self-reliance among the youth, enabling them to serve the country while advancing their own entrepreneurial and professional journeys", he said.

Barrister Aqeel praised the professionalism and talent already present in Pakistan's IT community, and underlined the urgent need to further sharpen and professionalize these skills. He appreciated the match-making efforts.—APP

# FGEHA accelerates F-14/15 development

In a major push to fast-track progress, heavy machinery and workforce deployments have been scaled up, signaling the Authority's renewed determination to meet development targets within the stipulated timeframe

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Government Housing Authority (FGEHA), operating under the Ministry of Housing and Works, has significantly intensified construction activities in Sector F-14/15, marking a decisive phase in one of the capital's most anticipated housing developments. In a major push to fast-track progress, heavy machinery and workforce deployments have been scaled up, signaling the Authority's renewed determination to meet development targets within the stipulated timeframe. Officials said that the project has now entered a "high-gear execution phase," with visible on-ground activity expected to accelerate in the coming weeks. An official spokesperson

of FGEHA told that the development of basic infrastructure — including roads, sewerage systems, and electricity networks — is planned for completion within three years under the existing contract framework. However, he clarified that the timeline may be adjusted depending on operational factors, with extensions permissible under contractual provisions if required.

In a significant development, the National Logistics Cell (NLC) has formally mobilized at the site, bringing additional technical capacity and execution strength to the project. Authorities anticipate that development momentum will further intensify by the end of January, transforming the pace and scale of operations across the sector. Addressing technical preparations, the spokesperson revealed

that a comprehensive joint survey will be conducted during the first quarter to record natural surface levels. This will pave the way for extensive earthwork operations, including large-scale leveling and grading — a critical step toward laying the groundwork for modern urban infrastructure. Responding to concerns regarding rising construction material costs, the official assured allottees that FGEHA had proactively incorporated an escalation factor into the project's PC-1 planning document. "The financial framework already accounts for anticipated market fluctuations," he said, underscoring the Authority's foresight in financial planning. On the issue of installment payments, the spokesperson disclosed that approximately 55 percent of allottees have cleared their third installment

to date. Regarding the possibility of an extension, he clarified that no formal decision has been made. "At present, the deadline has expired. Whether to grant further time or impose a penalty rests entirely with the Board," he explained. He added that, so far, no penalties have been imposed, but the matter remains under consideration. FGEHA reiterated that sustained cooperation from members remains essential to ensure timely achievement of project milestones. The Authority expressed appreciation for the continued trust of its allottees and reaffirmed its commitment to delivering a well-planned, fully serviced residential sector. For further information or assistance, members may contact FGEHA's UAN at 051-111-134-342 during official working hours.

## Kazakhstan envoy meets climate minister



ISLAMABAD: Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, on Wednesday called on Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik to discuss bilateral relations, environmental cooperation and upcoming regional initiatives. According to an official statement, the ambassador appreciated

the hospitality extended to Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and his delegation during their recent visit to Pakistan, noting that ties between the two countries were steadily strengthening. Kistafin invited Dr Malik to attend a Regional Ecological Summit scheduled to be held in Astana in April. The minister welcomed the invitation and

highlighted the longstanding historical and cultural links between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, stressing the need to expand cooperation and trade not only bilaterally but also with the wider Central Asian region. The two sides also reviewed progress on the implementation of a memorandum of understanding signed during President Tokayev's visit and

explored potential joint initiatives, particularly in artificial intelligence, financial technology and e-governance. Environmental challenges, including water scarcity and climate change, also featured in the discussions, with both sides emphasising enhanced collaboration in environmental protection and sustainable development.—DNA

## Farmers in Punjab turn to broccoli cultivation

ISLAMABAD: Sensing a lucrative opportunity, progressive farmers in Punjab are increasingly turning to broccoli cultivation, as the demand for the vegetable rises among upper-income consumers. Although broccoli remains a niche crop compared to traditional vegetables such as cauliflower and cabbage, it is now widely available at major supermarkets, specialized vegetable outlets, and online platforms. Currently, broccoli is being cultivated on the outskirts of major cities, particularly Lahore, as well as in Sheikhpura, Kasur, Sahiwal, and Pakpattan districts. "This is a profitable crop. There is a strong demand for broccoli in Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi," said Pir Mehmoud Chishti, a broccoli grower from village Tibba Sherko in Pakpattan district. Talking to Wealth Pakistan, Chishti noted that despite attractive prices, growers face uncertainty due to an underdeveloped marketing network for the exotic vegetable. "The retail price of broccoli ranges between Rs400 and Rs700 per 500 grams, which is significantly higher than cauliflower or cabbage," he said.

However, he added that imported seed remains the highest cost in broccoli cultivation. Marketing also poses a major challenge for growers. Because broccoli is unfamiliar to the general public, its market is limited, Chishti explained. According to him, the main buyers include high-end hotels, departmental stores, and select vegetable shops in large urban centers such as Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad. Some farms also sell broccoli directly to affluent households through online platforms for its use in salads. "You cannot supply broccoli in large quantities. Selling small volumes is more profitable because the demand is limited. In case of oversupply, growers face losses," he said. Several varieties of broccoli are being cultivated in Pakistan, with the green variety being the most popular. The crop, often described as a superfood, is primarily grown during the cool season from September to March. Vegetable seed dealers say all broccoli seed used in Pakistan is imported from countries such as Holland, Japan, China, and Thailand.—APP

## No formal info literacy programme in place

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed on Wednesday that no formally structured "Information Literacy Programme (ILP)" is currently operating under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting; however, various affiliated departments are implementing related initiatives through different platforms. Responding to a question by Ms. Naeema Khan, Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Daniyal Chaudhry said the ministry's institutions were carrying out programmes through different forums aimed at enhancing public awareness and responsible media engagement, though not under a specific programme name. He said Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) is run-

ning training courses and awareness programmes through various forums. The PTV Drama and Film Academy is also conducting capacity-building initiatives for media professionals, focusing on digital literacy, artificial intelligence (AI), ethical journalism, credible news production and public awareness content. Similarly, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), through Radio Pakistan, is promoting media and information literacy nationwide, particularly in remote and underserved areas. Through its Programme Wing and News and Current Affairs Channel, the corporation incorporates themes such as responsible use of information, digital awareness and countering misinformation into programme broadcast in 23

languages. These include educational, youth, women, religious, and current affairs content. The Parliamentary Secretary added that the Press Information Department (PID) is also conducting different outreach and awareness programmes. Its Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Cell has organized seminars, training sessions and outreach activities for journalists, students and civil society members. Over the past two years, the PID has also executed large-scale communication campaigns addressing fake news, cybersecurity, national security, Kashmir, the economy and youth empowerment. The Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) is supporting media literacy through internship programmes and

seminars in collaboration with universities, UNESCO and other stakeholders. These initiatives focus on ethical journalism and combating misinformation. He further informed the House that the Information Service Academy (ISA) is conducting specialized training programmes, mid-career courses, AI workshops, seminars and academic outreach activities during 2024-25, integrating information and media literacy, ethics and digital communication skills into its structured curricula. The Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) is also contributing by ensuring accurate and ethical dissemination of news and conducting regular training sessions on fake news, AI in journalism, and media ethics.—DNA

## Lane violations no more

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) have intensified enforcement against lane violations by heavy traffic on IJP Road, and key roads launching a focused campaign aimed at improving road safety and traffic discipline at Federal capital. An ITP official told on Wednesday that heavy vehicles travelling outside designated lanes pose serious risks to commuters and contribute to traffic congestion. The official said that during the past 24 hours, ITP took legal action against 155 heavy vehicles for violations, including lane violations and overspeeding. He said several vehicles involved in dangerous driving practices were impounded and shifted to police stations in accordance with the law. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Hamzah Humayun issued a stern warning to heavy vehicle drivers to strictly observe lane discipline or face strict penalties. He emphasised that lane violations are not minor infractions but safety hazards that can endanger human lives. The CTO Hamzah warned that repeated violations may result in vehicle seizure and cancellation of driving licences. He said Islamabad Traffic Police will continue the campaign without leniency to ensure safe roads for citizens.—APP

**Net metering reform shields 1.3% vulnerable consumers**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal on Wednesday said the revised solar net metering policy is aimed at preventing additional costs from being passed on to the remaining 1.3% of consumers, particularly low-income households, while maintaining a reasonable three-year payback period for solar investors. While speaking to a local media channel, Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal explained that the revised solar net metering policy was designed to balance supply and demand, a principle followed by energy regulators globally. He emphasized that the policy ensures long-term stability of the power system while promoting renewable energy growth. Responding to a query about consumers' concerns, he highlighted that the reforms protect around 1.3% of vulnerable consumers from additional costs, particularly low-income households. He also noted that solar investors would continue to benefit from a reasonable three-year payback period, which the government considers fair and sustainable.—APP

## China, Pakistan to advance livestock tech transfer, joint R&D

For core technology R&D, Chinese and Pakistani experts will focus on three key technologies — Himalayan pink salt application, sheep in vitro fertilization and dairy cow breeding — and co-establish a joint laboratory to enhance technology localization

ISLAMABAD: Substantive cooperation outcomes have been achieved between Jinan Animal Husbandry Industry Craftsman College and Pakistani counterparts after a visit to Pakistan, held in conjunction with the 2026 China-Pakistan Agriculture Investment Conference. The collaboration injects new impetus into bilateral livestock industry development, aligning with the advancement of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2.0, China Economic Net reported. During the visit, two key cooperation documents were signed to solidify consensus, the College revealed. It inked a Framework Agreement on Industrial and Technological Cooperation and Talent Training with Pak-China Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCJCCI), to jointly establish the China-Pakistan Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Industry Technology Cooperation Center, which will undertake technological R&D, standard-setting and customized talent training. A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed with GO DAIRY Private Limited, focusing on the transfer of sheep in vitro fertilization and dairy cow breeding technologies, alongside tailored solutions and on-site expert guidance to address the enterprise's breeding bottlenecks. Consensus was also reached with the University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences (UVAS) on curriculum co-construction and the development of a joint training base. A comprehensive and systematic promotion plan has thus been formulated to advance follow-up cooperation. The College will set up a special China-Pakistan Animal Husbandry Cooperation Center and establish regular communication mechanisms with Pakistani partners to ensure the efficient coordination of all projects. For core technology R&D, Chinese and Pakistani experts will focus on three key technologies — Himalayan pink salt application, sheep in vitro fertilization and dairy cow breeding — and co-establish a joint laboratory to enhance technology localization.—DNA

## Emerging markets must build on their recent success

MOHAMMED AL-JADAAN

It used to be that when advanced economies sneezed, emerging markets caught a cold. That is no longer true. Following recent global shocks, such as the post-pandemic inflation surge and a new wave of tariffs, emerging markets have held up well. Inflation has continued to slow, currencies have generally retained their value and debt issuance costs have remained at manageable levels. There has been no sign of the kind of financial turbulence that came with past economic shocks. In fact, emerging markets have expanded their role as a key global growth engine, with their share of the world economy more than doubling since 2000. The 10 emerging markets in the G20 alone now account for over half of global growth. While supportive external conditions have played a part in emerging markets' impressive resilience, so have the policies and institutions underpinning it. Central banks have grown more independent, with clearer inflation targets and less reliance on foreign exchange interventions to absorb shocks. And more emerging markets are using fiscal rules to impose budgetary discipline. In Brazil, for example, monetary reforms paid off in the country's fight against inflation. Guided by an inflation-targeting framework established in 1999, Brazil was one of the first countries to raise interest rates as prices surged during the pandemic. It has since refined its framework and is now expected to reach its 3 percent target next year. Likewise, Nigeria has implemented tough reforms to improve its energy pricing framework and phase out central bank financing of budget deficits. And Egypt is pushing ahead with plans to broaden its tax base, including by widening its value-added tax, closing loopholes and digitizing tax administration. In a world that is likely to remain turbulent for some time, emerging markets need to press ahead with focused reforms. But while emerging markets have made great strides in improving their policy frameworks and enhancing credibility, this is no time for complacency. Their strong recent performance also reflects favorable circumstances such as lower interest rates, accommodative financial conditions and robust commodity prices. Moreover, emerging markets' resilience has not yet translated into faster growth. Nearly six years after the COVID-19 out-

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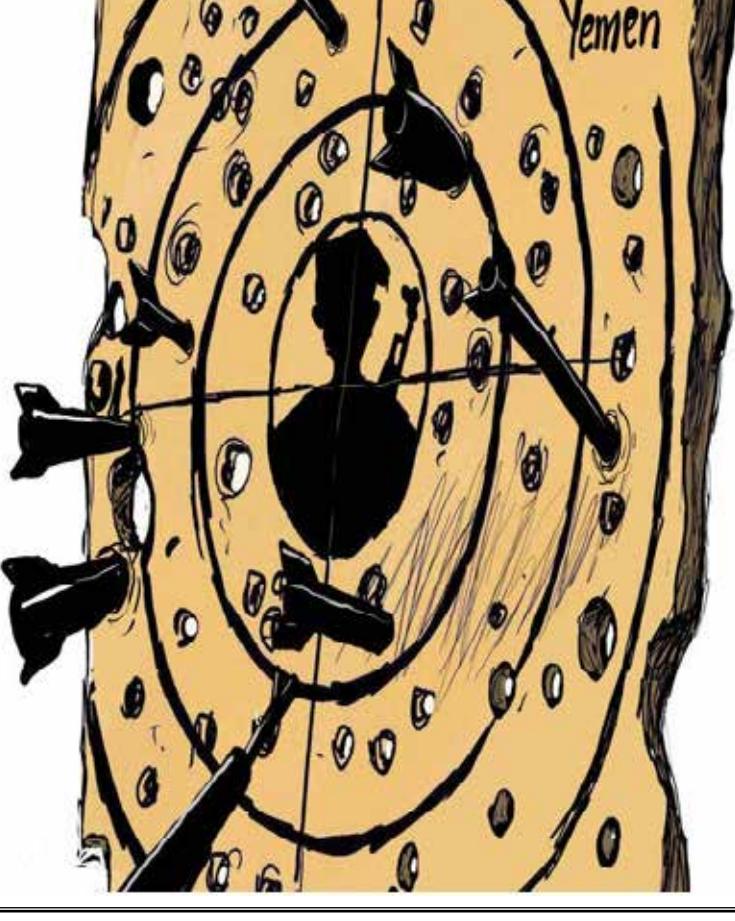
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Phone: 051-8488394

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



break, gross domestic product in emerging markets and developing economies is on a slower growth path than before the pandemic – a trend that has set back the goal of closing the income gap with advanced economies. At the same time, profound shifts in geopolitics, trade, technology and demographics could make it even harder for emerging markets to catch up. In a world that is likely to remain turbulent for some time, emerging markets need to press ahead with focused reforms. Each country must strike a balance between growth-promoting policies and maintaining economic resilience (through reserves and other instruments that offer shelter in downturns). Creating the conditions for a new job-rich growth surge requires strengthening the business environment to mobilize domestic investors and attract foreign capital. Stronger institutions and governance will lead to deeper financial markets in which the most dynamic and promising companies can grow. Policymakers must also position their economies to take advantage of the potential productivity gains from artificial intelligence. India, Saudi Arabia and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, for example, have unveiled impressive infrastructure investments that will lay the foundation for AI adoption for decades to come. Where possible, other emerging markets should follow their lead. Some frontier markets also have the advantage afforded by a young and fast-growing working-age population that is hungry for opportunities. This demographic asset can yield an enormous dividend, but only if countries make substantial investments in education and training to prepare their workforce for the challenges ahead. Increasingly, these economies are coming together to discuss how they can build on their hard-won resilience. Although strains in old alliances have introduced additional uncertainty, the shifting geopolitical and trade landscape does present opportunities for new forms of integration and cooperation. Emerging markets are already playing a leading role in this shift. From Southeast Asia to Africa and Latin America, regional groupings are forging new trade connections and deepening their members' economic and financial ties. As emerging markets' economic clout has increased, so has their influence in global debates. Increasingly, these economies are coming together to discuss how they can leverage their growing scale and build on their hard-won resilience. Their growing prominence was top of mind at this week's AlUla Conference for Emerging Market Economies, held in AlUla, Saudi Arabia. Jointly organized by Saudi Arabia and the International Monetary Fund, this annual event brings together policymakers, business leaders and economic thinkers to chart a course for these economies. Emerging market leaders mapped out plans to thrive in a world of shifting partnerships by emphasizing continued openness and collaboration. Their common goal is to face global volatility with sound economic policies that strengthen resilience and help their people become more prosperous and secure.

## When Rules Apply Selectively

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Today, that comfort has disappeared. The international order is under strain not only because of rising powers or regional conflicts, but because its moral foundations have weakened. When rules are applied unevenly, they lose legitimacy. When norms are enforced selectively, they cease to be norms and become instruments of power. The erosion of trust that follows cannot be repaired by rhetoric alone.

This crisis of credibility explains much of the current global disorder. Countries once willing to accept Western leadership now question its sincerity. Calls for restraint are dismissed as self-serving

WHEN Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos, his remarks cut through the usual diplomatic pleasantries. He spoke not of optimism or resilience, but of contradiction. For decades, he argued, Western states claimed to uphold a rules-based international order while quietly bending those very rules whenever it suited their interests. Liberal values were celebrated in speeches, free trade was praised in principle, and international law was invoked selectively – firmly against rivals, cautiously against allies, and rarely against oneself. This was not a radical critique voiced from the margins. It came from the heart of the Western establishment, delivered at a forum that has long served as a symbol of elite consensus. That alone gives Carney's words a particular weight. More importantly, they reflect a reality that much of the world has experienced for years, even if it has rarely been acknowledged so openly by those who benefited most from the system.

The idea of a rules-based order emerged from the ruins of the Second World War. It promised stability through shared norms, predictability through institutions, and fairness through law rather than force. In theory, it was meant to restrain power and protect the weak. In practice, power has often shaped the rules, decided when they apply, and determined who must obey them. Western countries prospered immensely under this arrangement. Open markets expanded where it suited them, financial systems were designed around their interests, and global institutions reflected their priorities. Yet when the same rules threatened domestic industries, political stability, or strategic dominance, exceptions were quickly carved out. Trade barriers were reintroduced under new labels, sanctions replaced dialogue, and international law became a tool of pressure rather than a shared constraint.

The language of liberalism masked these inconsistencies. Human rights were defended passionately in some regions, ignored in others. Military interventions were justified in the name of international responsibility, while equally severe violations elsewhere were met with silence. Allies were forgiven for breaches that would have triggered outrage had they been committed by adversaries. Over time, this pattern did not go unnoticed. It bred resentment, scepticism, and a deep sense of double standards across much of the Global South. Carney's admission that "we participated in the rituals" is telling. The rituals of summits, declarations,

and communiqués allowed the appearance of moral authority to be maintained even as the substance eroded. Calling out hypocrisy was avoided, not because it was invisible, but because it was inconvenient. The system worked well enough for those at the centre, and discomfort was an acceptable price for continued advantage.

Today, that comfort has disappeared. The international order is under strain not only because of rising powers or regional conflicts, but because its moral foundations have weakened. When rules are applied unevenly, they lose legitimacy. When norms are enforced selectively, they cease to be norms and become instruments of power. The erosion of trust that follows cannot be repaired by rhetoric alone. This crisis of credibility explains much of the current global disorder. Countries once willing to accept Western leadership now question its sincerity. Calls for restraint are dismissed as self-serving. Appeals to international law are met with reminders of past violations that went unpunished. Even within Western societies, public confidence in globalisation and international institutions has declined, fuelled by the sense that the benefits were unevenly distributed while the costs were socialised. The consequences are visible. Trade is increasingly fragmented, alliances are more transactional, and international institutions struggle to command consensus. Economic nationalism, once criticised as backward, has returned in the language of strategic autonomy and national security. Sanctions, tariffs, and subsidies have become routine policy tools, even as free trade remains a rhetorical ideal. For developing countries, the implications are particularly severe. They are asked to adhere to fiscal discipline while facing mounting debt, to open markets while confronting protectionism elsewhere, and to commit to climate targets without comparable access to technology or finance. The promise that integration into the global system would lead to shared prosperity has, for many, remained unfulfilled.

This is where Carney's remarks matter beyond Davos. Acknowledging hypocrisy is not the same as correcting it, but it is a necessary first step. The question is whether Western states are prepared to move beyond ritual towards reform. That would require more than adjusting language; it would demand a rebalancing of power within global institutions, a willingness to accept constraints on one's own behaviour, and an honest reckoning with past inconsistencies.

A genuinely rules-based order cannot survive if rules are negotiable for some and binding for others. International law cannot command respect if it is treated as optional. Free trade cannot regain credibility if it operates only when politically convenient. And human rights cannot be universal if their defence depends on strategic alignment. None of this suggests abandoning international cooperation. On the contrary, it underscores the need to rescue it from selective application. A more stable global order would not emerge from dominance disguised as virtue, but from reciprocity grounded in fairness. That means listening to grievances that were previously dismissed, sharing responsibility rather than prescribing discipline, and recognising that legitimacy flows from consistency. The shifting balance of power makes this reckoning unavoidable. As new economic and political centres emerge, the ability of any group of states to define the rules unilaterally is diminishing. Influence now depends less on enforcement and more on credibility. Countries that are seen as fair arbiters, rather than self-interested referees, will shape the future order. For Pakistan and other developing states, this moment presents both risk and opportunity. The weakening of old certainties creates instability, but it also opens space for voices that were previously marginalised. Demands for fairer trade terms, debt relief, and equitable climate arrangements are harder to ignore when the authority of the existing system is under question. Yet this requires strategic clarity. Moral arguments alone will not suffice. Coalitions must be built, institutions engaged, and alternatives proposed that are practical rather than merely critical. The aim should not be to replace one form of imbalance with another, but to contribute to a system that is more even-handed and durable. Carney's speech will not, by itself, transform global politics. Davos has heard confessions before, and the world has seen how easily reflection gives way to routine. But the significance lies in what his words reveal: an awareness, within the West itself, that the old narrative no longer convinces. The gap between rhetoric and reality has become too wide to ignore. Whether this admission leads to reform or merely to a more careful choice of words remains to be seen. What is clear is that the era of unquestioned authority is over. A rules-based order cannot be sustained by selective adherence. If it is to endure, it must finally become what it has long claimed to be a system where rules apply not just to others, but to all.

## Yemen charting road to peace and security with new government

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

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

YEMEN turned a new page with the formation of a new government last week. Led by former Foreign Minister Dr. Shaya Al-Zindani, it promised major economic, political and security reforms. Al-Zindani is a veteran diplomat who served in the diplomatic corps of the pre-1990 southern government, then in the unity government post-1990, before he was appointed foreign minister in 2024. As a conciliatory leader who avoids friction and inflammatory rhetoric, he is the man for the moment. The challenges before the new government are immense. Politically, the main task is to resume the search for a political solution to the Yemen crisis. The UN-mediated talks with the Houthis are at a standstill and need to be jumpstarted. With the dissolution of the Southern Transitional Council, the government has reunited all areas under its authority and is in a good position to lead the negotiations.

Yemen needs to strengthen its international support systems. During the eight-year conflict with the Southern Transitional Council, it was nearly paralyzed as the rebel group usurped government authority and pursued its own diplomatic moves. The near-unanimous expressions of support for the new government are a measure of how much the international community is eager for Yemen to resume its rightful place in the region and that it is ready to lend a helping hand. The Friends of Yemen is one of those support systems. It is a group of 30 major countries that have in the past provided political, economic and security support for Yemen. The G10 group of ambassadors, which grew to become 20 ambassadors from the countries most concerned about Yemen, including

the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, provided useful diplomatic coordination. Donors also had their own group to coordinate with the government on aid. These support groups supplemented the work of joint Gulf Cooperation Council-Yemen committees and bilateral relations. Security is a paramount concern for the new government. Internally, it has to deal with the Houthi military threat. Although there has been a tenuous truce for about four years, the rebel group has broken it with numerous attempts to annex more land. It also poses a serious threat to maritime security and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, Bab Al-Mandab Strait and Gulf of Aden. The Yemeni government's ability to patrol its territorial waters was hampered by the fragmentation of security forces and the rivalry between them.

The situation improved with the Southern Transitional Council's dissolution last month and especially since the government decided to put all armed groups under a unified command in coordination with the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen. Yemen could now play a larger role in countering Houthi threats, both internal and in Yemeni waters, but it needs support from the rest of the world. The third major challenge, after the political and security spheres, is the state of the economy, which has hampered the government's ability to provide basic services and humanitarian assistance to the population. The Southern Transitional Council rebellion against the internationally recognized government in 2017 exacerbated an already fragile economy, which nearly collapsed in 2015 following the Houthi takeover of the capital Sanaa the previous September.

Yemen's gross domestic product contracted by more than 37 percent in three years, from \$43 billion in 2014 to about \$31 billion in 2016 and \$27 billion in 2017, the year the Southern Transitional Council began its rebellion. During its eight-year control of much of the south between 2017 and 2025, the economy shrank to \$17 billion. Thus, the Houthi insurgency in the north and the Southern Transitional Council rebellion in the south caused a 58-percent contraction from 2014 levels. To bring the economy back from this unprecedented collapse, the government needs security, stability and the resumption of economic activity. There is significant economic potential but the government needs the help of its friends and partners, especially in restoring economic capacity. There are at least four areas of potential economic growth that could be maximized through international engagement and cooperation. Oil and gas production can bring in fuel for the needed economic recovery and funds for government expenditure. Restoring farmers' ability to grow crops and export surplus could bring life back to the countryside and improve food security. In the past, Yemen had thriving fisheries for both local consumption and export. Tourism also has some potential, especially specialized and ecotourism. Realizing the significant potential in these four areas requires several steps, which the government could handle with the help of its growing group of friends. Security needs to be restored to jumpstart economic activity. The exchange rate needs to be stabilized to reassure traders. And a sound economic plan is needed to spur investment.

## Briefs

### Tension with Afghanistan mounts...

FROM PAGE 01  
measures against undocumented Afghan nationals, including arrests and repatriations. Afghan officials and commentators have criticised these steps, calling them coercive and counterproductive. The fallout has affected ordinary citizens on both sides of the border. Traders have reported significant losses due to suspended supply chains, while families dependent on cross-border movement face uncertainty. The repatriation drive targeting Afghan nationals has also drawn criticism from humanitarian groups. Diplomatic efforts to ease tensions have so far yielded limited results. Dialogues held in Doha, Ankara, Tehran and Riyadh reportedly failed to produce a breakthrough. In addition, informal outreach through religious scholars and clerics has not led to a thaw in relations, particularly amid continued public statements from Islamabad emphasising security concerns. Observers note that this marks one of the rare occasions when Kabul has adopted a sustained and consistent position in the face of pressure from Islamabad. The Taliban administration has maintained that it will not compromise on what it describes as sovereignty and national dignity. Meanwhile, some political figures in Pakistan have acknowledged past policy miscalculations regarding Afghanistan. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif recently conceded that previous engagements with militant groups had produced unintended consequences – a statement seen by analysts as a sign of introspection within sections of the political leadership.

### PM Shehbaz Sharif takes notice of...

FROM PAGE 01  
from senators across the political spectrum, including the ruling ally, the PPP, and the opposition, the PTI, in opposition to the NEPRA move. The PMO quoted the prime minister as directing the Power Division to immediately file a review appeal before Nepra "to ensure every possible safeguard of the existing consumer contracts". PM Shehbaz was of the view that the "burden of 466,000 users benefiting from solar should not be put on 37.6 million domestic consumers who were getting electricity directly from the national grid". "Power division should chalkout a comprehensive strategy in this regard," he added.

### Ex-COAS Bajwa admitted...

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Inspector General of Training and Evaluation. He also held key positions in the 10 Corps as a lieutenant colonel, where he served as a General Staff Officer (GSO). Bajwa served with a United Nations mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a brigade commander. He also served as Commandant of the Infantry School in Quetta. Gen (retd) Bajwa belongs to the infantry's Baloch Regiment, which has produced three army chiefs: Gen Yahya Khan, Gen Mirza Aslam Beg and Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani.

### Asif terms opposition...

FROM PAGE 01  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and minority communities. "The composition of the Pakistan Army reflects the entire federation. It is a truly national institution," he said. Khawaja Asif said the record should clearly reflect that the Pakistan Army is a national institution with participation from all federating units and religious minorities. He urged political leaders to refrain from statements that could hurt national sentiments, particularly amid ongoing security challenges. "Differences of opinion are everyone's right, but national emotions and institutions should not be targeted," he said.

# Germany outclass Pak 5–2 in Pro League Hockey Clash

*The match was not without controversy. The German captain was shown a yellow card following misconduct that briefly disrupted play. Despite the setback, Germany regrouped quickly and continued to dominate proceedings, adding crucial goals that sealed the result.*

### DNA

PERTH: Australia witnessed an exciting Pro League hockey encounter as Germany defeated Pakistan 5–2 in a high intensity match. The German side showcased superior skill and tactical discipline, particularly in the second half, to secure a convincing victory. Pakistan began the game with determination, matching Germany stride for stride in the opening stages.

Their attacking play and defensive resilience kept the contest balanced through the first half, with both teams trading goals and opportunities. However, the momentum shifted dramatically after the break.

Germany tightened their grip on the midfield, pressed aggressively, and converted



chances with clinical precision, leaving Pakistan struggling to regain control.

The match was not without controversy.

The German captain was shown a yellow card following misconduct that briefly

disrupted play. Despite the setback, Germany regrouped quickly and continued to dominate proceedings, adding crucial

goals that sealed the result.

For Pakistan, the defeat was disappointing, yet their spirited first half perfor-

mance drew praise from supporters and analysts alike. The team's qualification for the Pro League itself carries significance, as Pakistan earned their spot after New Zealand withdrew from the competition due to financial constraints. This opportunity has allowed Pakistan to reassert its presence on the international stage, offering valuable exposure and experience against top tier opponents.

Germany's victory underscores their strength and consistency in global hocke

ey, while Pakistan will look to build on the positives from their early play and address shortcomings in defense and finishing. With more matches ahead, Pakistan's young squad has the chance to learn, adapt, and prove themselves in the prestigious league.

The Pro League continues to provide

thrilling contests, and this clash in Aus

tralia highlighted both the intensity of

international hockey and the resilience of teams striving to make their mark.

## Seventh edition of Dubai Games to begin on Feb 12

DUBAI: Under the patronage of Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, the seventh edition of the Dubai Games is set to kick off on Thursday, 12th February.

Running until 15th February, Dubai Games 2026 is held in official partnership with DP World, with Diamond Partners DAMAC, Emirates Petroleum Company (Emarate), and Beyond Developments; Gold Partners Dubai Electricity and Water Authority DEWA, Easa Saleh Al Gurg Group, and Unilabs Middle East; and a Strategic Partner, the Dubai Sports Council.

For the third consecutive year, Dubai Games will begin with the Cities bonus-points challenge at Burj Khalifa, which will host all

56 teams participating in the Battle of the Cities.

Scheduled for Wednesday, 11th February, the challenge marks the highest number of participating cities since the tournament's launch. Teams will race up the staircase of the world's tallest building, competing for 16 bonus points that will contribute to their overall standings ahead of the main Battle of the Cities.

The main competitions will commence on 12th February with the Battle of the Government. Day One will feature two heats of the Men's

Battle of the Government, starting at 3pm, with qualifying teams advancing towards the finals on 15th February.

Action continues on 13th February with the third heat of the Men's Battle of the Government at 15:00, followed by the Battle of the Community at 18:40. A total of 27 qualifying teams, alongside last year's champion AJ Team, will compete across eight demanding obstacle

zones designed to test teamwork, physical strength, and strategic decision-making. The competition programme on 14th February will feature the Women's Battle of the Government, with 21st teams competing from 09:00, followed by two additional heats of the Battle of the Cities from 15:00. The broad international participation highlights the Dubai Games' growing global stature as one of the world's leading team-based sporting challenges.

The tournament will conclude on 15th February, beginning at 08:00 with the Battle of the Juniors, which will see 56 teams compete across two heats. Junior participants will take on challenges inspired by the adult course, adapted to suit their age group and capabilities.

Finals will follow with the Women's Battle of the Government at 15:00, the Men's Battle of the Gov-

ernment at 16:30, and the Battle of the Community final at 6pm. The Dubai Games will conclude with the Battle of the Cities final at 19:30, followed by the awards ceremony.

Winning teams will share a prize pool exceeding AED4 million, distributed among the top three teams in the Men's

Battle of the Government, Women's Battle of the Government, Battle of the Community, and Battle of the Juniors, as well as the top 10 teams in the Battle of the Cities.

The Dubai Games Organising Committee highlighted that the tournament continues to inspire community participation and promote active lifestyles. The 2026 edition raises the level of competition through a new schedule that brings the slogan 'Ignite, Unite, Battle' to life, where success depends on teams' ability to plan, assign roles, and make the right decisions at the right time. – Agencies

## Haider Ali Strikes Gold for Pakistan at Grand Prix

### OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: National hero Haider Ali has once again brought immense pride to Pakistan by winning the gold medal in the discus throw event at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix held in Dubai. Haider Ali secured the top spot on the podium with an impressive throw of 54.71 meters, outperforming elite athletes from 54 countries, including competitors from India. Speaking from the venue, an emotional Haider Ali credited his success to rigorous preparation and divine intervention, saying, "I worked tirelessly for this championship, and I am grateful that my efforts have resulted in the Pakistani flag flying highest in the UAE. I am grateful to Almighty Allah and my entire nation, whose prayers have rewarded my dedication with a gold medal."

The athlete further said, "My gold medal victory is proof of the 360-degree support from ACTIVIT and its CEO, Rd. Rizwan Afat Ahmed. From the podium in Paris to the World Grand Prix in Dubai, their great commitment – spanning elite medical care, precision nutrition, and financial stability – allowed me to focus solely on winning gold."

"My deepest thanks also go to the Athletics Federation of Pakistan for providing the international stage. Together, we didn't just compete; we conquered," he added. This golden victory further solidifies Haider Ali's status as Pakistan's most successful Paralympic figure. He is expected to land in Pakistan on February 14, where a hero's welcome awaits him. District authorities and local sports fans in Gujranwala are already preparing for a historic reception to honor the man who continues to prove that physical challenges are no barrier to world dominance.

## Mengal resignation accepted

FROM PAGE 01  
The BNP-M chief had announced his resignation during an NA session back then, where he also expressed regret that he could not do anything for the people of the province, and decried not being given the right to rule and expressed a lack of trust in the whole system. His resignation in September had come after the province was marred by a series of horrific attacks in August that resulted in over 50 deaths, including 14 security personnel, as militants affiliated with the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) targeted civilians, police, and security forces.

## D. Trump now says...

FROM PAGE 01  
In contrast, the Pakistani government also nominated the American commander-in-chief for the Nobel Peace Prize. Last year in May, Pakistan and India engaged in a military showdown, the worst between the old foes in decades, which was sparked by a terrorist attack on tourists in IIOJK's Pahalgam area, which New Delhi alleged was backed by Pakistan. Islamabad denied involvement in the Pahalgam attack, which killed 26 men and offered to participate in a neutral probe into the deadly incident. Islamabad City Guide During the clashes, Pakistan downed several Indian fighter jets, including three Rafale, and dozens of drones. After at least 87 hours, the war between the two nuclear-armed nations ended on May 10 with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the US.

## British woman...

FROM PAGE 01  
holiday, said she would often become upset with her father when he spoke about owning a gun. The inquest also heard how Kris Harrison, who moved to the United States when his daughter was a child, had previously been to rehab for alcohol addiction. Kris Harrison, who did not attend the inquest, admitted in a statement sent to the court that he had relapsed on the day of the shooting and had drunk about 500ml of white wine. Little said on the morning of 10 January his partner had asked her father during the Trump row: "How would you feel if I was the girl in that situation and I'd been sexually assaulted?" Kris Harrison had replied that he had two other daughters who lived with him so it would not upset him that much. Little said Lucy became "quite upset" and ran upstairs.

## 10 dead in Canada...

FROM PAGE 01  
Police described the shooter as a woman – an unusual development as mass shootings in North America are almost always carried out by men. A police active shooter alert said the suspect was described "as female in a dress with brown hair." Police Superintendent Ken Floyd later confirmed at a press conference that the suspect described in the alert was the same person found dead in the school. Police did not say how many of the victims may have been minors. One of Canada's deadliest mass-casualty incidents Tumbler Ridge is a remote municipality with a population of around 2,400 people in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in northern British Columbia, approximately 1,155 km (717 miles) northeast of Vancouver. Images of the town show a snow-covered landscape filled with pine trees.

"Multiple injuries and multiple deceased were inside the school as officers progressed through the scene," Floyd told reporters. "We're still triaging other victims, and I don't have updates on whether that number could rise. The scene was very dramatic, and there are multiple victims that are still being cared for," Floyd said. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a statement on X: "I am devastated by today's horrific shootings in Tumbler Ridge, BC. My prayers and deepest condolences are with the families and friends who have lost loved ones to these horrific acts of violence."

## Forever Young bids for historic second Saudi Cup

Forever Young Eyes Historic Second Saudi Cup Triumph in Riyadh Showdown



RIYADH: Trainer Yoshito Yahagi believed Forever Young (JPN) to be virtually unbeatable when he thwarted Romantic Warrior (IRE) 12 months ago, and he returns to Riyadh with his Breeders' Cup hero bidding to become the first dual winner of the Group 1 Saudi Cup at King Abdulaziz Racetrack this Saturday.

Hong Kong legend Romantic Warrior

was the only possible danger to victory in the 2025 renewal of the \$20 million feature in the mind of the decorated trainer. And he was proved correct as the pair went head-to-head down the stretch with Forever Young prevailing by neck – having only led inside the final 25 meters.

"I didn't think he would be beaten by any horse," revealed Yahagi.

"But I wasn't completely sure about Romantic Warrior, as it was his first time racing on dirt. If Forever Young was going to be beaten, it had to be by Romantic Warrior."

Romantic Warrior made a big move at the top of the stretch and looked assured of success, only for Ryusei Sakai to wear him down aboard the brilliant entree in a dramatic climax.

"It was unbelievable. To be honest, I thought we had been beaten at the finish. It was a great race," added Yahagi. The trainer bids for a third win in just seven renewals of the Saudi Cup following on from Panthalassa (JPN) in 2023, and Forever Young will have his first start after writing another chapter in the history books when becoming the first Japanese-trained winner of the Breeders' Cup Classic at Del Mar last November.

"He skipped the Tokyo Daishoten this year after the Breeders' Cup," explained Yahagi. "He was carrying a little extra weight at first, but he has been improving steadily."

"The anti-clockwise track and the long home straight really suit him in Saudi Arabia and Sakai knows everything about him. Their partnership is very reliable," added the trainer of the pairing who also claimed the 2024 Saudi Derby. – Agencies

## Person detained for questioning over kidnap of US TV anchor's mother

*Footage shows the individual approaching Guthrie's front door, head down, clad in long pants, a zip-up jacket, hat and gloves, and carrying a backpack*

LOS ANGELES: Authorities have detained a person for questioning over the kidnapping of the mother of US TV anchor Savannah Guthrie, media reported Tuesday, the same day the FBI released new photos of an apparent suspect in the case.

Citing unnamed law enforcement sources, major networks CNN, ABC and Fox reported that law enforcement officials have detained someone for questioning in connection to the abduction of Nancy Guthrie, who is being held for ransom.

The person has not been charged, CNN reported. The update comes amid breathless coverage of the kidnapping of the high-profile anchor's mother in a case that has gripped the country.

Earlier Tuesday the FBI released images showing a person in a full-face balaclava apparently tampering with a front-door camera outside Nancy Guthrie's home in the southwestern city of Tucson, Arizona.

The six photographs and three videos posted by FBI Director Kash Patel on his X account show an individual on a deserted doorstep in the dark, in eerie black-and-white imagery. The person is described as an "armed individual."

ABC reported however that there was no indication that the person who was detained was the same person as the one seen in the photographs. Nancy Guthrie, mother of NBC News "Today" co-host Savannah Guthrie, is believed to have been kidnapped from her home on the night of January 31 or in the early hours of February 1. The images date to "the morning of her disappearance," Patel said on X.

"As of this morning, law enforcement has uncovered these previously inaccessible new images showing an armed individual appearing to have tampered with the camera at Nancy Guthrie's front door the morning of her disappearance," Patel wrote.

"Earlier Tuesday the FBI released images showing a person in a full-face balaclava apparently tampering with a front-door camera outside Nancy Guthrie's home in the southwestern city of Tucson, Arizona.

White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt began a media briefing by saying she and President Donald Trump had just reviewed the newly released imagery. Nancy Guthrie's family has received ransom letters with payment demands, the FBI has said. Footage shows the individual approaching Guthrie's front door, head down, clad in long pants, a zip-up jacket, hat and gloves, and carrying a backpack. The person's hands loom over the camera for several seconds before he or she turns, looking for seconds on the ground, then stepping outside the entryway and pulling up some plants. Subsequent footage appears to show the person pushing the plants against the camera. Pima County Sheriff Chris Ninos last week said that the doorbell camera outside Nancy Guthrie's home was disconnected at 1:47 am on Sunday, February 1. At 2:12 am, "software detects a person on a cam-

era, but there's no video available," he said. Savannah Guthrie on Monday released the latest video appeal for public help in tracking down her ailing mother, who suffers from heart problems and needs regular medication. "As we enter into another week of this nightmare...thank you so much for all of the prayers and the love that we have felt," an emotional Guthrie said on Instagram. "Law enforcement is working tirelessly around the clock trying to bring her home, trying to find where she was taken, and we don't know where."

"We believe our mom is still out there. We need your help."

Nancy Guthrie's disappearance has garnered wall-to-wall coverage in US media, with dozens of reporters and camera crews descending on the quiet Arizona suburb where she lives. Authorities said they believed the missing woman was still alive, and said blood discovered on her doorstep belonged to her. – Agencies

## Briefs

**PSX gains 896 points to close at 183,049 points**

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday witnessed a bullish trend, gaining 896.25 points, a positive change of 0.49 percent, to close at 183,049.81 points compared to 182,153.55 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 734.671 million shares with a traded value of Rs 35.393 billion, against 1,062.309 million shares valuing Rs 37.883 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization increased to Rs 20.710 trillion from Rs 20.634 trillion a day earlier. Out of 477 active companies in the ready market, 208 advanced, 223 declined, while 46 remained unchanged. K-Electric Limited topped the volume chart with 120,603 million shares, followed by Engenico PK with 81,776 million shares and F. Nat. Equities with 51,954 million shares. The top gainers included Khyber Textile Mills Limited, which rose by Rs 147.00 to close at Rs 1,620.09, and Sitara Chemical Industries Limited, which gained Rs 59.29 to settle at Rs 939.27.

On the losing side, PIA Holding Company Limited declined by Rs 740.67 to close at Rs 18,226.00, while Rafsan Maize Products Company Limited fell by Rs 339.65 to close at Rs 9,575.02. In the futures market, turnover stood at 149,370 million shares with a traded value of Rs 8,556 billion, compared to 286,117 million shares worth Rs 10,318 billion in the previous session. Out of 328 futures-market companies, 132 recorded gains, while 195 declined and one remained unchanged.—APP

**Gold prices surge by Rs 2,300 per tola**

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices witnessed a significant increase in the local market on Wednesday, as the price of 24-karat gold per tola surged by Rs 2,300 to settle at Rs 528,562, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Likewise, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold rose by Rs 1,972 to Rs 453,156, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold increased by Rs 1,808 to Rs 415,408. In the international market, the price of gold gained \$23 to reach \$5,058 per ounce. Meanwhile, silver prices also recorded an upward trend in the local market, with the price of 24-karat silver per tola climbing by Rs 120 to Rs 8,735, while the price of 10 grams of silver increased by Rs 103 to Rs 7,488. The price of silver in the international market rose by \$1.20 to settle at \$82.60 per ounce.—APP

**Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar**

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.66 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.67. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.55 and Rs 282.2, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 0.20 to close at Rs 333.23 from the previous day's close of Rs 333.02, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 03 paisa and closed at Rs 1.82, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 10.11 and closed at Rs 382.42 compared to the previous day's Rs 382.31. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 paisa each to close at Rs 76.13 and Rs 74.56, respectively.—APP

# Pak, KSA discuss for expanding regional market cooperation

The two sides agreed that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, by leveraging their respective strengths, can position themselves as complementary partners—combining Pakistan's production capabilities with Saudi Arabia's capital strength, market access, and regional connectivity.



## Philippines urges China to keep tone calm as rhetoric heats up

MANILA: The Philippine foreign ministry urged the Chinese Embassy in Manila on Wednesday to be "constructive" in its statements amid an escalating war of words between Chinese diplomats and public officials, including senators. The Department of Foreign Affairs' newly appointed maritime affairs spokesperson, Rogelio Villanueva, said that responses should be delivered in a "calm" and "professional" manner. "The DFA values candid and vigorous debate with its foreign counterparts on important issues consistent with the Philippines' democratic tradition," he said. The Chinese Embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Villanueva's remarks came after the Senate approved a resolution on Monday condemning statements made by the Chinese Embassy in Manila, which criticized Philippine officials for defending the country's sovereignty and maritime rights in the South China Sea. The Chinese embassy rejected and condemned the resolution, calling it a "political stunt." On Tuesday, the Philippines' Ambassador to the United States, Jose Manuel Romualdez, underscored the need to "cool" the temperature between China and the Philippines, saying that the relationship between the two countries should not be defined solely by the maritime dispute. The Philippines and China have been locked in a series of maritime confrontations in recent years, with the Philippines accusing China of aggressive actions inside its exclusive economic zones, including dangerous maneuvers, water-cannoning, and interference in resupply missions. China, in turn, has accused the Philippines of intruding into what it claims as its territory. China's military has grown stronger in the past year in its fight against corruption, President Xi Jinping told the Chinese armed forces on Wednesday, making a rare public reference to the graft probes linked to the country's top generals. China's two highest-ranked generals have been ensnared in disciplinary probes, with He Weidong expelled in October last year and Zhang Youxia placed under investigation in January, marking one of the most high-profile purges of the Chinese military in decades. "The past year has been unusual and extraordinary," Xi told the military in a virtual address. "The People's Army has deepened its political education, effectively addressed various risks and challenges, and undergone revolutionary forging in the fight against corruption." The downfall of Zhang and He, the two vice chairmen of the Central Military Commission, has cut China's seven-man supreme military leadership body to just a committee of two people—Xi himself as the chair of CMC and a newly promoted vice chairman Zhang Shengmin. The seats of CMC's three remaining members are currently empty. Li Shangfu was expelled in 2024 and Miao Hua in 2025, while Liu Zhenli was placed under investigation for corruption last month.—DNA

## New poll shows only 6% of Arabs accept recognizing Israel

CHICAGO: Eighty-seven percent of citizens in the Arab world oppose recognition of Israel while only 6 percent accept it, according to a new survey by the Arab Center Washington DC. The 2025 Arab Opinion Index, conducted nine times since 2011, surveyed more than 40,000 people in 15 Arab countries on a wide range of issues including politics, economy and identity. "An overwhelming majority ... oppose recognition of Israel," Tamara Kharroub, deputy executive director and senior fellow at the ACW, said during a live webinar on Tuesday attended by Arab News. That finding has been consistent and within range in every poll conducted since 2014, according to the center's polling data. The 15 countries surveyed are Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Tunisia. The highest rates of opposition to recognizing Israel were recorded in Libya (96 percent), Jordan (95 percent), Kuwait (94 percent) and Palestine (91 percent). A conclusion cited in the poll said: "Those who opposed recognizing Israel cited various factors, mainly linked to its colonial, racist, and expansionist nature and its continued occupation of Palestinian territory. Cultural or religious explanations were largely absent. "The reasons cited by respondents clearly indicated that their position on recognizing Israel is not likely to change as long as its colonial nature persists." Kharroub said the number that accept recognition of Israel dropped by 2 percentage points in the 2025 Arab Opinion Index compared to the 2022 survey." She added of those 6 percent, "half made such a move conditional on the formation of an independent Palestinian state." Yousef Muhammayer, ACW's head of the Palestine / Israel Program and senior fellow, said: "Israel continues to be widely perceived as a threat and not a partner. This is something that has only been escalated in recent years.—Agencies

## Israeli court ordered prisons to give Palestinian detainees more food

NABLUS: Five months after Israel's Supreme Court ruled that its prisons were failing to provide enough food for Palestinian detainees and ordered conditions be improved, emaciated prisoners are still emerging with tales of extreme hunger and abuse. Samer Khawaireh, 45, told Reuters that all he was given to eat in Israel's Megiddo and Nafha prisons was ten thin pieces of bread over the course of a day, with a bit of hummus and tahini. Twice a week some tuna. Videos saved on Khawaireh's phone show him at normal weight before he was detained in the West Bank city of Nablus last April, and clearly emaciated upon his release. He says he lost 22 kg (49 pounds) during nine months in captivity, emerging a month ago covered in scabies sores and so gaunt and dishevelled his 9-year-old son Azadeen didn't recognize him. Reuters could not independently determine the total number of prisons where the scarcity of food prevailed, or the total number of inmates who experienced its toll. Reuters could not independently verify Khawaireh's diet during his captivity, the reasons for his extreme weight loss, or exactly how widespread such experience is among the 9,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails. But it was consistent with descriptions in some reports compiled by lawyers after prison visits. Reuters reviewed 13 such reports from December and January, in which 27 prisoners complained of a lack of food, with most saying provisions had not changed since the court order. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), which was involved in last year's landmark court case that led to the order for better treatment for prisoners, has accused the government of harboring a "policy of starvation" in prisons. The Israel Prisons Service declined to comment on Khawaireh's individual case but said it "rejects allegations of 'starvation' or systematic neglect. Nutrition and medical care are provided based on professional standards and operational procedures." The service "operates in accordance with the law and court rulings" and all complaints are investigated through official channels, a spokesperson said. "Basic rights, including access to food, medical care, and adequate living conditions, are provided in accordance with the law and applicable procedures, by professionally trained staff." Khawaireh, a journalist at a Nablus radio station who was held without charge, said he was never told why he was detained in a night raid on his house in April. Israel's military declined to comment. Independent verification of the treatment of detainees has become more difficult since the start of the Gaza War, when Israel barred prison visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross, a role the Geneva-based body has played in conflicts around the world for a century. ACRI has petitioned Israel's Supreme Court to allow Red Cross access to Palestinian detainees. It has also applied to court to have the prison service held in contempt for failing to comply with last September's order that it improve conditions. "All the indications that we're getting are that not much has changed" since the court ruling, the group's executive director Noa Sattath told Reuters. "The prisoners are not getting more food if they ask for it. There hasn't been any medical examination of the situation of the prisoners, and the prisoners are still hungry." The Supreme Court did not respond to a request for comment on the case. The number of detainees held by Israel swelled after the Hamas-led attacks on October 7, 2023, with thousands swept up during Israel's assault on Gaza and a crackdown in the occupied West Bank, though hundreds were freed under a ceasefire last October. Throughout the war in Gaza, Israel's Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, in charge of the prisons service, has compared Israel's treatment of Palestinians with the abuse faced by Israeli hostages held in Gaza by Hamas, many of whom were released in a state of near starvation that shocked Israelis. Hamas denies starving hostages, saying they ate as well as their captors under Israeli restrictions on supplies to Gaza. Sattath, of ACRI, said the treatment of hostages held by militants provides no justification for mistreating Palestinian detainees.—APP

## Finance minister lauds the US support in Pak's economic uplift

ISLAMABAD: John Mark Pommersheim, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, United States Department of State, accompanied by Natalie A. Baker, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan, called on the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue at the Finance Division. The Finance Minister welcomed Mr. Pommersheim and appreciated the longstanding support and engagement of the United States in Pakistan's economic development, particularly cooperation in multilateral financial frameworks. Both sides exchanged views on Pakistan's economic outlook, reform agenda, and avenues for enhancing bilateral economic cooperation. The Finance Minister also highlighted growing investor confidence, citing recent

Pakistan's macroeconomic stabilization and reform progress with focus on transitioning toward sustainable, export-led growth. He shared that the fiscal deficit has declined, the current account has improved due to strong remittance inflows and growth in IT exports, and credit ratings have shown positive movement. The Minister emphasized that the government will stay the course in strengthening fiscal discipline, ensuring external stability, and undertaking structural reforms that support durable growth. He noted that reforms in state-owned enterprises and right-sizing of the public sector are being accelerated to improve efficiency and reduce fiscal risks. The Finance Minister also highlighted growing investor confidence, citing recent

indigenous investment initiatives and increased private-sector participation. Mr. Pommersheim acknowledged Pakistan's efforts toward fiscal stabilization and welcomed the signs of improvement in key macroeconomic indicators. He emphasized that the United States values a stable and pros-

perous Pakistan and noted that strengthening the investment climate remains a shared priority. He observed that U.S. businesses are closely watching reform progress and that improved policy consistency would further support commercial engagement. The Finance Minister reiterated Pakistan's commitment to facilitating foreign investment and maintaining regular engagement with the U.S. business community, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Business Council. The Finance Minister also briefed Mr. Pommersheim on Pakistan's plans to re-enter international capital markets, including Panda Bond issuance, as part of a broader strategy to diversify financing sources. On privatization, the Minister reaffirmed the government's resolve to move forward expeditiously. He noted that the privatization process is gaining momentum, with upcoming steps including transactions in the banking and power distribution sectors, as well as outsourcing of major airports beginning with Islamabad.



## Turkish, Greek leaders set for talks on maritime borders

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan will host Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Wednesday for talks likely to focus on migration and longstanding maritime disputes, as the NATO allies and historic rivals try to build on warming ties. Fifteen migrants died in a shipwreck off the Greek island of Chios last week after their boat collided with a Greek coast guard vessel and sank in the Aegean Sea off the Turkish coast. Mitsotakis will be accompanied by ministers responsible for foreign affairs, finance, development and migration, Greek officials said. Developments in the Middle East, Iran and Ukraine, migration, trade and organized crime are also likely to be on the agenda. Greek Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Lana Zochiou said on Tuesday the aim was "to assess the progress of bilateral cooperation" and "to keep communication channels open to defuse any potential crises.—APP

## Lebanon, Jordan seek solutions after Damascus bans non-Syrian trucks

BEIRUT: Lebanon and Jordan are seeking a solution with Syria after the latter barred foreign trucks from entering its territory, officials from both countries told AFP on Tuesday. Damascus had issued a decision on Saturday stipulating that "non-Syrian trucks will not be allowed to enter" the country, and that goods being imported by road must be unloaded at specific points at border crossings. The decision exempts trucks that are only passing through Syria to other countries. Dozens of trucks unable to enter the country were lined up on the Lebanese side of the Masnaa border crossing on Tuesday, an AFP photographer saw. Ahmad Tamer, head of land and maritime transportation at the Lebanese transport ministry told AFP that discussions were underway with Damascus over the decision. He said the issue was not specifically targeting Lebanon—which is trying to reset ties with Damascus after the fall of Bashar Assad—adding that he hoped to hold a meeting with the Syrian side soon. Lebanon sends around 500 trucks to Syria per day, according to Tamer. In Jordan, also affected by the decision, transport ministry spokesperson Mohammed Al-Dweiri told AFP that "discussions are currently underway, and we are awaiting a response from the Syrian side regarding allowing foreign trucks to enter and cross." Dweiri said that Jordanian trucks were continuing to unload their cargo at the free zone at the Nassib border crossing with Syria despite some "confusion."—APP

## Taiwan to send team to assess US rare earth deposits

TAIPEI: Taiwan plans to send officials to assess US rare earth deposits with a goal to have such minerals refined on the island. Economy Minister Kung Ming-hsin said on Wednesday, President Donald Trump's administration has stepped up efforts to secure US supplies of critical minerals after China rattled senior officials and global markets last year by withholding rare earths required by American automakers and other industrial manufacturers. Trump last week launched a US strategic stockpile of critical minerals, called Project Vault, backed by \$10 billion in seed funding from the US Export-Import Bank and \$2 billion in private funding. While semiconductor powerhouse Taiwan is not formally part of that scheme, it has previously held talks with the United States on how it can help, given Taipei's concerns about over-reliance on a China-centric supply chain. China views Taiwan as its own territory and has stepped up its military threats. Speaking to reporters in Taipei, Kung said the ministry's Geological Survey and Mining Management Agency would go to the United States to assess rare earths there.—APP

**Briefs**

**Indian cricketer Abhishek Sharma hospitalized**

DNA

NEW DELHI: Prolific Indian opener Abhishek Sharma has been hospitalised with an upset stomach ahead of the group match against Namibia at the T20 World Cup, a cricket board official said on Wednesday.

The explosive left-hander is key to India's chances of defending their title at the 20-team tournament and is doubtful for the Group A fixture on Thursday in New Delhi. The 25-year-old was admitted to a Delhi hospital on Tuesday after he missed training with a stomach issue he carried from the opener in Mumbai, the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

India's assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate acknowledged the concern on Tuesday, saying the batsman had "still got a few issues with his tummy". "We hope that he'll be available for the game in a few days' time."

Abhishek was out for a duck in India's win over the United States but has been a strong performer in the lead-up to the tournament. India play arch-rivals Pakistan in a blockbuster on Sunday.

**Punjab pledges Rs 10bnn for FC**

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has announced a Rs10 billion allocation for the Frontier Corps (FC) to strengthen the force's capacity-building and bolster security in Balochistan.

Addressing FC headquarters during her visit to Balochistan on Tuesday, she paid tribute to those serving in Balochistan under difficult and dangerous circumstances. In her speech, which was aired on Wednesday, Maryam shared that she found out a few months ago that the FC required Rs10 billion for "capacity building". "I was asked to contribute whatever Punjab could," she stated. "I decided it was not a favour ... it was a responsibility. I said we will provide them the entire Rs10bn."

The chief minister highlighted that the allocation aimed to enhance operational readiness and strengthen security efforts in Balochistan, particularly in light of recent threats and attacks. CM Maryam's visit came in the wake of a spate of attacks across Balochistan on January 31, which brought parts of the restive province to a standstill for several days.

Security forces had responded by killing a total of 216 terrorists during "Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-1" in the province.

# Pak announces appointments of envoys to key capitals

*The appointments cover major missions in the United Kingdom, Europe, Africa, Central Asia and North America, reflecting Islamabad's focus on diversifying partnerships*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has appointed 19 ambassadors and consuls general to key capitals and cities abroad following the approval of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar announced on Wednesday. The foreign minister said the new postings were aimed at building on two years of active international engagement. Dar expressed confidence that the envoys would represent Pakistan with "clarity of purpose and wisdom, with clear emphasis on 'economic diplomacy'".

He praised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomats serving far from home, de-

scribing their professionalism as central to Pakistan's global representation.

The appointments cover major missions in the United Kingdom, Europe, Africa, Central Asia and North America, reflecting Islamabad's focus on diversifying partnerships and promoting commercial interests overseas.

Ambassadors/High Commissioners  
Bangkok, Thailand – Saadia Altaf Qazi  
Berlin, Germany – Salman Sharif  
Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania – Hasnain Youasaf  
Dushanbe, Tajikistan – Irfan Ahmed  
Geneva, Switzerland – Tahir Hussain Andrabri  
Kampala, Uganda – Ashar Shahzad  
Kathmandu, Nepal – Mohammad Aamir Khan

London, United Kingdom – Chaudhry Tipu Usman

Nairobi, Kenya – Dr Bilal Ahmed Oslo, Norway – Asim Ali Khan  
Stockholm, Sweden – Ahmed Amjad Ali Tashkent, Uzbekistan – Muhammad Mu-dassir Tipu  
Tehran, Iran – Imran Ahmed Siddiqui  
Consuls General  
Frankfurt, Germany – Ali Anser Zaidi  
Guangzhou, China – Yasir Iqbal Butt  
Kandahar, Afghanistan – Shahbaz Hussain Los Angeles, United States – Siraj Ahmad Khan  
Mazare-Sharif, Afghanistan – Awais Ahmad Khan  
Montreal, Canada – Faisal Abro  
Chief of Protocol Capt retd Usman has

been designated as high commissioner to the UK, replacing Dr Mohammad Faisal, who is set to return to headquarters in August.

Faisal, formerly Pakistan's envoy to Germany and spokesperson for the Foreign Office, is among the likely candidates for the soon-to-be-vacant position of foreign secretary when incumbent Amna Baloch retires in September.

Ambassador Mudassir, currently serving in Iran, was designated for Uzbekistan, a post from which Ahmad Farooq is returning. Additional Secretary for Disarmament and Foreign Office spokesperson, Andrabri, was posted as Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, a location where he has previously served.

**Netanyahu to push Trump on Iran missiles in talks**

Israeli president likely to urge US counterpart to take harder line on Iran's ballistic missile programme

DNA

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will push Donald Trump on Wednesday to take a tougher stance in nuclear talks with Iran, after rushing to Washington to stiffen the US president's resolve. Trump said on the eve of the hastily arranged White House meeting – set to begin at 11 am local time (1600 GMT) – that he was weighing sending a second US "armada" to the Middle East to pressure Tehran to reach a nuclear deal.

But Netanyahu, making his sixth visit to the United States since Trump took office, will also be urging the US leader to take a harder line on arch-enemy Iran's ballistic missile programme.

Tehran, which resumed talks with Washington last week in Oman, warned Monday of "destructive influences" on diplomacy ahead of the Israeli premier's visit. Netanyahu had been expected to come to Washington for a February 19 meeting of Trump's "Board of Peace" for Gaza, but reportedly brought forward his visit as the US-Iran talks proceeded. While talking up hopes of a nuclear deal, Trump warned in an interview with the Axios news outlet on Tuesday that he was "thinking" of sending a second aircraft carrier strike group to the region. "Either we will make a deal or we will have to do something very tough like last time," Trump told Axios. "We have an armada that is heading there and another one might be going."

Trump, who ordered US strikes on Tehran's nuclear sites during Israel's 12-day war with Iran last June, separately told Fox Business that any deal would have to involve "no nuclear weapons, no missiles."

## President Zardari warns escalation involving Iran could destabilize region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday welcomed the efforts aimed at easing tension and promoting regional peace, warning that any military escalation involving Iran could destabilise the Gulf region, South Asia and Western Asia. "Any instability involving Iran, or any attempt to resolve issues through military means, carries grave risks. Such actions could ... undermine global peace, and cause serious harm to the global economy. The stakes are far too high for confrontation," The president said while speaking at a reception hosted by the embassy of Iran to celebrate 47th anniversary of Iran's National Day. He said Pakistan opposed unilateral sanctions and coercive measures, including against Iran, and believed that peaceful engagement best served regional and global security. "Pakistan welcomes efforts aimed at easing tensions and encourages continued dialogue among relevant parties in a constructive spirit, with the objective of promoting peace and stability in the region," he added. Earlier, the president requested the participants to observe one minute of silence in memory of the victims of the recent blasts in Islamabad, and the tragedies in Iran. "Let's pray that wars never come to us," the president prayed. Referring to the ongoing conflicts, terror-

ism, external interference and unresolved regional flashpoints in the region, the president said Pakistan firmly believed that such challenges could not be addressed through force or unilateral actions. President Zardari emphasized that Pakistan and Iran shared responsibilities as neighbouring countries and remained committed to cooperation on border management, counter-terrorism, and turning the shared frontier into a zone of cooperation, lawful trade and development. He said Pakistan valued balanced relations globally and remained ready to play a constructive role in promoting restraint, dialogue and regional peace. The president extended his warm congratulations to the leadership and people of Iran. "May our partnership continue to grow, and may our region move towards security, stability and shared prosperity," he prayed. He said Pakistan and Iran were not only neighbours; but also civilizational partners. "Our shared border reflects centuries of interaction, coexistence and mutual respect. Our relationship is rooted in faith, history and enduring cultural bonds that continue to shape our region." He noted that the Persian language and its great literary tradition had profoundly influenced Pakistan's intellectual life. For hundreds of years, he said Persian served as the official language of large parts of the regions that now form Pakistan.

## Pak urges South Sudan parties to recommit to 2018 peace accord

*"The upcoming renewal of UNMISS is critically important and should preserve the Mission's core capacities, which are urgently needed to support the South Sudanese people and prevent further deterioration of situation"*

UNITED NATIONS: Amid political deadlock among signatories to the 2018 South Sudan peace agreement and a dangerous escalation in armed confrontations, Pakistan has called on all stakeholders to recommit to the agreement in good faith and to address differences through inclusive dialogue. "It is time for renewal of national consensus," Ambassador Asim Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council which on Tuesday debated the deteriorating situation in South Sudan, an African country that gained independence from the Republic of Sudan in 2011. At this critical juncture, he stressed the need to prevent another descent into violence, warning, "The cost of failure would be borne first and foremost by the South Sudanese people, and would also have profound regional consequences. "It is time for more deeper engagement, not distancing or abandonment," the Pakistani envoy added. Against this backdrop, Ambassador Asim Ahmad underscored the crucial role of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), saying there is a continued need for the Mission to remain operational and robust at a time of heightened political uncertainty, inter-communal violence, and regional spill-over risks. "The upcoming renewal of UNMISS is critically important and should preserve the Mission's core capacities, which are urgently needed to support the South Sudanese people and prevent further deterioration of situation," he said, while calling for ensuring safety and security of UN personnel. Noting with "concern" UN Secretary-General's assessment of the operational impact of the ongoing liquidity crisis on UNMISS, the Pakistani envoy said, "In an already fragile environment, reductions in Mission's capacity carry serious risks for the protection of civilians and the safety and security of UN personnel." "The reported decline in patrols, reduced reach, and other implications underscore the real consequences of resource shortfalls on mandate delivery," he said, highlighting the fact that out of the 17,000 troops sanctioned by the Security Council to implement the mandate, only around 9,700 remain in UNMISS. These challenges are further compounded by the regional spill-over of the conflict in the neighbouring Republic of Sudan, Ambassador Asim Ahmad said, pointing out that the arrival of approximately 1.3 million people fleeing their country since April 2023 has placed additional strain on South Sudan's already strained systems. Further weakening UNMISS capacities would be particularly ill-timed and counterproductive, he added. – DNA



**ISLAMABAD:** President Asif Ali Zardari, Ambassador of Iran, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, and other dignitaries, cutting cake at a reception held to commemorate the 47th Anniversary of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and Iran's National Day. – DNA

## Govt proposes imposing new fixed monthly charges on household consumers

*"Fixed charge of Rs200 per month for those using up to 100 units, Rs300 for those using up to 200 units on cards"*

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The federal government plans to collect an additional Rs132 billion a year from domestic electricity consumers by imposing new fixed monthly charges, while reducing per-unit tariffs by up to Rs1.53 for calendar year 2026. The move marks major restructuring that will shift Rs101 billion in subsidies away from households and toward the industrial sector. The proposal was presented as the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) opened hearings on a wide-ranging overhaul of power tariffs. For the first time, fixed charges will apply to both protected and non-protected domestic consumers, a move aimed at cutting cross-subsidies and lowering industrial electricity tariff by up to Rs4.04 per unit. The hearing was held on a petition filed by the Power Division and is chaired by Nepra Chairman Waseem Mukhtar. Officials from the Power Planning and Monitoring Company (PPMC) briefed the regulator on the new tariff structure. Under the plan, fixed charges will now apply to households consuming up to 300 units per month, including protected consumers. Previously, only non-protected users consuming more than 300 units paid fixed charges. For protected consumers, the government has proposed a fixed charge of Rs200 per month for those using up to 100 units and Rs300 for those using up to 200 units. As a result, subsidies for these two slabs have been reduced by Rs51 billion, bringing total subsidy support down to Rs423 billion.

## FCCP stays IHC proceedings in Dr Aafia Siddiqui case, halts contempt action

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Wednesday stayed proceedings pending before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in the Dr Aafia Siddiqui case, suspending the high court's scheduled hearings and effectively halting further action including the contempt of court proceedings. A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of the Federal Constitutional Court Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, and comprising Justice Ali Baqar Nafai and Justice Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, heard the matter. After taking up appeals filed by the federal government, the court restrained the IHC from proceeding further in the case, particularly with regard to potential contempt proceedings. In its appeals, the federal government challenged the IHC's interim orders as well as its contempt-related proceedings. The government also sought to set aside the May 16, 2025 order through which the high court had allowed an amendment to a petition in a matter that had been disposed of nearly a decade earlier. During the hearing before the FCC, Additional Attorney General Rashid Hafeez

represented the federal government, while Advocate Imran Shafiq appeared on behalf of Dr Fozia Siddiqui. The Federal Constitutional Court also issued notice to Dr Fozia Siddiqui and stated that at the next hearing it would examine the maintainability of the appeals and other legal questions involved. Dr Fozia Siddiqui had approached the IHC, contending that her sister, Dr Aafia Siddiqui – currently imprisoned in the United States – faces threats to her life, safety, and physical and mental health. The federal government, in its stance, argued that allowing the amendment amounted to judicial overreach and undermined the principle of finality in litigation. It maintained that reopening a matter disposed of many years ago was contrary to settled legal principles. The government further submitted that diplomatic efforts had already been undertaken in Dr Aafia Siddiqui's case. In October 2024, the prime minister wrote to the US president supporting a clemency appeal, following which a high-level official delegation was sent to the United States. Efforts were also made to explore bilateral and multilateral agreements on prisoner transfer; however, US authorities did not agree to any such arrangement.

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11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,  
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan  
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-8488394

