



# Islamabad POST

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**Pakistan values ties with UAE, says Field Marshal**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Sporting ties with S. Lanka good: Naqvi**

Detailed News On Page-06

**Deal with Iran Difficult, says Marco Rubio**

Detailed News On Page-01

**Briefs****X down for thousands of users**

DNA

NEW YORK: Social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, experienced widespread service disruptions on Monday, with users across multiple countries including Pakistan reporting difficulties accessing the platform. According to outage-tracking website Downdetector, reports of problems surged to more than 25,000 around 13:00 GMT. Users in the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries were among those affected.

**Nepra releases new solar regulation 2026 draft**

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has issued a draft of the solar regulation 2026, inviting public feedback within 30 days. "The Authority is pleased to publish draft of the amendment to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Prosumer) Regulations, 2026 for eliciting public opinion," read a statement issued by the regulator. Nepra stated that the proposed amendment can be accessed through its official website, calling the public to send their comments on the proposed amendment to Nepra registrar within 30 days. The draft clarifies that existing solar net metering consumers will not be affected by the new regulation. Their current agreements will remain valid until their term expires. The amendment notes: "Notwithstanding the repeal effected by these regulations, nothing shall affect approvals granted, licences or concurrences issued and agreements executed under the repealed regulations before the commencement of these regulations and any distributed generator having a valid agreement executed under the repealed regulations shall be billed in accordance with rate and mechanism provided in the repealed regulations till the expiry of the term of the agreement executed under the repealed regulations."

**It will be hard to make deal with Iran**

NEWS DESK

BUDAPEST: A day before Washington-Tehran nuclear talks in Geneva, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said that making a deal with Iran will be difficult. The US secretary of state made the remarks during his visit to the Hungarian capital Budapest on Monday. He said: "I think that there's an opportunity here to diplomatically reach an agreement that addresses the things we're concerned about. We'll be very open and welcoming to that. But I don't want to overstate it either." "It's going to be hard. It's been very difficult for anyone to do real deals with Iran, because we're dealing with ... who are making theological decisions, not geopolitical ones," Rubio said: Meanwhile, Iran's foreign minister met with the UN nuclear watchdog chief today. The development came as Washington, which joined Israel in a wave of air strikes on Iran in June, has ordered a second aircraft carrier strike group to the Middle East in the latest standoff with Tehran.

**New Markets**

## PM invites Austrian investors

Pakistan and Austria have agreed to further strengthen the bilateral relationship in diverse fields including economic cooperation, trade and investment, tourism, hospitality, education, IT, healthcare and human resource development and mobility

CENTRELINE REPORT

**PM Shehbaz greets President Xi, Chinese people**

DNA

VIENNA: Prime Minister has invited the Austrian businesses and companies to expand their investments in Pakistan, particularly in the priority sectors for win-win partnerships between the private sectors of both countries. He was co-chairing a forum of CEOs of renowned Austrian and Pakistani companies, along with Federal Chancellor of Austria Christian Stocker, in Vienna today. The companies represented at the CEOs Forum included those working in renewable energies, energy efficiency, industrial manufacturing and construction, IT, textiles, surgical equipment, leather and sports products, healthcare, tourism and hospitality and food and agro-industries. In their remarks, both leaders highlighted the enormous potential to enhance trade, cooperation in AI and digital technology and other priority sectors. The Prime Minister also invited Austrian companies to visit Pakistan and participate in the upcoming EU-Pakistan Business Forum to be held in Islamabad in April this year. Later, the Prime Minister addressed the Pakistan-Austria Business Forum, organized by the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, WKO. Pakistan and Austria have agreed to further strengthen

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## Pak rejects Israel's illegal measures in occupied West Bank

Pakistan also reaffirmed full support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and for the establishment of an independent, viable, and contiguous State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan on Monday strongly condemned the latest attempt by the Israeli occupying power to convert areas of the Occupied West Bank into so-called state property, and to expand illegal settlement activities. Such steps are in clear violation of international law as well as relevant United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and must be rejected by the international community, a press statement issued by the Foreign Office Spokesperson said. It added that the occupying power's continued disregard for international law and its provocative actions undermined the prospects for a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region. "Pakistan calls on the international community to take concrete measures to

**Pakistan wish to expand its global outreach**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is expanding global scientific and industrial partnerships under the effective leadership of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). A high-level consultative meeting was held to promote scientific and technological cooperation between Pakistan and Turkiye. The Turkish delegation discussed the enhancement of bilateral cooperation with the

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

## PHF in the dock Rs 10 million for five-star stay, but team dumped in guest house

The Pakistan team lost all their matches in the Australian leg of the tournament, compounding the humiliation. Fans expressed deep disappointment online, slamming the PHF for mismanagement and prioritizing appearances over player welfare

SPORTS DESK / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) finds itself embroiled in fresh controversy following the national team's disastrous campaign in the FIH Pro League in Australia. Despite receiving substantial funding from the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), the squad endured poor accommodations, suffered heavy defeats, and sparked widespread outrage among fans and former players. Reports indicate that the PSB issued a cheque of Rs 10 million to the PHF specifically to arrange five-star hotel stays for the team during their Australian tour. However, players were instead housed in sub-standard guest houses or budget options, including last-minute low-cost Airbnbs and shared rooms. Images of these modest accommodations quickly circulated on social media, showing cramped conditions far below international standards for a national team competing in the elite Pro League. The Pakistan team lost all their matches in the Australian leg of the tournament, compounding the humiliation. Fans expressed deep disappointment online, slamming the PHF for mismanagement and prioritizing appearances over player welfare. Critics highlighted long-standing issues of corruption and administrative chaos within the federation, where "nobody knows who is truly in charge." The PHF has denied all allegations, insisting that arrangements were made in good faith and that any discrepancies stemmed from logistical challenges or payment delays rather than misuse of funds. However, sources close to the team claim that disgruntled players leaked the information, frustrated with the subpar treatment despite assurances of premium facilities. In response, the PSB has launched an

Continued on Page 06



VIENNA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was presented Guard of Honour upon arrival in Austria's Federal Chancellery. — DNA

**Law Minister says**

## Medical team 'fully satisfied' with Imran Khan's eye treatment

PTI founder's one eye has around 70% vision with glasses, while other eye has normal 6x6 vision, says Tarar

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Law Minister Azam Naeer Tarar said on Monday that the medical team had expressed complete satisfaction with the ongoing treatment of incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's eye. Addressing a lawyer's ceremony at Ferozewala, Tarar said Khan had undergone a repeat medical examination, adding that one of the former prime minister's eyes has around 70% vision with corrective glasses, while the other eye has normal 6x6 vision. Referring to concerns raised about specific visual measurements, the minister said there was no need to worry about the so-called "35/25" issue, adding that the medical team had already

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**PTI  
protestors'  
motorways  
closures  
no service  
to people:  
Muqam**

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam, here Monday said that the closure of the motorway is causing severe difficulties for the public and that the government should immediately take action against those responsible from PTI. In his statement, Amir Muqam said that during his journey from Swat to Islamabad, he saw children, women, and sick people stranded on the way. He stated that due to the motorway's closure, not only are people suffering greatly, but many are also missing their flights, and patients heading to hospitals are unable to reach their destinations on time. The Federal Minister demanded that the government direct the IG of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to immediately register FIRs against those causing hardship to the public and take strict action against the responsible members of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). He said that cases of prisoners should be fought in the courts, but the public should not have to face unnecessary difficulties. Amir Muqam emphasized that the injustice being done to the people must be stopped and that the state should take immediate action to ensure that citizens' daily lives are not disrupted. APP

**Police to  
hold 3-day  
self-defence  
course for  
citizens**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police has announced a three-day self-defence course aimed at enhancing personal safety skills and confidence among citizens. A police spokesperson told APP on Monday that the course, open to both male and female participants, will commence from Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at the Police Lines Headquarters, H-11, Islamabad. According to the spokesperson, the training programme will include key components such as unarmed combat, rappelling, Para PT and field craft, introduction to weapons, and live shooting, along with other practical safety techniques. He said the initiative is part of Islamabad Police's community-oriented policing efforts designed to empower citizens with essential self-protection skills. The spokesperson added that admissions are open on limited seats, and interested individuals may obtain further information by contacting 051-9258371 (Extension 173) or 0302-5452902. APP

**Abducted  
youth found  
dead in Hazro**

ATTOCK: The body of a young man reportedly kidnapped a few days ago was recovered from the Barah Zai area of Eastern Chhach in the limits of Hazro police station, the police said on Monday. The deceased, identified as Muhammad Rafiq, had allegedly gone missing earlier this week. The body was shifted to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ), Hazro, for legal formalities. The police confirmed that a case had been registered against unidentified suspects and an investigation was underway. APP

**Gilani vows to revive Pakistan football**

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) President Syed Mohsen Gilani has expressed optimism about steering the federation away from years of crisis and revitalising football in the country. The PFF president was speaking a day after the conclusion of the National Challenge Cup. "Since I took over, our aim has been to put better systems in place to ensure the growth of football in the country," Gilani said. The PFF chief emphasised that he is the first elected president after the federation spent several years under FIFA-appointed Normalisation Committee. Mohsen Gilani highlighted several key initiatives undertaken by the PFF since his election, notably the men's national team's maiden participation in the AFC Futsal Championship qualifiers, the upcoming FIFA Series – where the national women's team will feature – as well as the Under-16 team's tour of Kazakhstan

to compete in a UEFA development tournament. "The aim is to provide maximum international exposure for our teams," the PFF president stressed, adding that efforts are also underway to arrange international friendlies for the men's national team. "It is a landmark achievement for the PFF that the national women's team will take part in a FIFA event, where they will face teams like Turks

and Caicos Islands, Mauritania and Ivory Coast in April during the FIFA Series. "The PFF will also be participating in a UEFA event for the first time when our Under-16 team competes in the development tournament in Kazakhstan." The PFF president further revealed that plans are in motion to launch the domestic league, while talks with the government are ongoing

regarding the restoration of departmental teams. "The Challenge Cup marked the first step towards the resumption of domestic football activities in the country, and it concluded successfully yesterday with WAPDA being crowned champions. "We are engaged in discussions with the government to push for the restoration of more departmental teams. "As far as the league project is concerned, we have witnessed significant interest and have shortlisted several companies as potential partners." Gilani stressed that investment in football would lead to improved infrastructure. "The launch of the league will generate revenue for the PFF," he said, adding that it would help address the federation's funding challenges. "We have long relied on funding from FIFA and the AFC to run our affairs, but I believe it is time to change that. "We need to diversify our revenue streams, and that will naturally contribute to better infrastructure development across the country."

# Govt committed to youth empowerment thru creative economy

Minister Khichi praised Fashion Tourism as a vital pillar of the creative economy and a powerful instrument for cultural diplomacy and tourism promotion

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, reaffirmed the government's commitment to youth empowerment and the growth of Pakistan's creative economy during the official logo unveiling ceremony for the ISLOO International Fashion Festival 2026. The high-profile event, held in Islamabad and organized under the flagship of Royal Rovers, brought together diplomats, industry leaders, renowned designers, creative professionals, and stakeholders from the fashion and tourism sectors. Mr. Adnan Hafeez, Founder of Royal Rovers, hosted the ceremony, which featured senior actor, artist, and former Federal Minister for Culture Jamal Shah as the Brand Ambassador for the festival. In his keynote address as Chief Guest, Minister Khichi praised Fashion Tourism as a vital pillar of the creative economy and a powerful instrument for cultural diplomacy and tourism promotion. He described the initiative as a scalable platform that empowers emerging talent, fosters international collaboration, and elevates Pakistan's role in the global fashion tourism value chain. The minister specifically lauded the creativity behind the newly unveiled logo—designed in vibrant green tones symbolizing growth, vitality, and innovation—and commended the contributions of students and faculty from the National Textile University Faisalabad, under the guidance of Dr. Zafar Javed. Organized by Royal Rovers, the ISLOO International Fashion Festival aims to promote cross-border partnerships, youth entrepreneurship, institutional participation, and innovation in textile and fashion design. The event is poised to attract designers, creative entrepreneurs, and investors from Pakistan and abroad, positioning



Islamabad as an emerging regional hub for fashion tourism. This landmark festival underscores Pakistan's efforts to blend cultural heritage with modern creativity, driving economic opportunities through youth-led initiatives in the

fashion and tourism industries. The unveiling marks an exciting milestone ahead of the full festival program in 2026, with expectations high for its role in showcasing Pakistan's rich artistic legacy on the international stage. APP

## Jazz, USF sign Badin project to expand digital connectivity

ISLAMABAD: Jazz – Pakistan's leading connectivity provider from JazzWorld – and the Universal Service Fund (USF) have taken another step to expand digital connectivity in Sindh with the signing of the Badin Project, aimed at bringing reliable mobile voice and broadband services to underserved communities in District Badin. The agreement, formalized at a ceremony in Karachi, reflects a shared effort to extend meaningful digital access to areas where connectivity has remained limited. The ceremony was attended by Governor of Sindh, Kamran Tessori, and Federal Minister for IT & Telecom, Shaza Fatima, as Chief Guests. The project marks continued progress in strengthening telecom infrastructure to support inclusive digital access across the province. The Rs. 668 million Badin Project

will strengthen telecom access in the district by deploying 45 new telecom sites and upgrading four existing ones, extending reliable voice and high-speed mobile broadband services to 144 underserved and underserved mauzas and reaching an estimated 0.43 million people. The expanded network will support access to digital financial services, online learning, tele-health, and government e-services, while enabling small businesses and farmers with improved digital tools and generating direct and indirect employment during deployment and operations. Commenting on the development, Aamir Ibrahim, CEO JazzWorld, said: "Connectivity is the foundation of inclusive growth. We appreciate the continued support of the Universal Service Fund and the Ministry of IT & Telecom in enabling partnerships

that bring high-quality digital services to communities that have long remained on the margins of the digital economy. The Badin Project reflects our shared commitment to ensuring every Pakistani, regardless of geography, can participate in and benefit from the country's digital future." Chaudhry Mudassar Naveed, CEO USF, added, "The USF Badin Project reflects our continued partnership with Jazz to bridge the digital divide by delivering reliable connectivity to underserved communities. By expanding broadband access in District Badin, we are enabling socio-economic development, improving access to essential services, and creating new opportunities at the grassroots level." The Badin Project builds on Jazz and USF's longstanding partnership to expand digital access across Pakistan. APP

## AIOU holds 76th BASR meeting

ISLAMABAD: The 76th meeting of the Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASR) was held at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), where research projects were appreciated. The meeting was chaired by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood. University deans, senior professors, faculty members as well as renowned external experts from various universities across the country also participated. On the first day of the meeting, 12 PhD and 102 MPhil scholars from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Education presented their research proposals (synopses). The research projects presented during the meeting were not only appreciated by the participants, but the scholars' academic standard, research depth and critical abilities were also highly praised. The agenda of the meeting was presented by the Director BASR, Professor Dr. Irshad Ahmed Arshad. Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood advised the scholars to carry forward their research activities with innovation, objectivity and in accordance with international standards so that the positive outcomes of research could be effectively conveyed to society. Participants emphasized the need to further improve the quality of research, align it with international research requirements and promote interdisciplinary research. During the meeting, it was also agreed that quality research is not only a means of academic advancement but also plays an important role in highlighting the university's positive image at national and international levels.

Today, on the second day of the meeting, 15 research scholars from the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies and the Faculty of Science are defending their research proposals. APP

## National unity imperative to foil enemy designs: Zahid

FAISALABAD: Chairman of the Ulema Council Pakistan (UCP), Sahibzada Zahid Mahmood Qasmi on Monday stressed the urgent need for national unity and inter-sect harmony to safeguard Pakistan from external and internal threats. Speaking at a convention at Madrasa Anwar-ul-Quran Mubarak Mosque on Dijkot road, Qasmi urged the nation to stand united with state institutions for the protection and stability of the country. Qasmi expressed deep appreciation for the brave defenders of the country, acknowledging their continuous sacrifices in securing the homeland. He condemned efforts to spread chaos and unrest within the nation, emphasizing that collective unity was the key to thwarting anti-state conspiracies. The UCP chairman also lauded the Punjab government's announcement of the Ramzan Nigehban Package, which aims to provide relief to deserving families during the holy month of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak. He described the initiative as a positive step, particularly highlighting the establishment of Nigehban Dastarkhwan to support the underprivileged. However, Qasmi urged the government to take strict action against profiteers and hoarders, calling for measures to prevent artificial price hikes during Ramzan. He stressed the importance of effective price control on essential commodities, ensuring that citizens can observe fasting with ease. The UCP chairman also called for foolproof security arrangements at key congregational sites during Taraweeh prayers, stressing that there should be no discrimination between different schools of thought. In his address, Qasmi highlighted the spiritual significance of Ramzan, a month that brings blessings and mercy. He praised the Punjab government's public relief packages as a commendable gesture to ease the burdens of the people during this sacred time.

The event was attended by MPA Mian Muhammad Tahir Jamil, Mufti Muhammad Zia Madni, Maulana Khalil-ur-Rehman Anwari and other respected religious scholars. At the conclusion of the convention, MPA Mian Tahir Jamil, Sahibzada Zahid Mahmood Qasmi and other scholars distributed turbans to students who had completed memorization of the Holy Quran, celebrating their academic and spiritual achievements. APP

**Parks,  
green belts  
enhanced  
across  
Rawalpindi**

RAWALPINDI: The Horticulture Agency Rawalpindi is carrying out city-wide beautification of parks and green belts, aiming to provide enhanced recreational and security facilities for the public. According to an HA spokesman, work on the green belts along Rashid Minhas Road is ongoing, while care of flowers and plants in city parks is being stepped up to improve their freshness and aesthetic appeal. "The landscaping and colourful flower arrangements have become a focal point for visitors, who frequent the parks in the evenings for enjoyment," the spokesman said on Monday. HA Rawalpindi Managing Director Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, said comprehensive security arrangements had been put in place across parks to ensure public safety. He added that all necessary measures were being taken to maintain high standards and that negligence would not be tolerated, reaffirming the Agency's commitment to making Rawalpindi a greener and more attractive city with quality recreational spaces for residents. APP

## Balochistan shifts to outcomes driven partnerships

ISLAMABAD: Provincial Minister for Planning and Development Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi on Monday called for results-based and long-term partnerships to strengthen inclusive and resilient social services in Balochistan, while addressing a high-level policy consultation titled "Towards Inclusive and Resilient Social Services in Balochistan", organized by the Government of Balochistan with technical support from UNICEF here in Islamabad. Minister Buledi outlined a shift from project-based interventions to systems-oriented, outcome-focused reforms aimed at improving health, education, nutrition and social protection across the province. Addressing representatives of development partners, federal and provincial officials and other stakeholders, the minister said Balochistan stood at a critical juncture in redefining its social development pathway, stressing that the government's approach is firmly grounded in evidence, reform and strong partnerships. Improving human development outcomes, he added, was a shared responsibility. Highlighting progress achieved over the past decade, he cited national surveys and development studies showing a significant decline in child mortality. Infant mortality has fallen to around 66 per 1,000 live births, while under-five mortality has declined to 78 per 1,000 live births, reflecting the impact of targeted investments in health systems and child welfare. On education, the minister noted a gradual improvement in access, with literacy rates rising to about 42 per cent. However, he acknowledged persistent challenges in learning outcomes and transitions to secondary education, underscoring the need for sustained reforms to improve quality and retention. He also pointed to a decline in multidimensional poverty as a result of continued social sector investment, while cautioning that Balochistan still faces the highest levels of deprivation nationally, highlighting the urgency of accelerating progress through stronger service delivery systems and integrated policy interventions. While significant investments have been made in expanding infrastructure, he added, was a shared responsibility. Including education support programmes, health system strengthening and water supply initiatives, he said key indicators such as female literacy, nutrition outcomes and service quality remained areas of concern. He added that the next phase of reform would prioritize human capital development, service quality and resilient delivery systems. Outlining the province's strategic direction, the minister said the government is transitioning from a project-centric approach to a systems-oriented and outcome-focused model. Key priorities include integrating health, nutrition, education and social protection services, leveraging data and digital tools for improved planning and accountability, and aligning provincial investments with the Sustainable Development Goals and climate resilience principles. He emphasized the importance of deeper engagement with development institutions such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, KfW, World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, saying the province sought strategic. APP



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

|                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| Feb 04/Sri Lanka National Day      |
| Feb 06/N. Zealand National Day     |
| Feb 06/Uganda Army Day             |
| Feb 11/Iran Revolution day         |
| Feb 16/DPR Korea National Day      |
| Feb 16/Lithuania National Day      |
| Feb 18/Gambia National Day         |
| Feb 19/Nepal Democracy Day         |
| Feb 23/Uzbekistan National Day     |
| Feb 23/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



## Emergency

|   |
|---|
| Rescue (Police).....15                            |
| Bomb Disposal.....15                              |
| Fire Services Rawalpindi/Islamabad.....1122 & 16  |
| Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.445112 |
| Motorway Police...9266044                         |
| Motorway Police.9270601-20                        |
| Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596       |
| Rawalpindi.....9270601-20                         |



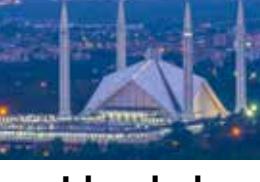
## Hospitals

|                             |
|-----------------------------|
| CMH.....5611111             |
| MH.....561116               |
| Cantt Hospital...9270907-11 |
| 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 9270151-3 |



## Water Tank

|                            |
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# FASP Mangolia chapter organizes Mono Marvel exhibition at ISH

The “Mono Marvel” theme encouraged artists to explore mono-botanic creativity—focusing on harmony, texture, color variations within one species or type of plant—while adhering to principles of balance, proportion, and artistic expression



## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Floral Art Society of Pakistan (FASP) Magnolia Chapter captivated floral enthusiasts and art lovers in Islamabad with its monthly programme, a creative competition titled “Mono Marvel”. The event took place in the elegant

surroundings of Kehkishan Hall 2, Serena Hotel, Islamabad. This exclusive competition invited participants to showcase their ingenuity through exhibits featuring a single plant material only, celebrating the beauty, form, and versatility of one chosen botanical element in innovative floral art designs. The “Mono Marvel” theme encouraged artists

to explore mono-botanic creativity—focusing on harmony, texture, color variations within one species or type of plant—while adhering to principles of balance, proportion, and artistic expression. Such mono-design challenges are popular in floral art circles for highlighting skill in minimalism and depth. The Magnolia Chapter, known for its reg-

ular monthly gatherings and competitions at premium venues like Serena Hotel, continues to promote floral artistry, education, and community among members and the public in the capital. Past events have included themes like autumn inspirations and advanced monobotanic sessions, drawing participation from dedicated floral designers.

## No rail tracks closed in KPK, Balochistan in last two years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has not closed any railway track in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) or Balochistan during the past two years, with all tracks in both provinces remaining fully operational. “Despite severe financial constraints, the railways continue to ensure safe operations, even as nearly 95 percent of its expenditure is consumed by pay, pensions, fuel and utilities, leaving only five percent for maintenance of aging infrastructure and rolling stock,” an official in the Ministry told APP. The officials said the limited maintenance budget is being used strictly for essential safety-related works. To bridge funding gaps, Pakistan Railways has mobilized alternative financing sources, particularly in KPK and Balochistan. Under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), the Rohri-Sibi railway track is being upgraded at a cost of Rs5.49 billion, while an additional \$390 million will be spent on upgrading the Rohri-Spezzand and Spezzand-Nokundi sections in Balochistan, he added. Moreover, the official said a 33-kilometre stretch from Sariab to Kuchlak is being upgraded through Balochistan’s provincial PSDP. He said that several stations have also been upgraded. In KPK, Attock Khurd

and the Washing Line at Peshawar Cantonment Station have been improved. In Balochistan, stations at Sariab, Quetta, Sheikh Manda, Baledi and Kuchlak are proposed for upgradation under the provincial PSDP. The official said that infrastructure safety has been strengthened through the rehabilitation of weak bridges, with four bridges reinforced in KPK and 21 in Balochistan. On passenger services, he said that Pakistan Railways has not discontinued any train in KPK or Balochistan during the last two years. In KPK, major trains included Khyber Mail, Rehman Baba Express, Awam Express which is planned for upgradation and Khushal Khan Khatkhate Express. In Balochistan, Bolan Mail continues to operate between Quetta and Karachi, while Jaffar Express links Quetta with Punjab and KP. These services provide affordable long-distance travel for daily commuters, students, labourers and small farmers. The official said the freight and parcel services have also been expanded. A modern dry port has been established at Azakhel in the Peshawar division to facilitate bulk transportation. He said the brake and luggage vans attached to major passenger trains enable

small traders and farmers to transport produce economically. Regular freight services from Balochistan are supporting the movement of minerals, livestock feed and agricultural products to Karachi and other up-country markets.

The officials said continuous improvements in digital ticketing, complaint redressal systems, station facilities and onboard services are enhancing passenger comfort and safety across the network. Currently, he said four mail and express trains operate from Peshawar, while two mail and express trains run from Quetta, connecting both provincial capitals with major cities including Karachi and Peshawar. The Ministry of Railways plans to engage provincial governments in KPK and Balochistan to introduce additional passenger services, similar to arrangements in other provinces, he added. He said the ministry has set an ambitious roadmap aimed at increasing Pakistan Railways’ market share from eight percent to 30 percent through a four-pronged strategy focusing on financial sustainability, governance and growth, private sector participation, and the use of technology and innovation.—DNA

## PRCS highlights humanitarian response in Bajaur

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), with the support of the Norwegian Red Cross and the European Union (ECHO), organized a comprehensive Media Engagement Session at its National Headquarters in Islamabad to brief print and electronic media professionals, vloggers, and bloggers on ongoing humanitarian response activities in Bajaur. The session aimed to provide an overview of relief operations, project progress, and assistance being delivered to conflict and disaster-affected communities. Journalists, social workers, and PRCS staff attended the event. In his opening remarks, Assistant Director Media Mr. Rehan Ali presented a detailed overview of the situation in Bajaur and highlighted the coordinated efforts of PRCS National Headquarters, facilitated by the PRCS Merged Areas Branch, and partner organizations. Mr. Amad Yousaf, Deputy Director for the Norwegian Red Cross Program, informed participants that affected families are receiving emergency relief assistance, Mobile Health Team services, access to safe drinking water, hygiene awareness support, psychosocial assistance for restoring family links, and cash assistance. Deputy Director Media Mr. Sher Zaman, during the session provided an overview of the global Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, including the roles of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, along with PRCS’s ongoing humanitarian initiatives across the country. Media representatives were briefed on project outcomes, the number of beneficiary families, and future plans. An interactive question-and-answer session allowed journalists to seek clarifications, reinforcing PRCS’s commitment to transparency, accountability, and effective communication. In his concluding remarks, Secretary General PRCS Mr. Muhammad Abaidullah Khan appreciated the constructive role of the media, noting that timely and responsible reporting amplifies the voices of affected communities and contributes significantly to improving humanitarian response efforts. He emphasized that the media plays a vital role in highlighting the challenges faced by vulnerable populations and bringing their concerns to the attention of decision-makers. —DNA

## Pak, Turkiye call for strengthening education ties

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye to Pakistan, Irfan Neziroglu called on Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajihah Qamar at her office here on Monday. During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on the proposed Agreement on Educational Institutions between Pakistan and Turkiye. The deliberations focused on enhancing institutional linkages and facilitating cooperation in the education sector in line with the longstanding fraternal relations between the two countries. The two sides also explored possible areas of collaboration in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Religious Education. Emphasis was laid on promoting skill development initiatives, sharing best practices, and strengthening partnerships between relevant institutions of the two countries. Matters relating to student exchange programmes and broader educational collaboration were also discussed. Both sides agreed to further promote academic exchanges, joint research initiatives, and mutual recognition frameworks to expand opportunities for students and educators. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister of State appreciated the continued support of Turkiye in the education sector and reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to deepening bilateral cooperation in diverse fields of education and training. The Turkish Ambassador expressed his government’s keen interest in strengthening educational ties and underscored the importance of sustained engagement to translate shared goals into concrete outcomes. The meeting concluded with a resolve to expedite consultations on the proposed agreement and to enhance collaboration in priority areas for mutual benefit. Earlier, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, called on Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afzali at the Supreme Court on Monday to discuss preparations for an upcoming high-level judicial exchange between the two countries. The meeting was held in the context of the scheduled visit of the President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Turkiye to Pakistan in March 2026. During the visit, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is expected to be signed between the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Constitutional Court of Turkiye to formalise institutional cooperation between two apex judicial bodies. —DNA

## FEBRUARY 2026

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



## Tenant cannot challenge landlord's title, rules SC

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has ruled that a tenant cannot challenge the ownership rights of a landlord while continuing to remain in possession of the property as a tenant.

According to a detailed written judgment approved for reporting, the Court made it clear that a tenant must first relinquish possession of the property before approaching a court of law to assert any claim of ownership.

The judgment was authored by Chief Justice Yahya Afzali and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. The bench observed that under Article 115, a tenant is stopped from denying the landlord's title so long as he continues to occupy the premises in the capacity of a tenant. The Court further explained that if a tenant subsequently purchases a share in the property or claims to be a co-owner, the proper legal remedy would be to file a partition suit before a competent civil court. Such a claim, the Court noted, cannot be used as a defence before a rent controller in eviction proceedings.

The judgment also stated that the Peshawar High Court had earlier adopted the correct legal approach by dismissing the tenant's appeal. The apex court upheld the high court's decision, affirming the established principle that a tenant cannot dispute the landlord's title while retaining possession under a tenancy arrangement.—APP

## IGP review Ramazan security, public facilitation

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi chaired an important meeting at the Central Police Office to review security arrangements, operational planning, and public facilitation measures in view of the upcoming holy month of Ramadan.

An official told APP on Monday that the meeting was attended by senior police officers and focused on ensuring enhanced policing and citizen convenience during Ramadan. During the meeting, the IGP Rizvi directed officers to further accelerate measures aimed at ensuring citizens' safety and facilitation. He emphasized effective policing, improved field presence, and strengthened security arrangements across the federal capital. The IGP Rizvi also issued special instructions regarding the welfare of police officers performing duties, particularly during Sehr and Iftar timings. He directed that appropriate arrangements be made to facilitate personnel while ensuring uninterrupted security coverage. Furthermore, the progress of the Islamabad Prison construction project was reviewed during the meeting. The IGP Rizvi was briefed on the latest developments and issued necessary directions to ensure timely completion of the project.—APP

## Briefs

45  
Bangladeshi  
students arrive  
in Pakistan to  
pursue higher  
studies

ISLAMABAD: The first batch of 45 students from Bangladesh, selected for the Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships under the Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor, have reached Karachi to pursue higher education at leading Pakistani universities. Upon arrival at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, the students were received by representatives of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan and universities. More Bangladeshi students will reach Pakistan in the next week, said a press release on Monday. Expressing its best wishes for the students success and for their rewarding and memorable stay in Pakistan, HEC has reaffirmed its commitment to providing quality education, a supportive academic environment, and full facilitation to international students. The Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor aims to strengthen academic cooperation and enhance people-to-people contacts between the two brotherly countries. The initiative is a key step towards strengthening educational links between Bangladesh and Pakistan, supporting Bangladesh's focus on youth empowerment through education and skills training.—APP

Dengue  
decline, polio-  
free status  
maintained  
thru joint  
efforts: Danyal

RAWALPINDI: Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Danyal Chaudhry on Monday lauded Rawalpindi's public health achievements, highlighting a dramatic reduction in dengue cases and a 15-year polio-free record in the district. Addressing a ceremony organized by the District Health Authority, Barrister Danyal said the event acknowledged the collective efforts behind these successes, aiming to motivate staff working both in the field and at administrative levels. Barrister Danyal said that the success was the result of joint efforts by the district administration, health department, frontline health workers, and local stakeholders. He said continuous community engagement, house-to-house campaigns, and strict enforcement of preventive measures had contributed significantly to reducing dengue cases and achieving comprehensive vaccination coverage. "Last year dengue cases in the district exceeded 6,000, but through coordinated planning, leadership and teamwork the number had fallen to around 1,500 this year, with no deaths reported", he said and termed the achievement as greater milestone achieved by the health department of Rawalpindi. He highlighted the leadership of CM Maryam Nawaz for her visionary leadership under which health reforms are being undertaken in throughout the Punjab province. He called for provision greater facilitation of health workers who, he said have been working days and nights for successful health campaigns including polio vaccination and dengue awareness drives. Danyal particularly mentioned female health workers and urged CM Punjab for special attention to their miseries and issues. I would request CM Maryam Nawaz for the regularization of the daily woker health workers", he said while encouraging the field workers of District Health Authority, Rawalpindi. Dr Ehsan Ghani, Chief Executive Officer, DHA in his address noted that environmental sampling confirmed the district remained polio-free, with all samples from three major sites testing negative. He credited the achievement to meticulous planning, effective leadership, and sustained teamwork across administrative and political units. He specifically recognized preventive services officer Dr Javed, the District Health Officer, pri-

# GDA brings 'Gwadar water crises' under control

He said that all these measures were made possible under the directives of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti and the continuous supervision of the Director General GDA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As a major development, Gwadar's severe water crisis, that kept haunting people of Gwadar over the last many months, is largely brought under control following GDA's Rs 11 billion water projects and other initiatives that have been completed with precision. Gwadar Pro reported. Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) official told Gwadar Pro that water issues are mitigated as Shadi Kaur line is restored, 1.2 MGD desalination plant turns operational, 300 kilometers of water distribution lines become active, and 11 pumping stations work sufficiently. Meanwhile four modern tanks have been constructed, more than 15,000 house connections have been shifted to the new system, water section is established and finally billing system is being introduced, he added. GDA DG Moin-ur-Rehman Khan, while speaking to media on February 13, said that GDA managed the water crisis effectively under extremely difficult circumstances and that today the water situation in Gwadar has improved significantly compared to before. He said that in August 2025, in the public interest, the provincial government transferred the responsibility of water supply from the Public Health Engineer-

ing Department back to GDA, which was a major challenge; however, GDA accepted it and took immediate as well as long-term measures. According to the GDA Chief Engineer Haji Syed Muhammad, transmission system established from Shadi Kaur Dam to Saud Dam and from Saud Dam to Gwadar, water has been supplied to the city since 2019, and under this system, a total of 4,542 million gallons of water were supplied up to September 2025. He stated that during the crisis, GDA ensured water supply on an emergency basis from various sources, which included 84 million gallons via tankers from Mirani Dam, 173 million gallons from Shadi Kaur Dam, and 78 million gallons from the GPA desalination plant, making total of approximately 335 million gallons. The Chief Engineer said that supplying water via tankers from Mirani Dam was a major administrative challenge because in the past, allegations of irregularities and corruption had surfaced regarding this system. However, after continuous negotiations with tanker owners and the water committee, GDA not only persuaded them to supply water but also ensured supply at rates lower than the market price. He stated that approximately Rs 700 million has been spent on this tanker operation so far, yet no report of corruption or irregularity emerged throughout the

process. The Chief Engineer further stated that GDA also undertook a major initiative to restore approximately 150 kilometers of pipeline from Shadi Kaur to Gwadar, which had been non-functional for the past three and a half years. During the restoration of the line, issues such as lack of electricity, reliance on generators, repeated faults in the line, theft of equipment, weather impacts, and security challenges were faced. He said that Director General GDA Moin-ur-Rehman Khan also visited the field from time to time to inspect the line and encourage the teams, which increased the pace of work. According to the Chief Engineer, water supply from the Shadi Kaur line was initially started at 500,000 gallons per day, and today 1.8 to 1.9 million gallons per day are being supplied to Gwadar through this line. He stated that through this line, Pasni, villages located along the route, and various government institutions are also benefiting, thereby making the total supply more than 2.5 million gallons per day. He stated that during the crisis, with the cooperation of the Government of China, the 12 MGD Chinese water desalination plant was restored to ensure water supply to the Old Town, and in this regard, the team of the Gwadar Port Authority also played an important role. The Chief Engineer

**FWO  
rehabilitates  
58km Dassu-  
Sazin section**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Highway Authority announced the final evaluation report for the up-gradation and rehabilitation of a section of the Karakoram Highway (KKH), a historic road linking Pakistan and China and widely regarded as a symbol of enduring friendship between the two countries, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. As per the official document, the project titled "Up-gradation/Rehabilitation of KKH N-35 Between KM 292+00 - 350+00 Dassu-Sazin," was procured through a single-stage, two-envelope bidding procedure in accordance with public procurement rules. According to the announcement, M/s FWO was declared the lowest evaluated bidder with a rebated cost of Re5.608,170,338 (about Rs5.6 billion) and was found responsive under PPRA Rules, 2004. The project will be financed through the Road Maintenance Account (RMA) of NHA, according to the bidding data. The contract involves the up-gradation and rehabilitation of the Karakoram Highway section between Dassu and Sazin.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Ali bin Mubarak Al Khater met with Syed Ahmed Maroof, Additional Secretary Middle East at the MOFA Pakistan. They engaged in discussions on matters of mutual interest. DNA

## Inter-collegiate competition organised

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inter-collegiate Competitions 2026 were successfully hosted by Islamabad Model College for Girls, Korang Town, providing a dynamic platform for students from various FDE colleges to showcase their academic, artistic and creative talents. The event featured Urdu Debate, Winter Delight Cooking, Wall Mural and Science Model competitions. Students participated with great enthusiasm and displayed confidence, teamwork and innovation throughout the day. Professor Jaleel Aali (Tangha-e-Imtiaz), renowned poet and educationist, was the Chief Guest while Principal Prof Munaza Faheem presided the ceremony. In the Urdu Debate Competition, IMCG F-11/1 secured first position, IMCG Korang Town secured second and IMCG F-10/2 secured third. In the Winter Delight Cooking competition, IMCG F-10/2 won first position, IMCG Humak received the consolation prize. In the Wall Mural competition, IMCG F-10/2 won first position, IMCG Korang Town secured second and IMCG F-10/2 secured third. In the Science Model competition, IMCG F-10/2 won first position, IMCG Korang Town secured second and IMCG F-10/2 secured third. In the Urdu Debate competition, IMCG F-11/1 secured first position, IMCG Korang Town secured second and IMCG F-10/2 secured third. Overall, IMCG Korang Town secured first position but graciously surrendered the host trophy. The overall winner's trophy was therefore awarded to IMCG F-11/1 for their outstanding performance. The competitions were evaluated by a distinguished judges Dr. Muhammad Hanif Durad as chief guests, along with Shanila Ammar Sikandar, Rana Ghazanfer, Prof. Zaka Akbar, Mr. Sajid Hassan, Ms. Zuhra Zakhra, Ms. Salma, Ms. Geytee Ara Aslam, Ms. Aqeel Ahmed Solangi, Ms. Nida Aitam, Ms. Sana Mujtaba, Zarina Gul and Sidra Ashraf. The judges appreciated the high standard of participation and commended the host college for organising a disciplined and successful inter-collegiate event. The Principal of the college presented the college insignia to the Chief Guest and tokens of gratitude to the judges for their valuable contribution. The programme concluded on a note of academic excellence and healthy competition, leaving a lasting impression on all participants and attendees.

received the consolation prize. In the Wall Mural Competition, IMCG F-7/4 won first position, ICG F-6/2 secured second, IMCG F-10/2 obtained third, while consolation prizes were awarded to IMCG F-11/1 and IMCG Korang Town. In the Science Model Competition, first position went to ICG F-6/2, second to IMCG I-10/4 and third to IMCG F-7/4 (PG), while IMCG Korang Town received the consolation prize. In Chemistry Models, IMCG Korang Town secured both first and second positions, IMCG G-10/2 got third and IMCG F-7/4 (PG) received consolation. In Biology, first position was won by IMCG F-7/4 (St-52), second by IMCG G-10/2, third by IMCG Korang Town, while ICG F-6/2 received consolation. In Computer Science Model & Presentation, IMCG F-7/4 (PG) won first position, IMCG Korang Town secured second and also received a consolation award. In Mathematics, IMCG F-7/4 (PG) stood first while IMCG Korang Town secured second. In the Computer Science AI Presentation, IMCG G-10/2 won first position, IMCG F-7/4 secured second and IHEAD F-11/1 obtained third. Overall, IMCG Korang Town secured first position but graciously surrendered the host trophy. The overall winner's trophy was therefore awarded to IMCG F-7/4 for their outstanding performance. The competitions were evaluated by a distinguished judges Dr. Muhammad Hanif Durad as chief guests, along with Shanila Ammar Sikandar, Rana Ghazanfer, Prof. Zaka Akbar, Mr. Sajid Hassan, Ms. Zuhra Zakhra, Ms. Salma, Ms. Geytee Ara Aslam, Ms. Aqeel Ahmed Solangi, Ms. Nida Aitam, Ms. Sana Mujtaba, Zarina Gul and Sidra Ashraf. The judges appreciated the high standard of participation and commended the host college for organising a disciplined and successful inter-collegiate event. The Principal of the college presented the college insignia to the Chief Guest and tokens of gratitude to the judges for their valuable contribution. The programme concluded on a note of academic excellence and healthy competition, leaving a lasting impression on all participants and attendees.

## Punjab health reforms to ensure timely care: Abbasi

He said further transparent and organized reforms in the health system would be finalized within the next six months to ensure timely treatment for patients

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi on Monday said that ongoing reforms and modernization in Punjab's health sector would prove a milestone in ensuring quality medical treatment for the public. Addressing the foundation stone-laying ceremony of a new facilitation centre at Benazir Bhutto Hospital, he said the provincial government's efforts under visionary leadership of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif would ensure equal, timely and transparent healthcare services for both urban and rural populations. He said around 4,000 citizens would benefit from the facilitation centre, which would play a key

role in streamlining patient guidance, registration and other administrative processes within the hospital system. The minister highlighted that an automated system was being introduced in hospitals across Punjab under which patient registration, medical reports and emergency services would be shifted to a digital platform to enable patients to receive treatment without unnecessary delays or influence. He appreciated Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for providing modern facilities to hospitals in Rawalpindi, including Holy Family Hospital and District Headquarters Hospital, saying the measures

would not only improve standards of care but also create new opportunities for medical research and training. Abbasi said that projects related to upgradation of hospitals, establishment of new health centres, expansion of wards and provision of modern medical equipment across Punjab had either been completed or were under construction. He said further transparent and organized reforms in the health system would be finalized within the next six months to ensure timely treatment for patients. The minister said that along with development of research, training and modern infrastructure, the

## Over 100 enterprises now operating in Pak's olive sector

ISLAMABAD: More than 100 enterprises are operating across Pakistan's olive sector, reflecting the rapid expansion of plantations, growing private participation, and rising domestic and global demand, head of the National Olive Project said. "With government backing, an olive policy is nearing cabinet approval," Mohammad Tariq, National Project Director, Olive Promotional Program in Pakistan, told Wealth Pakistan. "So, the roadmap for sustainability is taking shape," he maintained. He said the sharp rise in the number of enterprises – from just one or two at the start of the program to over 100 today – demonstrates the sector's growing momentum in marketing, processing, value addition, and related services. "Olive is a very high-value crop and has a lot of potential, which will be explored in the coming time," he said, adding, "The olive sector is emerging in Pakistan, offering one of the best opportunities to diversify agriculture." The national olive program spans cultivation, processing, branding, packaging, certification, and exportation, creating investment opportunities not only in farming but also in consultancy services, nurseries, processing, marketing, and branding. "So, there is great potential for increasing export and trade in this area," he said, noting that limited skilled manpower and technical know-how also open avenues for investors in training and specialized services. Pakistan's large, low-cost labour force provides a competitive advantage compared to traditional olive-producing countries, where labour shortages and higher production costs pose growing challenges, Tariq said. He cited rising urban consumption as another key driver, with the number of olive product consumers increasing steadily. While challenges persist – including reliance on imported machinery and limited business advisory services – un-tapped areas such as olive leaf, olive fruit, and olive pomace processing offer further room for expansion, he added. Tariq said olive imports are declining while exports are increasing, highlighting the sector's forward momentum. He noted that global olive oil trade is expected to expand significantly in the coming years due to rising health awareness worldwide. He added that sustained efforts have led to the development of 19 high-yielding, disease-resistant, and climate-resilient varieties of several high-value crops, including olive. "Olive is a promising and attractive area in Pakistan. With continued support, this sector can participate in global trade and generate impressive returns," Tariq said. He said olive development is progressing in phases, with plantations expanding annually and oil extraction units of varying capacities being installed across different provinces and regions. The government has focused on developing the entire value chain rather than limiting efforts to cultivation. This includes value-addition laboratories demonstrating fruit processing, depitting, grading, and slicing, along with processing plants being offered to the private sector on a matching-grant basis. Nursery tunnels have reduced dependence on imported plants from countries such as Italy, Spain, Turkey, and Tunisia. Certified olive plants are now being produced locally in the private sector, supported by a reference laboratory for olive oil quality testing. "The program is focused on lifting the economy, especially the rural economy," Tariq said, adding that large tracts of barren land have been made productive, helping reduce land degradation and desertification. He highlighted significant progress in the Potohar region, including Rawalpindi, Attock, and Jhelum, where olive cultivation was previously absent. Expansion of plantations has helped curb soil erosion and downstream siltation during monsoon seasons while strengthening rural livelihoods and climate resilience.—DNA

## Pakistan's disappointing defeat against India in T20 World Cup

THE much-anticipated clash between Pakistan and India in the T20 World Cup ended in heartbreak for Pakistani fans, as India secured a convincing victory. Pakistan's batting lineup faltered badly, raising serious questions about team planning, player selection, and overall strategy. Pakistan's decision to bat first after winning the toss proved costly. Critics argue that this was a tactical blunder, as Pakistan historically struggles to chase totals under pressure. The top order, led by Babar Azam, failed to provide a solid foundation. Early wickets fell cheaply, leaving the middle order exposed to India's disciplined bowling attack. India posted a competitive total of 175 runs, which proved more than enough on a pitch that demanded calculated shot selection. Pakistan's batters, however, looked unsettled and lacked intent. Instead of rotating strike and building partnerships, they succumbed to rash strokes and poor shot choices. The lack of a clear plan was evident, and the team never looked in control of the chase. The defeat has reignited debates about Pakistan's squad composition. Many experts and fans believe several players no longer justify their place in the team. Babar Azam's captaincy and batting form are under scrutiny, while Shaheen Afridi's inconsistent performances have raised eyebrows. Similarly, Faheem Ashraf has failed to make meaningful contributions, leading to calls for fresh talent to be introduced. Former cricketers and analysts have been vocal in their criticism, suggesting that Pakistan needs to rethink its approach to T20 cricket altogether. The format demands aggressive batting, sharp fielding, and innovative strategies—areas where Pakistan has lagged behind. Critics argue that sticking with underperforming players has cost the team dearly, and new blood must be injected to revive Pakistan's fortunes. This defeat is not just about one match; it reflects deeper issues in Pakistan's cricketing setup. Poor planning, questionable selections, and lack of adaptability have become recurring themes. India's disciplined performance highlighted the gulf in preparation and execution between the two sides. Pakistan's loss to India in the T20 World Cup is a wake-up call. The team must reassess its strategies, revamp its squad, and embrace the demands of modern T20 cricket. Without bold decisions and fresh talent, Pakistan risks falling further behind in a format that thrives on innovation and fearless play.

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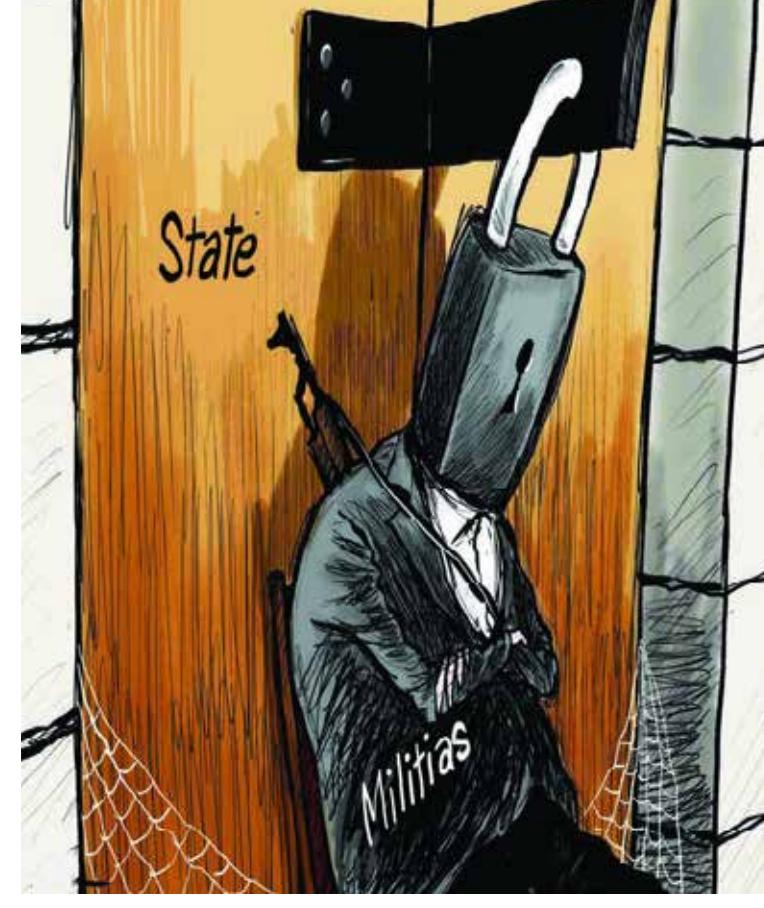
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Email: [dailysbpost@gmail.com](mailto:dailysbpost@gmail.com)

Phone: 051-8488394

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



## Fuel price hike adds to Pakistan's economic woes

THE government's recent decision to increase fuel prices has sparked widespread frustration among the masses. Petrol prices have been raised by Rs 5 per liter, while diesel has gone up by Rs 7 per liter. This move has intensified the financial burden on ordinary citizens, who are already grappling with inflation and rising living costs. What makes the decision particularly controversial is the global context. Crude oil prices worldwide have been on a downward trend, and the Pakistani rupee has shown signs of strengthening against the US dollar. Under these circumstances, many expected fuel prices to stabilize or even decrease. Instead, the government's move to raise prices has been seen as unjustified and insensitive to public hardship. Officials have defended the increase by citing the need to meet tax collection targets. However, critics argue that this approach unfairly penalizes the masses. Pakistan's tax system is plagued by inefficiencies and corruption. The wealthy elite and "big guns" often evade taxes, while ordinary citizens bear the brunt of revenue generation through indirect taxation and price hikes. This imbalance has created a sense of injustice and deepened public resentment. Tax authorities themselves are widely perceived as corrupt, with loopholes and weak enforcement allowing large-scale evasion. Instead of broadening the tax net and ensuring that affluent individuals and corporations contribute their fair share, the government continues to rely on measures that squeeze the middle and lower classes. This vicious cycle perpetuates inequality and undermines trust in state institutions. Fuel price hikes have a cascading effect on the economy. Transportation costs rise immediately, pushing up the prices of essential goods and services. For daily wage earners and low-income households, even a small increase in fuel prices translates into significant hardship. The ripple effect extends to agriculture, manufacturing, and logistics, making life more expensive across the board. At the heart of Pakistan's economic struggles lies corruption. It is the single biggest hurdle to sustainable development. Mismanagement of resources, tax evasion, and lack of accountability have crippled the country's ability to grow. While citizens are asked to tighten their belts, billions are lost annually due to corrupt practices. Without structural reforms and genuine political will, Pakistan will continue to lag behind its potential. The government's decision to raise fuel prices despite favorable global and domestic economic indicators reflects deeper systemic flaws. Instead of burdening the masses, authorities must focus on tackling corruption, expanding the tax net, and ensuring that the wealthy contribute fairly. Until then, ordinary Pakistanis will continue to pay the price for a system that protects the powerful while exploiting the vulnerable.

## The Scaling Back of Trump's Immigration Drive

Qamar Bashir



The public narrative surrounding criminality further complicated the calculus. While rhetoric frequently portrayed undocumented immigrants as disproportionately responsible for crime, state-level conviction data often show that undocumented immigrants have equal or lower per-capita conviction rates compared with U.S.-born citizens. This does not negate individual crimes, but it does challenge the statistical foundation for broad generalizations. If the anticipated crime reduction from mass removal is marginal while economic contraction could exceed a trillion dollars annually, the cost-benefit balance demands reconsideration

WHEN the immigration crackdown was launched by Trump in the USA, it arrived with spectacle and certainty. Executive orders were signed under bright lights, ICE deployments expanded into cities and workplaces, and the promise was unmistakable: unauthorized immigrants would be arrested, detained, and removed at scale. Military resources were discussed, National Guard support was contemplated, and the administration projected a message of decisive authority. For many supporters, this was a long-awaited assertion of sovereignty and order. Yet as months passed, the energy of the initial surge began to encounter the weight of domestic reality. Controversial incidents during enforcement, including the deaths of U.S. citizens and subsequent investigations into officer conduct, intensified scrutiny and resistance. Governors in several states declined to fully cooperate with federal operations, citing constitutional and economic concerns. The political atmosphere grew tense, and public protests became widespread. At that moment, the President confronted a fundamental distinction between foreign policy bravado and domestic governance. He was not dealing with Iran, Gaza, Syria, Greenland, Nigeria, or South Africa—arenas where executive rhetoric can project force across borders. He was dealing with Americans who elected him, Americans whose businesses and communities felt the immediate consequences, and Americans who could ultimately withdraw their support.

That realization infused the debate with a new sobriety. Federal officials began emphasizing the need for state concurrence before deploying National Guard units or intensifying enforcement actions. The tone shifted from unilateral assertion to negotiated federalism. The President's authority abroad may be formidable, but domestically it operates within a lattice of state governments, courts, and voters. When protests spread across nearly a thousand cities and economic actors signaled distress, recalibration became not weakness but prudence. Agriculture and dairy sectors illustrated the practical stakes. States such as Wisconsin acknowledged that immigrant labor forms the backbone of dairy farms and crop cultivation. The broader agricultural and food supply chain contributes roughly 1.3 trillion dollars to economic activity. Even a modest ten percent labor disruption in labor-intensive segments could generate a shock exceeding one hundred billion dollars, with immediate consequences for food prices and rural incomes. In such regions, immigration enforcement is not an abstract policy; it is a determinant of whether farms can operate and communities can thrive.

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data often show that undocumented immigrants have equal or lower per-capita conviction rates compared with U.S.-born citizens. This does not negate individual crimes, but it does challenge the statistical foundation for broad generalizations. If the anticipated crime reduction from mass removal is marginal while economic contraction could exceed a trillion dollars annually, the cost-benefit balance demands reconsideration.

A particularly illustrative episode involved the deportation of several hundred individuals to third countries at a reported cost of roughly thirty-five million dollars.

Complex cases involving diplomatic arrangements can exceed one hundred thousand dollars per person. Although not every removal incurs such expense, the example demonstrates how rapidly costs escalate when scaled. Multiplying such figures into the hundreds of thousands would produce tens of billions in expenditure, raising questions about sustainability.

The scale of the ambition carried a fiscal footprint far larger than the public imagination often assumed. With an estimated fourteen million undocumented immigrants living in the United States, even conservative operational estimates of deportation—averaging roughly twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars per individual for arrest, detention, legal processing, and removal—translate into direct costs approaching three hundred billion dollars. When expanded detention facilities, immigration courts, logistical coordination, and enforcement infrastructure are added, broader projections rise toward four hundred to six hundred billion dollars. What began as a policy pledge quickly revealed itself as a multi-hundred-billion-dollar undertaking.

Beyond direct removal expenses lies the broader economic dimension. The United States economy currently generates roughly thirty-one (31) trillion dollars in annual GDP. Removing millions of workers and consumers from that ecosystem is not an isolated administrative act; it is a macroeconomic shock. Economic modeling suggests that large-scale removal of undocumented immigrants could reduce output by several percentage points. A contraction of four to seven percent equates to between 1.2 and 2.1 trillion dollars in lost annual production. That scale of impact would reverberate across industries, affecting supply chains, investment decisions, and consumer confidence.

The fiscal implications extend further into tax revenues. Undocumented immigrants collectively contribute an estimated ninety-five to one hundred billion dollars annually in federal, state, and local taxes, including payroll deductions and consumption taxes. Scaling removal across the estimated population suggests a potential annual revenue loss of roughly one hundred twenty billion dollars. Over a decade, such a reduction could accumulate into more than a trillion dollars in foregone public revenue. The economic nar-

rative, when measured in dollars, becomes far more complex than campaign slogans suggest.

Local experiences underscored these national calculations. In Minneapolis, intensive enforcement actions sparked demonstrations that spread across hundreds of cities. Businesses reported steep declines in revenue, and city officials estimated that local economic disruption exceeded two hundred million dollars during peak operations. Restaurants, retail establishments, and service providers experienced losses, while policing and emergency response costs mounted. Even if only a portion of major metropolitan areas endured similar disruptions, the cumulative commercial shock would run into several billions nationwide. Economic stability proved as sensitive to enforcement intensity as public opinion.

Against this backdrop, alternative policy frameworks gained attention. Fast-track regularization for economically productive undocumented immigrants with clean records has been proposed as a means to stabilize labor markets while maintaining future enforcement. Administrative costs for nationwide legalization programs have historically been estimated at twenty to thirty billion dollars over several years. Granting work authorization could increase annual tax revenues by approximately forty billion dollars and improve productivity by allowing workers to move freely within the formal economy. Even modest gains in economic output, such as a one percent increase in GDP, would represent roughly three hundred billion dollars annually—an expansion rather than a contraction.

The evolution of the crackdown reflects a broader lesson about governance. Initial momentum can be driven by conviction and political mandate, but sustained policy must withstand economic arithmetic and public scrutiny.

The protests, the financial signals from states, and the constitutional friction between federal and state authority collectively reminded the President that domestic leadership differs fundamentally from geopolitical maneuvering. Authority abroad may rest on projection; authority at home rests on consent and economic viability.

Immigration in America is not solely a border issue. It is intertwined with labor supply, tax revenue, agricultural output, urban commerce, and constitutional federalism. The first phase of the crackdown demonstrated executive resolve. The subsequent recalibration revealed the constraints of economic reality and democratic accountability. In the end, policies endure not because they are announced with fanfare, but because they align with arithmetic, stability, and the will of the people who sustain the nation.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)  
Former Press Minister,  
Embassy of Pakistan to France  
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia  
Former MD, SRBC | Macomb, Michigan

## The Future of the World

THE world stands at a difficult crossroads. Economic growth, once taken for granted as a natural outcome of globalisation, is now uneven, fragile and deeply contested. Wars persist, supply chains are fractured, climate pressures are mounting, and trust between states is eroding. Yet history shows that moments of uncertainty often create space for new ideas. The future of the world economy depends not on restoring old models, but on building a new platform for global growth one that is inclusive, balanced and resilient. This proposal is offered as an open dialogue rather than a fixed blueprint. The challenges facing humanity are too complex to be solved by a single ideology or institution. What is required instead is a shared conversation that recognises diversity while seeking common ground.

For decades, global growth was driven by liberalisation, free trade and financial integration. While this model lifted millions out of poverty, it also produced sharp inequalities within and between countries. The backlash is now visible in the form of protectionism, economic nationalism and regional blocs. Growth is no longer a purely economic question; it is tied to social stability, political legitimacy and national security. A new platform for global growth must therefore move beyond narrow indicators such as GDP. Economic expansion should be judged by its ability to generate decent employment, reduce inequality, protect the environment and strengthen social cohesion. Growth that benefits only a few is not sustainable; it ultimately undermines the very system that produces it. Global economic governance is struggling to keep pace with contemporary realities. Institutions created after the Second World War no longer reflect the distribution of power in the twenty-first century. Emerging economies demand greater representation, while smaller states seek protection from market shocks they did not create. Rather than abandoning multilateralism, the task should be to reform it. International financial institutions must prioritise development lending over crisis management alone. Debt relief mechanisms should be predictable and fair, especially for countries burdened by climate-related disasters. Trade regimes need flexibility so that developing economies can

protect infant industries while integrating into global markets. A reformed multilateral system would not impose uniform solutions but offer adaptable frameworks that respect national contexts. This balance between global cooperation and domestic autonomy is essential for restoring trust.

While global cooperation remains vital, regional platforms can play a decisive role in promoting growth. Economic corridors, cross-border infrastructure and regional value chains reduce dependence on distant markets and lower vulnerability to global disruptions. For South Asia, Central Asia, Africa and parts of the Middle East, regional integration remains underdeveloped despite immense potential.

Political disputes, security concerns and weak institutions have limited progress. Yet investment in transport, energy and digital connectivity could transform these regions into engines of growth. Regional cooperation should be framed not as a zero-sum competition but as a shared opportunity. When neighbours trade more, they reduce conflict incentives and create mutual stakes in stability.

Technology is often presented as a neutral force of progress, but its benefits are unevenly distributed. Advanced economies dominate digital platforms, artificial intelligence and data flows, while many developing countries struggle with basic connectivity. A new growth platform must address the digital divide as a development priority. Data protection, fair taxation of digital firms and ethical use of artificial intelligence require global coordination. Without common rules, technology risks becoming another source of inequality rather than a driver of shared prosperity.

Climate change is no longer a distant threat; it is a daily economic reality. Floods, droughts and heatwaves disrupt production, destroy infrastructure and deepen poverty. For many developing countries, climate vulnerability is the single greatest obstacle to growth. Yet climate action also offers opportunities. Investment in renewable energy, climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable urban develop-

ment can generate jobs and reduce long-term costs. The challenge lies in financing this transition. Developed economies, having contributed most to historical emissions, bear a moral and practical responsibility to support climate adaptation and mitigation in poorer states. Climate finance should be predictable, accessible and free from excessive conditions. Growth and sustainability must be treated as complementary goals, not competing ones.

No economic model can succeed without investing in people. Education, healthcare and social protection are not welfare expenses; they are productive investments. Societies with skilled, healthy populations are better equipped to adapt to technological change and economic shocks. The future platform for growth should prioritise skills relevant to changing labour markets. Vocational training, lifelong learning and research collaboration deserve greater attention. Migration, often framed as a threat, can be managed as a source of growth if labour mobility is regulated fairly and humanely.

Economic growth cannot flourish in the absence of security. Conflicts disrupt trade, deter investment and drain public resources. From Eastern Europe to the Middle East and parts of Africa, prolonged instability continues to impose global economic costs. Preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction must therefore be seen as economic imperatives, not merely political goals. International efforts should focus on addressing root causes of conflict, including economic exclusion and governance failures. The future of the world economy cannot be dictated by a single power or ideology. It must emerge from sustained dialogue between states, regions, institutions and societies. Developing countries should not be passive recipients of policies designed elsewhere; they must be equal partners in shaping the rules of growth.

This proposed platform for global growth is not a finished product. It is an invitation to rethink assumptions, challenge inequalities and imagine an economic order that serves humanity rather than divides it. The stakes are high, but so is the opportunity. In choosing cooperation over confrontation and inclusion over exclusion, the world can still chart a path towards shared and durable prosperity.

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Technology is often presented as a neutral force of progress, but its benefits are unevenly distributed. Advanced economies dominate digital platforms, artificial intelligence and data flows, while many developing countries struggle with basic connectivity. A new growth platform must address the digital divide as a development priority

## Briefs

**PM invites Austrian investors**

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the bilateral relationship in diverse fields including economic cooperation, trade and investment, tourism, hospitality, education, IT, healthcare and human resource development and mobility. This commitment was expressed at a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Federal Chancellor of Austria Christian Stocker in Vienna on Monday. The two sides also agreed to work for the early finalization of Memoranda of Understanding related to these areas. Both sides also exchanged views on regional and global developments. The agreed on the central role of the United Nations in addressing the challenges of peace and security, peaceful settlement of disputes, sustainable development, climate action and protection and promotion of human rights. They expressed their shared commitment to multilateralism, and appreciated mutual support for each other's candidatures, while working together with the international community for strengthening the UN system. The Prime Minister and the Federal Chancellor of Austria also co-chaired a forum of CEOs of leading Austrian and Pakistani companies working in renewable energies, energy efficiency, industrial manufacturing and construction, IT, textiles, surgical equipment, leather and sports products, healthcare, tourism and hospitality and food and agro-industries.

## Medical team 'fully satisfied'...

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briefed opposition leaders and Imran Khan's personal physicians. Tarar's remarks come amid heightened political tension after a medical report submitted to the Supreme Court of Pakistan by Imran Khan's counsel and the court's amicus curiae, Salman Saif, confirmed that the former prime minister was diagnosed with a serious eye condition – central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO). CRVO is generally associated with older age and underlying cardiovascular risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and heart disease. The report stated that Imran Khan, who has been in jail since August 2023, had complained of losing about 85% of the vision in his right eye. Following the report, the PTI and members of Imran Khan's family raised alarm over his health and demanded that he be shifted to a hospital for treatment. Sources had earlier told Geo News that Imran Khan underwent an hour-long examination by a panel of five senior doctors, after which the pain in his right eye reduced significantly. The sources said further improvement is expected with ongoing treatment and that the medical report has already been forwarded to the relevant authorities.

## Court issues Aleema...

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justification for her absence. ATC Judge Anjum Ali Shah conducted the hearing. The judge observed that the trial had already been delayed and noted that witnesses had been required to appear 37 times due to Aleema's "irresponsibility". The court also directed the Rawal superintendent of police (SP) to ensure compliance with the arrest warrant, and adjourned further proceedings in the case until tomorrow. This is not the first time orders for Aleema's arrest and production have been issued. The Rawalpindi ATC has released multiple arrest warrants recently over her repeated absence during the proceedings in the same case. The most recent was issued on February 2, when her lawyer contended that Aleema would not appear in court until her bank accounts and identity card are unfrozen. However, the court had directed the police to arrest and present her, while the bank account and identity card could remain blocked.

# Cooperation and Promote Cricket Through Enhanced Collaboration and Sports Diplomacy

*Interior Minister and PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi Meets Sri Lanka Sports Minister Sunil Kumara Gamage, Both Countries Agree to Strengthen Bilateral*

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi held a meeting with Sri Lankan Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, Sunil Kumara Gamage. The discussion focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation in sports, particularly cricket, and ways to enhance collaboration between the two countries. The two sides agreed to increase joint efforts to promote cricket and other sports. Mohsin Naqvi emphasized the growing warmth in the relationship between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, noting that their ties would be further strengthened through sports. He also praised the excellent arrangements made during the T20 World Cup and thanked Sri Lanka for its hospitality and kindness. During the meeting, Mohsin Naqvi invited the Sri Lankan minister of Sports to visit Pakistan. Pakistan's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka was also present during the meeting.



## Quadruple chasing Arsenal rout Wigan to reach FA Cup fifth round

LONDON: Arsenal powered into the FA Cup fifth round for the first time in six years as the quadruple chasers crushed Wigan 4-0 on Sunday. Mikel Arteta's side routed the third-tier strugglers with four goals in the first 27 minutes of the fourth round tie at the Emirates Stadium. Noni Madueke and Gabriel Martinelli netted before Jack Hunt's own goal was followed by a Gabriel Jesus strike. The Gunners are back in the last 16 for the first time since they won the FA Cup in 2020, a success that remains the only major trophy of Arteta's reign. Holding a four-point lead at the top of the Premier League, through to the League Cup final against Manchester City and into the Champions League last 16, Arsenal could end their silverware drought with a

remarkable quadruple this season. "We made a lot of changes because of players who needed minutes. The intensity that we showed, the connections between players and the threat we had, I'm very pleased. The first-half made a difference, obviously," Arteta said. Arsenal's latest FA Cup clash with Wigan lacked the drama of their previous one in 2014 – a semi-final win featuring a penalty shoot-out goal from then Gunners captain Arteta. Wigan have fallen on hard times since, arriving in north London stuck in the League One relegation zone and led by interim boss Glenn Whelan after Ryan Lowe's recent sacking. Arsenal defender Riccardo Calafiori was injured in the pre-match warm-up, forcing Arteta to bring Bukayo Saka back into the line-up instead of resting the England wing-

er. Despite the late reshuffle, it took just 11 minutes for Arsenal to go in front. Arteta gave Eberechi Eze another start despite hauling the England midfielder off at half-time after his latest disappointing display in Thursday's 1-1 draw at Brentford. Eze repaid Arteta's faith, cleverly turning into space for a superb pass to Madueke, who raced into the Wigan area and finished with aplomb. Eze, signed from Crystal Palace last year, provided another assist in the 18th minute. He guided a pin-point pass to Martinelli and the Brazilian stroked a cool finish into the far corner from 12 yards. Arsenal's third goal arrived in the 23rd minute when Wigan defender Hunt headed Saka's cross into his own net. Arteta's men showed no mercy as Christian Norgaard's pass

sent Jesus clean through for a delicate chip over Wigan keeper Sam Tickle in the 27th minute. Arsenal will resume their push for a first English title since 2004 at bottom of the table Wolves on Wednesday. Leeds survived a penalty shoot-out to edge past second-tier Birmingham at St Andrew's. Birmingham substitute Patrick Roberts snatched an 89th-minute equaliser to cancel out Lukas Nmecha's 49th-minute opener for Leeds. With a feisty fourth round tie level at 1-1 after extra-time, Leeds won the shoot-out 4-2. Joel Piroe, Dominic Calvert-Lewin, Brenden Aaronson and Sean Longstaff all converted their penalties for Daniel Farke's team. Battling to avoid relegation from the Premier League, Leeds are one win away from reaching the quarterfinals for the first time since 2003. – APP

## TEPCO nuclear plant transmits electricity for 1st time in 14 yrs

TOKYO: A reactor at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant began power generation and transmission on a trial basis Monday, as Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc. geared up to resume nuclear power supply for the first time in 14 years. TEPCO, still grappling with the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident, plans to start full-fledged electricity transmission from the No. 6 unit at the seven-reactor plant in Niigata Prefecture on March 18. The complex is located 220 kilometers northwest of Tokyo. The No. 6 reactor in late January became TEPCO's first reactor to be brought back online since the meltdowns at its Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex in the wake of the massive earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011. The unit will supply electricity to Tokyo and its nearby areas.

TEPCO started running a turbine powered by steam generated by heat from the reactor at 7:10 p.m. on Sunday and confirmed there were no abnormalities. It then began transmitting electricity at 2:55 a.m. on Monday. The operator plans to disconnect the power generator from the grid and then reconnect it multiple times before the trial ends, boosting its output gradually to 50 percent from 20 percent and then to its maximum level. The last time electricity was transmitted from the No. 6 unit was in late March 2012 before it was shut down for a regular checkup. Another reactor at the nuclear power plant is also expected to be restarted, with approval already secured from Japan's nuclear watchdog. – APP

MADRID: Rayo Vallecano waltzed to a 3-0 victory over Atletico Madrid on Sunday in La Liga, leaving Diego Simeone's side 15 points behind leaders Real Madrid. Atletico dropped to fourth after their heavy defeat at Leganes's Butarque stadium, where Rayo hosted the fixture due to pitch problems at their own Vallecas ground. Real Betis, fifth, were able to cut the gap to Atletico down to four points with a 2-1 win at Mallorca. Fran Perez, Oscar Valentin and Nobel Mendy struck for Rayo, who thoroughly deserved their triumph against an Atletico side that had thrashed Spanish champions Barcelona 4-0 in the Copa del Rey on Thursday. With the Spanish cup their best chance of silverware this season it has seemed that Atletico lack some focus in La Liga, and that was reflected in this humbling by their city rivals. The Rojiblanco have not won in their last three league matches. "It seems like the league has slipped away, we can't lose games like this and we can't play a game the way we did today," angry Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak told DAZN. "Competing like this is going to be to tough, you can't choose your games, every game has to be played at the highest level... Today they were much better, congratulations to them, we lost and deserved to lose." Simeone, who rotated much of the team that beat Barca with Wednesday's Champions League play-off against Club Brugge in mind, did not agree with all of Oblak's analysis. "I don't share (his opinion), I thought the team gave what it

could, they were better, but the truth is there is no need to criticise the team in terms of effort, work, of wanting to do well," said Simeone. "We didn't have a good match, the opponent was better, congratulations to them and let's think about what's coming on Wednesday." Inigo Perez's Rayo took the lead in the 40th minute when Perez finished Andrei Ratiu's cross, and Valentin doubled their advantage after Clement Lenglet gave the ball away. Mendy netted the third in the 76th minute after some more poor Atletico defending to round off a miserable afternoon for Simeone's side. Rayo, whose players have complained in recent weeks about the way the club is being run, as well as the state of the Vallecas pitch and their training ground facilities, backed by the coaching staff, climbed up to 17th. "This is a battle-hardened team that adapts well to circumstances," said Rayo coach Perez. "Today's match was very tough both because of the opponent and because of our own institutional and sporting situation." Betis doubled down on their win over Atletico in La Liga last weekend with a third straight top flight triumph, boosting their hopes of Champions League qualification. Manuel Pellegrini's side capitalised on Atletico's defeat by Rayo on the road at Mallorca, thanks to first-half goals from Ez Abde and Cedric Bakambu. Vedat Muriqi pulled one back for the hosts in the second half with his 16th league goal of the season, behind only Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe in the scoring charts, but it was not enough. – Agencies

## Rayo thrash Atletico who 'deserved to lose' as Betis cut gap

## Norway's Carlsen wins first FIDE Freestyle World Chess Championship

NORWAY'S Magnus Carlsen added another crown to his collection on Sunday by becoming the first official FIDE Freestyle Chess world champion after a come-back win over Fabiano Caruana in Germany. The chess master secured the title with a cautious draw in the fourth and final game, clinching a 2.5-1.5 match victory against his 33-year-old American opponent in Weissenhaus. Sunday's turning point came in the thrilling third game, in which Carlsen, 35, pulled off a stunning win from a seemingly lost position, swinging the entire contest in his favor. The world number one only needed a draw in the decisive fourth game, and that's exactly what he got in an equal endgame, with Caruana missing late opportunities to mount a comeback. Carlsen has now won 21 world titles in various formats. The World Championship marked a breakthrough collaboration between FIDE and private organizer Freestyle Chess, staging the first officially recognized title in this format. Carlsen had previously failed to capture the FIDE Fischer Random World Championship, making this victory particularly sweet for the chess great. In the bronze medal match, Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov beat Germany's Vincent Keymer, securing his spot by drawing from a winning position in the final game. Both finalists and Abdusattorov have qualified for next year's championship. – Agencies

## Rs 10 million for five-star stay...

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investigation into the matter to determine how the allocated funds were utilized and why the team faced such hardships abroad. Hockey legends, including former captains, have described the episode as "shameful and painful," demanding accountability and a thorough probe into the federation's operations. This incident underscores the deeper crisis plaguing Pakistan hockey, plagued by corruption, financial irregularities, and chronic mismanagement. With the national team's global standing in decline, calls are growing for Prime Minister intervention to take notice, overhaul the PHF leadership, and restore transparency to prevent further damage to the sport's legacy.

## PM Shehbaz greets President...

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Prime Minister Shehbaz, who is currently in Austria on a two-day visit, said that Pakistan and China were iron brothers, bound by an All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and a shared vision of peace, development and regional connectivity. He wished that the new year would further strengthen the enduring bilateral friendship and deepen cooperation for the prosperity of two peoples. "The entire Pakistani nation joins me in wishing our Chinese brothers and sisters continued good health, success and forward momentum in the Year of the Horse," the prime minister added.

## Pakistan wish to expand...

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Federal Secretary Science and Technology, Shahid Iqbal Baloch. Under the joint research programs between the two countries, 33 projects have made practical progress to date. These projects include advanced sectors such as energy, biotechnology, artificial intelligence and electric vehicles.

## Pak rejects Israel's...

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end Israeli impunity, and ensure respect for international law", the spokesperson added. Pakistan also reaffirmed full support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and for the establishment of an independent, viable, and contiguous State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

## Nepal's veteran Marxist leader Oli seeks return

*Political journalist Binu Subedi said Oli had an authoritarian streak, and considered his word as "final", rarely accepting criticism or suggestions, even from his own party*

KATHMANDU: Tough-talking Nepali leader Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli spent decades in communist politics and served as prime minister four times before he was ousted in 2025 by deadly youth protests. Less than six months since the September anti-corruption unrest, in which at least 77 people were killed, the 73-year-old is seeking his political comeback. Oli, leader of the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), hopes to regain control of parliament in the March 5 elections. But he faces a direct challenge in his home constituency from 35-year-old rapper-turned-mayor Balendra Shah, who has cast himself as a symbol of youth-driven political change. Campaigning begins Monday.

Oli spent last week meeting communities and appealing for votes, painting the polls as a "competition between those who burn the country and those who build it". The protests were triggered by the Oli government's ban on social media, but driven by widespread frustration over economic

stagnation and entrenched corruption. As prime minister, Oli became a lightning rod for protester fury. He resigned on September 9, 2025, as mobs torched his house, parliament and government offices. In his resignation letter, Oli said he hoped stepping down would help "move towards a political solution and the resolution of the problems". In January, he gave a statement to a commission established by the interim government to investigate the deadly crackdown on the youth-led uprising. Oli has denied he had told the police to open fire on protesters. "I did not give any orders to shoot," he said, in an audio statement posted on his social media in January. Instead, he has blamed "infiltrators" or "anarchic forces" for igniting violence – without giving further details. "The children were led to such a point where the law itself orders shooting," he added. Despite the turmoil, Oli brushed aside doubts about his political future, winning re-election as CPN-UML chief in December by a landslide. Political journalist Binu Subedi said Oli had

an authoritarian streak, and considered his word as "final", rarely accepting criticism or suggestions, even from his own party. Often known by his first initials "KP", Oli for years carefully crafted a cult-like image as his party's leader, with life-size cutouts and banners of "KP Ba (father), we love you" at rallies. Oli's political career stretches nearly six decades, a period that saw a decade-long civil war and Nepal's 2008 abolition of its monarchy. Drawn into underground communist politics as a teenager, he was 21 when arrested in 1973 for campaigning to overthrow the king. "I was sentenced to harsh imprisonment for 14 years, with four years of solitary confinement", he wrote in a book of selected speeches. He studied and wrote poetry in detention, penning his verses on cigarette boxes when he couldn't access paper. "My crime was that I fought against the autocratic regime," Oli added. "But this never deterred me, instead, it emboldened me to continue the struggle."

After his release in 1987, he joined the CPN-UML and rose through the ranks, winning a parliamentary seat. The veteran politician first became prime minister in 2015, before being re-elected in 2018 and reappointed briefly in 2021 in Nepal's often turbulent parliament. He previously said he recognises that "Marxism and Leninism cannot be a ready-made solution to every problem". Oli's most recent stint in power, from 2024 until his ouster, rested on a coalition between the CPN-UML and the centre-left Nepali Congress. But Congress has since replaced his old ally, five-time prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, 79, electing 49-year-old Gagan Thapa as its new leader in January. In the Himalayan republic of some 30 million people, overshadowed by giant neighbours India and China, Oli previously trod a fine balance between the rivals. But he also stoked populist rhetoric against India, which is often portrayed as acting like an overbearing "big brother" to Nepal. – APP

## Briefs

**Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar**

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.61 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 279.62.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 280.30 and Rs 282.25, respectively. The price of the Euro against Rupee increased by Rs 0.27 to close at Rs 331.84 from the previous day's close of Rs 331.57, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.82, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a increase of Rs 1 and closed at Rs 381.77 compared to the previous day's Rs 380.77.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal declined by Rs.0.01 each and were traded at Rs 76.12 and Rs 74.55, respectively. APP

**Gold price drops sharply by Rs.3,200 per tola**

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices witnessed a significant decline in both domestic and international markets on Monday as 24 karat gold per tola rates decreased by Rs3,200 to settle at Rs523,762, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold fell by Rs2,743 to Rs449,041, while that of 10 grams of 22 karat gold dropped by Rs2,515 to Rs411,635.

In the international market, gold prices declined by \$32 to \$5,010 per ounce. Meanwhile, silver prices also recorded a downward trend. The price of silver per tola decreased by Rs55 to Rs8,164, while 10 grams of silver declined by Rs47 to Rs6,999. In the international market, silver prices fell by \$0.55 to \$76.80 per ounce. APP

**Russia find way to reduce child mortality from burns**

MOSCOW, Feb 16 (SPUTNIK/APP): Researchers at the Tyumen Medical University have found, using drugs that regulate the immune system in the first hours after injury can improve survival rates and speed up treatment for children with burns.

The university reported that the study revealed the mechanism behind immune system deterioration in young children following burn injuries. Burns are one of the leading causes of hospitalization among children under four to five, according to scientists at Tyumen Medical University. In about 75% of cases, children suffer thermal injuries from scalding liquids such as boiling water, tea, soup, or steam. "Burns rank eleventh among the causes of death in children aged one to nine, and they are also the fifth most common cause of non-fatal injuries in children. Each year, more than half a million children worldwide are hospitalized with burn injuries. According to UNICEF statistics, 260 children die every day from thermal injuries and their consequences," said Sergey Sakharov, head of the Department of Healthcare Mobilization Training and Disaster Medicine at the university and a practicing surgeon. According to him, the main cause of illness and mortality following burn injuries is infectious complications, since thermal trauma significantly weakens the body's immune defenses. At present, the mechanisms of immune protection in burn patients are still insufficiently studied, and specialists are searching for ways to improve treatment effectiveness, the researcher noted. Specialists at Tyumen Medical University studied the activity of blood T-lymphocytes in young children with burn injuries. T-lymphocytes are key immune system cells – a type of white blood cell that matures in the thymus and is responsible for adaptive immunity. APP

# FPCCI, Hungary agree to boost economic cooperation

President Atif Ikram Sheikh emphasized an expanding cooperation in Agricultural Technology, Food Processing, Pharmaceuticals, and IT



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Hungarian Ambassador to Pakistan, Zoltán Varga-Haszonits, visited the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to meet with President Atif Ikram Sheikh.

The meeting was also attended by FPCCI Vice Presidents Tariq Jadoon, Mr. Muhammad Raziq,

Capital Office Chairman Karim Aziz Malik, Mr. Zahid Maqbool, Mr. Rashid Humayon, Badar Haider, Dost Ali Jan, Asif Javed, Ms. Aliya Agha, Ms. Rabia Raheel, Ms. Ayesha Khan.

The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral trade, investment, and industrial cooperation between Pakistan and Hungary. Both parties discussed increasing the current trade volume and the exchange of business

delegations. Exploratory talks were held regarding potential joint venture projects. President Atif Ikram Sheikh emphasized an expanding cooperation in Agricultural Technology, Food Processing, Pharmaceuticals, and IT. He highlighted that Pakistan is offering a "One-Window" facility and a favorable environment for foreign investors. He specifically invited the Hungarian companies to explore: Energy and Infrastructure, Auto Parts Manufacturing.

He invited Hungarian investors to take advantage of the vast opportunities within Pakistan's industrial hubs. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI further said that there is a need for effective and practical steps to increase economic cooperation. Organizing B2B meetings and joint business forums will give a new dimension to our bilateral trade relations. Ambassador Zoltán Var-

ga-Haszonits reaffirmed that Hungary is keen to solidify its economic ties with Pakistan. He noted that Hungarian companies possess specialized expertise in, Modern Agricultural Machinery, Water Management, Healthcare Technology. The Ambassador assured full support for promoting investment and stated that the economic partnership between the two nations is set to enter a new phase of growth. APP

## Swiss train derails, injuring five

GOPPENSTEIN: A regional train derailed early on Monday in southern Switzerland, police said, injuring five people with more than two dozen evacuated. The accident near the town of Goppenstein occurred as the region is under its second highest avalanche warning, a level four out of five. "According to initial findings, an avalanche may have crossed the tracks shortly before the train passed," police stated, adding that the public prosecutor's office has opened an investigation. At the time of the incident, around 7:00 am (0600 GMT), 29 people were on board the train, police said. "Five people were injured. One of them was taken to hospital," police said, adding that the rest of the passengers had been taken to safety. Heavy snow was falling in the village, located at an altitude of 1,216 meters (4,000 feet), later Monday.

an AFP journalist observed. The train was not immediately visible. Goppenstein, a key loading and unloading hub for road and rail transport, is located at the exit of the Lotschberg rail tunnel. The train derailed as it was exiting the tunnel, police said. Police advised journalists not to remain at the scene due to the high risk of avalanches in the area. The federal train operator CFF also said on its website that train traffic "is interrupted between Goppenstein and Brig" because of an avalanche. On Thursday, an avalanche buried a section of the main road linking the Lotschental valley to the plain at Goppenstein. Road traffic and the Lotschberg car shuttle were interrupted for several hours. The incident, however, caused no injuries or damage. Separately, authorities issued an evacuation

order Monday for several areas in the municipality of Orsières following severe weather and strong winds recorded, and with heavy rain forecast for later Monday. Switzerland is renowned for its extensive and punctual rail network, with frequent services between cities, towns and even villages. Rail enthusiasts come from all over the world to ride on some of the most picturesque routes, or those with exceptionally steep climbs. The Swiss are the heaviest rail users in Europe in terms of kilometres travelled per person, but accidents have fallen in recent decades even as use grows, according to government statistics. Fifteen people were wounded when two trains derailed some 20 minutes apart during a storm near the capital Bern in 2023. APP

## China's Spring Festival spending surge becomes global harvest

BEIJING: When the Spring Festival lanterns light up the streets of her hometown Hangzhou in east China's Zhejiang Province, Lu Jing is watching the northern lights dance over Norway. Arranging such an overseas trip during the Spring Festival – China's most cherished time for family reunions – would have been unthinkable for many just a decade ago. Yet this year, Lu is among millions of Chinese tourists celebrating the New Year abroad. The 2026 Spring Festival holiday, extended to nine days, is the longest in recent years, and Chinese tourists are making the most of it. The National Immigration Administration estimates that daily inbound and outbound passenger traffic nationwide will average 2.05 million during the holiday, a 14.1 percent increase from last year. Data from Tongcheng Travel, a leading Chinese online travel agency, shows that searches and bookings for visas, flights and hotels around the holiday have all exceeded 2025 levels. Eager to tap into the surge, international operators are ramping up capacity, with many adding flights and sailings to meet Spring Festival demand. MSC Cruises, for instance, has added three special voyages from Shanghai to its South Korea itineraries tailored specifically for the Chinese New Year, with one for early birds, one for the official Golden Week, and one for travelers extending their holidays. The current travel fervor, peaking during the holiday, is attributable to sustained policy tailwinds. Last year, the Central Economic Work Conference, an annual meeting that sets the country's economic agenda for 2026, called for an action plan to boost urban and rural incomes. Multiple government bodies have since followed up with concrete measures, including employment support, efforts to eliminate out-of-pocket expenses for childbirth under basic insurance schemes, and steps to shore up the housing sector, all aimed at strengthening consumer confidence. These policies have fueled consumption enthusiasm, encouraging a wider demographic to travel abroad. Among the top 15 cities of origin for outbound tourists this Spring Festival, nearly 40 percent are non-first-tier cities, with many located in central and western regions, according to Tongcheng. Years ago, these regions accounted for a much smaller share of outbound tourism. Today, their enthusiasm for overseas travel is catching up with that of China's major cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Propelled by greater spending power, Chinese travelers, especially the younger generation, are also changing the way they explore the world. Tourists are no longer satisfied with a quick snapshot at a landmark; tour groups are getting smaller, and itineraries more extensive. An industry report shows that private tours, customized trips and themed travel, once considered niche luxuries, have become a growing trend in this year's Spring Festival outbound trips. "Besides iconic landmarks like the Merlion and Universal Studios, an increasing number of Chinese tourists are opting for deeper experiences like hiking the Southern Ridges, exploring Pulau Ubin's mangroves, or wandering Katong's Peranakan enclaves," a tour guide in Singapore said. APP

## Germany will keep supporting Lebanon after UN peacekeepers leave

BEIRUT: Germany moved to assure Lebanon on Monday that it will support the Lebanese government even after pulling out German troops deployed as part of UN peacekeepers along the Lebanon-Israel border when their mission ends later this year. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier made the announcement during a news conference at the presidential palace near Beirut. Germany's navy, he said, is already training Lebanese troops as they boost their presence in the country's south following the 14-month war between Israel and the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group. The mission of the multinational UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, concludes at the end of 2026, nearly five decades after it was deployed. The force has played a significant role in monitoring the security situation in the region, including during the Israel-Hezbollah war last year. Over the past months, Beirut has said that Lebanon will need a follow-up force to fill the vacuum in southern Lebanon once the UN peacekeepers leave. "After the end of UNIFIL's mission, Germany will stay by the side of your country to boost state authority," Steinmeier said, without elaborating. It remains unlikely German troops – tasked with preventing arms smuggling by sea and helping the Lebanese army monitor the country's sea border – would remain in Lebanon. UNIFIL currently numbers about 7,500 peacekeepers, including 179 Germans. "The Lebanese armed Forces are, of course, the backbone of stability in Lebanon and this means that after UNIFIL's mission we have to think how to strengthen" the army, Steinmeier said. Steinmeier added that the process of disarming Hezbollah – which was part of a November 2024 US-brokered ceasefire that halted the fighting – should move ahead and that Israel should fully withdraw from Lebanese territory. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said Lebanon paid a high price for the Hezbollah-Israel war, which Hezbollah started by firing rockets into Israel a day after the militant Palestinian group Hamas attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, triggering the war in Gaza. Israel expanded its attacks that included bombardment and a ground operation in September 2024, severely weakening Hezbollah. The Israel-Hezbollah conflict killed more than 4,000 people in Lebanon, including hundreds of civilians, and caused an estimated \$11 billion in damage and destruction, according to the World Bank. In Israel, 127 people died, including 80 soldiers. "We were forced to live through violent conflicts we did not choose and we bore their burdens. We are no longer able to do so," Aoun said of the Israel-Hezbollah war. Aoun also said he had asked Steinmeier to have Germany assume a "main role" after UNIFIL, without elaborating what that would entail, and to also ask Israel to abide by the ceasefire and withdraw from Lebanon. He made no mention of Hezbollah's withdrawal from southern Lebanon. APP

## Turkish envoy calls on CJP ahead of Constitutional court president's visit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, called on Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi at the Supreme Court on Monday to discuss preparations for an upcoming high-level judicial exchange between the two countries. The meeting was held in the context of the scheduled visit of the President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Turkey to Pakistan in March 2026. During the visit, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is expected to be signed between the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Constitutional Court of Turkey to formalise institutional cooperation between two apex judicial bodies. To ensure coordination at the governmental level, the meeting was also attended by the Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, and a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Justice Yahya Afridi welcomed the proposed visit and reaffirmed the Supreme Court's commitment to extending full judicial courtesy and hospitality to the visiting dignitary, reflecting the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and Turkey. The chief justice highlighted the historic and cordial ties between the two countries, rooted in shared legal traditions, mutual respect and enduring cultural bonds. He noted the expanding cooperation in areas such as technology integration within the judiciary, capacity building, and the exchange of best practices at various levels of the judicial system. Both sides expressed confidence that the forthcoming visit and the signing of the MoU would provide a structured

framework for enhanced collaboration, including judicial dialogue, research cooperation, training initiatives and the mutual exchange of jurisprudential develop-

ments. The visit is being viewed as a significant step towards strengthening institutional linkages and deepening judicial cooperation between Pakistan and Turkey.



## 34 Australians released from Syrian camp

ROJ CAMP: Syrian Kurdish forces on Monday released 34 Australians from a camp holding families of suspected Daesh militants in northern Syria, saying they would be flown to Australia from Damascus. Hukmiya Mohamed, a co-director of Roj camp, told Reuters that the 34 Australians had been released to members of their families who had come to Syria for the release. They were put on small buses for Damascus. Roj camp holds more than 2,000 people from 40 different nationalities, the majority of them women and children. Thousands of people believed to be linked to Daesh militants have been held at Roj and a second camp, Al-Hol, since the militant group was driven from its final territorial foothold in Syria in 2019. Syrian government forces seized swathes of northern Syria from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in January, before agreeing a ceasefire on January 29. The US military last week completed a mission to transfer 5,700 adult male Daesh detainees from Syria to Iraq. APP

**Erdogan postpones UAE visit, saying leader has 'health problem'**

ISTANBUL: Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday announced he was postponing a visit to Abu Dhabi because Emirati leader Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan had a "health problem" – then deleted the message. The message, posted by Erdogan's team on X, said he had talked with Al Nahyan by phone. "During the course of the call, President Erdogan expressed his sadness over the health problem experienced by (President) Al Nahyan and wished him a prompt recovery," said the three-paragraph message. Erdogan would travel to the United Arab Emirates at a later date, still to be determined, the message added. Although the message – of which AFP has a screen grab – was quickly deleted from the account, it had already been picked up by official Turkish media. Turkey's state broadcaster likewise took down its article on Erdogan that mentioned the Emirati leader's health problem. The official Emirati news agency, WAM, reported on the telephone conversation between the two leaders, but did not mention that Erdogan's visit had been postponed. APP

**India hosts global leaders, tech moguls at AI Impact Summit**

NEW DELHI: A global artificial intelligence summit opened in New Delhi on Monday, with representatives of more than 60 countries scheduled to discuss the use and regulation of AI with the industry's leaders and investors. The India AI Impact Summit 2026 is hosted by the Indian government's IndiaAI Mission – an initiative worth in excess of \$1 billion and launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in 2024 to develop the AI ecosystem in the country. After five days of sessions and an accompanying exhibition of 300 companies at Bharat Mandapam – the venue of the 2023 G20 summit – participating leaders are expected to sign a declaration which, according to the organizer, will outline a "shared road map for global AI governance and collaboration." Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will attend the summit on Friday with French President Emmanuel Macron, said on X it was a "matter of great pride for us that people from around the world are coming to India" for the event, which is evidence that the country is "rapidly advancing in the fields of science and technology and is making a significant contribution to global development." Among the 20 heads of state that the Indian Ministry of External Affairs has announced as scheduled to attend are Macron, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, and Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi's crown prince. Also expected are tech moguls such as OpenAI CEO Sam Altman. APP

**Briefs**

**Pakistan  
seeks peace  
& good  
neighbourly  
ties**

NEW YORK: The visiting Senate Chairman, Yusuf Raza Gilani, told a gathering of the Pakistani-American community in New York that Pakistan is fast emerging as a dynamic country on the global stage. The event brought together a diverse cross-section of the diaspora, including professionals, business leaders, and journalists. Chairman Gilani led Pakistan's six-member delegation to the just-concluded Annual Hearing of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) at the United Nations. Speaking to the participants, the Chairman Senate said that sustained and intensive efforts are underway to transform Pakistan into a developed welfare state. He further highlighted that the Government is introducing multiple initiatives aimed at the welfare and facilitation of overseas Pakistanis. Emphasizing Pakistan's foreign policy outlook, Chairman Gilani stated that the country seeks peace and good-neighbourly relations, but not at the cost of its dignity or national interests. He observed that while Pakistan is endowed with a prime geostrategic location, it faces a challenging neighbourhood, adding that durable regional peace requires the resolution of all core issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. — APP

**Kremlin rejects  
European  
assessment  
Navalny died of  
poisoning**

MOSCOW: The Kremlin said Monday that it "strongly rejected" an assessment by five European countries that Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny died from poisoning two years ago, as his supporters marked the anniversary of his death in prison. Navalny, a charismatic anti-corruption campaigner who rallied hundreds of thousands to the streets in protest at the Russian leadership, was Russian President Vladimir Putin's fiercest domestic opponent for years. He died in an Arctic prison colony in February 2024 while serving a 19-year sentence for "extremism", a charge that he and his supporters say was punishment for his opposition work. Britain, Sweden, France, Germany and the Netherlands issued a joint statement on Saturday saying they believed he had been poisoned with epibatidine - a toxin found in poison dart frogs - and that the Russian state had the "means, motive and opportunity" to administer it. "We naturally do not accept such accusations. We disagree with them. We consider them biased and baseless," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, including AFP, during a daily briefing call. — APP

# Field Marshal indebted to UAE for continued support

Field Marshal Asim Munir further affirmed that the security and stability of the United Arab Emirates are an integral part of Pakistan's own security, given the enduring historical relations and strong strategic partnership between the two countries

DNA

DUBAI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, met today in Abu Dhabi with His Highness Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and National Security Advisor of the United Arab Emirates. During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral cooperation across various sectors, particularly in the fields of economic collaboration, investment and security. They also exchanged views on regional developments and emphasized the



importance of continued coordination to promote peace and stability in the region. Field Marshal Asim Munir expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for its longstanding investments and continued support to Pakistan's economy and security over the decades. He noted that such support reflects the deep-rooted historical relations between the two brotherly countries and commended the constructive role of the UAE leadership in advancing economic and social development in Pakistan. Field Marshal Asim Munir further affirmed that the security and stability of the United Arab Emirates are an integral part of Pakistan's own security, given the enduring historical relations and strong strategic partnership between the two countries. He reiterated Pakistan's firm commitment to continuing joint efforts to further strengthen this partnership in all fields, in a manner that serves the interests of both brotherly peoples and contributes to peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

**T20 World Cup**  
**Sri Lanka beat Australia to seal Super Eight spot**

*Sri Lanka chase down 182-run target with eight wickets in hand*



DNA

PALLEKELE: Sri Lanka on Monday inflicted an eight-wicket defeat on Australia to seal Super Eight spot during the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026. Earlier, fifties from Australian openers Mitchell Marsh and Travis Head helped their team post a target of 182 runs against Sri Lanka in their group match of the T20 World Cup at Pallekele International Cricket Stadium.

After being sent in to bat, Australian openers Mitchell Marsh and Travis Head gave their side a solid start, adding 111 runs for the opening partnership. Marsh scored 54 off 27 balls, hitting eight fours and two sixes before being trapped LBW by Dushan Hemantha. Head contributed 56 runs from 29 balls, with seven fours and three sixes. Josh Inglis and Glenn Maxwell added 27 and 22 runs respectively, while the rest of the batting lineup failed to reach double figures. For Sri Lanka, Dushan Hemantha took three wickets and Dushantha claimed two. Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Wellalage, and Kamindu Mendis took one wicket each. Playing XIs: Sri Lanka: Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Perera, Kusal Mendis (wk), Pavan Rathnayake, Dasun Shanaka (c), Kamindu Mendis, Dunith Wellalage, Dushan Hemantha, Dushantha Chameera, Maheesh Theekshana and Matheesa Pathirana. Australia: Mitchell Marsh (c), Travis Head, Cameron Green, Josh Inglis (wk), Tim David, Marcus Stoinis, Glenn Maxwell, Cooper Connolly, Xavier Bartlett, Nathan Ellis and Adam Zampa.

## Bannu explosion kills two

Police and security forces cordoned off the area and launched a search operation, added the police statement

DNA

PESHAWAR: At least two people were killed and 17 others injured in a powerful explosion near Miryan Police Station in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district on Monday. According to a statement by the police, the blast occurred when a time bomb planted in a motorcycle detonated. A child was among those killed in the explosion. Police sources said the blast took place near shops located in front of the station. Although police personnel remained unharmed, civilians in the vicinity were caught in the blast. Several of the injured are reported to be in critical condition. Medical Teaching Institution (MTI) spokesperson, Muhammad Noman Khatab, stated that the victims were brought to District Headquarters Hospital and Khalfa Gul Nawaz Hospital. Rescue 1122 officials said emergency teams promptly

reached the scene and moved the bodies and injured to nearby hospitals. Following the incident, a heavy contingent of the Bannu police reached the scene, along with the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) and the Quick Response Force (QRF). Police and security forces cordoned off the area and launched a search operation. Evidence is being collected and an investigation has been initiated. The BDS team also engaged in clearing the affected site "to ensure timely and effective prevention of any possible further threat", the police statement said. Meanwhile, Regional Police Officer Sajjad Khan visited the hospital and enquired after the injured, it said. Bannu district has been the scene of repeated security incidents in recent months, with both civilians and local security forces coming under attack amid a broader surge in militant violence.

## Over \$5 billion for Gaza reconstruction, says Trump

Trump's post did not specify which member nations were making the pledges or would contribute personnel

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Ahead of this week's meeting of the Board of Peace, President Donald Trump has announced that members of his newly established U.S.-led body have pledged \$5 billion for the reconstruction of Gaza and will commit thousands of personnel to international stabilization and police forces for the war-tattered territory. Trump plans to host the board's inaugural meeting on Feb. 19 at the "Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace" in Washington, D.C., where, he said in his Sunday Truth Social post, the pledge will be formally announced. "Very importantly, Hamas must uphold its commitment to Full and Immediate Demilitarization," Trump wrote. "The Board of Peace will prove to be the most consequential International Body in History, and it is my honor to serve as its Chairman." Trump's post did not specify which member nations were making the pledges or would contribute personnel. However, media reported that Indonesia's military expects up to 8,000 of its troops to be ready by the end of June for a potential deployment to Gaza as part of a humanitarian and peace mission. It's the first firm commitment that Trump has received. Rebuilding the Palestinian Gaza Strip is projected to be an immense undertaking. Estimates from the United Nations, World Bank and European Union place recon-

struction costs at roughly \$70 billion, following more than two years of devastating Israeli bombardment that left much of the territory in ruins. Pakistan, whose Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will also attend the Board meeting, is a founding member of the Board. But Islamabad has not yet announced its commitment in this connection. The UN-endorsed Board initiative is tied to the Oct. 10 U.S.-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas aimed at ending the prolonged conflict. The agreement mandated the creation of an armed international stabilization force which is to be tasked with maintaining security and ensuring the disarmament of Palestinian organization Hamas - a key demand of Israel. So far, few countries have publicly expressed interest in joining such a force, and Thursday's meeting might make things clear in terms of individual commitments. It is unclear at this time as to how many of the board's more than 20 members will attend Thursday's meeting. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who met with Trump at the White House last week, is not expected to participate. Several European countries have declined Trump's invitation, including France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Ukraine. Trump revoked Canada's invitation after Prime Minister Mark Carney voiced opposition to tariffs the US president had proposed against European allies in his bid to acquire Greenland.

## 'Iran must abandon enriched uranium'

NEWS DESK

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the US must require Iran to relinquish all of its enriched uranium and be barred from enriching more, as part of any nuclear deal with Tehran.

In a speech in Jerusalem on Sunday, he outlined several conditions he wanted, including that "all enriched material should be left in Iran" and that "there should be no enrichment capability". His comments come as Iranian and US officials prepare for a second round of talks in Switzerland on Tuesday. Iran will consider compromises to reach a nuclear deal if the US is willing to discuss lifting sanctions, Iranian deputy foreign minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi told the BBC in Tehran. However, Iran regards zero enrichment as a red line and a violation of its rights under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The US has piled pressure on Iran to reach a deal and has built up its military capabilities in the Middle East, sending two aircraft carriers - including its largest-ever warship - to the region. Additional American naval forces will protect against any potential threats in the region, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told a news conference in Slovakia. He said US President Donald Trump "prefers diplomacy and an outcome of negotiated settlement" over direct attacks on Iran. Trump's top envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner are set to meet Iranian negotiators including Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who is travelling to Geneva. "No-one's ever been able to do a successful deal with Iran, but we're going to try," Rubio said.

## PPP strongly condemns hike in fuel prices

*In a statement issued, Marri rejected the increase of Rs 5 per liter in petrol and Rs 7.32 per liter in diesel, calling it a "petrol bomb"*

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Shazia Marri's Strong Reaction to Government's Increase in Petroleum Products Prices

Karachi/Islamabad, February 16, 2026 - Shazia Marri, the central spokesperson for the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP), has strongly condemned the government's decision to hike petroleum product prices, describing it as an unjust and unwise move especially timed just before the holy month of Ramadan. In a statement issued, Marri rejected the increase of Rs 5 per liter in petrol and Rs 7.32 per liter in diesel, calling it a "petrol bomb" of inflation dropped on the public right before Ramadan, which will further exacerbate people's hardships. newsWire.com.pk She emphasized that the public, already burdened by soaring inflation, needs re-

lief rather than additional financial strain. The PPP spokesperson highlighted that the price surge will severely impact the poor, laborers, and middle class, leading to rises in the costs of essential food items and transportation. "The government is announcing a Ramadan package on one hand while gifting inflation to the people on the other - this is a clear contradiction," Marri stated. She urged the government to seriously address unemployment, inflation, and the economic crisis instead of imposing more burdens. Marri demanded an immediate review of the petroleum price increase and the provision of genuine relief to the public. This reaction comes amid reports of the latest fortnightly review leading to higher fuel costs effective from today. Opposition voices like Marri's echo past criticisms of similar hikes, underscoring ongoing concerns over economic policies affecting everyday Pakistanis.

## North Korean leader Kim Jong chooses daughter as his heir

NEWS DESK

NORTH KOREA: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has selected his daughter as his heir, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers on Thursday. Kim Ju Ae - who is believed to be 13 - has in recent months been pictured beside her father in high-profile events like a visit to Beijing in September, her first known trip abroad. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) said it took a "range of circumstances" into

account including her increasingly prominent public presence at official events" in making this assessment. The NIS also said it would keep close tabs on whether she will attend the North's party congress later this month - its largest political event that is held once every five years. The party Congress is where Pyongyang is expected to give more details about priorities like foreign policy, war planning and nuclear ambitions for the next five years. On Thursday lawmaker Lee Seong-kwon told reporters that Ju Ae, who was previously described by the NIS as being "trained" to be a successor, was now at the stage of "successor designation". As Kim Ju Ae has shown her presence at various events, including the founding anniversary of the Korean People's Army and her visit to the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, and signs have been detected of her voicing her opinion on certain state policies, the NIS believes she has now entered the stage of being designated as successor," Lee said.

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