



# Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Israel bars United Nations chief from the country**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Iran's warned US against interference**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Alcaraz beats Sinner to win China Open**

Detailed News On Page-06



**ISLAMABAD:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcoming the Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim upon his arrival on a 3-day official visit at Islamabad. — DNA

## Pak polio tally soars to 26

Resurgence of polio in country presents significant setback for govt's efforts to eradicate disease

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two new cases of polio virus have been reported in Pakistan, taking the country's yearly tally to 26 amid a sharp rise in the spread of the crippling disease despite rigorous efforts by the authorities for polio eradication. Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by virus mainly affecting children under the age of five years, who are malnourished or have weak immunity because of being under-vaccinated or not vaccinated for polio and other childhood diseases. The illness invades the nervous system and causes paralysis or even death.

## Six BLA terrorists gunned down

Terrorists "directly attacked" security forces and innocent people, say sources

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: At least six terrorists of the outlawed Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) were eliminated after the security forces conducted a joint operation in Balochistan's Harnai district, security sources told Geo News on Wednesday. The operation, as per the sources, was carried out on secret information in the province's northeastern district where the forces successfully targeted on BLA hideouts on September 12.

## Islamabad's Red Zone sealed

Containers have also been placed at Faizabad on the Express Highway, causing long queues of vehicles

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Red Zone in Islamabad has once again been sealed ahead of anticipated protest by PTI. According to details, containers have been placed on roads leading to the Red Zone, with only Margalla Road remaining open for access. Containers have also been placed at Faizabad on the Express Highway, causing long queues of vehicles. Early in the morning, citizens heading to offices and educational institutions faced significant difficulties on the roads.

## Defection clause case

# CJP Qazi Faez rejects PTI's objection on bench

CJP Isa directs AG to facilitate PTI lawyer, Imran Khan meeting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) objection to the constitution of the bench hearing the review plea against the Article 63(A) verdict and directed the federal government to arrange a meeting between incarcerated ex-prime minister Imran Khan and party lawyer Ali Zafar. "Arrangements should be made for a meeting between Barrister [Ali] Zafar and the PTI founder," Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa said while directing the attorney general to facilitate the said meeting. The development comes as a CJP-led five-member bench comprising Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhal and Justice Naeem Akhtar

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## PTI gets more time in intra-party elections case

Gohar pleaded that FIA has taken in custody the intra-party elections record

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday granted more time to the PTI to submit documents in the intra-party elections case. A four-member bench, led by ECP Member Nisar Durrani, conducted the hearing. Barrister Gohar, representing PTI, informed the bench that

Continued on Page 06

## Opposes mily courts

# Bilawal affirms commitment to constitutional amendments

PPP chairman asserts party will not abandon the constitutional court matter, vowing to see it through to completion

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has reiterated his commitment to completing the constitutional amendments, stating that if they are finalised before October 25, the matter can be resolved peacefully. In a session with reporters in Islamabad on Wednesday, Bilawal was asked about his stance on former prime minister Imran Khan's military trial. He replied, "We need to assess the evidence first; after all, we have the authority to grant a presidential pardon." He maintained that the PPP stands against the death penalty. When questioned about the proposed constitutional amendments and their deadline of October 25, he stated, "If the amendments are made before October 25, the matter can be settled peacefully."

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## PTI MPs among 200 workers held

Entry, exit points of Mianwali, Bahawalpur shut; mobile service suspended in Mianwali

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has called for protests across several cities in Punjab, prompting the government to impose Section 144 and tighten security in various districts to maintain law and order. The protests come in response to the PTI's demand for the release of their detained leaders.

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# Constitutional package has nothing to do with CJP

Senator Siddiqui says issue surrounding constitutional amendments will be clarified in the next two weeks

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Irfan Siddiqui on Wednesday reiterated that the proposed constitutional amendments are not person-specific. "Any constitutional amendment has nothing to do with Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa or Justice Mansoor Ali Shah," said Siddiqui while speaking to media persons after meeting Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman. The government pushed the constitutional package amid speculation about a potential extension in the tenure of CJP Isa, who is set to retire this month, following the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) request last month for the early

Continued on Page 06

## Forex reserves surge to 2-month import cover

Jameel Ahmad says central bank plans to launch fully digital banking by 2025 to enhance financial inclusion

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have surged to cover two months' worth of imports after the arrival of the first tranche from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF)

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## PM Shehbaz lauds Dr Zakir Naik

Naik said Islam is a complete code of life that provides us guidance in every matter

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prominent Islamic scholar Dr Zakir Naik called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Wednesday. Welcoming Dr Zakir Naik, the prime minister said the entire Muslim Ummah is proud of him for introducing the true image of Islam to the world. PM Shehbaz said he listened to his lectures with great interest, which are very enlightening and impactful. He said, "Islam is a religion of peace, and you are doing an important duty by spreading the true message of Islam among people". The premier remarked that he is happy to know that Dr Zakir Naik's son is also following his footsteps and serving Islam. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Zakir Naik said Pakistan is the only country in the world that was created in the name of Islam. He said Islam is a complete code of life that provides us guidance in every matter. He said spreading the message of Islam worldwide is his mission as success lies in following the path of Islam. The prime minister expressed his best wishes for Dr. Zakir Naik.

# 'You reap what you sow' Nawaz urges Imran Khan to seek forgiveness

Pointing out the development work carried out in his tenures, the former premier said that his government laid the network of motorways and highways and metro bus services, eliminated terrorism, made Pakistan a nuclear power, overcame energy crisis

ABID RAZA / DNA

LAHORE: Amid ongoing protests by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in different areas of Punjab, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif asked incarcerated party founder Imran Khan to learn humility and refrain from making tall claims. "You reap what you sow," the three-time prime minister said to jailed PTI founder while addressing a ceremony related to "Apna Ghar Apni Chat" Scheme. His statement came as PTI continues its anti-government campaign, with party workers and supporters staging protests in different areas of Punjab today (Wednesday). Without naming the PTI, the ruling party president said the ruling party of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was not interested in the development of the province. "They come Punjab with tear gas shells," the PML-N chief said hinting at PTI protesters. Nawaz also asked which of the "tall promises" the PTI had fulfilled. "Their performance is zero and they stage protest whenever they get a chance," he added. "I think such elements should be dealt with strictly." Moreover, the former premier also expressed disappointment with his supporters and voters, stating that they never

Continued on Page 06


## PTI to protest at D-Chowk on Oct 4 at any cost

CM Gandapur once again would lead the KP delegation

SHAMIM SHAHID


PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) announced agitation at the D-Chowk on October 4. The party leadership in Peshawar decided to protest at the D-Chowk come what may. CM Gandapur while addressing the participants said that the planning in the last protest was poor. He termed it the reason to return in the way. The decision was made in a meeting of the PTI parliamentary party in Peshawar. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur chaired the meeting.

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### Chinese delegation visits Takht Bhai archaeological site

MARDAN :An 18-member Chinese delegation here on Wednesday visited the world famous and among the UNESCO world heritage sites, Takht Bhai archaeological site.

On the directives of District Police Officer (DPO) Zahoor Babar Afridi, DSP Takhtbhai Circle, Shakeel Khan received the delegation and took them to various sites amid foolproof security arrangements. He told them that the site was famous due to its' historical and cultural importance and every year several domestic and foreign tourists visit this site in large numbers. The Chinese delegation appreciated the security arrangements of Mardan Police and expressed their satisfaction over it. Meanwhile, the officials of Directorate of Archaeology gave a detailed briefing to the delegation on the historical significance of archaeology. The delegation was informed that now, Takht Bhai ruins became a part of world heritage list and considered one of most well-structured Buddhist monasteries. The visiting delegation took keen interest in historical sites and called Pakistan a very beautiful and peaceful country. While touring the historic site, they praised the security measures and said that they felt completely safe and in a pleasant environment.—APP

### Malaysian PM's visit to Pakistan boosts bilateral trade

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Ifkhar Ali Malik has said that Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's three-day visit to Pakistan marks a significant step in strengthening the existing bilateral trade relations between the two nations. In a statement issued here on Wednesday, popular octogenarian trade leader of South Asia said that current visit holds substantial potential for enhancing economic cooperation, particularly in key sectors of trade, investment, energy, agriculture and technology and activity would serve as an opportunity to deepen these relations further. He said visit would lead to the signing of new agreements and memorandum of understandings (MoUs) aimed at diversifying trade portfolios and increasing market access for two countries. He said his visit would underscore the importance of regional economic challenges posed by the global market. Enhanced cooperation between Malaysia and Pakistan would not only strengthen bilateral trade but also contribute to broader regional economic stability and growth, he added. He said that Malaysia was a key trading partner for Pakistan in Southeast Asia, with a strong presence in sectors like palm oil, electronics, and automotive products. Pakistan, on the other hand, has growing exports to Malaysia in textiles, agriculture, and services, he added.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Envoy of Tajikistan Yusuf Sharifzoda and Maldives Mohamed Thoha in talks with President ICCI Nasir M. Qureshi at Chamber House. Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari can also be seen.—DNA

## Envoys of Tajikistan, Maldives visit ICCI to congratulate new leadership

### STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Tajikistan, H.E. Yusuf Sharifzoda, and the High Commissioner of Maldives, Mohamed Thoha, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Wednesday to extend their congratulations to the newly elected President, Senior Vice President, Vice President, and the executive committee. During his address, Ambassador Sharifzoda emphasized the deep-rooted ties between Tajikistan and Pakistan, underscoring the extensive potential for trade and investment that exists between the two brotherly nations. He highlighted the mutual benefits that could be harnessed through enhanced cooperation, stating that both coun-

tries stand to gain significantly by leveraging these opportunities for the welfare of their people. Drawing attention to the longstanding camaraderie, the Ambassador likened the two nations to "part of the same body and soul," and remarked on the high demand for Pakistani products not only in Tajikistan but across Central Asia. He urged both nations to prioritize strengthening and expanding their existing relationship. Ambassador Sharifzoda also provided an update on the ambitious CASA-1000 renewable energy infrastructure project, noting its expected completion in 2025, which will foster closer collaboration among the stakeholders. Additionally, he extended an invitation to the Pakistani business community, particularly ICCI members, to participate in the upcoming exhibition

in Dushanbe on October 24. High Commissioner Mohamed Thoha of Maldives, while expressing the close brotherly ties between Pakistan and the Maldives, emphasized the wealth of investment opportunities in his country despite its smaller size. He encouraged Pakistani entrepreneurs to explore these opportunities and to enhance trade relations for mutual benefit. Highlighting the potential for importing high-quality Maldivian tuna at competitive rates, he suggested Pakistani businesses could reciprocate by exporting vegetables and fruits to the Maldives, further enhancing trade between the two nations. In his welcoming remarks, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, expressed his heartfelt gratitude

to the distinguished guests for their visit and their good wishes for the newly elected leadership. Introducing his team, President Qureshi assured the envoys of ICCI's commitment to further elevate trade relations with both nations to new heights, fostering economic growth on both sides. He also reaffirmed ICCI's dedication to building bridges with chambers of commerce in friendly countries, facilitating ease of business. Former President of FPCCI, Zubair Ahmed Malik, highlighted the immense investment potential on all fronts and stressed the need for its effective realization, while Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General of the United Business Group, emphasized the importance of enhancing air connectivity to

strengthen bilateral ties. Bakhtawari noted that the strong bond between Pakistan, Tajikistan, and the Maldives is reflected in the shared sentiments and mutual goodwill among the three nations. In his vote of thanks, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Senior Vice President of ICCI, reiterated that numerous opportunities exist to further enhance relations among the three countries. The gathering was also attended by ICCI Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, executive members Tahir Ayub, Ch. Irfan, Ch. Waseem, Malik Abdul Aziz, Fatima Azeem, Shumaila Siddiqui, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Malik Aqeel, Kaleemullah, Umer Hayat Abbasi, Ishaq Sial, Malik Najeemullah, along with Naeem Siddiqui, Khalid Chaudhry, and Abbas Hashmi.

### Punjab CM stresses peace, tolerance for social uplift

#### DNA

LAHORE :Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has stressed peace and tolerance for development and welfare of society. She said genuine progress could only be attained through a commitment to understanding and harmony, rather than through force or violence. In her message on International Day of Non-Violence being celebrated on Wednesday, she condemned violence and extremism, saying: "All forms of violence and extremism are condemnable", emphasising that the path of non-violence was the only guarantee of true success. The CM clarified that violence was not a solution to any problem; rather, it exacerbates the situation. She expressed that the philosophy of non-violence is the greatest philosophy of humanity, asserting that it is essential for progress and stability. The CM called for the promotion of a culture of dialogue to resolve mutual differences, stating that the Punjab government is always ready to deal with those who spread violence. CM Maryam Nawaz expressed her commitment to building a Punjab where everyone has the right to live in peace and where the rule of law prevails. She stressed the need to promote the message of non-violence against violence, extremism, and hatred, and urged, "Let us dedicate all our efforts to a peaceful Pakistan."

## President directs CAA to appoint deceased employee's son

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has directed the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) to process the appointment of a deceased employee's son in accordance with the law within a month. As per details, Faheem Ahmed (the complainant) had complained against the PCAA for his non-appointment against the deceased employees' quota, according to a President House press release. The complainant stated that his father was an employee of PCAA, who had died in the year 1999 during service due to cancer. He said as he was a minor at the time, he could not apply for appointment against the deceased employees' quota. He said that when he applied for a job, his request was turned down without any justification. He approached PCAA for the redressal of his grievance but to no avail. Feeling aggrieved, he approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib for the resolution of his complaint. The Mohtasib decided that the complainant had failed to make out any case of maladministration against PCAA as the Family Assistance Package was not applicable at the time of his application. The complainant then filed a representation with the president against the orders of the Mohtasib. In his decision, the president observed that the complainant's father expired in 1999 during service and at that time the petitioner was only six years of age. He noted that the petitioner applied for appointment, after coming of age, under the policy of 2005, according to which the son of a deceased employee was to be considered for appointment in the same department without undergoing the formality of advertisement.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Renowned Islamic Scholar Dr. Zakir Naik calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

## MoU signed to synergize efforts towards developing micro, SMEs

PESHAWAR :In order to continue its journey of evolution, Krafters signs an MoU with Handicrafts Association of Pakistan to synergize efforts towards development of Micro, Small & Medium enterprises and home based workers. Under the MoU both the organizations will endeavor to undertake projects and activities together with particular focus on digital financial inclusion, enterprise development and youth empowerment. Krafters is an e-commerce platform with a developed network of over 9000 artisans and is striving to revive and sustain craft tradition and to empower artisans to live a life of respect. As part of its App based initiative for digital financial inclu-

sion of home based workers and SMEs under Pakistan Innovation Fund (PIF) initiative, Krafters also arranged a session on "Digital Financial Inclusion" at TMA Hariapur for women led enterprises of District Hariapur. The session, organized in collaboration with JazzCash, focused on the importance of digital financial inclusion, onboarding and its effects towards fostering economic growth, reducing poverty, and empowering individuals. JazzCash team from Islamabad undertook a session on need of digital onboarding to the participants followed by registration of women led enterprises for jazz cash accounts enabling them towards financial economic

empowerment. "Digital financial inclusion plays a significant role in empowering women-led businesses, particularly in developing regions, where traditional financial systems often marginalize women entrepreneurs," observed Syed Zahid Ali Shah, CEO Krafters while speaking at the training session. Krafters in partnership with JazzCash & Government Technical Teachers Training College (GTTTC) Peshawar also held a session about "Digital Financial Inclusion" for women led enterprises on GTTTC, Hayatabad Peshawar. The event besides creating awareness on digital financial inclusion also involved onboarding of women entrepreneurs on hashtag.—APP

## 'Pakistan Economy Dashboard' provides easy access to socioeconomic data

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance and Revenue, Ali Pervaiz Malik said that 'Pakistan Economy Dashboard' is huge initiative in the direction of making the socio-economic data easily accessible to everyone. The launch of the Pakistan Economy Dashboard represents a major leap forward in our mission to modernize the dissemination of economic information, he said while addressing the launching ceremony of 'Pakistan Economy Dashboard' here Wednesday. "I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Economic Adviser at the Finance Division, and his team, whose relentless efforts have successfully brought this initiative to fruition," he said. He ap-

preciated the appreciation to the EU-funded PFM-II Programme for providing technical assistance to the Finance Division in these crucial areas. In today's rapidly evolving global economy, access to accurate and timely economic data is more critical than ever, he said. Ali Pervaiz Malik said this portal has been designed to be a user-friendly resource, providing all stakeholders—whether policymakers, researchers, investors, or citizens—with the data they need to make informed decisions. "We stand on the cusp of a new era in economic management, the integration of technology into governance has never been more crucial." He said the Pakistan Economy Dashboard is not just

a tool; it symbolizes our commitment to harnessing the power of technology to make governance more transparent, efficient, and responsive. By adopting such innovative platforms, we are setting a precedent for how data-driven governance can drive real, impactful change in our country, he said. He said that this initiative marked a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to promote transparency and enhance the accessibility of economic data, particularly for academia and research institutions. On the other hand, the internal section of this portal will empower the Finance Division with real-time access to economic data and outlook, thereby strengthening the evidence base for our policymaking,

he said. The Finance Division, Government of Pakistan has been striving to enhance transparency of fiscal and budgetary initiatives and in this regard, many important documents are now made available to everyone on Finance Division's website. "We have been regularly sharing the budgetary documents and Economic Survey of Pakistan every year." In addition, information is made available on budget execution through the fiscal operations data which is updated on quarterly basis. The Finance Division also disseminates information on various aspects of fiscal policy through publication of various reports on its website; Public Debt Bulletin, Medium Term Debt Management Strategy and Medium-Term Budget Strategy Paper, he

said. He said that in the recent past, the Economic Adviser's Wing has been publishing economic forecasts through Monthly Economic Update and Outlook report. The state minister said that these forecasts were produced through a macro forecasting model developed in the Finance Division and these forecasts were beneficial for various segments of the economy such as businesses, banks, multilateral institutions and provincial governments in the country. Looking ahead, the potential for this platform is immense. The government continues to expand its capabilities, we envision a future where the Pakistan Economy Dashboard evolves into a central hub for all economic activities in the country.—APP

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### OCTOBER

- Oct 01/China National Day
- Oct 01/Cyprus National Day
- Oct 01/Republic of Korea Armed Forces Day
- Oct 01/Nigeria Armed Forces Day
- Oct 02/Guinea National Day
- Oct 03/Germany Unification Day
- Oct 03/Republic of Korea National Foundation Day
- Oct 05/Indonesia Armed Forces Day
- Oct 06/Egypt Armed Forces Day
- Oct 09/Uganda Independence Day
- Oct 12/Spain National Day
- Oct 23/Hungary National Day
- October 24/United Nations United Nations Day
- Oct 25/Romania Armed Forces Day
- Oct 26/Austria National Day
- Oct 27/Turkmenistan Independence Day
- Oct 28/Czech Republic National Day
- Oct 29/Turkey Republic Day

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Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16  
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& Rescue Services.4451122  
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RGH.....9290301-7  
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Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
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### Water Tank

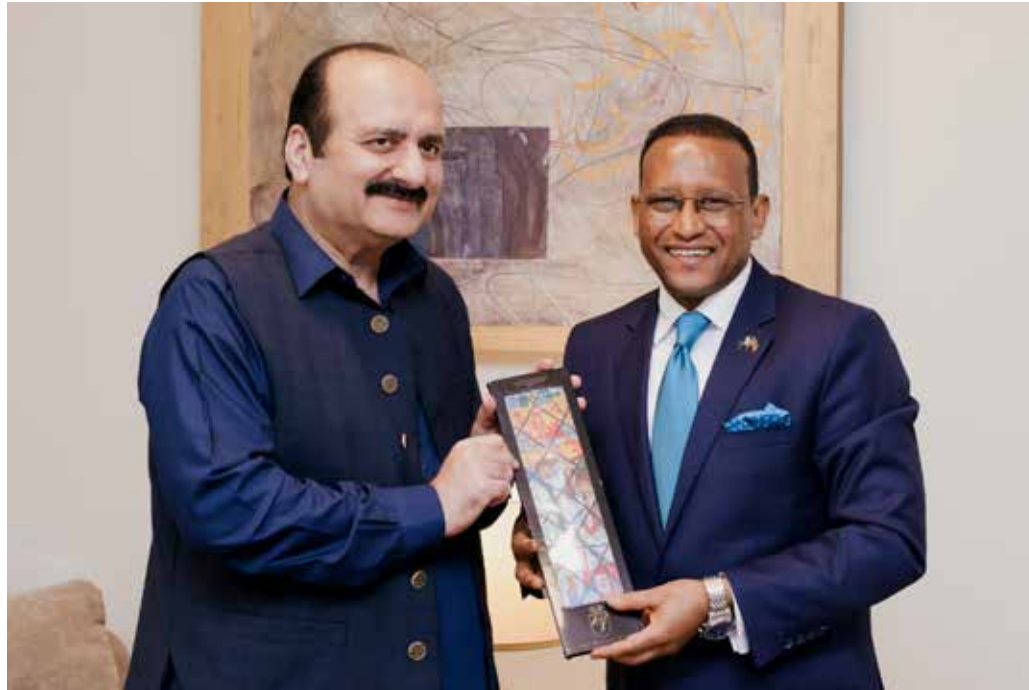
Islamabad.....0321-5744480

## Ethiopia, Pak discuss promotion of people-to-people contacts

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Wednesday discussed potential areas to further promote people-to-people relations between the two countries, especially by exchanging delegations of youth leaders.

The discussion to this end took place during a meeting between H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDR Ethiopia to Pakistan and H.E. Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister of Pakistan's Youth Programme. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest including bilateral collaboration to empower youth of both the countries, mainly by imparting trainings, education and skills in modern technologies. H.E. Ambassador Dr. Jemal Beker said both the countries have young population which needed to be equipped with modern technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and others to build the effective



workforce which would eventually increase productivity for achieving faster economic growth. He said Ethiopia and Pakistan, both could learn from each other experiences and share best practices

to empower the youth in both the countries. The Ambassador informed the Chairman Youth Programme about the home-grown economic reforms 2.0 which was undertaken by the Government

of the FDR Ethiopia following the success of its first phase that has corrected macroeconomic imbalances, increased Ethiopia's productivity and attracted the foreign direct investment. There is

a huge potential in Africa for the IT services, the Ambassador said, while urging the Pakistani entrepreneurs to participate in the Single Country Exhibition being held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2025. The Ambassador said Ethiopia has been playing key role in the Look Africa and Engage Africa policy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan especially by launching the Ethiopian Airlines operations in Karachi which has given a major boost to the people-to-people and business-to-business relations between the two countries. The Chairman of the Youth Programme acknowledged the Ethiopian Airlines' role in connecting Pakistan with the African continent of more than 1.4 billion people. H.E. Rana Mashhood said he is deeply impressed by the socio-economic development in Ethiopia under the leadership of H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of the FDR Ethiopia. He said the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is looking forward to strengthen bilateral relations with the FDR Ethiopia, and would like to collaborate with Ethiopia for empowering youth of both the countries.

## Prohibition of gatherings Section 144, Peaceful Assembly Act enforced in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) authorities have enforced Section 144 and the Peaceful Assembly Act across the capital, prohibiting gatherings and processions in restricted areas as part of tightened security measures. According to a police statement, the high-security zone, red zone, and surrounding areas have been designated as restricted, with strict enforcement of the law. He said that the ICT Police are committed to safeguarding the lives and property of citizens. He said anyone involved in illegal activities will be held accountable. He said that citizens are requested not to engage in any unlawful gatherings. He further stated that legal action will be taken against those who attempt to disturb peace and order. Citizens are advised to report any emergencies by dialing 15.-APP

## Pakistan needs tapping resources to gain opportunities amid Saudi rise

DNA

ISLAMABAD:Senior journalist and film-maker, Amna Khaishgi Wednesday said Pakistan is in need of tapping its immense resource-bases at home and abroad, and it has to gradually adjust to the realities and opportunities that Saudi Arabia has for it amid the latter's rise in the region as a key player. She was addressing the Distinguished Lecture Series at Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), on the topic titled, "The MBS Effect: Transforming South Asia's Geodynamics", a news release said. Khaish-

gi eulogised Muhammad Bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom, and opined that he is out to influence the region and the world with his pragmatic and far-sighted policies. She recalled the rise of MBS and pointed out as to how astutely and courageously he has impacted on the domestic mosaic of a conservative society, and made inroads in the region and beyond. She said that staying away from Abraham Accord, as the UAE and other Gulf States recognised the Jewish State, was a masterstroke of his diplomacy, and goes on to hint that he has a bigger plan for the region which might see the resolution of Palestinian dispute.

Amna Khaishgi elucidated as to how India and Saudi Arabia are emerging as the strategic partners, and how Riyadh sees its ties with China in the long run. She stressed that unfortunately Pakistan has not been able to cajole its priorities with the Kingdom, and the latter too does not see it more important than a country sending in millions of people for religious tourism. She was sceptical of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts and lobbying in Saudi Arabia, and stressed for a better deal to keep in relevance with changing geo-economic realities. She said that the troika of China and India for Saudi Arabia is Muhammad Bin Salman's brainchild, and he

has greater plans of amalgamation and cooperation. This, she said, makes the US a secondary power in the region. She also pointed out that Iran and Saudi Arabia are moving towards rapprochement, and could turn the tables in the region by emerging as a great Muslim bloc. She called on Pakistan to watch its steps and reorder its priorities by befriending the great leadership of MBS. President IPRI Dr Amb. Raza Muhammad laid out the salient features of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relationship, and termed it as multi-dimensional. He said both are linked in a cobweb of religion, economic and enjoy greater confidence in strategic muscles too.

## Pak, Denmark sign MOU for restructuring Maritime sector

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh on Wednesday signed the memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the behalf of Pakistani government and Denmark's Minister for Industry, Business and Financial Affairs Morten Boddok from the Danish government. Denmark's Ambassador to Pakistan Jacob Linulf presented the signed document of Danish Minister in this ceremony, said a press release. After this MOU, Maersk (Danish Shipping Company) was ready to invest almost two billion dollars in Pakistan's maritime sector. Minister for Finance Mohammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal, Minister for Industries Rana Tanveer, Additional Secretary Maritime Affairs Umar Zafar Sheikh and Secretary SIFC Jameel Qureshi were also present in this MOU signing ceremony. On this occasion, Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh said that we are extremely thankful to the Government of Denmark on this remarkable breakthrough in maritime sector. He further added that as results of this memorandum ministry could integrated logistics hubs in all ports, establish deep water container terminal in Karachi, create International Maritime Organization (IMO) and European Union (EU)-compliant ship recycling facilities in Gaddani, assist Pakistan Marine Academy to upgrade curriculum and equipment, and provide continuous technical and training assistance to Pakistani ports. The minister said that Maersk has the highest market share of 20 percent for containerized imports and exports in Pakistan. Apart from that, the global market capital of this company is around 175 billion Danish Krone. He further said that Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Denmark's Government was continuously working from last six months to reach at fruitful conclusion. The Danish Ambassador to Pakistan Jakob Linulf also thanked the Government of Pakistan and Minister for Maritime Affairs on this progress. Both sides were willing to strengthen ties for the growth of maritime sector.-DNA

## Innovative technologies pivotal for enhancing trade: Ayaz

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Wednesday said that Pakistan can achieve higher business standards by adopting new technologies and upgrading modern equipment. He emphasized that embracing innovative technologies would create opportunities for growth in trade and business. "Socio-economic stability is closely linked to encouraging investment and trade opportunities," he added. He expressed these views while inaugurating a new Grain Storage Silo in Rawalpindi. MNA Ispahanyar M. Bhandara was also present on the occasion. The Speaker also commended the Pakistani business community for adopting modern technology for promoting industries and businesses within the country. Ayaz Sadiq also said that the National Assembly has been working to create a conducive environment for businesses through positive legislation, fostering further opportunities for growth.-APP

## Workshop on cybersecurity landscape in OIC countries

ISLAMABAD :The OIC-COMSTEC and Huawei Technologies will jointly hold an international workshop on the "Cybersecurity Landscape in OIC Countries: Issues and Prospects" in Islamabad from December 16-18, in hybrid mode. Cybersecurity has become a crucial component for the stability and security of nations in an era of rapid digital transformation. With increasing reliance on digital infrastructure, OIC countries face unique challenges in protecting their data, networks, and critical systems from cyber threats. According to COMSTEC, the workshop is aimed at providing a platform for stakeholders from OIC Member States, including experts, policymakers, and industry leaders, to discuss current cybersecurity challenges, share best practices, and develop strategies for mitigating risks and fostering collaboration. Through expert-led discussions, participants will explore opportunities to build resilient cybersecurity frameworks that adapt to the evolving threat landscape, ultimately strengthening the collective cybersecurity posture of OIC countries and ensuring a safer digital future. The topics to be covered during the workshop include Introduction to Cybersecurity, Cybersecurity Landscape in OIC Member States, Cyber Threat Landscape and Defense Mechanisms, Cybersecurity Policies, Regulations, and Infrastructure Protection, Cybersecurity in Government, Academia, and Industry, Emerging Technologies, Data Privacy, and Workforce Development and Specialized Cybersecurity Areas and Practical Implementation. This workshop offers an ideal opportunity for cybersecurity professionals, policymakers, researchers, industry leaders, startups, academicians, students, and representatives from international organizations to collaborate and learn from each other. The applicants registering to attend the workshop must be relevant to the field of cybersecurity.-APP

## Police conduct grand search,combing operation

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police conducted a grand search and combing operation in various areas across the district, involving a heavy contingent of police under

the supervision of Zonal Superintendents of Police (SPs). Under the special directions of Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the ICT Police has intensified its crackdown on criminal elements to eliminate crime from the city, a police spokesman told APP on Wednesday. In this regard, the Lady Police Force also participated in the operation. Before the operation, Zonal SPs briefed the personnel on the mission's objectives. He said during the operation, police checked 1,440 suspicious individuals, along with 734 households, hotels, and motels. The search led to the arrest of seven criminal elements.-APP

## Naqvi reviews preparations of SCO Summit

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chaired a high-level meeting at the Ministry of Interior regarding the preparations of upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit. The meeting was attended by top officials, including the Federal Secretary Interior, Additional Secretaries, Chief Commissioner Islamabad, IG Police Islamabad, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Deputy Commander FC, Sector Commander Pakistan Rangers, and representatives from security agencies. During the meeting, security arrangements for the SCO Summit were reviewed in detail. The Interior Minister approved a comprehensive plan to ensure foolproof security during the sum-

mit. He emphasized the significance of hosting the SCO Summit in Pakistan, stating that several heads of state will attend. He called it an honor for the entire nation. He stated that special arrangements for beautification and cleanliness of Islamabad will be made on the occasion of the SCO Conference. The Interior Minister stated that in order to ensure foolproof security, additional personnel from Pakistan Army, Rangers, FC, and Punjab Police will be deployed. He underscored that all relevant departments should play their assigned role with mutual cooperation. He added that we all have to ensure the peaceful and successful conduct of this summit through mutual cooperation. Earlier, Federal Minister

## PTI's agitative politics to cost dearly to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: PTI founding member Akbar S. Babar on Wednesday said that Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) resorted to politics of commotion and anarchy adding that such agitative politics would cost dearly to Pakistan. Talking to journalists outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) here, he said that establishing the writ of the State was the prime responsibility of the government. He said that PTI staged a fake drama on March 3 to hold the intra-party election. He said that he had challenged the PTI intra-party elections in ECP on March 5. Barister Gohar was the self-proclaimed chairman of PTI, he added. Babar said that there was a complete fiefdom in PTI and everyone was engaged in a power struggle. He alleged that Adiyala Jail looked like a camp office of PTI adding that Imran Khan was enjoying every facility inside the jail. Whether the other prisoners also have the same facilities inside the jail, he questioned.-APP



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## Briefs

## Police arrest 5 with illegal arms

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested five illegal arms holders and recovered arms and ammunition from their possessions during a crackdown. According to police spokesman, Bani, New Town, Naseerabad, R.A.Bazar and Saddar Wah police rounded up five illegal weapon holders namely Ethesham, Rizwan, Qasim, Ahsan Abbas and Zubair and recovered five 30 bore pistols and ammunition from their possessions. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. Divisional Superintendents of Police commended police teams and instructed to take strict action against those carrying illegal weapons.—APP

## Dastgir vows to address concerns of all parties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Khurram Dastgir has promised to make changes to the country's constitution in agreement with all political parties and concerns of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman will be addressed as a top priority. By engaging with all stakeholders and addressing their reservations, the PML-N leader aims to create a more inclusive and collaborative political environment, he said while talking to private news channel. Khurram highlights the importance of Maulana Fazlur Rehman's involvement in the constitutional amendment process, adding, his ability to bring changes to the amendments will likely contribute to a more unified approach, fostering collaboration and consensus among political parties. Khurram emphasized the pivotal role of Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif in shaping Pakistan's national affairs, asserting that their wise decision-making will contribute to the country's betterment. He highlighted their extensive experience in governance, citing Nawaz Sharif's three terms as Prime Minister and Shahbaz Sharif's tenure as Chief Minister of Punjab. Khurram noted that Shahbaz Sharif's leadership as Chief Minister of Punjab from 2008-2018 was marked by notable development projects, improved education and anti-corruption efforts.—APP

## Pakistani delegation to attend int'l conference

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani delegation will attend the International Conference on 'Productivity Gain sharing for Rural Development' in Laos People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) from October 2 to 3, 2024. The event brings together global experts to discuss innovative strategies for fostering rural development through productivity gain sharing, said a NPO news release here on Wednesday. A 10 member's Pakistani delegation, composed of professionals from diverse fields, is expected to make significant contributions to the discussions. Pakistan's team, comprising National Productivity Organization (NPO) and academic representatives, will share insights on integrating public sector strategies, expertise, and sustainability efforts. The conference focuses on productivity gain sharing techniques, particularly in rural sectors, aimed at improving living standards, ensuring economic stability, and fostering sustainable development. This participation underscores Pakistan's commitment to advancing rural development in line with global best practices.



ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Pakistan Baitul Maal Zamurad Khan presenting a shield to religious scholar Dr. Zakir Naik during a function held at the Islamabad Serena Hotel.—DNA

## Dr. Faisal calls for awareness campaigns to curb Malaria

Preventing mosquito bites is the most effective way to avoid contracting Chikungunya, Dengue, and Malaria, adding, wearing protective clothing, applying insect repellents and ensuring windows and doors have proper screens to keep mosquitoes out

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: With the number of Chikungunya, Dengue and Malaria cases escalating, Dr. Faisal Mehmood a leading health specialist, emphasized the critical role of public education and mosquito control measures in mitigating the threat posed by these viral diseases. To a Private news channel, Dr. Faisal Mehmood stressed that early detection is crucial in managing mosquito-borne diseases. Dr. Mehmood advises individuals to seek medical attention immediately if they experience symptoms

such as fever, joint pain, or rashes after a mosquito bite. He said preventing mosquito bites is the most effective way to avoid contracting Chikungunya, Dengue, and Malaria, adding, wearing protective clothing, applying insect repellents and ensuring windows and doors have proper screens to keep mosquitoes out. Dr. Mehmood stresses the importance of eliminating mosquito breeding sites around homes and communities. He advises regularly checking and removing standing water from flowerpots, tires and other containers as these are prime breeding areas for mosquitoes.

Dr. Mehmood advocates for community-led initiatives, public education campaigns and inter-sectoral collaboration to promote preventive measures and encourage community participation. Responding to a query, he said both Dengue and Chikungunya are mosquito-borne diseases, they have distinct clinical presentations and epidemiological characteristics. "Understanding these differences is crucial for accurate diagnosis and effective management," he added. "Chikungunya is characterized by sudden onset of fever, debilitating joint pain and swelling, headache, and rash. Dr.

Mehmood said the joint pain can persist for months or even years, earning it the nickname 'break-bone fever', he highlighted. "The main differences between Dengue and Chikungunya lie in their clinical manifestations," Dr. Mehmood highlighted. "Dengue typically presents with severe bleeding manifestations, while Chikungunya is characterized by persistent joint pain," he added. "Diagnosing these diseases can be challenging due to overlapping symptoms." Dr. Mehmood cautioned. "Accurate diagnosis requires laboratory confirmation through molecular

tests or serology." "While there is no specific treatment for Dengue or Chikungunya, supportive care and symptom management are crucial," Dr. Mehmood emphasized. "Rest, hydration, and pain management are essential for alleviating symptoms and preventing complications." "Prevention remains the cornerstone of controlling these diseases," Dr. Mehmood stressed. "Vector control measures, public awareness and personal protective equipment are essential in reducing the transmission of Dengue and Chikungunya," he added.

## PSS comes in action at Gwadar Port

With an estimated cost of Rs 3,325.6 million, the Gwadar Safe City Project is being executed by the Ministry of Homes and Tribal Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology under the Government of Balochistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, the Perimeter Security System (PSS), with the installation of 675 high-tech security cameras, has been put into full operation in the jurisdiction of the Gwadar Port area. With this significant move, the Perimeter Security System, costing Rs 252.350 million, has instilled a sense of heightened security coverage for Gwadar Port, allied infrastructures, buildings of Gwadar Port Authority (GPA), Gwadar Free Zone South, and Gwadar Free Zone North. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, the PSS is a built-in multipurpose system that detects threats, performs surveillance, and analyzes attack

patterns, installed with the objective of ensuring a safe and secure environment in Gwadar Port and the adjoining Free Zone. Chairman GPA Passand Khan said that after the installation of the modern security system, the entry and exit of goods and services have been facilitated. PA Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch appreciated this noble initiative and further invited domestic and foreign investors to invest in Gwadar, applauding the efforts of the port operator in ensuring the security of Gwadar Port. Jahangir Sabir, a local travel agent in Gwadar, said that the security system is the need of the hour, keeping in view Gwadar's economic output. The PSS is an insurance policy for upcoming development, the tourism industry, hotel industry, recreational sites, and large shopping plazas," he added. Meanwhile, the Government of Balochistan is also working on the Gwadar Safe City Project. Phase I of the project has seen substantial progress with the establishment of the Project Management Unit (PMU) and the submission of technical and financial feasibility reports, in compliance with the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan 2025. With an estimated cost of Rs 3,325.6 million, the Gwadar Safe City Project is being executed by the Ministry of Homes and Tribal Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology under the Government of Balochistan.

## Ahsan assures bright economic future for Pakistan

"Collective wisdom and collaborative effort are key to unlocking Pakistan's true potential for progress," he added

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal reassured that the government is dedicated to addressing structural bottlenecks, leveraging reforms in education, healthcare, and development projects to catalyze Pakistan's transition into a robust, export-driven economy. Minister talking to the PTV news channel expressed confidence in the party's ability to secure a brighter economic future for Pakistan. Ahsan Iqbal reaffirmed the government's unwavering commitment

to steer Pakistan out of its economic challenges, pledging to implement transformative structural reforms and provide vital facilities to empower the nation's citizens, thereby fostering a resilient, diversified, and inclusive economy that drives growth, stability and improved living standards for all. The minister emphasized the need for accessible, high-quality education and vocational training, enabling the youth to develop into a highly skilled workforce. Minister Ahsan Iqbal also

appealed to the nation to unite in supporting the government's economic agenda through timely tax payments. "Collective wisdom and collaborative effort are key to unlocking Pakistan's true potential for progress," he added. He further said instead of criticizing each other, let us converge on our targets. Responding to a question, he said by focusing on the welfare of the common man, political parties can restore public trust and demonstrate their commitment to democratic values.

## RCCI newly elected body sworn in

RAWALPINDI: The oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office bearers and executive members of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) for the term 2024-2026 was held at a local hotel in which the newly elected body took oath of office. Usman Shaikat was sworn in as the President of RCCI, Khalid Farooq Qazi assumed office as the Senior Vice President and Fahad Barlas was appointed as the Vice President. The oath was administered by Sohail Altaf, who congratulated the newly elected officials and executive members on their successful election. Sohail Altaf, Group Leader of RCCI, appreciated the commendable efforts of the outgoing team and extended a warm welcome to the newly elected members. He emphasized the critical role the Chamber plays in supporting the business community and expressed confidence in the new leadership's ability to take RCCI to greater heights.—APP

## Franklin Covey trains HEC officers

ISLAMABAD: HEC's National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) has organized a Professional Development Program entitled "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" in collaboration with Franklin Covey which is the world leader in helping organizations achieve results that require lasting changes in human behavior, often the most difficult challenge any organization faces. to the HEC, a group of 20 deputy directors from different HEC divisions attended the day-long programme, aimed to enhance their skills and knowledge. Nabila Kamrani of the Franklin Covey was the resource person who elaborated the effectiveness of these habits for personal and professional development. Mr. Sulaiman Ahmad, NAHE was the chief guest in the closing ceremony. He said that NAHE has planned various customized trainings for all HEC employees. He hoped that the program will help HEC officers in carrying out their responsibilities in a more effective manner. He thanked the resource person for chalking out and delivering a customized program for the participants. It is worth mentioning here that Franklin Covey based in Salt Lake City, Utah, is a coaching company which provides training and assessment services in the areas of leadership, individual effectiveness, and business execution for organizations and individuals.—APP

## Rana for stern action against PTI's tactics

ISLAMABAD: Rana Sanaulah, a key Advisor to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and prominent PML-N leader Wednesday condemning PTI's undemocratic tactics said action would be taken against those seeking to unleash chaos, intolerance and violence to disrupt the nation's peace. Talking to a Private news channel, he warned that the government is committed to maintaining law and order and will not hesitate to take strict action against PTI's attempts to create chaos and anarchy. He emphasized that PTI's undemocratic tactics will not be tolerated and that the government will ensure the nation's peace and stability are upheld. Rana Sanaulah has strongly criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for its undemocratic attitude, stating that they are unwilling to engage.—APP



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## Unlocking AI's potential

LIKE the steam engine and electricity, artificial intelligence (AI) is a transformative, foundational technology. If developed to its full potential, AI can create opportunities for people around the world, enable businesses small and large, power economic growth, advance science and help humanity make significant strides towards achieving the United Nations sustainable development goals. But realising AI's potential requires addressing the risks, complexities and inequities that limit access to its benefits. First, we must rethink our approaches to global cooperation and governance. Too many countries are left out of key policy discussions. As we show in a new report, a sample of major non-UN international AI governance efforts found that only seven countries have participated in every one, while 118 countries – primarily in the Global South – have not been included. The international community can and must do better. Over the past year, we have co-chaired the UN secretary general's high-level advisory body on AI, a group of 39 individuals from government, civil society, the private sector and academia representing a wide range of regions, genders, age groups and disciplines. We developed a set of principles and recommendations for international AI governance, aiming to ensure the technology serves the public interest by grounding it in human rights and international law. To engage diverse perspectives and voices, we involved more than 2,000 participants from every region, consulted more than 1,000 experts, reviewed 250 written submissions and held more than 100 virtual discussions. We believe this moment presents a unique opportunity for the international community to lay the foundation to harness the potential of AI, address key governance shortcomings and capacity gaps in its development, deployment and use, and enable a more equitable AI ecosystem. Our report offers seven concrete recommendations for fostering global cooperation, closing governance gaps and creating mechanisms to enable all countries to benefit from advances in the technology. AI's technical and social trajectory remains the subject of fierce debate, even among experts. This makes sense, given AI is in its early stages, with its capabilities, applications and uses evolving rapidly. But uncertainty should not lead to inaction. Instead, it underscores the need for guardrails that can evolve with the technology and our understanding of it. Governance efforts must therefore be rooted in both technical expertise and global perspectives. With this in mind, our first recommendation is to establish a truly international scientific panel on AI. This panel would work with global organisations and initiatives to collect, analyse and promote research, and publish an annual report on AI-related capabilities, opportunities, risks and uncertainties. By highlighting areas of agreement and identifying topics that require further study, the report could enhance transparency and inform policy debates and decision-making. The panel could also conduct focused investigations into specific issues, such as how AI could be used to discover new materials or treat neglected diseases. In addition to knowledge-sharing, many countries need better access to essential AI resources like computational power, inclusive and representative training data sets, skilled talent and a global data framework. We recommend establishing a global AI fund to support data sharing, build digital infrastructure, nurture local AI ecosystems and foster entrepreneurship.



## UN must give middle powers greater say

AS the new 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly opened last week, its member states faced a dark and gloomy global context amid the UN's own waning credibility. When the UN was set up towards the end of World War II, its key purpose was to prevent global wars. Its member states were supposed to achieve this through both peaceful dialogue as well as coercive measures against renegade states. Decades later, amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Israel's war in Gaza, there are concerns the UN has lost its ability to prevent or even deter states from invading each other. In the past few days, both wars have escalated and broadened. Last week, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a warning that his country would use nuclear weapons if it was struck by conventional missiles. Meanwhile, fears of a region-wide war in the Middle East were sparked when an Israeli air strike killed Hassan Nasrallah, the chief of the Iran-backed militia Hezbollah. Amid the fighting, the UN's own personnel have also become targets. Last year marked the deadliest year on record for humanitarian workers worldwide. Since last October, more than 280 aid workers have been killed in Gaza alone, many of them staff members of the UN agency helping Palestinian refugees in Gaza and elsewhere in the Middle East. Similar violence has been directed against humanitarian workers in Ukraine. Yet despite the mounting casualties, world powers have been unable to come together to take action. In the aftermath of the Cold War, US influence often helped cobble together consensus at the UN Security Council. That era came to an end following the US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, which left the leadership of the UN heavily diluted. Consequently, the use of the veto by members of the Security Council has risen in the past 10 years as world powers have prioritised their narrow geopolitical interests over international norms. Between January 2022 and April 2024, permanent council members used their veto 18 times. For context, the veto has been used 320 times since the UN's inception. Emerging middle powers have added to this complex interplay of narrow national interests. Countries such as India, Brazil and South Africa have argued for years that multilateral institutions have failed the world by excluding large parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America from decision-making. In recent years, cut off from diplomatic negotiations over global wars, these countries have ended up undermining those efforts while trying to protect their own narrow interests in a volatile world. In Ukraine, for instance, middle powers from the Global South have undercut the West's efforts to bring Russia to the negotiating table by bypassing sanctions. India's imports of oil from Russia have ballooned since the start of the invasion, and in July it overtook China to become the world's biggest importer of Russian oil. South Africa has similarly maintained military and economic ties with Russia despite an initial condemnation of Moscow's invasion. In the Middle East, Washington's efforts to press Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to strike a deal have been thwarted. This is another sign of diluted leverage.

## Middle East dynamics and future of US foreign policy

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Regarding U.S.-Iran relations, Trump's approach is expected to be more confrontational, relying on sanctions and economic pressure rather than military force. He has suggested the possibility of negotiating with Tehran, but only on terms favorable to the U.S. The election of a reformist president in Iran may open the door to such negotiations, although it remains unclear whether Iran can endure another four years of stringent U.S. sanctions. While Republicans and Democrats differ in their methods of addressing Iran's nuclear program...

AS the U.S. presidential election approaches, the United States confronts several pressing economic, social, and political challenges that will critically shape the outcome of the contest between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. Persistent inflation, the widening wealth inequality, and deeply polarized opinions on immigration and border policies have emerged as key domestic concerns influencing the electorate. Beyond these internal matters, however, the election will also carry significant consequences for U.S. foreign policy. The predominant foreign policy issue in this election is the intensifying economic rivalry with China, coupled with the escalating tensions in the South China Sea, a vital maritime route through which approximately one-third of global trade passes. Additional priorities include the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Hamas war, with its broader regional implications. While the divide between the Republican and Democratic stances on the Ukraine war may be irreconcilable, their differences concerning the Middle East, particularly regarding the Gaza conflict, are relatively minor. Both candidates are expected to prioritize U.S. strategic interests in the region while minimizing deep involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. Five enduring principles guide U.S. policy toward the Middle East. The first is the unwavering commitment to Israel's security and ensuring its military superiority in the region. This is evident in the advanced military technologies provided to Israel compared to the comparatively less sophisticated equipment supplied to other states. The second principle pertains to safeguarding the flow of oil through strategic waterways, notably the Straits of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, ensuring uninterrupted access to global markets. U.S. involvement in this area is designed to counter potential threats from Iran to disrupt navigation in the Persian Gulf or from Houthi forces to block the Red Sea. The third principle is the prevention of external powers, particularly Russia and China, from exerting dominance over Middle Eastern political affairs, a priority well understood by the region's leadership. Fourth, the U.S. remains steadfast in its commitment to nuclear nonproliferation, working to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. The final guiding principle is the ongoing effort to combat terrorism, a key aspect of U.S. foreign policy. Despite these constants, the U.S. has recognized the complexities of Middle Eastern politics and the limitations of its influence. This understanding stems from the failures following the 2003 Iraq invasion, where heavy investments in democratization and reconstruction did not yield the intended outcomes. As a result, U.S. interest in the region has diminished over time, a trend that began with the Obama administration's strategic "pivot to Asia." Moreover, the concerns of the American electorate, with the exception of Arab and Muslim Americans, remain largely disconnected from Middle Eastern issues. While the Gaza

conflict may capture significant media and activist attention, it does not reflect the priorities of most U.S. voters, who are more concerned with domestic issues. If Donald Trump secures the presidency, his foreign policy is expected to emphasize the "America First" doctrine, characterized by a preference for signing trade agreements, a reluctance to engage in military interventions abroad, and a reduction of international commitments, including to NATO. In the Middle East, Trump has shown minimal interest in addressing the ongoing crises in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, focusing instead on domestic challenges. Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he has displayed little support for a two-state solution, preferring instead to pursue quick, often impractical solutions. A key focus of Trump's Middle East policy will likely be normalizing relations between Israel and its neighboring countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. In 2020, Trump facilitated similar agreements between Israel and several Gulf states. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman has expressed willingness to sign a peace treaty with Israel, even without a commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state. However, the finalization of such a treaty may be delayed until after the U.S. election, as both bin Salman and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may prefer credit for the deal to go to Trump rather than to Kamala Harris. Trump might also consider formalizing a defense treaty with Saudi Arabia to encourage peace with Israel, though this would face significant challenges, including securing the support of two-thirds of the U.S. Senate. Once an agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia is reached, Trump would likely pressure other Gulf states, such as Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman, to follow suit. Regarding U.S.-Iran relations, Trump's approach is expected to be more confrontational, relying on sanctions and economic pressure rather than military force. He has suggested the possibility of negotiating with Tehran, but only on terms favorable to the U.S. The election of a reformist president in Iran may open the door to such negotiations, although it remains unclear whether Iran can endure another four years of stringent U.S. sanctions. While Republicans and Democrats differ in their methods of addressing Iran's nuclear program and regional influence, the core U.S. position remains consistent. Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 set the tone for future relations, and although Joe Biden had promised to restore the agreement, negotiations during his presidency failed to produce results, leaving Trump-era sanctions in place. On the Democratic side, congressional candidates have generally supported Israel but have adopted a more nuanced stance, emphasizing human rights, the plight of Gaza's civilians, and the need for a two-state solution. This contrasts with Republican candidates, who offer unconditional support to Israel, bolstered by the influence of right-wing Christian groups. The Democratic base, however, is divided, with younger, non-white voters expressing more sympathy for the Palestinian cause, while old-

er white voters remain staunchly pro-Israel. Despite growing criticism of Israeli actions, particularly in Gaza, Democratic Party leaders have refrained from extreme positions due to the mainstream unpopularity of anti-Israel views. Kamala Harris, if elected, will likely adhere to core Democratic principles such as defending democratic values, promoting human rights, and strengthening alliances, especially with NATO. Her foreign policy will also focus on confronting global challenges such as climate change, nuclear proliferation, and Russian aggression in Ukraine, as well as curbing Chinese influence in the Pacific. While she has largely avoided addressing Middle Eastern policy during her time as vice president, Harris may be compelled to engage more actively with the region's complexities if she assumes the presidency. Although U.S. support for Israel is unlikely to change drastically, Harris has shown signs of diverging slightly from Biden, such as her call for a ceasefire in Gaza and her decision to boycott Netanyahu's speech before Congress. In terms of U.S.-Saudi relations, Harris has historically been critical of U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia and its involvement in the Yemen conflict. In 2020, she advocated for a reevaluation of U.S.-Saudi relations to ensure they align with American values and interests, though she did not specify what those values were. Nevertheless, her administration would likely continue efforts to strengthen security cooperation with Saudi Arabia and pursue collaboration on technological and green energy initiatives. Regarding Iran, Harris would likely adopt a balanced approach, seeking to renegotiate the nuclear deal, particularly in light of escalating tensions between Iran and Israel. The limitations of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East are well understood within the region. Middle Eastern leaders recognize that while the U.S. is committed to combating terrorism and ensuring open sea lanes for trade, it is less inclined to involve itself in regional conflicts that do not directly affect American interests. For example, despite President Obama's warning to Syrian President Bashar Assad not to use chemical weapons against his own people, the U.S. refrained from military intervention when Assad's forces used sarin gas in 2012. Similarly, Trump's decision not to retaliate after Houthi attacks on Saudi oil installations in 2019 signaled a limited U.S. commitment to defending Saudi interests when the impact on U.S. oil imports was minimal. The United Arab Emirates has also recognized these limitations, signaling that it does not intend to resume talks with the U.S. regarding the purchase of F-35 fighter jets, regardless of the outcome of the election. This reflects a broader understanding that primarily vital national interests, rather than a deeper commitment to regional stability or human rights drive U.S. engagement in the region. The region's authoritarian leaders have thus been able to act with impunity, confident that U.S. involvement will remain limited as long as their actions do not conflict with American strategic interests.

## Addressing the Critical Challenges in Pakistan's University Ecosystem

Dr. Fayaz A. Soomro



The major financial limits placed on Pakistan's universities and degree-awarding institutions by the inadequate budgetary provisions are among the most urgent problems they face. Even with the rising demand for postsecondary education, university funding is still woefully insufficient. Underfunded programs, deteriorating facilities, and a general inability to recruit or keep skilled faculty are the results of this financial...

THE paper "An Effective University Ecosystem" by Muneer Ahmed Mirjat offers a comprehensive analysis of the operational and structural elements required for Pakistan's higher education industry to succeed. Although the author, who is a member of the highest organization, skillfully discusses the value of infrastructure, compliance with rules, and the role of faculty, the article skips over several crucial issues that seriously undermine Pakistan's university system at the moment and indicate the need for inclusive reforms. If these issues are not resolved, there is a good chance that a major chunk of the nation's higher education institutions will face severe issues and may cease to exist. Prior to moving on, there are a few more valid worries that also require a clear-cut solution to ensure the growth and success of Pakistan's higher education industry. The major financial limits placed on Pakistan's universities and degree-awarding institutions by the inadequate budgetary provisions are among the most urgent problems they face. Even with the rising demand for postsecondary education, university funding is still woefully insufficient. Underfunded programs, deteriorating facilities, and a general inability to recruit or keep skilled faculty are the results of this financial stress. Universities are also prevented by a lack of funds from making investments in infrastructure, cutting-edge machinery, and research—all of which are essential to upholding academic standards. Foreign universities generally make significant profits in comparison to global norms, which enables them to expand autonomously without substantially depending on public funding—a problem that developing nations like Pakistan face regularly. In the long run, the higher education sector in Pakistan cannot continue to rely solely on student fees to pay for operating expenses. This reliance on tuition fees restricts access to higher education and feeds inequality, especially for students from low-income families. Furthermore, universities find it difficult to carry out creative projects and programs that would otherwise aid in the development of the country in the absence of sufficient funds. This is true for universities in the private sector; nevertheless, public universities continue to rely on government funding, which is a quite different situation that is resulting in exacerbating the situation. Consequently, Pakistani universities, especially those in the public sector, must retrace their steps to embrace long-term survival strategies by launching crea-

ative projects that align with their areas of expertise. The underutilization of university resources is another serious problem. Majority of universities are only open in the mornings, leaving classrooms, labs, and libraries empty during the rest of the day. In terms of the economy, this is a resource infringement and underutilization. Considering that institutions might use these spaces for evening courses, job training programs, or community outreach projects, this is a glaring inefficiency in resource management. Campuses that close after regular business hours are wasting precious resources that could be used to support community development and lifetime learning. In this sense, a strong mechanism to optimize resource utilization within a triple helix or public-private partnership model must be developed by the HEC, the business sector, and academia. Moreover, there is a worrisome lack of research culture in universities. Although the article stresses the value of research, it does not yet address the structural obstacles that stand in the way of the development of a strong research environment. Nonetheless, a primary cause of this is the dearth of financial support and incentives for scientific inquiry. Faculty members frequently have little time or energy for research because of their demanding teaching schedules and administrative responsibilities. Moreover, a large portion of the current research output is unnecessary or redundant because it is usually unconnected with social issues and industry demands. Another important problem is the gap that exists between academia and business. To make sure that academic programs are in line with commercial demands, universities in Pakistan have not developed significant relationships with the industry. Because of this, graduates frequently discover that they lack the skills necessary to live up to the expectations of employers, which drives up the jobless rate for those with degrees. The exigency of time demands that the universities must immediately start collaborating with industry players to create programs that are both pertinent to and sensitive to the changing demands of the labor market. Due to time constraints, curriculum and syllabi must be developed by establishing corresponding Sector Skills Councils. This will allow experts to use the Delphi Technique to create demand-driven content that will discourage supply-driven syllabi. It has been noted that the current curricula in the field, as compared to the top universities in the world, are out of

date and do not adequately prepare students for careers in today's local and worldwide marketplaces. If prompt action is taken, this important element that contributes to graduates' low employability could also influence the institutions' future. While multidisciplinary studies and cutting-edge subjects like data science, renewable energy, and artificial intelligence are becoming more popular worldwide, but the scenario here in the country is different. A thorough revision of the curricula to include contemporary, demand-driven courses that equip students for the future is the most demanding initiative to get rid of the quality quagmire. Pakistan does, in fact, require demand-driven curricula grounded in practical experience, hands-on actual machinery, labs, and equipment as opposed to theory-based methods. The deficiency of strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems also undermines the efficacy of universities. Many university administrations struggle to put in place efficient M&E procedures, which results in poor performance and a lack of responsibility. To make matters worse, positions like vice chancellor, controller, finance officer, and registrar frequently go unfilled for long periods. The demise of administrative operations brought on by key personnel absences impacts educational quality and overall institutional performance. Auto M&E interventions are required to be generated to improve and gauge the rate of return on the manpower and utilitarian paper of resources. In conclusion, even if the paper "An Effective University Ecosystem" offers insightful analysis of the operational and structural features of universities, it ignores several crucial issues that pose a threat to Pakistan's higher education system's survival. A number of the problems that require immediate attention are budgetary limitations, underutilization of resources, a deficient research culture, and lack of industry participation, out-of-date curricula, and inadequate M&E. A comprehensive and coordinated effort from all stakeholders, including the government, HEC, academic institutions, and business, is needed to address these issues. Then and only then will we have a chance to build a university ecosystem that not only serves the demands of today but also looks ahead. Stakeholders in Pakistan's higher education industry need to respond quickly to the variety of ongoing concernsthrough collective wisdom and strategic policies aimed at sustainability in the sector.

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## Briefs

Nawaz urges  
Imran Khan  
to seek  
forgiveness

FROM PAGE 01  
raised their voice against his ouster from power in 2017. "You never asked that so many good things are taking so why Nawaz Sharif is being removed [from power]," the PML-N chief said adding that proud and dignified nations always raise their voices against any injustice. "Where is the Billion Tree [programme], where are the 350 dams [...] They [PTI] claimed to build 5 million houses. Still, they could not provide a single one," the PML-N president questioned as he accused the Imran Khan-founded party of promoting "violence, bloodshed and politics of protests" in the country. Pointing out the development work carried out in his tenures, the former premier said that his government laid the network of motorways and highways and metro bus services, eliminated terrorism, made Pakistan a nuclear power, overcame energy crisis, ended loadshedding and stabilized the rupee.

PTI to  
protest at  
D-Chowk...

FROM PAGE 01  
CM Gandapur, while addressing the meeting, acknowledged flaws in the planning of their previous protest, which led to an early withdrawal. He stressed the lack of proper protective equipment, such as masks, for workers and leaders during the tear gas shelling. This time, Gandapur assured that well-trained workers and vital machinery would lead the procession to avoid issues. "Unlike last time, the machinery will be ahead of the convoys, ensuring that if roads are blocked, it won't hinder the protest's progress to D-Chowk," he said. He cautioned that this protest may spread over several days.

CJP Qazi  
Faez rejects  
PTI's...

FROM PAGE 01  
Afghan is heard the Supreme Court Bar Association's (SCBA) petition challenging the apex court's previous ruling on the defection clause. The new bench was constituted a day earlier due to Justice Munib Akhtar's "unavailability" for varying reasons. The lawyer's body had moved the apex court against its May 2022 verdict wherein it declared that the votes of dissident members of Parliament (MPs), cast against their parliamentary party's directives, cannot be counted. During today's hearing, PTI lawyer Barrister Zafar argued that the party's founder, who is also a former prime minister, is one of the petitioners, and he needed to consult him on key aspects of the case.

PTI gets  
more time in  
intra-party...

FROM PAGE 01  
the party approached the court to retrieve the intra-party election record from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). The court sought the records, and PTI requested the FIA to provide the record, assuring the court that once received, they would submit copies to the ECP. The PTI chairman said that the party requested the FIA to return the documents, and they expect to retrieve them within 10 days. Gohar urged the ECP to extend the deadline for document submission. The ECP adjourned the case until October 22, providing PTI more time to gather and submit the necessary documents. Speaking to the media outside the ECP office, Barrister Gohar expressed hope that the commission will recognise PTI's intra-party elections. He stated that the elections were conducted as per the ECP's directives and that PTI possesses the records in digital form. He blamed the FIA for seizing the election records from PTI's central office and urged the ECP to direct the agency to return them.

# Alcaraz beats Sinner in dramatic China Open final

## Second seed Alcaraz wins his fourth title of the season



## SPORTS DESK

BEIJING: Carlos Alcaraz came from a set down to edge out world number one Jannik Sinner in a dramatic China Open final. Alcaraz, 21, continued his fine run of form against the Italian and has now won each of their last three encounters after coming through 6-7 (6-8) 6-4 7-6 (7-3). It is the Spaniard's fourth ATP Tour title this year and 16th of his career. "Jannik once again showed he's the best player in the world, he's unbelievable and plays such a high level of tennis," Alcaraz said. "I had my chances in the first set and didn't take it. In general, I'm proud of the way I dealt with the match and managed everything. "I never lose hope but I know he has great stats. I knew I had to give everything I had to give myself the opportunity." Since suffering a shock second-round exit at the US Open, Alcaraz has bounced back to win nine matches in a row, including helping Team Europe win the Laver Cup last month. Alcaraz appeared to be on track for the perfect start when he moved into a 5-2 lead in the opening set, however, Sinner saved two set points to force a tie-break, which he went on to win. The pivotal moment in the second arrived in the ninth game, when Alcaraz seized his opportunity to secure a break before serving out for the set to take it to a decider. There has been little to separate the pair in the early stages of their careers, with their head-to-head record now 6-4 in Alcaraz's favour, and it was another fine example of what the future of tennis has to offer in Beijing. Sinner has made a habit of winning big games over the course of 2024, prevailing in all six of his previous finals - including the Australian Open and US Open - and he found an extra gear to mount another fightback in the final set. Trailing 4-2 in the third, Sinner won three successive games to

wrestle back momentum and send the encounter to a match-deciding tie-break. Sinner looked firmly in control after opening up a 3-0 advantage, but Alcaraz would not be denied. He rattled off seven successive points to claim victory and make it three wins on the bounce against the two-time Grand Slam champion. "During the whole week I've been playing great tennis, some luck went to my side but I felt great on the court too," Alcaraz said. The win means he is the first player to win an ATP 500 title on all three surfaces. Sinner was competing in Beijing after the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) announced on Saturday that it was appealing the decision to clear him of blame after he twice tested positive for a banned substance in March. The 23-year-old returned positive for low levels of a metabolite of clostebol - a steroid that can be used to build muscle mass - during Indian Wells. Wada said last month's ruling by an independent tribunal to find Sinner had no fault or negligence was "not correct under the applicable rules". It has appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas) and said the player should be banned for "between one and two years". Sinner's defence said he was inadvertently contaminated by the banned substance by his physiotherapist, Giacomo Naldi, and when Wada's decision was announced, Sinner said he was "surprised" by the decision to appeal. World number four Novak Djokovic, speaking at a news conference for the Shanghai Masters, called for the issue to be "resolved as soon as possible" and criticised the tennis anti-doping system's "inconsistencies". "I think it's quite obvious that we have a system that is not working well," Djokovic said. "There's way too many inconsistencies, way too many governing bodies involved and this whole case is not helping our sport at all. "Whatever is going to happen at the end of the day, just I wish for it to be resolved as soon as possible."

Bilawal  
affirms...

FROM PAGE 01  
While they can be done later, it may lead to confrontational situations." He further asserted that the PPP would not abandon the matter concerning the constitutional court, vowing to see it through to completion. "We have already faced significant delays; our demands date back to 2006 and are part of our manifesto," he added. Bilawal also criticised the judiciary's timing regarding certain actions, questioning why the timing of the injunction on reserved seats was not being scrutinised. He pointed out that the judiciary's four-page clarification issued on September 14, the day of a parliamentary session, raised questions about the judicial timing. He mentioned that the head of the constitutional court would serve a three-year term and expressed his opposition to the establishment of military courts, emphasising that the justification for the federal constitutional court lies in the Supreme Court's historical precedents.

PTI MPAs  
among 200  
workers...

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In view of the PTI's protest call, Section 144 has been imposed for two days in several divisions, including Bahawalpur, Sahiwal, and Sargodha. The curfew restricts public gatherings and protests, and highways and roads have been blocked using containers to prevent movement. Major routes leading into and out of Bahawalpur were sealed, with containers placed at strategic locations such as Qutubpur Toll Plaza and Mewati in Duniyapur, as well as at the Emphasis Bridge connecting Lodhran and Bahawalpur. Checkposts have been erected on five main highways leading from Lodhran to Bahawalpur. In Mianwali, entry and exit points of the district have also been sealed, cutting the city off from surrounding areas. As part of the government's crackdown, mobile phone services have been suspended in Mianwali, though internet access is available via Wi-Fi and DSL services.

Constitutional  
package...

FROM PAGE 01  
issuance of a notification regarding the appointment of the next top judge. The PML-N, despite having the support of its allies such as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and others, had postponed introducing the constitutional amendments in the parliament while claiming to have secured the "magic number" earlier. However, deferment came after JUI-F refused to lend its support to the ruling coalition, short of 13 votes in the National Assembly and nine in the Senate as the said legislation requires a two-thirds majority in both houses. Speaking on the said matter, Senator Siddiqui said that the issue surrounding the constitutional amendments will be clarified in the next two weeks. The PML-N leader further said that the JUI-F chief backed the formation of constitutional court, however, he said Fazl did not want anything in the proposed judiciary centric constitutional package that is against the Constitution.

Forex  
reserves  
surge to...

FROM PAGE 01  
37-month loan deal under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF), Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmed said on Wednesday. In much-needed support for the country's fiscally-challenged economy, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) received the first tranche of \$1.03 billion (SDR 760 million) on Monday, September 30, 2024. Pakistan had been working on implementing conditions deemed "strict" to complete the loan programme agreed to in July, which Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif time and again hoped would be Pakistan's last. The liquid reserves now stand at \$10 billion, providing much-needed stability to the country's foreign exchange position.

## Haaland on target again in City's 4-0 rout of Slovan

BRATISLAVA: Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan, Phil Foden, Erling Haaland and James McAtee got on the scoresheet as the visitors thrashed Slovan Bratislava 4-0 on Tuesday for the first victory of their Champions League campaign. City, winners of the 2023 Champions League, have four points after two games, having opened this season's campaign with a 0-0 home draw with Inter Milan. Slovan's loss comes on the heels of a 5-1 thrashing by Celtic. "Got to give (Slovan) respect," Foden told TNT Sports. "It was difficult to break them down. The atmosphere was unbelievable. "We did the job at the end and we managed to find the space. On another night there could have been more goals, but we're delighted with the 4-0. After the draw (with Inter) we had to get the win, so we're on the right steps now." The Premier League champions parked themselves in Slovan's half and peppered the home side with shots all night. Gundogan got City on the scoreboard in the eighth minute with his first goal since his return from a season at Barcelona. The German's shot from edge of the penalty area deflected off the leg of Kyriakos Savvidis and into the net. Foden, who scored 27 goals in all competitions last term, doubled City's lead with his first of the season in the 15th minute, latching onto a pass from Jeremy Doku and curling a strike into the bottom corner. Haaland netted his 42nd goal in Europe's top competition in the 58th, sprinting onto Rico Lewis's pass and then stepping around keeper Dominik Takac before slotting into the empty net. Haaland, who has 11 goals this season across all competitions, took a seat on the bench two minutes later, his work done for the night. Foden chipped a pass to McAtee for his first ever City goal in the 74th minute to cap a perfect night for the visitors. "I'm over the moon," said McAtee, who joined City at age 11. "It's what every kid dreams of, so it's a dream come true." - Agencies

## Pakistan Cricket Board accepts Babar's resignation

### National selection committee has been tasked with recommending new captain following Azam's resignation

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has confirmed that Babar Azam tendered his resignation as Pakistan men's white-ball captain on Tuesday evening, and it has been accepted. The national selection committee has been tasked with beginning the process of formulating future white-ball cricket strategies, including recommending a new captain. "Although the PCB had backed Babar Azam as the white-ball captain, his decision to step down reflects his desire to focus more on making a greater impact as a player," the cricket board said in a statement. "This decision is a testament to his professionalism and commitment to Pakistan cricket. He believes that dedicating himself fully to his batting will enable him to play a more decisive role in the team's success

in the shorter formats," the statement added. It further stated: "The PCB acknowledges Babar's contributions as white-ball captain, his ability to prioritise the team's needs and his unwavering dedication to Pakistan cricket. The PCB will continue to support Babar Azam, recognising he still has much to offer both as a world-class batter and a senior statesman of the team." Earlier, Azam, while highlighting his role as the former captain of the Pakistan cricket team, had said: "Playing for Pakistan has always been my greatest honour and I've always placed the team's success above everything else. Stepping down as captain will help me deliver even more for the team as a player and I'm fully committed to that path. The team's success is what matters most." "I've had the privilege of leading Pakistan for five remarkable years, always trying to give my best as both captain and player. At this

stage, I strongly believe I can make a bigger impact by concentrating on my batting. I am grateful for the constant support from my teammates, coaches and the PCB throughout my captaincy," he said. Azam also added: "While it has been a great honour to lead Pakistan, now

is the right time to shift my complete focus on batting, team's objectives during this transitional phase and back the new captain and emerging players as we prepare for a crucial season ahead, including the defense of the ICC Champions Trophy on home soil next year."



## Rizwan 'strongest' captaincy candidate

## DNA

LAHORE: Following Babar Azam's resignation from captaincy of the Pakistan cricket team, right-handed batter and wicket-keeper Mohammad Rizwan is likely to be the "strongest candidate" for the job, sources told Geo News on Wednesday. Relevant officials have been asked to hold consultations with Mohammad Rizwan for team selection, according to the sources. A day earlier, the former Pakistan captain had announced that he was stepping down from white-ball captaincy, as it was time for him to focus on his playing role and personal growth.

## Szczesny joins Barcelona a month after retiring

BARCELONA: Former Arsenal goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny has joined Barcelona until the end of the season, just over a month since he retired. Former Poland international Szczesny, 34, announced his retirement on 27 August after his contract with Juventus was terminated. Barca lost first-choice goalkeeper Marc-Andre terStegen to a serious knee injury in their 5-1 win against Villarreal last month. Szczesny made 181 appearances for Arsenal after joining as a 16-year-old and also spent time at Brentford, Roma and Juventus. He joined Juventus in 2017 and made 252 appearances across seven years in Turin, winning three Serie A titles and three Coppa Italia. The Warsaw-born player won 84 caps for Poland, playing at four European Championships and two World Cups. When he announced his retirement Szczesny said: "Today, though my body still feels ready for challenges, my heart is not there any more. I feel that right now it is time to give all of my attention to my family." Szczesny could make his debut against Alaves in La Liga on Sunday. Barcelona suffered a 4-2 defeat by Osasuna on Saturday but remain top of the table with seven wins from eight games. On Tuesday Hansi Flick's side beat Young Boys 5-0 in the Champions League. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar welcomes the Foreign Minister of Malaysia Dato Seri Utama Haji Mohamad Bin Haji Hasan on his arrival at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

## Southee resigns as New Zealand Test captain

### Top-order batter Tom Latham will be leading Black Caps in upcoming Test series against India

## WEB DESK

AUCKLAND: New Zealand's Tim Southee announced stepping down as red-ball captain after facing a setback against Sri Lanka in a two-Test series. As per sources, wicketkeeper Tom Latham will be leading the team in the forthcoming series against India scheduled to kick off on October 16. While announcing his retirement, the veteran cricketer penned down a heartfelt note, sharing that it was an honour for him to be a Test captain. "Captaining the Black Caps in a format that's so special to me has been an absolute honour and a privilege," Southee said. "I've always tried to put the team first throughout my career, and I believe this decision is the best for the team. Meanwhile, the 35-year-old succeeded Kane Williamson

as Test captain in 2022. Since then, he has participated in 14 tests, winning six of them, drawing two, and losing six of them. Being a right-arm medium-fast bowler, Southee has never been a disappointment for the Black Caps. He has bagged 382 wickets in 102 Tests, placing him second on the New Zealand all-time list behind Richard Hadlee. In addition, under his captaincy, the swing bowler has taken 35 wickets in 14 Tests. He was able to dismiss only two players in the recent Test series against Sri Lanka. Considering the recent series against the Lions, in the first Test the Southee-led team was defeated by 63 runs, while in the second by an innings and 154 runs. Continuing with his conversation, the former skipper revealed that being a captain might affect his performance.

"I believe the way I can best serve the team moving forward is by focusing on my performances on the field and getting back to my best, to continue taking wickets and helping New Zealand win test matches. I will, as I've always done, continue to support my teammates, especially the exciting young bowlers making their way on the international stage." Southee wished Latham well as captain, "and he knows I'll be there to support him on his journey, as he has done for me over the years." The newly appointed captain has acted as an interim captain in nine Tests, when Williamson was suffering from an elbow injury. Along with Tests, the top-order batter has led New Zealand in 44 one-day internationals. Reflecting on Southee's efforts as a captain, Black Caps coach Gary Stead

called him a "true team-man". "Tim's a fantastic player and a very good leader who is held in high regard by the players and support staff," Stead said. "He's been a great servant of New Zealand cricket over nearly 17 years playing on the international stage, and I'd like to acknowledge his humility in stepping down from the role as test captain. "It's not easy giving up something you love, but Tim is a true team-man and he's made the decision with the team's best interests at heart." Meanwhile, the Latham-led side will be facing India in a three-day Test series on October 16 in Bengaluru. India vs New Zealand schedule: Test 1 of 3: October 16 to 20 Test 2 of 3: October 24 to 28 Test 3 of 3: November 1 to 5



## Briefs

### Israel bars UN chief from the country

TEL AVIV: Israel's foreign minister has declared United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "persona non grata" and barred him from entering the country. Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz on Wednesday accused Guterres of failing to "unequivocally" condemn Iran's missile attack on Israel. Israel has persistently complained over the UN's approach throughout its yearlong war in Gaza. "Anyone who cannot unequivocally condemn Iran's heinous attack on Israel, as almost every country in the world has done, does not deserve to step foot on Israeli soil," Katz wrote on X. Warming to his theme, the official accused the UN chief of giving his "backing to terrorists, rapists, and murderers" and branded him "a stain on the history of the UN". Shortly after the attack, Guterres condemned the escalation of violence in the region but made no mention of Iran. The UN chief wrote on Tuesday evening: "I condemn the broadening of the Middle East conflict with escalation after escalation. This must stop. We absolutely need a ceasefire." — Agencies

### IHC cancels hearing on election rigging

#### COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court has canceled the cause list for hearing petitions related to alleged rigging in three constituencies of Islamabad. Justice Tariq Mahmood Jahangiri was scheduled to hear the petitions in the election tribunal on Wednesday. This was set to be the first hearing following the reinstatement of the petitions in Justice Jahangiri's election tribunal. It is noteworthy that PTI candidates Amir Mughal, Ali Bukhari, and Shoaib Shaheen have approached the election tribunal regarding the alleged rigging.

### LHC grants bail to Bhatti

#### DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court has approved the bail of former principal secretary to ex-Chief Minister of Punjab Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Muhammad Khan Bhatti. A two-member bench, led by Justice Shahram Sarwar Chaudhry, heard the alleged corruption reference against Bhatti. The court granted his bail against surety bonds of 10 million rupees. It is important to note that this bail application pertained to a corruption reference related to developmental projects involving Muhammad Khan Bhatti.

### Iran warns US to stay away from conflict

TEHRAN: Iran will respond strongly to any country that takes action in support of the Zionist regime following the Iranian retaliation against the regime, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says. "We will respond strongly to any third party that enters [the conflict] in support of the Zionist regime. And if the Zionist regime decides to respond, our second response will be even harsher," he said on Wednesday. "Anyone who provides their space to their enemies is considered suspicious by us." The Iranian minister congratulated the brave and bold actions of the armed forces and their appropriate response to the Zionist regime's barbarism, describing the operation as an act of self-defense. "Iran only exercised its right to self-defense; a right that exists for all countries under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Our actions were purely defensive and in response to the terrorist actions of the Zionist regime." The Iranian minister said available footage shows Iran has achieved its objectives in the operation, which solely targeted military sites. — Agencies

# Pak-Malaysian think-tanks collaborate to enhance ties

Prof. Dr. Maszlee bin Malik emphasized the significance of cultural diplomacy and highlighted the importance of collaboration between think-tanks in addressing regional and global challenges, enhancing mutual understanding, and advancing Malaysia-Pakistan relations

#### KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's bilateral visit to Pakistan, the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted Pakistan-Malaysia think-tank dialogue with its Malaysian counterpart, the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS). The IAIS delegation was led by H.E. Dr. Maszlee bin Malik, former Minister of Education and Chairman of IAIS. The dialogue focused on Pakistan-Malaysia relations and Pakistan's growing relations with ASEAN. The event culminated with the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ISSI and IAIS, marking steady progress in their partnership aimed at reinforcing different

aspects of Pakistan-Malaysia relations and fostering closer collaboration between the two think-tanks. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood extended a warm welcome to the distinguished delegation, noting that the dialogue marked a significant moment in the evolving relationship between ISSI and IAIS. He expressed appreciation for the first in-person visit, which coincided with the historic visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to Pakistan. He noted the exceptional cordiality of Pakistan-Malaysia relations and Malaysia's steadfast support to the growth and expansion of Pakistan-ASEAN relationship. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood also emphasized the importance of ISSI-IAIS institutional collaboration in reinforcing different aspects of Pakistan-Malaysia

relations and broader policy objectives on both sides; deeper understanding of their respective regions' dynamics through regular mutual dialogue; efforts to combat Islamophobia, and closer people-to-people exchanges. Prof. Dr. Maszlee bin Malik reflected on the deep-rooted historical ties between Malaysia and Pakistan, particularly the strong people-to-people connections that predate the establishment of both countries. He emphasized the significance of cultural diplomacy and highlighted the importance of collaboration between think-tanks in addressing regional and global challenges, enhancing mutual understanding, and advancing Malaysia-Pakistan relations, particularly in the fields of education, IT, AI, and tourism. He expressed optimism for future cooperation,

especially in ASEAN as Malaysia prepares to assume the chairmanship in 2025. Dr. TalatShabbir, Director of the China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at ISSI, highlighted the ISSI's efforts in strengthening Pakistan's ties with ASEAN, including through close collaboration with ACI (ASEAN Committee in Islamabad). He also noted the establishment of "ASEAN Corner" in ISSI Library last year to raise awareness and support for partnership with ASEAN. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG, ISSI highlighted the importance of strengthening Pakistan-Malaysia bilateral relations and advancing collaboration in key areas such as trade, diplomacy and enhancing cooperation on multilateral forums. The event concluded with the exchange of each other's publications and Dr. Maszlee's visit to the ASEAN Corner.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf exchanging views with Marilina Armellini Ambassador of Italy at Naval Headquarters. — DNA

## 14 Israeli soldiers killed in southern Lebanon, sources say

#### NEWS DESK

BEIRUT: At least 14 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the regime's ground aggression in Lebanon, Israeli sources say, a few days after the regime launched a cross-border ground incursion into southern parts of the Arab country. Since the onset of Israel's ground aggression into Lebanon on Tuesday, at least 14 Israeli soldiers have been killed during clashes with Hezbollah fighters with many reported injuries among the invaders, Sky News Arabia, citing unnamed Israeli sources. Furthermore, Israeli Army Radio said that a commando unit faced Hezbollah fighters in a building in a southern Lebanese village, prompting medical rescue teams to respond for the regime's injured soldiers. This is while a statement by the Israeli army claimed on Wednesday that only one Israeli soldier had so far been killed "during combat in Lebanon", as the occupying regime is reinstating its policy of not disclosing the true number of soldiers killed in combat and providing significantly lower death toll figures. Separately on Wednesday, Hezbollah said in a statement that while "an Israeli enemy force was trying to encircle the town of Yaroun from the direction of the forest," Hezbollah fighters managed to either kill or wound all members of the invaders through detonating "a special explosive device." There has been a major escalation in Israel's barbarism in Lebanon that saw the regime assassinating Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in an airstrike on southern Beirut on September 27. The death toll from Israeli aerial assaults across Lebanon since early October 2023 has passed the 1,700 mark with nearly 8,770 injured, according to Lebanese government data. In response, Hezbollah has fired barrages of rockets and drones towards Israeli targets. In the same context, Hezbollah announced that its Resistance fighters shelled on Wednesday the positioning of Israeli occupation forces at the Shomera barracks with a rocket salvo, achieving a direct hit.

## 51 more Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip: Israeli strikes killed at least 51 people in southern Gaza overnight, including women and children, as the military launched ground operations in the hard-hit city of Khan Younis, Palestinian medical officials said Wednesday. Israel has continued to strike what it says are militant targets across Gaza nearly a year after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack ignited the war there, and even as attention has shifted to Lebanon and Iran. Israel has launched ground operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Tehran fired ballistic missiles on Israel late Tuesday. Separately, Hezbollah said its fighters clashed with Israeli troops in the Lebanese border town of Odaisseh, forcing them to retreat. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military or independent confirmation of the fighting, which would mark the first ground combat since Israeli troops crossed the border this week. Israeli media reported infantry and tank units operating in southern Lebanon after the military sent thousands of additional troops and artillery to the border. The military warned residents to evacuate another 24 villages in southern Lebanon after making a similar announcement the day before. Hundreds of thousands have already fled their homes as the conflict has intensified. Palestinians describe massive raid in Gaza. The Health Ministry in Gaza said at least 51 people were killed and 82 wounded in the operation in Khan Younis that began early Wednesday. Records at the European Hospital show that seven women and 12 children, as young as 22 months old, were among those killed. — Agencies

## Forex reserves surge to 2-month import cover: SBP

Jameel Ahmad says central bank plans to launch fully digital banking by 2025 to enhance financial inclusion

#### NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have surged to cover two months' worth of imports after the arrival of the first tranche from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) 37-month loan deal under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF), Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmed said on Wednesday. In much-needed support for the country's fiscally-challenged economy, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) received the first tranche of \$1.03 billion (SDR 760 million) on Monday, September 30, 2024. Pakistan had been working on implementing conditions deemed "strict" to complete the loan programme agreed to in July, which Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif time and again hoped would be Pakistan's last. The liquid reserves now stand at \$10 billion, providing much-needed stability to the country's foreign exchange position. "The foreign exchange reserves have stabilised, and we expect further improvements," Ahmed said speaking at a banking conference. He highlighted that the recent IMF disbursement has eased pressure on the rupee, ensuring a smooth supply of dollars in the market. "Overseas workers' remittances have increased, and the supply of dollars has improved," said Ahmed, noting that a decline in

inflation has positively impacted monetary policy. The governor expressed satisfaction over the government's fiscal situation, which he said had also improved. "The rate of borrowing from banks has decreased," he further stated. Dispelling the impression of a holdup in repayments to commercial banks, Ahmad said the government was not short of funds. "We are making early repayments of bank loans," the governor said. Ahmed also briefly outlined the central bank's strategy to modernise Pakistan's banking sector, underlining that promoting innovation in banking could spur economic growth. "We aim to launch fully digital banking by 2025," he said, noting that the initiative will enhance financial inclusion and accessibility for millions of Pakistanis. The SBP governor further revealed plans to expand Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) financing, with a target to increase the current volume from Rs550 billion to Rs1.1 trillion over the next five years. This will support small and medium-sized enterprises, key drivers of economic activity in the country. As the popularity of digital banking continues to grow in Pakistan, Ahmad acknowledged the rising risks of online fraud. "Banks have been warned to strengthen their cybersecurity measures," he said, stressing the importance of safeguarding the growing number of users, which currently stands at 12 million for mobile banking and was increasing at an annual growth rate of 70%.

## Mohsin Naqvi reviews preparations for SCO's meeting

The Interior Minister approved a comprehensive plan to ensure foolproof security during the summit. He emphasized the significance of hosting the SCO Summit in Pak

#### MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chaired a high-level meeting at the Ministry of Interior regarding the preparations of upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit. The meeting was attended by top officials, including the Federal Secretary Interior, Additional Secretaries, Chief Commissioner Islamabad, IG Police Islamabad, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Deputy Commandant FC, Sector Commander Pakistan Rangers, and representatives from security agencies. During the meeting, security arrangements for the SCO Summit were reviewed in detail. The Interior Minister approved a comprehensive plan to ensure foolproof security during the summit. He emphasized the significance of hosting the SCO Summit in Pakistan, stating that several heads of state will attend. He called it an honor for the entire nation. He stated that special arrangements for beautification and cleanliness of Islamabad will be made on the occasion of the SCO Conference.

## Starmer warns ME 'on brink'

#### FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has reiterated Britain's support for Israel following Iran's missile attack, which saw around 200 projectiles launched at Israeli targets. In a televised address from Downing Street on Tuesday, Starmer condemned the attack, warning that the Middle East is "on the brink" of a larger conflict. The missile assault occurred while Starmer was speaking with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He strongly criticized Iran's actions, which he said aimed at harming civilians. "I utterly condemn this attempt by the Iranian regime to harm innocent Israelis, to escalate this incredibly dangerous situation, and push the region ever closer to the brink," Starmer said.

## 'Inflation drop was more than we expected': Fin Min

Finance czar praised banking sector for offering support to investors; expressed confidence trend would continue

#### FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb announced that the country has seen a "sharper-than-expected drop in inflation", with the economy moving towards improvement. Speaking at the launch of the Pakistan Economic Dashboard on Wednesday, the finance czar highlighted key economic progress and stressed the need for structural reforms to ensure sustainable stability. During his address, the minister noted that inflation has decreased more than the government had anticipated. "The inflation rate is falling faster than we expected, which is a positive sign for our economy," he said. However, he emphasised that continued efforts are needed to maintain this trajectory. The minister also pointed out that tax filer numbers have increased, and the government aims to further raise the tax-to-GDP ratio. "We need to focus on increasing our tax base to achieve long-term economic stability," he added. Aurangzeb spoke highly of Pakistan's banking sector, describing its current trajectory as one of significant improvement. He praised the sector for offering greater support to investors and expressed confidence that this trend would continue. "The banking sector is facilitating investment and creating more opportunities for growth," the minister stated. He highlighted that improvements in the banking sector would enhance access to financial services for ordinary citizens and help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) gain much-needed financial support. This, he believes, will play a key role in boosting the overall economy. The finance minister made it clear that Pakistan's ongoing programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would be the last, provided the government successfully implements structural reforms.

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