



Islamabad POST

Thursday, November 14, 2024

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Pakistan's economic Reforms reflect through improving indicators

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Pak working to promote legal migration

Detailed News On Page-08

Shaheen Afridi becomes no.1 ODI bowler

Detailed News On Page-06



'Honour financial pledges'

No real resilience sans climate justice, Shehbaz tells COP29

"Pakistan needs international support to deliver climate ambitions," says Premier Shehbaz, calling for grants, not loans

NEWS DESK

BAKU: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that nations cannot put up real resilience without climate justice, stressing the need to boost climate funding for developing nations. "As the minus-one emitters, we should not brave the impact of immissions realised by others without even the tools to finance resilience. Without climate justice, there can be no real resilience," the premier told the COP29 Climate Action Summit, taking place in Baku, Azerbaijan on Wednesday. Nearly 200 nations are negotiating global action on climate change at the summit aimed at climate fundraising to help transition to clean energy and adaptation to a warmer world. The summit seeks to reach a deal that ensures up to trillions of dollars in financing for climate projects worldwide. "I would not want other countries to face the plight Pakistan faced back in 2022. Pakistan is a resilient, hard-working, and responsible nation. We are fully committed to being part of the global climate solutions," PM Shehbaz said. He added that the incumbent government in the country has taken concrete actions to deliver on its commitment to producing 60% of all energy from clean sources and shifting 30% of our vehicles to electric vehicles (EVs) by the end of this decade. At the same time, Pakistan is going to go through a renewable energy revolution, he added. The premier told the summit that last year, Pakistan presented a comprehensive national adaptation plan and developed its carbon market framework by 2024. He, however, underscored that the country cannot reach the goal on its own and needs international support to deliver on its climate ambitions. PM Shehbaz said that the developing countries will need an estimated \$6.8 trillion by 2030 to implement less than half of their current NDCs. The same goes for adaptation and loss and damage. "In COP27, Pakistan led this phenomenon. I strongly feel that climate finance must be grant-based and not add to the debt burden of developing countries. Finally, two years ago,

Continued on Page 06

PM praises Pak-Azerbaijan strong ties

The two leaders also exchanged views on the escalating situation in the Middle East

DNA

BAKU: Meeting of the Prime Minister of Pakistan with the President of Azerbaijan on the sidelines of the World Leaders Climate Action Summit (COP-29) Baku, Azerbaijan On the sidelines of the World Leaders Climate Action Summit (COP-29), Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a productive bilateral meeting with H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif congratulated President Aliyev on successful holding of the World Leaders Climate Action Summit in Baku, Azerbaijan. He commended President Aliyev's vision and commitment to enhance international cooperation to address challenges posed by climate change. The Prime Minister assured him that Pakistan is being itself among the most affected countries due to climate change despite its negligible contributions, is committed to work with Azerbaijan and the international community on climate change related challenges.

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BAKU: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on the sidelines of COP29 Climate Action. – DNA

'Welcome back' Trump meets Biden at White House

Biden promised Trump a smooth transition of power and to do all he could



AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump returned to the White House on Wednesday for the first time since winning last week's election and sat down for talks about the looming transfer of power with longtime political rival President Joe Biden. "Welcome, welcome back," Biden told Trump at the start of their meeting in front of a roaring fireplace. He promised Trump a smooth transition of power and to do

Continued on Page 06

Petroleum prices expected to 'rise'

Petrol price may rise by Rs2.58 per litre, claim oil companies' insiders

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The price of petroleum products is expected to increase by Rs5.50, sources within the oil marketing companies (OMCs) said on Wednesday. The federal government will announce the new prices on November 15, two days from now, and the fresh rates will come into effect the very next day. Carting sources a private news channel reported that the price of petrol could

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'March to Islamabad'

Imran gives 'final call' to supporters on November 24

"PTI founder has stressed that party's entire leadership will be part of march," says Imran's lawyer

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has called on his supporters to march to Islamabad on November 24, his lawyer and sister said on Wednesday. Talking to reporters in Rawalpindi, lawyer Faisal Chaudhry said: "Imran Khan says this is the final call for a [anti-government] protest. The PTI founder has stressed that the party's entire leadership will be part of the march." The protest will not only take place in Islamabad, but throughout Pakistan and across the world where Imran's supporters are present, Chaudhry said. The lawyer said that the party founder had also formed a committee for the march and asked not to reveal the names of those who are part of it as Imran fears they'll be arrested. All party leaders are aware of their responsibilities, the lawyer said, adding that the committee would have the authority to call off the protest – ensuring that no single person calls

Continued on Page 06

Will not return until demands are met: Gandapur

Preparations are still ongoing, and this time, they will ensure everything goes as planned, says Gandapur

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has stated that the preparations for the protest are already complete, and they will not return until their demands are met. Speaking to the media in Peshawar, when asked about Aleema Khan's announcement of a rally, Gandapur replied that their preparations

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

PTI politics only revolves around chaos

Says no one would be allowed to create anarchy on the pretext of peaceful protest.

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has berated the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) saying their politics worsened than in her statement, she said that the PTI politics only revolved around chaos, propaganda, protests and sit-in, nothing productive. Whole gang of PTI caught red-handed in a robbery who used to accuse others of theft, Bokhari lambasted. Azma Bokhari asserted that their children were living a luxurious life in London but they were making public victims for the sake of power. Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz had been taking revolutionary measures and projects and providing relief to all classes, Bokhari highlighted.

Govt has spread hatred among people

Says businesses are already on the brink of collapse

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Awami Muslim League chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Wednesday criticised the government for spreading sorrow and hatred among the people. Speaking to media outside the sessions court, Rashid said that businesses were already on the brink of collapse, and now, due to smog, daily life had come to a standstill. He added that the hardships had no idea of the hardships the poor were enduring. He stressed that the government had only caused further distress and division among the people. The former interior minister also commented that Nawaz Sharif was hit with eggs and tomatoes. "Should the public throw you roses instead?"

Vision of digital tax environment

FBR introduces new payment creation system

ePayment 2.0 marks a significant advancement in revenue management, covering a wide range of taxes, including Income Tax, Sales Tax, Federal Excise Duty, and Withholding Taxes

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Wednesday introduced the New Payment Creation System, namely ePayment 2.0, available within the IRIS 2.0 portal, an advanced platform designed to simplify tax payment processes for taxpayers across Pakistan. In line with the vision of the government to modernize Pakistan's tax infrastructure, FBR is reinforcing its commitment to advancing tax administration and enhancing revenue collection through advanced digital solutions, said a news release. This innovative system enables secure, efficient, and user-friendly online payments, accessible directly from taxpayers' bank accounts via internet banking, ATMs, and mobile banking, eliminating the need for physical bank visits. ePayment 2.0 marks a significant advancement in revenue management, covering a wide range of taxes, including Income Tax, Sales Tax, Federal Excise Duty, and Withholding Taxes. Earlier, taxpayers used a

Continued on Page 06

Constitutional bench to hear 18 cases today

While 16 cases are slated for Nov 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday released the cause list of cases which will be heard by the recently established constitutional bench on November 14 and 15. Earlier, the SC constituted a three-judge committee to fix cases, issue court rosters, form benches, and decide weekly caseload for its recently established constitutional bench. SC on Tuesday announced that the constitutional bench will start

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Pakistan, Morocco to strengthen collaboration in aerospace

Inspector Royal Moroccan Air Force calls on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Inspector Royal Moroccan Air Force, Major General Mohammed Gadih Wednesday called on Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu at Air Headquarters, Islamabad, said a statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). The meeting covered a wide array of matters related to military cooperation, joint

training and collaboration in the industrial domain. On his arrival, a smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented Guard of Honour to Major General Mohammed Gadih. During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff conveyed his warm wishes to Inspector Royal Moroccan Air Force on his maiden visit to Pakistan. The Air Chief highlighted that both brotherly countries enjoy long-standing historical ties and reiterated his resolve to strengthen military part-

nership through full collaboration in joint training initiatives in the entire spectrum of air power application, which will include basic and tactical level training for Moroccan Air Force personnel. Both the dignitaries expressed a deep desire to consolidate the existing ties focusing on collaborative training programs, joint military exercises and industrial cooperation. Major General Mohammed Gadih lauded the technological advancement of Pakistan Air Force and expressed the desire of Moroccan Air Force to learn from aerospace industrial strides of the Pakistan Air Force in order to enhance its operational capabilities. He conveyed his admiration for the state of the art technological ecosystem witnessed during his visit to the National Aerospace Science & Technology Park and shared his deep interest in exploring avenues of collaboration in the industrial domain. The dignitary also visited various installations and technological infrastructure established at Air Headquarters, Islamabad including National ISR & Integrated Air Operations Centre and PAF Cyber Command.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

NOVEMBER

- Nov 01/Algeria National Day
- Nov 04/Italy Armed Forces Day
- Nov 07/Russian Federation Socialist Revolution
- Nov 09/Cambodia National Day
- Nov 11/Poland Independence Day
- Nov 14/Jordan Birthday of King Hussein
- Nov 15/Belgium Kings Day
- Nov 15/Brazil Republic Day
- Nov 15/Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus National Day
- Nov 18/Oman National Day
- Nov 18/Morocco Independence Day
- Nov 21/Bangladesh Armed Forces Day
- Nov 22/Lebanon Independence Day
- Nov 25/Suriname National Day
- Nov 28/Mauritania National Day
- Nov 28/Albania Flags Day

Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police...9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

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PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Japan provides 18.5m USD for flood management enhancement

A signing ceremony for the assistance was held at the Ministry of Economic Affairs in Islamabad. H.E. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan, Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and other officials from both countries attended this ceremony

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has agreed to provide new grant assistance worth 2.831 billion Japanese Yen (equivalent to around 18.5 million USD/ around 5.119 billion PKR) for Flood Management Enhancement in the Indus Basin. On 13 November 2024, a signing ceremony for the assistance was held at the Ministry of Economic Affairs in Islamabad. WADA Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan, Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and other officials from both countries attended this ceremony. In 2022, Pakistan experienced the most devastating flood in the country's history. In response, the Government of Japan has been dedicated to providing necessary assistance to support Pakistan's recovery and reconstruction efforts.



This assistance will fund the construction of three embankments on the Indus River in Haripur district, KP, and install water and rain meters at 45 sites along the river in KP and Punjab. The three embankments will protect local communities from potential human and economic losses due to flooding and data from the water and rain meters, managed by FFC and WAPDA, will be shared with various agencies to help predict and manage potential possible floods. This project incorporates the concept of "Build Back Better", which the Government of Pakistan strongly emphasizes. In the signing ceremony, H.E. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro stated, "I hope this project will provide reassurance to the people of Pakistan regarding possible future floods. Japan remains committed to providing assistance that will directly benefit vulnerable people in Pakistan."

Rana for exploiting olive potential to cut edible oil imports

Tanveer said that Pakistan currently imports 70-80% of edible oil, which is then processed into unhealthy ghee while in contrast, olive oil offers numerous health benefits

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food and Security Rana Tanveer here on Wednesday stressed the need for exploit the potential of olive oil production and reduce dependence on edible oil imports. Speaking at Olive Summit 2024, the minister emphasized the country's vast potential for olive sector, urging the need of processing, packaging, and marketing to attract customers. The minister said that research was crucial to the

growth of any sector, so for developing the agricultural sector, there is a need to undertake research to enhance its development. Tanveer said that Pakistan currently imports 70-80% of edible oil, which is then processed into unhealthy ghee while in contrast, olive oil offers numerous health benefits.

With Pakistan's current reliance on imported edible oil, the minister stressed the need for a sustainable substitute, highlighting the poten-

tial for olive oil production to meet local demands and drive exports. "As we hear the word export the government becomes excited because we want to enhance our export", he added. He praised the efforts of Dr. Tariq and Azmat Awan, two government officials driving the olive sector's development. Pakistan's olive sector is poised to significant growth, with Rana Tanveer outlining ambitious plans to transform the country into a major player

in the global market. The Al Baraka Pakistan Olive Summit 2024 brought together key national and international experts, policymakers, and industry leaders to advance Pakistan's olive industry. Under the theme "Developing a Safe, Sustainable & Ready-to-Export Supply Chain of the Olive Sector," the summit emphasized Pakistan's potential to emerge as a significant player in the global olive market. —DNA

SZABIST announces ZAB Artificial Intelligence CUP 2024

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Department of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence at Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (ZABIST) has announced the 2nd ZAB Artificial Intelligence Cup competition, taking place on December 18 and 19. This prestigious competition aims to bring together AI enthusiasts from various universities

who are pursuing BS, MS, and PhD degrees in computing and related fields. This two-day event will bring together some of the brightest students from across Pakistan, giving them the chance to showcase their expertise in Machine Learning (ML) and Deep Learning (DL). According to an official of the university, the challenge will involve implementing ML/DL models to achieve high accuracy on provided datasets. The teams consisting of

two students each may participate. The intending participants can register through filling out the registration form available. The deadline for on-spot registration is November 29. The exciting prizes and souvenirs will be given to the top three performing teams.

Participants, organized in teams of two, will tackle complex datasets and build ML/DL models to achieve high accuracy within a timed, three-hour contest session. This chal-

lenging format is designed to foster innovation, teamwork, and practical problem-solving skills in real-world AI applications. The competition offers significant incentives for the top three teams including Rs. Rs 50,000, Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 20,000 for the top three winners respectively. The students can contact the focal person, Saad Irfan Khan through his email: saad.khan@szabist-ib.edu.pk for more details. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Isphanyar Bhandara has assumed office as Parliamentary Secretary of SAFRON Ministry in Pakistan Secretariat Islamabad. A briefing from the Secretary Mr. Zafar Hassan attended was given to the Secretary. The meeting was also attended by JS's, DS's, SO's and designated ministerial staff to the honorable Parliamentary Secretary. DNA

Motorbikes, three-wheelers sale increases 23.42%

ISLAMABAD: The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country has witnessed an increase of 23.42 per cent during the first four months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year. During the months under review, as many as 457,880 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against the sale of 370,966 units in July-October (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). The sale of Honda motorcycles surged by 19.83 per cent from 322,260 units to 386,170 units whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles also rose by 49.74 per cent from 4,995 units to 7,480 units during the months under review. —APP

Govt committed to transforming Pakistan into cashless economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government, following the Prime Minister's vision, is dedicated to transforming Pakistan into a cashless economy. An official from the Ministry of Information Technology said that steps are being taken to promote digital payments across the country, recognizing their crucial role in enhancing economic growth and efficiency. He said that Pakistan has embarked on a journey of national digitization. Prime Minister has directed the establishment of a National Digital Commission and Pakistan Digital Authority, which will soon be legislated, the official added. The goal is to promote digitization across economic, governance, and social sectors in Pakistan.

Death anniversary of 1st President of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The fifty-fifth death anniversary of the first President of Pakistan, Iskandar Mirza, is being observed on Wednesday.

He was born in Murshidabad, Bengal, on November 13, 1899. He was educated at the University of Bombay before attending the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, after military service in the British Indian Army. He was appointed as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defense in 1942, marking the beginning of his pivotal role in the nation's defense administration. Following Pakistan's independence in 1947, he was chosen to serve as the country's first Secretary of Defense. He stepped in as Acting Governor General when Governor General Malik Ghulam Muhammad fell ill on August 6, 1955. He was being elected as the first President of Pakistan under the newly formed constitution on March 5, 1956. He died of a heart attack on 13 November 1969, his 70th birthday. Yahya Khan, the president of Pakistan, denied him a burial in East Pakistan.

PEIRA, NCHD join hands to eradicate illiteracy

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PEIRA), Dr. Sayeda Zia Batool and Director General of the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), Mr. Ali Asghar ON Wednesday signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaboratively extend the "Each One Teaches One" (EOTO) initiative to Islamabad's private educational institutions. According to the detail of MoU, this initiative, in alignment with the Prime Minister's Roshan Pakistan - National Literacy Drive, under the Education Emergency is committed to eradicating illiteracy across Pakistan by engaging students and institutions under PEIRA's purview. Through this partnership, PEIRA will facilitate and coordinate with NCHD for the program's implementation in registered private institutions, contributing to the national goal of achieving universal literacy. This collaboration underscores both organizations' dedication to extending educational access and ensuring quality learning opportunities in the Islamabad Capital Territory. —APP

Draft of Pakistan Shipping Policy 2024 reviewed at workshop

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Maritime Affairs organized a workshop on Wednesday in order to refurbish the draft of 'Pakistan Shipping Policy 2024' as per the directions of Federal Minister Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh. The aim of this workshop was to refine the draft before being presented in the cabinet. This policy will replace Pakistan Merchant Marine Policy 2001 and its amended version of 2019. Secretary Maritime Affairs Syed Zafar Ali Shah, chairperson of port authorities, senior officials of ministry of maritime affairs and stakeholders from private sector participated in this workshop. The secretary of Maritime Affairs while giving the opening remarks said that the Shipping Policy 2024 had been drafted in accordance with the standards and rules of the International Maritime Organization. Later, the Deputy Secretary presented the important points of draft before the participants. All the participants thoroughly reviewed the policy and expressed satisfaction with almost most of its proposals in the plenary session. The most important point of the policy would be to make it possible by legislation to furnish a bond of adequate amount to the owners of any registered ship if it is detained or seized for any reason within the territorial jurisdiction of Pakistan, and it should be within 24 hours after taking surety bond. Moreover, the government should ensure that if the case was settled, the bail bonds were returned within one month. In this regard, a help desk should also be established within the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and special courts related to maritime affairs should also be established having powers equal to the High Court. The draft also proposed that the newly registered Pakistani Shipping Company will pay USD 0.75 per gross registered tonnage for five years, while currently the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) is paying USD 1 per gross registered tonnage on its revenue. The USD 0.25 rebate to new companies is intended to encourage domestic and national investors to show interest in maritime industry. —DNA



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Briefs

NDMA to host key panels on gender, climate resilience at COP 29

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is set to host two crucial panel discussions on Gender, Climate Change and Risk Financing and Resilience at the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, showcasing Pakistan's commitment to addressing pressing climate issues. NDMA's participation at COP 29 highlights Pakistan's commitment to tackling climate change and strengthening resilience through international collaboration and support. Pakistan, ranked as the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, has faced severe impacts, including devastating floods, heat waves, and droughts. The country's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) outlines comprehensive strategies to enhance resilience across various sectors. However, the implementation of these strategies is hindered by financial and technical constraints. Anticipatory Actions (AA), a proactive tool for Risk-based Financing, should be institutionalized for climate financing grants. This approach enables timely interventions, reducing the impact of climate-related disasters and enhancing resilience in vulnerable communities. In his keynote address, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif highlighted the significance of COP 29 for Pakistan and called for greater international support for adaptation efforts, stressing the need for customized solutions to address the unique challenges faced by vulnerable regions like South Asia.—APP

SME's role highlighted to keep export industries' supply chain intact

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Wednesday highlighted the important role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), describing it as a 'vital component' to keep intact Pakistan's supply chain, particularly in key export industries like textiles, food processing, and engineering. He said while talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Muhammad Farhan Munir Arain, said a news release. He pointed out that the share of manufacturing-based SMEs in bank's lending to the entire manufacturing sector is only 5.3 percent and a nominal 11.5 percent in the construction sector. This needed to be increased manifold to boost exports and productivity in line with practice in the USA and Western countries. He said manufacturing and construction are the two largest job providing sectors in the country. He stressed expansion in e-Commerce and IT-ES can only prove qualitative for economic growth if the manufacturing sector continues to grow simultaneously. For the overall growth of the manufacturing sector, he said, promoting manufacturing-based SMEs is essential.—APP

Chinese envoy, Rector NUML discuss research collaboration

The Ambassador expressed optimism for Pakistan's future, citing the nation's abundant resources, strategic location, and youthful population. He noted the country's recent economic progress, with GDP growth from negative to 2.5% and a forecast of 3.2% in the coming fiscal year

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan H.E Jiang Zaidong today visited NUML university and called on Rector NUML Maj Gen (r) Shahid Mehmood Kayani HI (M) at his office to discuss expanding academic and research collaboration between the universities of both nations, focusing on educational excellence and language as a bridge connecting the people of Pakistan and China. The Chinese Ambassador, joined by the Rector and the Director General NUML Brig Shahzad Munir, witnessed an inspiring display of talent as NUML students showcased their language proficiency and cultural performances representing China and Gilgit-Baltistan. In his address, the Ambassador praised the university's efforts in promoting Chinese language and cultural understanding, thanking the administration for fostering educational and cultural exchange.

Engaging directly with students in a lively question-and-answer session, H.E Jiang Zaidong emphasized the value of resilience and hard work. "Education involves challenges, and happiness is found through struggle," he remarked, inspiring students to pursue their studies with dedication. The Ambassador expressed optimism for Pakistan's future, citing the nation's abundant resources, strategic location, and youthful population. He noted the country's recent economic progress, with GDP growth from negative to 2.5% and a forecast of 3.2% in the coming fiscal year. "Pakistan is



poised to thrive as a pivotal nation in Asia," he added, highlighting the strong collaboration between China and Pakistan. He underscored China's commitment to supporting Pakistan's development, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which he described as a "landmark of bilateral cooperation." Additionally, he outlined various initiatives aimed at empowering Pakistani youth, including scholarships, exchange programs, and internship opportunities in Chinese enterprises

operating in Pakistan. Pakistan ranks third globally in securing Chinese scholarships, with approximately 20,000 Pakistani students currently studying in China. He announced future initiatives such as the Chinese Ambassador's Scholarship for Pakistani students, expanded vocational training, and enhanced collaboration with Pakistani institutions. The event concluded with an awards ceremony for the contest winners and remarks from the Rector NUML, Maj Gen (r) Shahid Mehmood Kayani who lauded



the participants' linguistic achievements and cultural presentations. The Rector extended his gratitude to the Chinese Ambassador for his unwavering support for cultural exchange and highlighted NUML's vision for students to gain expertise in diverse fields, particularly Information Technology, through study opportunities in China. The event celebrated the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China and reaffirmed the shared commitment to educational growth and cross-cultural understanding.

Call for planning, legislation to reduce smog effects

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Meteorologist, Anjum Nazir Zaigham on Wednesday called for planning and legislation to reduce the effects of smog caused by human activities. The phenomenon of smog did not develop in one day or some months, it took some years to its accumulation, he told APP. "We still assume that the causes of smog include the burning of remains of crops and the fuel used in factories and we are taking steps to overcome this issue, while on the contrary, major contributor of sulphur in the air is fuel used in vehicles", he said. He suggested that for the elimination and reduction of smog in the air, it was necessary to enhance the usage of fuel that contributed fewer chemicals in the environment. He remarked that cutting of trees on regular basis and at massive level also contributed to the climate change. He requested to increase plantation at massive level to counter the negative impacts of climate change. Prof. Dr. Haroon Hameed, a health expert, also commented that quality of air index had reached at dangerous level in some cities of Pakistan. He further remarked that the smog caused medical issues in human body parts like nose, throat, ear and also enhanced the breathing issues mostly in children. He further added that recent data showed that adults were facing attack of paralysis due to smog.—APP

Call for addressing Pak's mental health crisis with digital solutions

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is facing a mental health crisis, with an estimated 24% of the population affected. However, it remains largely unaddressed due to societal stigma, limited resources, and cultural barriers. Women, college students, and children are among the most vulnerable. Mental health struggles, linked to economic instability, family pressures, and gendered expectations, are intensified by a shortage of mental health professionals and awareness. Women are disproportionately affected by mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. However, cultural norms discourage seeking help. "Women are expected to be the pillars of the family, so mental health struggles are seen as weaknesses," Dr Amina a local mental health professional talking to APP said. Domestic violence and early marriages contribute to untreated mental health struggles among women. A particularly troubling

trend is the reliance on fake spiritual healers (pir) in rural areas. "Many women, especially in rural regions, turn to fake spiritual leaders for emotional and mental relief because they feel there's nowhere else to turn," Professor Dr. Nasir Ali at PIMS hospital in response to an APP query highlighted another aspect contributing to this growing health issue. "These so-called healers often lack any formal training in mental health, and exploit women's desperation, offering false promises that only worsen their situation, leaving women vulnerable to exploitation." He suggested consulting qualified doctors, "as even minor mental health issues can be mishandled, leading to long-term complexities." At the same time, mental health issues among men often go unaddressed due to societal norms that discourage emotional vulnerability. "Many men suffer in silence," he further ex-

plained, "because expressing emotions is seen as a sign of weakness." Mental distress is also prevalent among students, with 60% of college and university students reporting significant mental health challenges. These are driven by academic pressures, financial stress, and a lack of social support. Abrish, a bachelor's student at Quaid e Azam University talking to APP said, "The pressure to succeed academically, along with financial concerns, affects my mental health daily." Similarly, children face increasing mental health challenges due to unstable family environments, poverty, and child labour. The UNICEF estimates a significant percentage of Pakistani children suffer from anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues. The rise of digital mental health platforms offers a solution, particularly in underserved rural areas. Humraaz and Sehat Kahani are key platforms providing support. The Humraaz app,

backed by the government and WHO, has helped over 240,000 users with counseling and emotional support. "Humraaz helped me reach out when I couldn't find help in person," app's rural user Sara said. Sehat Kahani, a telemedicine platform, connects users with mental health professionals through online consultations. Dr. Zainab, a psychiatrist, notes, "Sehat Kahani is expanding access to mental health care, especially in rural areas." Despite progress, challenges remain in ensuring continuous, personalized care. Platforms like Talkspace and BetterHelp in the U.S. and UK offer direct access to licensed therapists and AI-based tools, models Pakistan could adapt to improve digital mental health care. To tackle the mental health crisis, Pakistan must integrate digital solutions into its national healthcare system, connecting online support with in-person care.

Malaysia keen on importing Pakistani Food Products

As demand continues to grow, the future looks promising for increased food product exports from Pakistan to Malaysia

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Saif Ur Rehman on Wednesday said that Malaysian buyers have shown a keen interest in importing high-quality food products from Pakistan that meet international standards. Currently, he is on a two-week visit to Malaysia, leading the Pak Food delegation to explore export markets and joint ventures with counterparts, said a news release. He said growing demand of Pakistani food products reflects a shared appreciation for premium food items and highlighted the potential for strengthening trade ties between the two countries. Pakistan, known for its rich agricultural resources and diverse food products, offers an array of products, including rice, fresh fruits, spices, and processed foods, which align well with the tastes and preferences of the Malaysian market, he added. He said the focus on quality, safety, and adherence to international food standards has enhanced the popularity of Pakistani food products in Malaysia. With advancements in production, packaging, and food safety, Pakistani manufacturers have been able to meet the stringent quality requirements expected in international markets. He said this alignment with global standards gives Malaysian buyers confidence in the safety and premium quality of Pakistani imports. He also highlighted the country's commitment to maintaining competitive pricing while upholding quality makes it an attractive source of destination for Malaysian food importers. He said trade fairs, online platforms, and business delegations have further facilitated connections between Malaysian buyers and Pakistani suppliers, creating a favorable environment for expanding this trade relationship. As demand continues to grow, the future looks promising for increased food product exports from Pakistan to Malaysia.—DNA

PEIRA, NCHD join hands to eradicate illiteracy

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PEIRA), Dr. Sayeda Zia Batool and Director General of the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), Mr. Ali Asghar ON Wednesday signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaboratively extend the "Each One Teaches One" (EOTO) initiative to Islamabad's private educational institutions. According to the detail of MoU, this initiative, in alignment with the Prime Minister's Roshan Pakistan - National Literacy Drive, under the Education Emergency is committed to eradicating illiteracy across Pakistan by engaging students and institutions under PEIRA's purview. Through this partnership, PEIRA will facilitate and coordinate with NCHD for the program's implementation in registered private institutions, contributing to the national goal of achieving universal literacy.—APP

Commerce Minister, WB advance agenda for export competitiveness

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and World Bank team on Wednesday met to discuss Pakistan's export reform agenda, focusing on strategies to enhance export competitiveness and streamline enabling policies. The discussion also addressed how the World Bank can support these initiatives under the broader country program, said a press release issued here. Jam Kamal Khan highlighted the Whole-of-Government ap-

proach to export enhancement, which promotes a unified policy framework to improve competitiveness and the Ease of Doing Business for exporters. This strategy emphasizes export-led growth by providing crucial enabling factors such as financing, liquidity support, reduced input costs, and regulatory facilitation to empower Pakistan's export sector. The World Bank reiterated its support for Pakistan's Trade and Investment Officers (TIOs) stationed in Missions abroad and its commitment to collaborating on knowledge-sharing

initiatives to strengthen Pakistan's global trade connections. Minister Jam also noted the recent establishment of 17 Sectoral Councils by the Ministry of Commerce, aimed at bolstering private sector involvement in policy development—a move warmly appreciated by the World Bank team for its potential to enrich the policymaking process. Both sides agreed to form a joint working group on trade, set to meet periodically, to advance the goal of realizing Pakistan's export potential of \$60 billion.

Govt committed to transforming Pakistan into cashless economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government, following the Prime Minister's vision, is dedicated to transforming Pakistan into a cashless economy. An official from the Ministry of Information Technology said that steps are being taken to promote digital payments across the country, recognizing their crucial role in enhancing economic growth and efficiency. He said that Pakistan has embarked on a journey of national digitization.

CBCare portal to enhance digital access to civic services in cantonment areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Defence Launches CBCare Mobile App and Portal to enhance Digital Access to Civic Services in Cantonment Areas In line with the Government of Pakistan's Digital Pakistan Policy and the mission of the Military Lands and Cantonment (MLC) Department, a new digital interface has been launched to provide streamlined access to civic services for residents of cantonment areas. Secretary Defence, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Muhammad Ali inaugurated the CBCare mobile app and CBCare portal in Rawalpindi, marking a significant step forward in e-governance and digital

transformation. At the inauguration ceremony, Secretary Defence commended the department's proactive efforts in modernizing

service delivery and making it more accessible to the public. He praised the MLC Department for embracing e-governance solu-

tions that empower residents of cantonment areas with efficient, transparent, and user-friendly access to local government services. The CBCare mobile app and CBCare portal serve as a comprehensive platform for residents to interact with their respective cantonment boards digitally. Through the CBCare mobile app, now available on both Android and iOS devices, residents can apply online for a variety of civic services, including the registration of birth and death certificates, property tax exemptions, downloadable bills, payment verification, and status checks on registered complaints and applications. The complete list of features is available on the CBCare portal at cbcare.cantonment.gov.pk



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World's 'green ambitions'

The 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) is being held from November 11 to 22 in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, bringing the urgency of addressing global climate change back onto the international agenda. The vision of this conference is "enhancing ambition and enabling action," with the most important agenda item being the provision of \$1 trillion annually in climate finance for developing countries. COP29 should inspire confidence and hope in the international community by addressing the issue of how to "materialize" ambition, ensuring that ambition does not remain empty talk or become a tool for achieving other goals. Currently, the core concern for developing countries is support for climate financing, and this requires developed countries to fulfill their commitments through concrete actions. The COP29 has attracted representatives from 198 parties, highlighting that climate change has become one of the greatest unifying issues for global cooperation. In recent years, COP conferences have frequently been held in developing countries, reflecting the growing awareness and action of the Global South in addressing climate change. On Monday, the first day of the conference, global carbon credit quality standards were adopted, creating the conditions for launching a global carbon market and providing funding for emission reduction projects. These are positive signals, indicating that with the efforts and collaboration of all countries, significant progress is being made in humanity's fight against climate change. "Green ambition" is not a pipe dream; its ultimate realization depends on countries implementing it based on their own national conditions and capabilities. Developed countries, having completed the industrialization phase and accumulated capital and technology, are also responsible for about 90 percent of the excess carbon emissions globally. In terms of global climate justice, developed countries should assume the obligations that correspond to their historical responsibility and provide funding to help developing countries pursue climate goals. It must be pointed out that the developed countries' previous promise to provide \$100 billion annually to help low-income countries address climate change has yet to be fully realized, significantly hindering global climate action progress. Addressing climate change is a race against time, and there is no room for hesitation or shifting blame. A few days before the COP29, the World Meteorological Organization released a thought-provoking report predicting that 2024 is on track to be the hottest year on record. Another focal point of the conference comes from the policy uncertainty in Washington: participants are generally concerned that the next US administration may alter its climate policies, repeating the scenario of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. Certainly, regardless of changes in any country's climate policies, the international multilateral climate cooperation will continue. However, it's hard to imagine achieving global "green ambitions" without the participation or a stable role from the world's largest economy. As former EU official Marc Vanheukelen said, "If they [the US] don't set themselves an ambitious target, why would we?" As a responsible major country, China has turned goodwill into good actions in addressing climate change. Since 2012, China has maintained an annual energy consumption growth rate of 3 percent, supporting economic growth of more than 6 percent per year.



G20, a talk shop

Less than a week, global attention might shift from the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East to Brazil, where G20 leaders will meet. Originally an informal forum of finance ministers and central bank governors, the platform was upgraded in 2009, in response to the global financial crisis, to a premier cooperation forum for world leaders. There was no codified list of criteria that led to the "Group of 20", comprising 19 countries, the European Union (EU) and, as of last year, the African Union. These represent about 85 per cent of the global economy. The first G20 summit was held in 2008 in Washington as leaders worked to prevent the near meltdown of financial systems in advanced economies as a result of the subprime crisis in the United States. Since then, the summit has taken place at least every year, hosted by different members under a rotating presidency. As the current G20 president, Brazil has set a theme of "building a just world and a sustainable planet" and announced three priorities: fighting hunger, poverty and inequality, pushing for energy transitions and sustainable development, and reforming global governance. These are all lofty objectives. The question is how the G20 hopes to achieve them. What the international community wishes to see is not simply a joint statement but collective action. But will the G20 continue to behave like a talk shop? The successful operation of any international organisation requires three elements: effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy. In the face of criticism, there are five areas the G20 should examine. First, its image - which needs improving. The G20 did a good job of dealing with the 2008 global financial crisis by coordinating its members' macroeconomic policies. But since then, it has failed to develop from its firefighting role into a steering committee capable of tackling such important issues as speeding up world economic growth, pushing for global economic governance and curbing trade protectionism. No wonder some complain that the G20 summits are a waste of time, on top of generating a huge carbon footprint just so world leaders can meet in different countries to talk face to face. This kind of criticism has gone too far, in my opinion, but it reflects a need for the G20 to show that it can meet the expectations of the international community. Second, the developed countries in the G20 should set a better example of promoting global economic growth. The world economy faces many obstacles and the most pernicious is protectionism, which hurts both investment and trade. Sadly, the developed countries seem to have become the vanguard of protectionism rather than the promoters of economic justice. Notably, both the US and EU have put up barriers against Chinese electric vehicles, which can only hurt the global EV industry and efforts to deal with climate change. Despite the repeated G20 statements pledging to oppose protectionism, including one just last month, protectionism has intensified, with developing countries as the main targets. Third, cooperation among the G20 should be promoted in the spirit of "united we stand, divided we fall". Every country has its national interests and ideals. But they should not be the cause of selfish actions that hurt what Chinese President Xi Jinping has called "the community with a shared future for mankind". On many important issues from curbing climate change to reforming international financial organisations, developed countries often fail to take collective, "we're all in the same boat" action.

German political crisis and realignment

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



In the United States, discussions surrounding the potential easing of sanctions on Russia have gained momentum following former President Donald Trump's re-election. According to a report by the Financial Times, leading Western banks have started speculating that Trump's return to office may lead to the lifting of sanctions imposed on Russia. This possibility has had an immediate impact on the financial market, with Russian stocks experiencing a notable increase in value shortly after the election results were announced. The potential shift in U.S.-Russia relations could have significant ramifications for the balance of power in Europe and beyond.

The recent dismissal of German Finance Minister Christian Lindner by Chancellor Olaf Scholz has ignited a political crisis that could precipitate snap elections. Scholz's decision to dismiss Lindner, a representative of the pro-market Free Democratic Party (FDP), has placed the stability of Germany's coalition government in jeopardy. This coalition, led by Scholz's Social Democratic Party (SPD) and encompassing the FDP and the Greens, now faces substantial internal challenges. The unfolding situation in Germany highlights broader trends in the global political landscape, where alliances are increasingly volatile and governments face pressures to respond swiftly to both domestic and international challenges. Scholz, in a statement underscoring the gravity of the situation, emphasized Germany's need for an "effective government that has the strength to make the necessary decisions for our country." His call for a confidence vote in January demonstrates the strategic moves necessary to maintain leadership amid a fragmented coalition. Beyond Germany, significant developments in global diplomacy have emerged. In a move with regional and international implications, Myanmar's junta leader, Min Aung Hlaing, recently traveled to China, marking his first diplomatic visit to the country since taking power following a 2021 military coup. The coup led to an intensified armed insurgency and has created ongoing instability in Myanmar. Min's meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang on the sidelines of the Greater Mekong Sub-region Summit in Kunming underscores the strategic alignment between China and Myanmar. Li assured Min of China's continued support and reiterated Beijing's commitment to strengthening economic and social cooperation. For China, this partnership not only reinforces its influence in Southeast Asia but also aligns with its broader foreign policy goals of securing alliances with neighboring states, especially those facing international isolation. Min, for his part, expressed gratitude for China's economic assistance and its role in supporting peace and reconciliation, signaling Myanmar's reliance on Chinese support in a time of heightened domestic challenges. Iran and Pakistan, meanwhile, have engaged in high-level security dialogues, further highlighting the complexities of regional alliances and defense collaborations. The Iranian Deputy Defense Minister recently visited Islamabad, where he engaged in talks with Pakistani defense officials. Just prior to these discussions, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh. This sequence of meetings underscores Pakistan's strategic efforts to maintain and deepen defense relationships across the Middle East and South Asia. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have historically exercised considerable influence in Pakistan and Islamabad's engagement with

both countries reflects its balancing act between competing regional powers. As Pakistan strengthens its defense alliances, it must navigate the regional tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, while ensuring stability within its borders. These engagements also illustrate a broader trend of middle powers pursuing diversified alliances to safeguard national security and economic interests amid an evolving multipolar world. In Central Asia, the strengthening ties between Russia and Kazakhstan illustrate the shifts in post-Soviet regional dynamics. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov recently visited Kazakhstan, where he met with President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Foreign Minister Murat Nurtleu. Lavrov's visit included a proposal to construct Kazakhstan's first nuclear power plant, reflecting Russia's strategic interest in maintaining influence over its former Soviet neighbors. Moreover, Lavrov confirmed that Kazakhstan had been formally invited to join the BRICS alliance as a partner country. This invitation comes amid Tokayev's earlier decision to decline full membership, signaling Kazakhstan's careful approach to balancing relations with Russia and other global powers. The recent meeting between the Security Council heads of Russia and Kazakhstan in Moscow, in anticipation of a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit, further highlighted the two nations' collaboration on security concerns, including terrorism, extremism and regional development in the Caspian Sea area. Russia's regional engagements, alongside its outreach to Kazakhstan, underscore its intent to secure alliances in Central Asia, especially amid its isolation from Western allies. In the United States, discussions surrounding the potential easing of sanctions on Russia have gained momentum following former President Donald Trump's re-election. According to a report by the Financial Times, leading Western banks have started speculating that Trump's return to office may lead to the lifting of sanctions imposed on Russia. This possibility has had an immediate impact on the financial market, with Russian stocks experiencing a notable increase in value shortly after the election results were announced. The potential shift in U.S.-Russia relations could have significant ramifications for the balance of power in Europe and beyond, with implications for energy, trade and defense policies. This scenario underscores the geopolitical fluidity prompted by changes in leadership in major powers, with each new administration carrying the potential to reshape international relations. Meanwhile, Afghanistan is closely monitoring the political developments in the United States. The Taliban, who regained control of Afghanistan in 2021, are hopeful that Trump's re-election might lead to a shift in U.S.-Afghan relations. The Afghan Foreign Ministry has expressed a desire for a

"pragmatic approach" from the U.S. under Trump's leadership, noting that his administration previously negotiated the Doha Agreement, which ultimately led to the end of America's 20-year presence in Afghanistan. The Taliban's expectation of improved diplomatic relations with Washington highlights their efforts to achieve international legitimacy and engage with global powers despite ongoing domestic and international challenges. In Central Asia, Kazakhstan's decision to reduce fuel oil exports through Russia by 26 percent during the first nine months of 2024 marks a shift in energy logistics. Rather than relying on Russian routes, Kazakhstan has redirected its oil exports to the Georgian port of Batumi via the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. This adjustment underscores Kazakhstan's intention to diversify its trade pathways and lessen dependence on Russia, particularly as Moscow faces increased international isolation. Kazakhstan's choice of alternate routes, including Georgian ports, signals a strategic realignment aimed at strengthening its economic independence and securing alternative markets. Global concerns about geopolitical instability were also a central theme at the recent Organization of Turkic States summit, where Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev delivered a candid address on the escalating international risks. Mirziyoyev warned of intensifying competition and deepening mistrust between major powers, identifying "new hotbeds of confrontation" around the world. His remarks underscore the shared apprehension among Turkic states regarding the consequences of geopolitical rivalries, especially as conflict looms in multiple regions, including the Middle East. Mirziyoyev's call for a unified stance on key international issues reflects a growing recognition among smaller states of the need to collaborate in a world marked by polarization and fragmentation. These developments reflect a global landscape characterized by heightened tensions, shifting alliances and recalibrated diplomatic engagements. Leaders across the globe are increasingly compelled to adopt nuanced and multifaceted approaches to international relations, balancing national interests with regional stability. From Germany's political challenges to the strategic realignments in Central Asia and the shifting dynamics in U.S.-Afghan relations, the evolving international order demands enhanced diplomatic engagement, strategic foresight and adaptable foreign policy frameworks. As these shifts continue to unfold, countries will need to navigate the complexities of a multipolar world, where traditional alliances may falter and new partnerships offer both opportunities and risks. The need for resilience and proactive diplomacy is paramount as nations contend with the dual challenges of domestic instability and global uncertainty.

Trump may end the Ukraine war but

Alexander Clackson

The prospect of re-establishing amicable relations with Ukraine is remote, as years of war and aggression have built an almost insurmountable wall of resentment. Even if the conflict concludes, Russia's exclusion from the European political space will persist. Reintegration into the Group of 7 or the lifting of some of the sanctions imposed by the West remains unlikely any time soon, leaving Russia economically isolated. The war has led to a significant brain drain, coupled with an immense military expenditure that has detracted from domestic development.

As the war in Ukraine, in its third year, rages on, it becomes increasingly clear there will be no true winner. The push for an end to this conflict has gained renewed momentum, particularly with Donald Trump's re-election as US president and his promise to bring the conflict to a swift conclusion. Russian President Vladimir Putin has indicated a willingness to engage in talks. But while ending the war is necessary to halt the bloodshed and civilian suffering, no party will emerge as a definitive victor. Trump's anticipated diplomacy, if successful, could yield benefits for all sides. In what will probably be labelled a historic peace deal, Trump could frame the cessation of hostilities as an achievement that saved lives and brought stability. For Russia, negotiations that result in Ukraine's neutrality and the acknowledgement of annexed territories as Russian victories would fulfil some of Moscow's objectives. For Ukraine, the most immediate benefit would be the end of civilian suffering, the greatest toll of the conflict. Yet even with these outcomes, no side will walk away truly victorious. From Russia's perspective, while territorial gains and a neutral Ukraine would mark tangible achievements, the war has been far from the resounding success initially envisioned. Putin's aspirations for regime change in Kyiv and to install a pro-Russian government have not materialised. The prospect of re-establishing amicable relations with Ukraine is remote, as years of war and aggression have built an almost insurmountable wall of resentment. Even if the conflict concludes, Russia's exclusion from the European political space will persist. Reintegration into the Group of 7 or the lifting of some of the sanctions

imposed by the West remains unlikely any time soon, leaving Russia economically isolated. The war has led to a significant brain drain, coupled with an immense military expenditure that has detracted from domestic development, such that Russia would lag behind its European and Asian counterparts. The outcome reflects a nation that, despite territorial gains, has paid a high price - one that eclipses any semblance of victory. For Ukraine, the situation is similarly grim. Losing up to 25 per cent of its territory would be a major blow. Its shattered economy faces a daunting path to recovery, necessitating years of reconstruction and healing of war trauma. The envisioned peace settlement is likely to leave Ukraine a neutral state, unable to pursue Nato membership and with little chance of joining the European Union for now. That Ukraine's neutral status is a concession that could have been made before the war only highlights its tragic futility. The destruction and deaths suffered over these years have yielded no gains for Ukraine. Instead, it stands to lose territory, opportunities and years of economic stability. The West, particularly the United States and Europe, must come to terms with the implications of a neutral Ukraine, a non-negotiable demand by the Kremlin. While Russia's military and economic capacity has been weakened, the initial hope of destabilising Putin's leadership or ushering in political change has not come to fruition. The West will also face the difficult reality of conceding Russia's acquisition of Ukrainian territory, including Crimea, as a necessary compromise for peace. Although Nato and Western support helped prevent a Russian takeover of Kyiv, this does not erase the

fact that earlier diplomacy might have avoided or shortened the war significantly. The ripples of the EU's 2022 energy and cost of living crises are with still being felt today. While the cessation of hostilities should be pursued to prevent further loss of life and destruction, it will not crown any side as victorious. For Russia, the gains come with significant long-term losses - Western isolation, economic stagnation and the prospect of continued sanctions. Ukraine, in exchange for an end to its suffering, faces territorial loss, economic devastation and a compromised future. The West, despite showing a somewhat unified front against the aggression, faces a negotiated settlement that falls short of reversing Russian territorial gains. The war's consequences for the West include economic disruption, energy crises and inflation. The reality is that the war, by its very nature, has left no side unscathed. As the scale increasingly tilts in Russia's favour, the urgency for negotiations becomes more pressing. Trump is expected to push for peace talks early next year and this may bring an end to the conflict - but this will also force the sobering acknowledgement that the war could have been avoided. If concessions and agreements had been reached before February 2022, the human and economic costs might have been spared. As it stands, no side can claim victory after nearly three years of relentless warfare.

Alexander Clackson is the founder of Global Political Insight think tank in London, and a researcher on Russia.

Briefs

KSE-100 closes marginally higher in choppy trading

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed choppy trading on Wednesday, allowing the index to close with a marginal gain of 131 points. The KSE-100 started the session negative, hitting an intra-day low of 92,943.08. A buying spree later pushed the index to an intra-day high of 93,803.59, followed by some selling that trimmed the gains. At close, the benchmark index settled at 93,355.43, up by 130.86 points or 0.14%. "The market exhibited a consolidation phase, with the index reaching a peak of 93,804 and dipping to a low of 92,943. Notable, consistent buying by local mutual funds supported the market in the recent rally," brokerage house Topline Securities said. The index was boosted by positive contributions from MARI, LUCK, SEARL, ENGR0, and POL, which collectively added 461 points. Conversely, OGD, FFC, and MEBL experienced some profit-taking, resulting in a combined loss of 213 points to the index, it added.—APP

Gold price increases Rs1,400 per tola

KARACHI: After a massive decline in the previous session, gold prices in Pakistan saw an increase on Wednesday in line with their rise in international rates. In the local market, the price of gold per tola gained Rs1,400, clocking in at Rs271,900. Similarly, 10-gram gold was sold at Rs233,111 after it recorded an increase of Rs1,200, according to rates shared by the All-Pakistan Gems and Jewelers Sarafa Association (APGJSA). On Tuesday, gold price declined by Rs7,000 to settle at Rs270,500. Meanwhile, the international rate of gold increased on Wednesday. As per APGJSA, the rate was \$2,607 per ounce (with a premium of \$20) and was up by \$14 during the day. Silver prices remained unchanged at Rs3,250 per tola.—APP

Rupee records marginal improvement against US dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani rupee registered a marginal improvement against the US dollar, appreciating 0.03% in the inter-bank market on Wednesday. At close, the currency settled at 277.85, a gain of Re0.08 against the greenback. On Tuesday, the rupee had settled at 277.93, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). Internationally, the US dollar held near a 6-1/2-month peak against major peers and bitcoin was solidly poised just below record highs on Wednesday as markets sized up so-called Trump trades ahead of key US inflation data later in the day. The US dollar is reaping the benefits of Republican Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election last week, with investors pricing in policies of lower taxes and trade tariffs under the incoming administration that are seen as inflationary. The Trump trade has pushed up US Treasury yields as markets wager the Federal Reserve may temper the extent of its future rate cuts. The US dollar index, which measures the currency against a basket of currencies, tacked on 0.02% to 106.01, not far from Tuesday's high of 106.17, its strongest since May 1. Bitcoin paused its record-breaking climb, down 0.23% at \$87,105.05 after hitting an all-time high of \$89,998 on Tuesday. Trump has vowed to make the US "the crypto capital of the planet". Oil prices, a key indicator of currency parity, inched higher on Wednesday underpinned by signs of near-term supply tightness but held near their lowest in two weeks, a day after OPEC downgraded its forecast for global oil demand growth in 2024 and 2025.—APP

Lead with photo 7 column with photo

Gilani for more social steps to boost investors' confidence

Chairman senate acknowledged the business community's pivotal role in national economic development. He endorsed RCCI's call for an economic charter, policy stability, and business representation in key committees

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate and former Prime Minister, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Wednesday called for creating more social cohesiveness to boost investors' confidence and strengthening democratic credentials. He said this while addressing to business community during his visit to Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce here on Wednesday. The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI) welcomed Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani for an insightful address to the business community. RCCI President Usman Shaikat, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, Group Leader Sohail Altaf, along with former presidents and executive committee members, extended a warm reception to the Senate Chairman. Representatives from Anjuman Tajran, Small Chamber President Sardar



Saqib, RWCCI President Ms. Quratulain Khan, women members, and RCCI members also attended the event. President Usman Shaikat provided an update on RCCI's ongoing initiatives, noting improvements in Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators. He highlighted re-

duced inflation and interest rates, a stabilized currency, and increased exports and remittances. He also urged for accelerating the construction work of economic and industrial zones around the Ring Road, underscoring the strategic importance of these zones in fostering

growth. Group Leader Sohail Altaf further advocated for an economic charter to ensure policy continuity, suggested business community representation in Senate Finance and Commerce Committees, and recommended that the Chamber President's term be reduced

from two years to one for greater dynamism. Addressing the ceremony, Chairman Gilani acknowledged the business community's pivotal role in national economic development. He endorsed RCCI's call for an economic charter, policy stability, and business representation in

key committees. Stressing the importance of the economic zones around Ring Road, he recognized them as essential for sustainable growth. Gilani emphasized that public-private partnerships are crucial for driving socio-economic progress and reaffirmed Parliament's commitment to supporting recovery efforts. He highlighted government initiatives such as the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) as part of efforts to assist the needy. Chairman Gilani concluded by emphasizing that political stability directly impacts economic growth, underscoring the importance of a conducive business environment and consistent policies for national progress. He called for reduced imports, increased exports, and a stable policy framework to attract long-term investment, reassuring the business community of Parliament's support in promoting Pakistan's economic prosperity.

Israel airstrikes kill 23 in largest daytime assault in Beirut

Israel stated it had taken measures to reduce civilian casualties, reiterating its longstanding accusation that Hezbollah deliberately places its operations in residential areas to use civilians as human shields, a charge Hezbollah denies

BEIRUT/JERUSALEM: The Israeli military launched extensive airstrikes on southern Beirut on Tuesday, delivering one of its most significant daytime assaults on Hezbollah-controlled areas, along with attacks on central Lebanon that resulted in at least 23 fatalities. Smoke filled the skies over Beirut as approximately twelve airstrikes hit southern suburbs by mid-morning. After issuing warnings on social media, the Israeli military reported targeting Hezbollah's weapon and missile facilities in Beirut's Dahiyeh district, claiming substantial destruction of the group's infrastructure. Israel stated it had taken measures to reduce civilian casualties, reiterating its longstanding accusation that Hezbollah deliberately places its operations in residential areas to use civilians as human shields, a charge Hezbollah denies. In northern Israel, two people were killed in Nahariya when a residential building was hit by an attack; later, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for a drone assault targeting a military base near the city. Israelis across the north sought shelter due to continued drone attacks, with one drone landing in a kindergarten yard in a Haifa suburb. Fortunately, no injuries were reported, as the children had been safely moved to a shelter. In Lebanon's Mount Lebanon region, Israeli strikes killed eight individuals in Baalchmay, southeast of Beirut, and fifteen in Joun, within the Chouf district, according to Lebanon's health ministry. Strikes on other southern areas led to additional fatalities, including five in Tefahtha, two in Nabatieh, and one in Tyre, while a further casualty was reported in Hermel, located in northeast Lebanon. The ongoing violence has led many Beirut residents to abandon the southern suburbs since the bombings began in September. Footage from one airstrike, widely shared on social media, captured two missiles destroying a ten-story building, filling the area with smoke and debris. This intensification follows a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, which gained momentum due to the Gaza conflict. In September, Israel escalated its actions by initiating airstrikes across Lebanon and deploying troops along the southern border. Israel asserts it has inflicted significant losses on Hezbollah, killing key leaders, including Hassan Nasrallah, and extensively damaging southern Beirut and Lebanese border villages. On Tuesday, Israel's military chief, Herzl Halevi, visited forces in Lebanon, remarking that the Israeli military was "operating very strongly" within the country. According to Lebanon's health ministry, Israeli operations over the past year have resulted in at least 3,287 deaths in Lebanon, with the majority occurring within the last seven weeks. The ministry's records do not distinguish between civilian and militant casualties. Hezbollah's retaliatory attacks over the past year have killed approximately 100 civilians and military personnel in northern Israel, the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon.—DNA

Airlines ground Bali flights after volcano erupts

JAKARTA: Airlines cancelled flights to and from the Indonesian resort island of Bali on Wednesday, leaving travellers stranded after a nearby volcano catapulted an ash tower miles into the sky. At least 16 international routes were affected after Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki on Flores island spewed a nine-kilometre tower a day earlier, the general manager of Bali's international airport said in a statement. Flights from Singapore, Hong Kong, Qatar, India, Australia, Malaysia, China's Pudong and South Korea's Incheon were all either delayed or grounded, Ahmad Syaugi Shahab said Wednesday. Animal clinic worker Samsudin, 52, from Indonesia's main island was transiting in Bali to Malaysia and forced to spend the night at the airport. "I'm sleeping here rather than going back to Java. It is far," he told AFP. "I'm waiting here, until tomorrow," he added, saying he bought a new flight after his AirAsia ticket was refunded. Australia's Jetstar, Qantas and Virgin Australia all grounded flights, while Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, India's IndiGo and Singapore's Scoot also listed flights as cancelled on Wednesday, an AFP journalist at Bali's airport said. "Volcanic ash poses a significant threat to safe operations of the aircraft in the vicinity of volcanic clouds," said AirAsia as it announced several cancellations. Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific also listed its flights as cancelled, rescheduling routes to and from Bali until Thursday. Passengers look at an electronic board displaying cancelled flights after the nearby Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki volcano catapulted an ash tower miles into the sky, at the Ngurah Rai International Airport in Tuban near Denpasar, on Indonesia's resort island of Bali on November 13.—AFP



SINGAPORE: Atif Ikram Sheikh President FPCCI & Vice President CACCI presenting crest of FPCCI to Rabia Shafiq High Commissioner of Pakistan. Mr. Aun Ali Syed Vice President FPCCI and Mrs Atif Ikram Sheikh Zil-e-Huma Director Mujahid Group of Companies and officials of the High Commission are also present at a lunch hosted by High Commissioner in honour of President Atif Ikram Sheikh.

Beijing showcases cutting-edge fighter jets

State news agency Xinhua quoted military expert Wang Mingzhi as saying the combination of the two models greatly enhances the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF)'s "ability to conduct offensive operations in high-threat and contested environments"

ZHUHAI: Stealth fighter jets and attack drones took centre stage as China's largest air show officially opened on Tuesday, attracting more than 890 companies from 47 countries and regions. The star of Airshow China, which showcases Beijing's civil and military aerospace sector every two years in the southern city of Zhuhai, is the new J-35A stealth fighter jet. Its inclusion in the airshow suggests it is nearly ready to enter operation, which would make China the only country other than the United States to have two stealth fighters in action, experts said. The J-35A is lighter than China's existing model, the J20, and looks

more similar in design to a US F-35. A group of J20s performed a display flight on Tuesday morning, flying in a diamond formation across a grey sky. State news agency Xinhua quoted military expert Wang Mingzhi as saying the combination of the two models greatly enhances the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF)'s "ability to conduct offensive operations in high-threat and contested environments". The airshow will feature a dedicated drone zone for the first time, reflecting their increased prominence in warzones, including Ukraine. The SS-UAV - a massive moth-

ership that can rapidly release swarms of smaller drones for intelligence gathering, as well as strikes - will be on display in Zhuhai, according to the South China Morning Post. This year the show's focus is squarely on the military sector, as it coincides with the 75th anniversary of the PLAAF, but China's burgeoning space industry will also be showcasing developments. A model of a homegrown reusable space cargo shuttle will debut at the show, Xinhua reported on Monday. Named Haolong, the shuttle is designed to be launched on a commercial rocket, and then dock with China's

space station Tiangong. "It can re-enter the atmosphere, fly and land horizontally at a designated airport, allowing for recovery and reuse," Xinhua said. China's homegrown regional jetliner, the ARJ21, was rebranded as C909 at a product launch by its developer Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC). Since its commercial operation in 2016, the C909 has delivered a total of 150 aircraft and safely carried over 17 million passengers. The jetliner has undergone continuous improvements in performance, cabin comfort and crew operations, allowing it to offer multiple cabin con-

figurations. It is equipped with excellent takeoff and landing capabilities at airports with short, narrow runways, as well as in high-altitude, hot or cold environments, making it highly adaptable to the operating conditions in China's border regions, Southeast Asia, Africa and other overseas areas. The C909 is well-suited for building a route network based on regional or secondary hub airports, providing capacity support to major hub airports. Additionally, it is capable of flying on commercial routes using sustainable aviation fuel, meeting the diverse needs of customers.—Agencies

Russia asks Israel to avoid air strikes near Syrian base

MOSCOW: Russia has asked Israel to avoid launching aerial strikes as part of its war against Lebanon's Hezbollah near one of Moscow's bases in Syria, a top official said Wednesday. Syrian state media in mid-October claimed that Israel had struck the port city of Latakia, a stronghold of President Bashar al-Assad, who is supported by Russia and in turn backs Hezbollah. Latakia, and in particular its airport, is close to the town of Hmeimim that hosts a Russian air base. "Israel actually carried out an air strike in the immediate vicinity of Hmeimim," Alexander Lavrentiev, Russian President Vladimir Putin's special envoy in the Near East, told the RIA Novosti press agency. "Our military has of course notified Israeli authorities that such acts that put Russian military lives in danger over there are unacceptable," he added. "That is why we hope that this incident in October will not be repeated." Israeli airstrike attacks Syrian military targets. Israel has carried out intensive bombing of Syria but rarely targets Latakia, to the northwest of Damascus.—Agencies

Iran says communication channels with US 'still exist'

TEHRAN: Iran's top diplomat said Wednesday that communication channels with the United States were still open, a week after Donald Trump was elected president. "The communication channels between us and the Americans still exist," Abbas Araghchi said on the sidelines of a weekly cabinet meeting. "We have differences with the Americans, which are sometimes very fundamental and central and may not be resolved, but we must manage them to reduce their costs and decrease the tensions," he added. Araghchi said last month that there was no ground for indirect nuclear talks with the United States. Iran urges Trump to change 'maximum pressure' policy "We don't see any grounds for these talks, until we can get past the current crisis," Araghchi said on October 14 during a visit to the Gulf sultanate of Oman as part of a regional tour. Oman has long mediated between Iran and the United States, which cut ties after the 1979 Islamic revolution that saw Western-backed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi ousted. The remarks by the Iranian top diplomat were echoed by the country's president on Tuesday. "Regarding America, whether we like it or not, we will eventually face this country in the regional and international arena, and it is better to manage this issue ourselves," Masoud Pezeshkian said.—APP

Chief Collector Custom told about issues affecting Pak-Afghan trade

PESHAWAR: A delegation of businessmen from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa met with newly appointed Chief Collector Customs KP, Khawaja Khurram Naem and apprised him about the problems causing hindrances in smooth sailing of Pak-Afghan trade. The businessmen delegation was led by President Frontier Customs Agents Association (FCAA), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi. Other members of the delegation were SVP FCAA, Khalid Shehad, VP Imtiaz Ahmad Ali, GS Mian Waheed Bacha and member Executive Committee including Mansoor Ahmad, Tariq Afridi, Israr Afridi, Arshad Khan, Nizam Shah and Wahab Khan. During the meeting, Collector Custom Apprisesment, Mateen Alam and Madam Iqra Shaikat were also present. President FCAA, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi congratulated newly appointed Chief Collector Customs KP and expressed the hope that he will give due consideration to problems being faced by business community of the province.—APP

Briefs

4 terrorists killed in Kech operation

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On night 12/13 November 2024, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Balgatar of Kech District on reported presence of terrorists. During conduct of the operation, after an intense fire exchange between own troops and the terrorists, four terrorists including a High Value Target, Terrorist ring leader Sana @ Baru were killed. He was focal recruitment agent, especially suicide bombers, for so called Majeed Brigade in District Kech and was highly wanted by the Law Enforcement Agencies. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed Terrorists. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan, in step with Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan.

PTA blocks websites for obscene content

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has blocked websites that spread profane and obscene content. As per details, it has so far blocked over one hundred thousand blasphemous URLs and 844,008 obscene websites. In a separate development, the government of Pakistan started blocking unregistered Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) in firewall trial. The unregistered VPNs were blocked temporarily for white-listing. The sources within the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) termed unregistered VPNs a 'security risk' for Pakistan, as they can be used to access 'sensitive information.' PTA has urged businesses—such as IT companies, software houses, freelancers, and banks—to register their IP addresses to ensure continued VPN access and uninterrupted internet services for authorized users. Those registering must provide information about their intended use and specify their business activities. It is to be noted that the PTA started registration of VPNs in 2010 and so far around 20,500 VPNs have been registered, the sources said.

Earthquake hits Islamabad, parts of KP

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A 5.3-magnitude earthquake shook the federal capital, Islamabad, and several areas of neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Peshawar, on Wednesday morning. The tremors were felt in other areas including Mohmand, Shabqadar, Attock, Malakand, Swat, Shangla, Buner, and Abbottabad. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department's Seismological Centre, the earthquake struck at 10:13am, with a depth of 220 kilometres. The epicentre was located in the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan, a region known for frequent seismic activity. This earthquake adds to a series of tremors that have affected the region in recent years, with the Hindu Kush area being a hotspot for seismic activity due to its position along tectonic plate boundaries. Today's tremors came exactly two months after a 5.7-magnitude earthquake jolted the federal capital and parts of Punjab and KP on September 11. The quake in September was preceded by another one of 5.4-magnitude which jolted parts of Islamabad, Rawalpindi and KP in June. So far, the country has reportedly witnessed at least seven earthquakes this year, of which three were in coastal city Karachi.

Pak working to promote legal migration pathways

Minister of Interior Mohsin Naqvi emphasized that It is essential to recognize that these challenges require comprehensive strategies that address not just the symptoms but also the root causes

FOREIGN DESK

BUDAPEST: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi says challenges like prolonged conflicts, economic instability and climate change require comprehensive strategies to address irregular migration. While addressing the Conference he said that since the last Ministerial Conference held in 2019, several important developments have taken place. He highlighted that today, we are confronted with a range of pressing issues such as prolonged conflicts, economic instability and climate change, that have reshaped migratory flows worldwide. He stated that these dynamics create complex challenges that no single country can address alone. He emphasized that It is essential to recognize that these challenges require comprehensive strategies that address not just the symptoms but also the root causes of irregular migration. Interior Minister highlighted that Pakistan has taken a number of legislative and administrative measures to curb irregular migration. He said that we have empowered our Law Enforcement Agencies to effectively prosecute criminals involved in human smuggling. He added that we are also focusing on raising public awareness regarding the dangers associated with migrant smuggling, strengthening our border controls and enhancing regional and international cooperation to address smuggling of migrants. He stated that we



PROCESS MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

are actively working on enhancing bilateral agreements and talent partnerships with EU countries and beyond to promote and diversify legal migration pathways. Mohsin Naqvi highlighted that there has been a troubling rise in anti-immigrant sentiments across the globe, often fueled by populist rhetoric. He added that this trend poses significant challenges. Interior Minister

hoped that the adoption of the Budapest Declaration will generate fresh political momentum for a balanced approach, ensuring that no aspect of migration is prioritized over another in our future work. He said that Pakistan looks forward to a constructive and mutually beneficial engagement with the Process. Interior Minister stated that It is an honor to address this gathering at the

7th Ministerial Conference of the Budapest Process. He congratulated Co-Chairs Turkey and Hungary and extended a special thanks to the Government and people of Hungary for a very warm welcome in the beautiful and historic city of Budapest. He also commended the International Centre for Migration Policy Development for their dedicated efforts towards arranging this meeting.

Privatisation board rejects PIA bid, proposes new plan

New proposals for airline's privatisation will now be forwarded to cabinet committee and federal cabinet for approval

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Privatisation Commission Board of Pakistan has rejected the latest bid for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and presented new proposals for the airline's privatisation, which will now be forwarded to the cabinet committee and the federal cabinet for approval. The decision came during a meeting led by Privatisation Minister Aleem Khan, which reviewed several privatisation initiatives and approved key recommendations. Addressing the meeting on Wednesday, Khan stressed that all privatisation efforts, including those for PIA, must adhere to legal protocols while prioritising the national interest. "The final decision on the privatisation of institutions like PIA rests with the cabinet committee," he stated, adding that steps must be taken to enhance future bidding processes. Khan also directed officials to expedite the privatisation of PIA and other public entities, noting, "We are bound by our oath to undertake whatever actions are necessary for the welfare of the country and its people." He emphasised the importance of learning from the current PIA privatisation process to improve future efforts. The board also considered significant aspects related to the

privatisation of other state-owned projects, marking further steps towards Pakistan's broader privatisation agenda. Meanwhile, The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has once again written to the privatisation minister to participate in the privatisation of national airline PIA. In its first correspondence on November 1, the KP government formally conveyed its readiness to submit a competitive bid for PIA, surpassing the current highest offer of Rs10 billion made by the Blue World Consortium. In a follow-up letter addressed to Federal Minister for Privatisation Abdul Aleem Khan, Hassan Masood Kunwar, Vice-Chairman of the KP Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BOIT), mentioned that 10 days had passed since the initial proposal and that the board was now seeking an update on the matter. The letter emphasised the strategic importance of the acquisition, highlighting strong support from Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and the KP Investment Board, and requested an update on the status of the proposal. The KP government reiterated its commitment to preserving and revitalising PIA, aiming to maintain its legacy as the national flag carrier. The letter noted that the KP leadership was prepared to offer significant resources and support to achieve these objectives, with a vision to return PIA to prominence while aligning with Pakistan's national interests.

Pakistan passport plunges to 102nd in global ranking

Somalia, Yemen, Bangladesh, the Palestinian Authority, Ethiopia, and Libya rank higher than Pakistan

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani passport has seen a further decline, now ranking 102nd in the world, according to the latest report by the global passport ranking organization, Henley & Partners. The report revealed

that countries such as Somalia, Yemen, Bangladesh, the Palestinian Authority, Ethiopia, and Libya now held passports that ranked higher than Pakistan's. These countries were ranked 101st, with their citizens able to travel to 38 countries without a visa, while Pakistani passport holders could travel to only 34 countries visa-free. According to the report, Singapore held the title of the world's most powerful passport, with its citizens able to travel to 195 countries without a visa. France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain follow closely, with access to 192 countries visa-free. Afghanistan held the position of the world's weakest passport, with Afghan citizens able to travel to only 28 countries without a visa. The decline in the Pakistani passport's ranking has been attributed to the large number of Pakistanis fleeing the country due to its current uncertain political and economic situation. Many have been traveling illegally to European countries, while a significant number of Pakistanis also live illegally in Gulf countries, often resorting to begging. Begging is considered a crime in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with Saudi prisons reportedly holding numerous Pakistanis caught in the act. The reputation of the Pakistani passport has also been damaged by Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan, who allegedly obtained Pakistani passports through bribery from passport authorities.

Israel forces presses airstrikes in Lebanon

NEWS DESK

BEIRUT: The Israeli army on Tuesday continued to launch attacks against civilians in Lebanon, targeting them in several areas without prior evacuation warnings. However, 13 airstrikes on Beirut's southern suburbs in the space of only three hours were preceded by evacuation warnings. The attacks caused no injuries but resulted in widespread destruction of residential buildings and commercial, medical and educational centers. The airstrikes in southern Lebanon and Bekaa region, reaching Akkar in Lebanon's far north, erased any hope of a near-term ceasefire settlement. The strikes were accompanied by an announcement on Israel's Channel 14 that "the Israeli army has expanded its operations in southern Lebanon to areas it had not reached since the beginning of the ground operation." About 50 days have passed since Israel intensified its hostile operations in Lebanon targeting Hezbollah. The death toll from these confrontations and attacks has passed 3,200, with more than 14,000 wounded. For the first time, an airstrike targeted a mountainous area between Baalchmay and Aabadiyeh on the road leading to Aley, destroying a building housing displaced people. The mayor of Baalchmay, Adham Al-Danaf, confirmed that "the airstrike targeted a residential building in the Dhour Aabadiyeh area." The initial toll from the Ministry of Health showed "five people killed and two injured." The raids that targeted Beirut's southern suburbs for the first time in the morning, unlike nightly raids before, caused huge destruction. Those who evacuated their homes after Israeli warnings, used their phones to record the collapse of empty buildings in Sfeir, Haret Hreik, Bir Al-Abed, Mrajyeh, Laylaki and Hadath. Israeli warplanes also targeted Tyre, where a strike on a building killed three people and injured many others, while a raid on Tefahta killed a man identified as Kifah Khalil and his family.

Trump names Hegseth as defence secy pick

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump has named Pete Hegseth, a Fox News host, author and military veteran, as his pick for defence secretary. Hegseth, 44, who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, will be responsible for the world's most powerful military in his first political role. Announcing his choice on Tuesday, Trump described him as "tough, smart and a true believer in America First". The news came on the same day Trump announced another political newcomer, billionaire Elon Musk, would take a government cost-cutting role. Trump's administration is taking shape after his win in last week's presidential election. Hegseth was one of a flurry of security appointments that also included Trump's pick of John Ratcliffe to head the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). If confirmed for his role by the US Senate, Hegseth will arrive at the Pentagon with decisions to make on issues such as military assistance for Israel during its campaign in Gaza, and on support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's invasion. Trump wants the US to disentangle itself from foreign conflicts generally. During the election campaign, he criticised the Biden administration's expenditure to support Kyiv. Also on Tuesday, Trump confirmed that he wanted South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem to play a significant role as homeland security secretary. Another military veteran, Michael Waltz, was chosen by Trump as national security adviser - meaning he will advise the president on foreign threats. - Agencies

Russia launches drone, missile barrage on Kyiv

KYIV: Russia stepped up its attacks on the Ukrainian capital early on Wednesday with its first combined drone and missile attack since the summer. Officials said one man was wounded by falling debris from a downed drone in a suburb of Kyiv. Russia escalated its attacks on Kyiv early Wednesday, launching waves of drones and missiles in its first combined aerial assault on the capital in more than 70 days, authorities said. The broadside came as Washington and Seoul echoed warnings from Ukraine that North Korean troops had begun "engaging in combat operations" alongside Russian forces on the border between the warring countries. A security source in Kyiv meanwhile told AFP that Ukraine was behind the assassination of a high-ranking Russian naval officer in a car bombing on the annexed Crimean peninsula. Ukraine's air force said its units had downed four missiles and 37 drones launched by Russia over eight regions of Ukraine overnight and into Wednesday morning. - Agencies

Pak partners with China for Chang'e-8 lunar mission

SUPARCO spox Pakistan will contribute a 35-kilogram rover designed to explore Moon's south pole

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) has announced a historic collaboration with China for the upcoming 2028 Chang'e-8 lunar mission. This marks Pakistan's inaugural venture into lunar exploration, underscoring the country's growing ambitions in space research. A SUPARCO spokesperson revealed that, as part of the mission, Pakistan will contribute a 35-kilogram rover designed to explore the Moon's south pole. The rover, slated for launch in 2028, will play a key role in advancing the mission's objectives by enhancing lunar surface analysis and contributing to revolutionary research on the Moon. "The collaboration with China will pave the way for groundbreaking scientific research that will significantly expand our understanding of the lunar surface," the spokesperson stated. "The rover's primary mission will focus on detailed exploration of the Moon's south pole, an area believed to hold valuable resources, including water ice." This partnership follows the successful launch of Pakistan's iCube Qamar satellite in May 2024, which was deployed aboard China's Chang'e-6 mission. iCube Qamar entered lunar orbit on May 8, marking another significant step in Pakistan's space exploration efforts. The CubeSat, a miniature satellite, serves as an important tool for scientific research and technological advancement. The Chang'e-8 mission, a joint effort between China and SUPARCO, will offer Pakistan its first direct involvement in lunar exploration, enabling Pakistani scientists and engineers to contribute to one of the most ambitious space missions of the decade. - DNA

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