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Pakistan, Syria to work together for regional peace

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Wake-up call

3 dead in AJK protests as govt proposes talks

AJK PM Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq urges action committee to resume dialogue, citing police casualties; The PAC has issued a 38-point charter of demands, including ending 12 reserved seats for refugees and rolling back "privileges of the elite"

DNA / NEWS DESK

MUZAFFARABAD: The federal government has once again offered negotiations to the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC) amid ongoing protests, which claimed the lives of three police personnel and injured over 100. "90% of the committee's demands have already been accepted federal ministers stand as guarantors to ensure implementation of these demands," Federal Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said while addressing a press conference along with AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq. Azad Kashmir witnessed an overwhelming shutdown and wheeljam strike on the second consecutive day, a day earlier, amid intermittent skirmishes between law enforcers and activists in the state capital, Muzaffarabad. Shops, hotels, and commercial centres across Muzaffarabad remained closed, while public transport disappeared from the roads. Although schools were officially open, classrooms were largely empty as students stayed home. The PAC has issued a 38-point charter of demands, including ending 12 reserved seats for refugees and rolling back "privileges of the elite". Addressing the presser, Fazal explained that two demands required constitutional amendments in Azad Kashmir, including abolishing seats reserved for refugees in the Legislative Assembly and reducing the number of ministers. The minister emphasised that the government was still willing to negotiate openly on these two points.

Chaudhry argued that there was no need for protest in Azad Kashmir, as the majority of the demands had already been met. He slammed the action committee for taking the protest into a dead end, warning that protests would not deliver results nor provide a solution. He urged the action committee members to sit down for dialogue, reiterating that the government sought to resolve matters peacefully. "We do not want violence in Azad Kashmir, nor do we want our enemy to benefit from it," Chaudhry said. The minister added that the prime minister had tasked him with holding talks with the action committee in Muzaffarabad to resolve the issues. He revealed that 12 hours of negotiations had already taken place, resulting in a written agreement. Action committee members, he said, had also sought corrections in the document, which were accepted. Despite this, Chaudhry said, the action committee resumed protests on September 29, which were unnecessary. He warned that violent demonstrations would give India the opportunity to use such footage for its own propaganda. Meanwhile, AJK Premier Haq also renewed the government's invitation to talks, saying 90% of demands had been resolved and the remaining could also be discussed. He stressed that negotiations were the only civilised way to resolve disputes and insisted there was no benefit to continuing protests. Haq confirmed that three policemen had been martyred and more than one hundred injured in the unrest, including eight critically wounded. He said the government placed equal value on the lives of both police and civilians.

Hamas wants to amend Trump plan

Hamas negotiators held discussions with Turkish, Egyptian and Qatari officials

NEWS DESK

DOHA: Hamas officials want amendments to clauses in US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan including on disarmament, a Palestinian source close to the group's leadership told agencies. Hamas negotiators held discussions with Turkish, Egyptian and Qatari officials in Doha, the source said, requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters and adding that the group needed "two or three days at most" to respond. Trump's plan, backed by Israeli Prime Minister

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Russian reaction on Gaza peace plan

DNA

MOSCOW: The Russian Federation has taken note of the proposed peace plan for Gaza presented by the President of the United States. In relation to this initiative, the Official Representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria V. Zakharova, stated the following: "Russia has consistently and firmly called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip. In this context, we believe that any measures and initiatives aimed at achieving this critical goal deserve to be supported. It is our sincere hope that a ceasefire will not only take hold but

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US govt shutdown begins

Senate rejects spending measure; analysts warn shutdown could last longer than past closures

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The US government shut down much of its operations on Wednesday as deep partisan divisions prevented Congress and the White House from reaching a funding deal, setting off what could be a long, grueling standoff that could lead to the loss of thousands of federal jobs. There was no clear path out of the impasse, while agencies warned that the 15th government shutdown since 1981 would halt the release of a closely watched September employment report,

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey decorating Syed Jamal Shah with the French award on behalf of the Ministry of Culture, France. - DNA

Life-long contributions

France honours artist Jamal Shah with Order of Arts and Letters

Ambassador Galey highlighted Shah's deep-rooted connection to Pakistan's diverse cultural and historical heritage

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of France to Pakistan, Nicolas Galey, conferred the prestigious Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Order of Arts and Letters) on renowned Pakistani artist Jamal Shah, in recognition of his lifelong contributions to art, culture, and heritage. The award ceremony, held at the French residence, was attended by leading artists, intellectuals, and cultural figures. In his address, Ambassador Galey warmly welcomed Jamal Shah, his family, and friends of the embassy, praising Shah's remarkable journey through multiple artistic disciplines. "We are gathered tonight to celebrate a singular contribution to the field of arts and culture, as you have been officially inducted into this Order of Arts and Letters," he said. The award, established in 1957 by the French Ministry of Culture, honors distinguished global contributors in the realm of arts and literature.

Ambassador Galey highlighted Shah's

deep-rooted connection to Pakistan's diverse cultural and historical heritage. Referring to Quetta, his hometown in Balochistan, the ambassador recalled the work of French archaeologists in nearby Mehrgarh, where remains of one of the earliest known human settlements were discovered. "This unique historical depth and rich cultural narrative is something you kept at heart as you navigated art forms as varied as sculpture, printmaking, acting, and painting," he remarked. He praised Shah's academic journey through the National College of Arts (NCA), where he later became an influential teacher, and his 15-year tenure as founder and head of the Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts. "Above all, we admire your deep attachment to transmission, giving back through teaching and social work. You exemplify the necessity for all artists of giving back and of belonging, but also art's key role as a

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Briefs

Mohsin Naqvi rebuffs Indian media 'apology'

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, in a strong rebuttal against recent claims circulating in Indian media, denied apologising to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) over the Asia Cup trophy presentation row. Addressing what he called "fabricated, nonsense and cheap propaganda," Naqvi, who also heads the Pakistan Cricket Board, said that Indian media is prioritising misinformation over facts. "This fabricated nonsense is nothing but cheap propaganda, aimed only at misleading their own people," he posted on X. "I have done nothing wrong and I have never apologised to the BCCI nor will I ever do so," the ACC chairman added.

US offers security guarantees to Qatar

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States will regard "any armed attack" on Qatari territory as a threat to Washington and will provide the Gulf Arab state with security guarantees, the White House said, after an Israeli strike on the country last month. "In light of the continuing threats to the State of Qatar posed by foreign aggression, it is the policy of the United States to guarantee the security and territorial integrity of the State of Qatar against external attack," said an Executive Order signed by US President Donald Trump. In the event of an attack on Qatar, the United States will "take all lawful and appropriate measures - including diplomatic, economic, and, if necessary, military.

Commonwealth observers

Voters' fundamental political rights restricted in 2024 polls: report

Commonwealth Observer Group report highlights conditions which "affected one party's ability" to contest polls fairly

CENTRELINE REPORT

LONDON: Election observers from the Commonwealth have criticised the fairness of the 2024 general elections in Pakistan in their long-awaited final report, noting that voters' "fundamental political rights" were restricted during the polls. The report, released on Tuesday more than 18 months after the elections, flagged the shutdown of mobile phone services on election night, saying it "reduced the transparency of the process and impacted the efficiency of delivering results". "Critically, the lack of digitally transmitted results forms expanded opportunities for the manipulation of Forms 45, 46 and 47," the Commonwealth Observer Group said in its 161-page report. The observer group further said that "it surveyed a wide range of documentation that appeared to indicate that, in some cases, copies of Forms 45

held by party agents differed from those used in the tabulation of results that later appeared on the ECP website, with vote totals and turnout figures altered."

The report said: "We noted with concern a number of factors in the pre-election period that significantly impacted the level playing field, most crucially the non-allocation of the bat symbol to PTI and the registering of PTI candidates as independents." The report noted: "The COG received multiple reports of PTI members and supporters being arrested, detained, and of PTI offices and PTI members' homes being closed or raided. These occurrences affected the ability of parties and candidates to exercise their fundamental constitutional rights of freedom of association and assembly." Alongside its criticisms, the group commended the Election Commission of

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Hidden hands or internal power struggle? rifts emerge in PTI

The Chief Minister has gone further, directly accusing Ms. Aleema Khan, sister of PTI founder Imran Khan, of conspiring against him

SHAMIM SHAHID

KHYBER Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandhapur, fresh from a successful power show in Peshawar, has moved swiftly to assert his authority—forcing two members of his cabinet to resign while also siding with one of his confidants from Buner by suspending a controversial notification on party office bearers. The sudden ouster of the two provincial ministers—both from Swabi district—has triggered a storm of speculation. The Chief Minister has gone further, directly accusing Ms. Aleema Khan, sister of PTI founder Imran Khan, of conspiring against him. Gandhapur, however, claims that in his latest meeting at Adiala Jail, Imran Khan expressed satisfaction with his performance and gave him a free hand in reshuffling the cabinet. So far, the two ministers and their influential families have remained tight-lipped. Yet their abrupt removal, coupled with Gandhapur's extraordinary allegation against Aleema Khan, has raised serious questions about internal fault lines within PTI. Both dismissed ministers hail from powerful political families. The outgoing education minister is the younger brother of MNA Shahram Khan Tarakai and son of Senator Liaqat Tarakai, while the ex-irrigation minister is the younger brother of PTI stalwart and former National Assembly Speaker

Asad Qaiser. Circles close to the Chief Minister insist the sackings were performance-related, but the ousted ministers reject this, claiming they had no real authority as their portfolios were micromanaged by the Chief Minister's office. Observers also point out that Swabi's disappointing turnout at the September 27 Peshawar rally may have been another factor. The same rally, intended to apply pressure for Imran Khan's release, also saw PTI workers openly criticize party leaders, chanting slogans and even waving shoes—a visible sign of discontent at the grassroots. On the same day, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan revoked his earlier decision on district-level party appointments in Buner, a move widely interpreted as influenced by Gandhapur. The withdrawal favored a close ally of the Chief Minister, indicating Gandhapur's growing control over party affairs in the province. The sequence of events paints a picture of calculated maneuvering. Within 24 hours of his jail meeting with Imran Khan, Gandhapur summoned both ministers and secured their resignations—described by insiders as being "with honor," though the identical wording of their resignation letters only fueled speculation of coercion. The Tarakai family's loyalty to PTI has long been questioned. Shahram Tarakai entered politics under the banner of Awami Jamhoori Ittehad before merging into PTI.

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Mustafa discusses healthcare challenges with WB Country Director

The Minister underlined that Pakistan's health sector faces multiple challenges but reaffirmed the government's commitment to introducing wide-ranging reforms.

ISLAMABAD: World Bank Country Director held a meeting with Federal Minister for National Health Services, Mustafa Kamal, to discuss Pakistan's healthcare challenges and reforms. In the discussions, both sides reviewed the pressing issues confronting Pakistan's health sector and explored sustainable solutions. The World Bank Country Director praised the performance of the Ministry of Health over the past six months and assured full support for its ongoing initiatives. The Minister underlined that Pakistan's health sector faces

multiple challenges but reaffirmed the government's commitment to introducing wide-ranging reforms. He said that the Ministry is working to expand healthcare access to remote and underserved communities through telemedicine services. The Minister also highlighted the government's initiative to implement Universal Medical Records for protecting patient data. He drew attention to the fact that nearly 68 percent of diseases in Pakistan arise from contaminated water, emphasizing that clean drinking water, public awareness, and collective efforts are key to prevention.

"The real duty of the health sector is to prevent people from falling ill, not merely to treat diseases," he stressed. Mustafa Kamal added that reducing the rising patient burden on hospitals requires a stronger focus on prevention. "If we want to reduce overcrowding in hospitals, we must ensure that people do not fall sick in the first place," he remarked. Reaffirming the Ministry's commitment, the Minister said that special measures will be taken to protect people from preventable diseases and to build a stronger, more sustainable healthcare system for the future.



ISLAMABAD: Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Pakistan presenting souvenir with Qaisar Ahmed Shaikh, Federal Minister for the Board of Investment on Wednesday.

Yousaf, Raghib discuss reforms in Zakat, prayer systems

ISLAMABAD :Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Wednesday met with Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), Allama Dr. Raghib Hussain Naeemi, at his office to discuss matters of mutual interest. The discussions focused on strengthening the Zakat and prayer systems. The minister sought the council's assistance on the Zakat mechanism, to which Dr. Naeemi assured full scholarly cooperation. He proposed the formation of a joint working group comprising experts from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and the CII to carry forward the initiative. The minister also underscored the need to further strengthen the Ruete-e-Hilal Committee, while the CII Chairman emphasized the importance of legislation by the National Assembly to enhance its role. He also suggested expanding the committee's scope to the divisional level for greater effectiveness.—APP

E-Office System at the SC launched

By harnessing technology, the justice sector will be better positioned to meet contemporary challenges, ensure timely access to justice, and strengthen public trust in the judicial process

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan hosted a landmark event aimed at advancing digital transformation in the justice sector: the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP) and the National Information Technology Board (NITB), and the formal launch of the E-Office system in the Supreme Court. The ceremony was graced by Justice Yahya Afridi, Chief Justice of Pakistan; Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication; Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Zarrar Hasham Khan, Federal Secretary, Ministry of In-

formation Technology and Telecommunication. However, Justice Ali Baqar Najafi, Judge SCP attended event online from Lahore. The MoU was signed by the Secretary, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP) and the National Information Technology Board (NITB). The agreement provides for the joint development of an Analytical Dashboard for the Judiciary—a digital platform that will consolidate judicial data, integrate information from across the justice sector, and incorporate monitoring parameters of the National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NJPMC). The dashboard will allow real-time tracking of case disposal rates, backlog trends, and institutional efficiency, supporting evidence-based policy making, performance-driven reforms, and enhanced transparency. Following the signing, the

E-Office system was formally launched in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, marking another significant step toward digitalization. The system will digitize all file movement and office work, while a dedicated case management system for the Judges of the Supreme Court will soon be introduced. Together, these initiatives herald the shift towards a more efficient, paperless, and technology-driven judicial process. These reforms represent a major stride in the digital transformation of Pakistan's justice system, reflecting the judiciary's strong commitment to modernization, innovation, and public accountability. By harnessing technology, the justice sector will be better positioned to meet contemporary challenges, ensure timely access to justice, and strengthen public trust in the judicial process.—APP

Jordan, Pak vow to boost bilateral investment ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Pakistan met with Qaisar Ahmed Shaikh, Federal Minister for the Board of Investment on Wednesday. The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral investment ties and exploring new avenues for economic cooperation between Jordan and Pakistan. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing mutual collaboration in trade and investment sectors.

The envoy said that Jordan is a free market economy with free economic zones, which have passed through major reforms during the last two decades. "We would like to increase the volume of trade with Pakistan. Maen Khreasat said that Jordan has strong and historic relations with Pakistan based on mutual respect and shared values. "We intend to enhance bilateral trade ties by intensifying our relationship with the private sector in Pakistan," he maintained. He said both the countries have great potential to increase trade ties in the

manufacturing, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, defence and tourism sectors. The most important way to enhance bilateral trade is through business-to-business cooperation and people-to-people contacts, the ambassador opined. He said that Pakistani products that can be exported to Jordan include fabric, garments, agriculture seeds, machinery and spare parts, oil, juices, cotton, fibre optics, paper and leather. This meeting reflects the growing momentum in diplomatic and economic relations between the two brotherly countries.

Kundi highlights Pak, China strong bilateral ties

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday extended heartfelt felicitations to the Chinese leadership and the people on the occasion of China's 76th National Day. In his message, the Governor said that Pakistan-China friendship has withstood the test of time and is built on mutual trust and brotherhood between the peoples of both nations. He emphasized that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has always played a central role in strengthening these ties. He recalled that Shaheed

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto laid the foundation of the enduring relationship with China, which was further strengthened by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, he added, are carrying this legacy forward. Governor Kundi said that China has stood by Pakistan during testing times, including the recent Pakistan-India conflict, and the PPP leadership has consistently valued its relations with the Chinese leadership. He underlined that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was a guaran-

tee of a bright future for both nations, bringing not only economic stability to the region but also deeper people-to-people connectivity. He further expressed his resolve that development projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with China's cooperation would bring prosperity to the people of the province. Governor Kundi reaffirmed the timeless strength of Pakistan-China relations, saying the friendship is "deeper than the ocean, higher than the Himalayas, and sweeter than honey," and will endure for generations to come.—APP

Breast Cancer: A growing threat to human health

PESHAWAR :In the sterile quiet of an oncology ward in a local cancer hospital in Peshawar, 32-year-old Noman Ali holds his ailing wife's hand with quiet resolve to defeat breast cancer. Just across the hospital bed of IRNUM hospital, Memona's eyes are tired but full of fight as she prepares for her fifth round of chemotherapy. "I never imagined it could happen to me," Memona murmurs. "Life was normal, even joyful. I was preparing breakfast for my family one morning when I felt a sharp pain in my right breast. It was sudden... unexpected." What followed changed her life. After tests and consultations, the young mother was diagnosed with Stage II breast cancer—a diagnosis that she describes as feeling "like hell had fallen on me." But through the darkest days, she found strength in her husband's unwavering support. "His motivation and belief in me pulled me out of despair," she says. "Now, I am on the road to recovery." Memona's story, though heartbreaking, is becoming more common in Pakistan and around the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), breast cancer has overtaken lung cancer as the most diagnosed cancer globally, with 2.3 million new cases reported each year. While the disease primarily affects women, around 2,700 men are also diagnosed annually, making it a threat to all. "Breast cancer is a malignant tumor that originates in the breast cells and can spread to other parts of the body if not detected early," explains Dr. Jawad Khan, senior oncologist at the Institute of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine (IRNUM), Peshawar. "Early detection significantly improves survival rates, but unfortunately, in countries like Pakistan, many cases are diagnosed too late." In 2023 alone, over 685,000 people lost their lives to breast cancer, WHO data reveals. What makes this disease particularly concerning is its indiscriminate nature and that it affects women of all ages, across all regions, and is increasingly appearing in younger women. "We are seeing more patients in their 20s and 30s," Dr. Jawad says. "Lifestyle factors such as poor diet, lack of physical activity, alcohol use, and genetic predispositions are all contributing to this surge." In high-income countries, he said the five-year survival rate for breast cancer patients can exceed 90%, thanks to early detection, advanced medical technology, and access to treatment. In contrast, in low- and middle-income countries like Pakistan, that figure can fall below 50%. Dr. Mahmuniir, senior oncologist at Khyber Teaching Hospital Peshawar, stresses that a lack of awareness, late diagnosis, and poor access to healthcare infrastructure are among the primary barriers to survival. "One in every eight women is likely to develop breast cancer in her lifetime due to poor lifestyle," she says, "but early detection is still our best weapon." The financial burden of cancer care is another devastating blow for many families in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The cost of chemotherapy, surgery, medications, and follow-up care often forces households into poverty, especially in countries like Pakistan, lacking universal health coverage.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Nigerian High Commission Muhtari B.B., along with Spouse of the Charge d'Affaires, Nigerian High Commission Aishatu Yushau Mohammed and others cutting the cake to celebrate the Nigerian National Day. Ms. B. A. Kureshi, Principal IGS F-11/4 Islamabad also present on the occasion. —DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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Oct 01/China
National Day

Oct 01/Cyprus
National Day

Oct 01/Republic of Korea
Armed Forces Day

Oct 01/Nigeria
Armed Forces Day

Oct 02/Guinea
National Day

Oct 03/Germany
Unification Day

Oct 03/Republic of Korea
National Foundation Day

Oct 05/Indonesia
Armed Forces Day

Oct 06/Egypt
Armed Forces Day

Oct 09/Uganda
Independence Day

Oct 12/Spain
National Day

Oct 23/Hungary
National Day

October 24/United Nations
United Nations Day

Oct/25/Romania
Armed Forces Day

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National Day

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TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ICCI delegation calls on new Austrian ambassador

Zafar Bakhtawari Secretary General UBG , underscored the importance of peace and stability for business and economic growth, recalling Austria’s historic role as a neutral country during the Cold War

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and the United Business Group (UBG) met with the newly appointed Ambassador of Austria to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Wolfgang Oliver Kutschera, at the Austrian Embassy. The delegation comprised ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, and ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub. The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere and reflected a strong spirit of mutual understanding between the Austrian Embassy and Pakistan's business community. The Ambassador expressed Austria's willingness to further promote bilateral trade and business relations with Pakistan, assuring his full cooperation with ICCI in strengthening ties in the future. He particularly highlighted opportunities for collaboration in renewable energy, infrastructure development, information technology, and agriculture, noting Austria's expertise in these areas. ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed the Chamber's commitment to working closely with the Austrian Embassy, expressing readiness for B2B meetings to explore partnerships in the IT, agriculture, mining, and business sectors. He further welcomed Austrian investors to Pakistan and announced that ICCI would extend full support to the Austrian Business Conference scheduled for November 18–19. Zafar Bakhtawari Secretary General UBG , underscored the importance of peace and stability for business and economic growth, recalling Austria's historic role as a neutral country during the Cold War. He emphasized that ongoing regional conflicts – such as the Russia-Ukraine war, tensions in South Asia, and instability in the Middle East – continue to pose challenges to global peace. Stressing that prosperity is only possible in a peaceful world, he noted that politics should not be allowed to spill over into areas such as sports, where unity and fair competition must prevail. ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub highlighted the potential for agriculture cooperation, particularly the export of Pakistani fruits and vegetables, including mangoes, to Austria. He invited Austrian businesses to explore Pakistan's agriculture sector and benefit from its vast investment opportunities. The Ambassador, while appreciating these proposals, assured the delegation of his continued support in strengthening economic and cultural ties between Austria and Pakistan.

NUML, UNICEF, MoFE&PT join hands for PSL standard

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark step toward building a more inclusive Pakistan, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, in collaboration with the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), and UNICEF Pakistan convened a National Consultation in Islamabad to develop a unified framework for the standardization of Pakistan Sign Language (PSL). This important gathering is part of the UN Country Team's Disability Inclusion Strategy and aims to create a national roadmap for improving communication access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals across the country. The multi-stakeholder consultation brought together key voices from government bodies, academia, the Deaf community, and civil society to identify priority actions for curriculum development, interpreter training and certification, and the creation of digital PSL resources. It also focused on formulating a National Action Plan for PSL standardization, with clearly defined timelines, responsibilities, and mechanisms for monitoring progress. The event was attended by several distinguished figures including Maj Gen Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI (M) (Retd), Rector NUML; Minister of State for MoFE&PT, Ms Wajeeha Qamar; Capt. Asif Iqbal, Director General, Special Education, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training; Sharmeela Rasool, Deputy Representative, UNICEF Pakistan; Afke Bootsman, Head of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office; and Irfan Mumtaz, Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan Association of the Deaf, among others. In his address, Rector NUML Maj Gen Shahid Mahmood Kayani emphasized the urgency of closing Pakistan's long-standing inclusivity gap by introducing a nationally ratified Pakistan Sign Language standard. He underlined that NUML, as an institution with expertise in language research and emerging technologies, is well positioned to serve as a neutral academic host for this initiative. He added that NUML has the capacity and credibility to bring together Deaf community representatives, government bodies, researchers, and the private sector to work toward a common goal. Rector NUML outlined the university's vision to establish a Standard Pakistan Sign Language (S-PSL), supported by a comprehensive open-access PSL Dictionary comprising over 10,000 entries. This dictionary would be enriched with artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML)-enabled visual resources to ensure accessibility for Deaf users across educational, healthcare, and public service platforms. He stressed that this would allow Deaf Pakistanis to engage fully in society, access learning and essential services, and see their rights and dignity recognized. NUML announced plans to set up a dedicated PSL project office equipped with a professional sign capture studio and staffed with Deaf liaison officers. The university will also work closely with key partners such as the Pakistan Association of the Deaf, Deaf Reach, and provincial special education departments to ensure the work reflects authentic community needs and input. All participants in the consultation reaffirmed their commitment to working collaboratively to develop a national PSL standard that meets global best practices and ensures no Deaf Pakistani is left behind. This initiative represents a vital step forward in realizing Pakistan's commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and promoting inclusive access to education, communication, and public services for the Deaf community. As Rector Kayani concluded, "The time for action is now."—DNA

Youth development index tool launched

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA-Pakistan) on Wednesday launched the Youth Development Index (YDI) Tool 2025, in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP) and SDPI as implementing partner, to develop the Pakistan Youth Development Index (PYDI) – 2026 to systematically measure and track the progress of youth well-being and developm. The YDI Tool 2025 has been rolled out with the clear objective to collate the progress on youth development for establishing YDI 2026 that demonstrate Pakistan's commitment to global frameworks such as the UN, Commonwealth, and other international organizations, said a press release. The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), as implementing partner of PMYP and UNFPA will extend secretariat support to PYDI Technical Working Group (TWG) to finalize YDI Tool along with finalizing the pre-testing methodology, validity of tool, data collection instrument, weighting of domains and indicators, assessing data availability and ensuring their suitability for the Pakistan Youth Development Index. The Youth Development Index (YDI) is a composite measure developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat to assess the multi-dimensional progress of young people aged 15–29. YDI measures the multi-dimensional progress of youth across various sectors, including education, employment, health, civic participation and political engagement. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Muhammad Ali Malik, Deputy Secretary to the Prime Minister, emphasized the urgent need for the Pakistan Youth Development Index (PYDI), highlighting the country's unique demographic profile. According to the 2023 Census, nearly 68% to 70% of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30, equivalent to almost three out of every four Pakistanis.—APP

PIDE hosts seminar on National AI policy

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) hosted a high-profile seminar on Pakistan's newly launched National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy, focusing on the theme "Bridging Gaps in Pakistan's AI Roadmap: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward." The session brought together policymakers, academics, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders to deliberate on the transformative potential of AI for Pakistan's economy, governance, and society. The panel featured distinguished speakers including Dr. Anil Salman, Chair of the Government of Pakistan's AI Policy Committee; Dr. Najibullah, Member Science and Technology at the Planning Commission of Pakistan; Ms. Suniya Shahid, CEO & Co-founder of Techvention Ltd.; and Dr. Naveed Iftikhar, CEO of Atomcamp, who joined virtually via Zoom. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Wajid Islam, Research Economist at PIDE. Dr. Salman explained the policy's vision as bold, ethical, and transformative, stressing inclusivity across economic, social, and technological dimensions. He highlighted that the policy was developed through extensive consultation with domestic and international stakeholders including UNESCO, ADB, and the Commonwealth. He projected that full implementation could boost GDP by 7–12% and create up to one million jobs by 2030. Dr. Najibullah discussed the financial ecosystem and emphasized the importance of venture capital and accelerators to bridge Pakistan's "valley of death" in scaling startups. He announced a Public Venture Capital Fund of PKR 2 billion and highlighted the need for global accelerators to support Pakistani innovators. He also stressed sectoral opportunities in agriculture, health, and education, and pointed out challenges around data infrastructure, payment gateways, and cybersecurity. Ms. Suniya Shahid presented an industry perspective, stressing the importance of AI adoption in healthcare and the need for ethical auditing mechanisms to ensure responsible AI use. She advocated for dedicated AI funds for women-led startups, retraining programs for displaced workers, and greater use of social media campaigns to raise awareness among youth. She also warned that unless AI models are trained on localized datasets, Pakistan will continue to face serious implementation gaps.—APP

F-9 park parking firing 2 accused held, weapon recovered

ISLAMABAD :Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested two accused after an exchange of fire outside McDonald's at F-9 Park during the early hours of Tuesday. An official told APP on Wednesday that at around 2:35 a.m., the accused Umar Farooq, resident of E-11/3, and Hassan Shah, resident of G-11, opened aerial fire from car No. AGB-783 was in the restaurant's parking area, creating panic among citizens present there. He said that upon receiving information, a police team from Margalla Police Station immediately reached the spot, where the accused also opened fire at the police party. The police, using tactical expertise, managed to overpower the culprits inside the car. He said that during resistance, a constable's uniform was torn while apprehending the accused. The police recovered a pistol and two magazines from their possession and shifted them to Margalla Police Station. The accused were booked under FIR No. 603/25 with sections 324 (attempt to murder), 153 (provoking riot), and 186 (obstructing a public servant in discharge of duty). A police spokesman said further investigation was underway to identify possible facilitators of the accused.—APP

Mehfil-e-Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) held

RAWALPINDI: To mark the blessed birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Rawalpindi Women University (RWU) organized a soulful Mehfil-e-Milad-un-Nabi(PBUH). MPA Tahira Mushtaq and the wife of Acting Vice Chancellor RWU, Prof Dr Muhammad Inayatullah Khan, were the chief guests at the event. The program began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by heartfelt Naats and Darood Sharif presented by students. Lecturer of Islamic Studies Saima Bashir highlighted the Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH) and emphasized the Prophet's message of brotherhood, stressing the importance of aligning all aspects of life with his teachings. Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Bushra Mirza (Pride of Performance, Tamgha-e-Imtiaz), in her message, reminded students of the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), saying it is a beacon of guidance for humanity. She encouraged them to treat education as an amanah that they must carry with responsibility, their research as a sadaqah e jariyah that benefits others long, and to embody sincerity, compassion, and service in their lives. The milad concluded with a heartfelt prayer for the progress of Pakistan and the unity and well-being of the Muslim Ummah.—APP



ISLAMABAD Minister of State for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Kheeral Das Kohistani in a meeting with Ambassador of France to Pakistan Nicolas Galey.

NA body on Railways defers discussion on bill

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways on Wednesday deferred discussion on "The Transfer of Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2025" owing to the absence of the Pakistan Peoples Party parliamentarians. The meeting was held with MNA Waseem Qadir presiding in the absence of the Chairman, under Rule 216(2) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007. However, the committee observed that members from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) were not present. It was unanimously felt that consideration of the Bill should be deferred until their participation in a subsequent sitting. Accordingly, the meeting was adjourned without deliberation on the legislative business. The meeting was attended by MNAs Ibrar Ahmed, Haji Jamal Shah Kakar, Syed Waseem Hussain, Ahmed Saleem Siddiqui and Muhammad Ilyas Chaudhry. Senior officials of the Ministry of Railways and Pakistan Railways were also in attendance.—APP

Court Notice

IN THE COURT OF SHAHAZADA KAMRAN JUDGE FAMILY COURT RAWALPINDI
Suit for Dissolution of Marriage and recovery of maintenance allowance etc. Kainat Aziz etc. Versus Usama Muqeen Notice to Usama Muqeen s/o Muqeen Ahmed R/o Ali Town, Naim Abdi, Bahrah Kahou Islamabad. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 02-10-2025 at 8 am avoid ex-parte proceeding.

Briefs

Ahsan
felicitates
China on
National Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday extended warm congratulations to the leadership and people of the People's Republic of China on the occasion of their National Day. In his message, the minister said the day symbolized China's unity, resilience and remarkable journey of progress that has transformed it into a beacon of development and stability in the world. "Pakistan takes pride in being China's iron brother and an all-weather strategic partner," Ahsan Iqbal remarked, adding that the two countries shared a friendship rooted in trust and common aspirations that continues to grow stronger with each passing day. Highlighting ongoing cooperation, the minister said Pakistan and China were committed to advancing mutual collaboration under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Phase-II and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), reaffirming their pledge to work for a shared and prosperous future. "May Allah bless China with further progress, and may Pakistan-China friendship remain everlasting," he added.

Pakistan
greet's China

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has extended heartfelt felicitations to the leadership, Communist Party, and people of the People's Republic of China on the occasion of its 76th National Day, praising Beijing's remarkable journey of progress and its steadfast support to Pakistan. In his message, Naqvi lauded the Chinese leadership for achieving economic stability and sustainable development within a short span, noting that "with perseverance, adherence to principles, and a spirit of collective welfare, China has attained a distinguished place among the comity of nations." He described China's extraordinary accomplishments in economic, social, and military spheres as a source of regional development and stability. Paying tribute to China's "glorious history, cultural heritage, and astonishing progress," Naqvi reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering friendship and historic bond with its "iron brother." The minister highlighted that Pakistan-China relations are rooted in strategic partnership, citing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a shining example of bilateral cooperation. "From the towering peaks of the Himalayas to the rugged Karakoram and the depths of the seas, the everlasting friendship between Pakistan and China stands as a testimony of trust and resilience," he remarked.—APP

Azma Bokhari
urges
'Dialogue'

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari on Wednesday underscored the need for dialogue to ensure political stability and called on the PPP to respect provincial boundaries in governance, stressing that cooperation between provinces is essential for effective administration. Speaking exclusively to a local news channel, Azma Bokhari said the Punjab provincial government, under the active leadership of Chief Minister Punjab is actively helping flood victims without any outside support. She confirmed Punjab's dedication to the rehabilitation of those affected by floods and promised that the province will take full responsibility for managing all flood-related challenges. Bokhari made it clear that Punjab respects other provinces and never interferes in Sindh's matters, adding, however, she accused PPP of involving itself in Punjab's governance. "There is no confusion from our side. We do not want to create problems. If PPP wants to help, they should do it properly and keep away from our affairs," she said.—APP

Leghari calls for enhanced
collaboration for Clean Tech

DNA

ISLAMABAD: DThe Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), in collaboration with a number of national and international partner organizations, held international Seminar on The Future of Energy: Innovations in Renewable and Clean Energy Technologies. H.E. Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Federal Minister for Energy, Government of Pakistan, graced the inaugural ceremony of the event, as Chief Guest, held at COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI). Ambassadors and diplomats of Palestine, Philippines, Somalia, Syria, Sudan, and Zimbabwe also attended the inauguration. The Federal Minister noted that although Pakistan contributes less than 1% of global emissions, it ranks among the most climate-vulnerable nations. "Harnessing our abundant solar, wind, and hydro potential is a national priority for energy self-sufficiency and sustainability," he said. He outlined the Government's reforms, including stronger governance through independent boards in distribution companies, steps toward privatization for efficiency, and digitization with smart and advanced metering. He added that infrastructure alone is not enough; smart solutions, advanced forecasting, storage, and digital integration are also required. To this end, the Power Planning and Monitoring Company (PPMC) has been established to support evidence-based decision-making. Pakistan is committed to deriving 60% of its electricity from clean and renewable sources by 2030. He remarked: "our grid carries 2,000 MW of wind, 800 MW of solar, and over 10,000 MW of hydropower. Distributed generation, particularly net metering, adds nearly 7,000 MW more, underscoring our steady transition to a sustainable energy future." He expressed gratitude to the Executive Director COMSATS, Ambassador Dr. M. Nafees Zakaria, the Rector CUI, Prof. Dr.



Sajid Qamar, and all of the collaborating institutions for organizing the event bringing together a diverse and distinguished audience. He commended COMSATS' initiatives and reaffirmed the Government of Pakistan's full support for the organization's mission. The Executive Director COMSATS highlighted that 15 collaborators from COMSATS Member states and International Partner organizations was a manifestation of the importance attached to Renewable Energy Technologies. He viewed energy security as a cornerstone of sustainable development and therefore called for ensuring access to reliable, affordable, and clean energy, as enshrined in SDG-7. He considered it essential to integrate digital technologies in energy systems. Ambassador Zakaria highlighted COMSATS' initiatives to promote clean energy, particularly the development of indigenous Electric Vehicle (EV).

He proudly shared that COMSATS Tech Partner has developed EV technology indigenously. Prof. Seyed Komail Tayebi, President ECO Science Foundation, Prof. Liu Weidong, Executive Director ANSO, and Prof. Dr. Junaid Mughal, COMSATS University Islamabad delivered remarks during the inaugural session. They highlighted the significance of renewable and clean energy technologies and expressed pleasure on this collaboration. ED ANSO highlighted the ongoing activities of his organization, including scholarships, fellowships, collaborative R&D and capacity building. He informed that ANSO is promoting international cooperation in S&T with support of its 78 member institutions. He noted that ANSO and COMSATS have common mandate and therefore unlimited opportunities of cooperation. He appreciated

COMSATS programs and initiatives. The seminar included four technical sessions during which 15 speakers from China, Iran, Morocco, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Türkiye, and USA delivered talks on latest trends and futuristic technologies in renewable and clean energy, integration of digital technologies in energy systems, and policy interventions to promote clean energy adoption. They explore cutting-edge topics, inter alia, related to solar power, wind energy, biofuels, tidal energy, energy storage breakthroughs, and AI-driven energy systems and smart grids. The event attracted over 70 in-person and 80 online participants. These included scientists, researchers, policy makers, faculty members and students from Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Jamaica, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Türkiye, United States, and Zimbabwe.

Pakistani flavors and
culture captivate visitors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The International Cultural Bazaar at Nanjing South Railway Station's NJCHI • PARK is transforming into a vibrant global village, with Pakistan's colorful culture and flavorful cuisine emerging as standout attractions. Being held as part of the city's "Autumn Sugar & Alcoholic Drinks Season", this week the event features 40 booths across four thematic zones including technology displays, creative workshops, cross-border commerce and a special "Belt and Road" countries exhibition that highlights international cooperation and cultural exchange. Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. Pakistani stalls offer an authentic taste of the South Asian nation, serving beloved dishes such as fragrant Biryani, savory Yakhni Pulao, sweet Jalebi and hearty Chicken Karahi. Maroosha, a Pakistani master's student of food science at Nanjing Tech University, shared her entrepreneurial dreams at the bazaar. "I hope to open a restaurant in Nanjing that combines Pakistani cuisine with food from my husband's home country, Bangla-

desh," she said, highlighting the event's role in inspiring cross-cultural business ideas. Fellow exhibitors Khan Kashif and Aiden underlined their commitment to authenticity by using ingredients directly imported from Pakistan. In a nod to local tastes, they also showcased their innovative fusion creations, such as Chicken Buns and Mashed Potato Buns, which were met with enthusiasm. Cultural exchanges extend beyond food. Shahid, a scholar from Southeastern University, delivered an engaging presentation on the diverse heritage of Pakistan covering its cuisine, cultural landmarks, sporting achievements, stunning landscapes, notable personalities and higher education institutions. "Events like this are vital to let more people know about the potential and beauty of Pakistan," Shahid stated. Adding to the cultural exchange, Pakistani students Faria Rashid and Manahil Aftab, along with their classmates, demonstrated their appreciation for Chinese culture through a performance of Tai Chi, a UNESCO-listed intangible cultural heritage. The musical segment came alive with Rana Shahid's soulful performance of traditional Pakistani songs, which further enhanced the warm and festive atmosphere.

Pakistani scholar
demonstrates Eco-Friendly dam research

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Areej Sabir, a Pakistani PhD candidate from Hohai University, presented her innovative research on sustainable dam technology at the 3rd Contest of Dam Safety Science Popularization for Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) countries, Gwadar Pro reported. The event, hosted at the Nanjing Hydraulic Research Institute (NHRI), gathered experts and scholars from 17 countries including China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, and Laos to advance knowledge sharing in critical water infrastructure management. The 3rd Contest of Dam Safety Science Popularization for Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) countries, photo provided by Center for Research Innovation and Development (CRID), Dhaka, Bangladesh. Under the theme "Better Dams, Better Life", the forum facilitated discussions on sustainable water resource management, climate resilience, and transboundary water cooperation. Areej's presentation, "Innovating Eco-Friendly Dams with Real-Time Monitoring", demonstrated how dam design can integrate natural processes through simulated seasonal flow patterns. Her approach aims to maintain ecological balance while supporting fish migration, spawning and overall aquatic biodiversity. "China leads in dam engineering, and this platform provides crucial knowledge exchange opportu-

nities for BRI nations," Areej noted, emphasizing the importance of integrating ecological considerations into infrastructure development. Reflecting on Pakistan-China cooperation, Sabir described dam safety collaboration as "a cornerstone of our bilateral partnership". She highlighted that given Pakistan's significant water security and energy needs, particularly through projects like the Diamer-Bhasha Dam under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), collaboration with China's expert institutions like NHRI is both logical and essential. "This partnership goes beyond contractor-client relations; it's built on long-term strategic trust," she stated. The knowledge and technology transfer in areas such as seismic safety, sediment management and digital monitoring represent the most valuable aspect of this collaboration, according to Areej. She highlighted that such collaboration ensures long-term resilience through joint geological surveys, robust warning systems and maintenance protocols, ultimately safeguarding downstream communities and vital infrastructure investments. The event serves as both a high-level international exchange and a capacity-building platform, effectively promoting knowledge sharing and collaboration among young scientific talents from BRI countries on water security. Areej Sabir concluded, "Presenting my PhD research alongside leading experts was a privilege, and I returned with valuable insights that will undoubtedly shape my work," underscoring the event's role in fostering sustainable development and regional cooperation

Driving without license after
Oct 7 to invite arrest

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has warned that after the extended deadline of October 7, strict action will be taken against anyone driving without a valid license, including arrest and impounding of vehicles. The Chief Officer of the Islamabad Traffic Police while speaking to a local news channel explained that the authorities have made it clear that strict measures will be enforced against those driving without a valid license after the extend-

ed deadline of October 7, warning that offenders will be subject to legal action including detention and confiscation of their vehicles as part of efforts to curb unlawful driving practices in the city. In addition to legal penalties, officials have also announced that individuals found driving without a license will be ineligible to receive character certificates until they obtain a valid driving license. This move aims to discourage unlicensed driving by linking it to broader legal and

administrative consequences. The Islamabad Traffic Police urges all drivers to comply with the licensing requirements before the deadline to avoid facing these strict penalties. The authorities emphasize that these measures are necessary to improve road safety and maintain law and order in the city. The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has expanded its services at facilitation centers to accommodate the increased demand for driving licenses, he said, adding that this includes

longer operating hours and the deployment of mobile units to make the licensing process more accessible for citizens across the city. Authorities emphasized that the focus goes beyond imposing penalties; it is about enhancing road safety and reducing unlicensed driving, a major cause of accidents in the capital. By encouraging more people to secure valid licenses, the ITP seeks to strengthen adherence to traffic regulations and create safer roads for everyone.

CCP grants approval
for PTCL's acquisition
of Telenor Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PTCL is grateful to the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) for successfully concluding Phase II of the review of its acquisition of Telenor Pakistan. We highly appreciate the Commission's thoroughness in safeguarding the future outlook and long-term sustainability of Pakistan's telecom sector. We are especially thankful to our customers, partners, and the wider telecom community who have been eagerly looking forward to this historic announcement. PTCL fully cooperated with the Commission throughout the review process and remains committed to advancing the acquisition in complete alignment with the directions of all regulatory bodies on this matter, along with necessary compliances to the applicable laws of the country. This intra-sector consolidation is a pivotal step forward for Pakistan's telecom industry, which will draw strengths from both PTML (Ufone) and Telenor to deliver best in class customer experience, enhanced network quality, broader coverage, and innovative digital services for their customer base, while enabling the sector to achieve greater efficiency, resilient infrastructure, and a more competitive landscape. Moreover, the consolidated entity will strengthen nationwide connectivity, drive innovation, and support the government's vision of a digitally empowered Pakistan.

OGDC
announces
gas and
condensate
discovery

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) on Wednesday announced a significant discovery of gas and condensate at Bitrism East-1 exploratory well, located in District Khairpur, Sindh. OGDC is the operator of the Bitrism Exploration License with 95% working interest, along with Government Holdings (Private) Limited (GHPL) holding 5% working interest. The Bitrism East-1 well was spudded on June 30, 2025, and drilled to a depth of 3,800 meters in the Sembar Formation. The well was drilled using OGDC's in-house expertise in collaboration with its joint venture partner GHPL. Based on wireline log interpretations, two Drill Stem Tests (DSTs) were conducted in the Lower Goru Formation, targeting Massive and Basal Sands. The first DST in the Massive Sand and the second DST in the Basal Sand both confirmed the presence of hydrocarbons. The well has a combined production potential of 22.5 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas and 690 barrels of condensate per day (BCD) at a 32/64" choke. This discovery adds to OGDC's hydrocarbon reserves and underscores the company's commitment to enhancing Pakistan's energy security. It will also contribute towards reducing the gap between energy supply and demand through indigenous resources.


15 new
licensing
desks added
to facilitate
citizens

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has established 15 additional desks at its Faizabad Traffic Headquarters to provide citizens with improved licensing facilities. An official told APP on Wednesday that the initiative aims to facilitate applicants in obtaining driving licenses in less time and with greater ease. He said the new desks would remain functional 24 hours a day to accommodate citizens without long delays. He said the newly established desks will be operational for the public from 6 p.m. onwards at the ITP Headquarters, while service vans are also providing mobile licensing facilities across different areas of the capital.—APP


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PPP, PML-N differences widen over flood relief funds

DIFFERENCES between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) have once again come to the surface, this time over the distribution of flood relief funds. The issue has snowballed into a political tussle, with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz openly criticizing the PPP leadership. At the heart of the dispute lies the channel through which the funds should be disbursed. The PPP is insisting that the money be distributed via the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), a flagship scheme closely associated with the Bhutto legacy. The PML-N, however, is adamant that the Punjab government should distribute the funds directly to flood-affected families. Both sides are accused of playing politics over a matter that directly concerns millions of suffering citizens. For PPP, using BISP would not only ensure centralized distribution but also allow it to reap political dividends, particularly in Sindh and southern Punjab where the party has traditional support bases. For the PML-N, allowing funds to pass through BISP would be tantamount to handing PPP the political credit—something Maryam Nawaz and her party are unwilling to concede. Instead, the Punjab government wants to ensure that affected communities see PML-N, and specifically Maryam’s administration, as the benefactor. The tug-of-war highlights how disaster relief, instead of being treated as a humanitarian issue, is once again becoming hostage to partisan battles. Punjab government sources argue that direct disbursement ensures transparency and efficiency. PPP leaders counter that bypassing BISP is an attempt to weaken an institution that has built credibility over years of functioning. Beyond the question of flood funds, the disagreement reflects a broader struggle for political space between the two parties. PPP is increasingly desperate to regain relevance at the federal level. With speculation rife that November could bring major political shifts following a possible extension for the country’s military leadership, PPP sees an opening to maneuver itself into a stronger position in Islamabad. For PML-N, especially under Maryam Nawaz’s leadership in Punjab, the priority is to consolidate its hold on the province—the party’s traditional power base. Any perception of weakness, or of conceding ground to PPP, could undermine that goal. Hence, Maryam’s sharp criticism of the PPP leadership signals not just frustration over relief fund mechanisms but also an assertion of her political authority. The growing friction is likely to intensify in the coming months. Observers believe that PPP’s insistence on BISP is not only about relief funds but also about strengthening its bargaining position in the federal coalition. On the other hand, PML-N’s strategy appears focused on keeping PPP at bay in Punjab while preparing for possible turbulence at the federal level. With both parties unwilling to compromise, the rivalry risks overshadowing governance at a time when unity is required.

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The Future of NATO: Do We Still Need It?

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was created in 1949 to provide collective defense for its member states, primarily in Europe and North America. The core principle of the alliance is that an attack against one member is considered an attack against all, as outlined in Article 5 of the NATO treaty. This principle has been invoked only once, in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001. Following the Cold War, NATO shifted its focus from solely deterring Soviet threats to addressing a wider scope of security challenges. The alliance expanded its roles into crisis management, peacekeeping, and combatting terrorism. NATO conducted missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and maritime security operations. Furthermore, the alliance grew eastward, incorporating many former Warsaw Pact countries and Soviet republics, thereby redefining its strategic objectives. Today, NATO faces multifaceted challenges that raise questions about its traditional role and future viability. The most acute challenge is the resurgence of Russia as a geopolitical adversary, especially after its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This conflict revitalized NATO’s original mission of collective defense and caused members to strengthen their military presence, especially in Eastern Europe. Simultaneously, internal disputes within NATO have emerged, including disagreements over defense spending and diverging views on global powers such as China and Russia. Some member states have questioned NATO’s ongoing relevance and the financial costs of membership, particularly as security threats evolve beyond traditional military conflicts into realms such as cyber warfare, terrorism, and hybrid warfare. The rise of China as a global power also affects NATO’s strategic considerations. Although China does not pose a direct military threat to NATO members comparable to Russia, its expanding influence in technology, economics, and geopolitics challenges the alliance to reexamine and update its strategic priorities accordingly. Despite these challenges, several strong arguments affirm NATO’s continued necessity: Collective Defense and Deterrence: NATO remains the world’s most effective military alliance for credible deterrence against aggression, particularly from Russia. Its integrated command structure and coordinated capabilities outperform any other security arrangement globally. Political Unity: Beyond its military functions, NATO fosters vital political dialogue and cooperation among Western democracies. This coordination helps address a broad spectrum of security issues, including counterterrorism and cyber defense. Adaptability: NATO has demonstrated resilience and adaptability over decades. It is expanding its focus to include new domains like cyber and space and is exploring partnerships beyond the traditional Euro-Atlantic sphere. Support for Global Stability: Through joint exercises and partnerships, NATO plays a crucial role in stabilizing conflict regions and enhancing interoperability among diverse militaries worldwide. NATO’s future will largely depend on its ability to reform and stay relevant amid an increasingly complex global environment. Key priorities include: Resolving internal divisions and achieving equitable burden-sharing among members.

Atlas: The Stranger That Stirred the Solar System

Qamar Bashir



Yet many astronomers recoiled from this leap. Natural explanations, they insisted, remained the safest bet. Comets do outgas in strange ways; icy jets can mimic controlled propulsion; dust tails and solar radiation can disturb paths more than simple equations predict. “We must resist the temptation to let imagination outrun data,” said Professor Karen Meech of the University of Hawai i, who has studied interstellar objects with NASA’s backing. To her, Atlas’s chemistry and behavior, though unusual, were still within the margins of cosmic possibility. Extraordinary claims, she reminded us, demand extraordinary evidence...

WHEN news first broke that a foreign body, nicknamed Atlas, had drifted into our solar system from the deep unknown, the story ignited imaginations across the world. Unlike the countless comets and asteroids that pass silently and obediently under the rule of gravity, Atlas appeared to resist the script of physics, straying from expected trajectories, releasing strange exhaust, and fueling a chorus of voices who insisted that this was no ordinary celestial wanderer. For some, it was a harbinger of hope, for others a reason for dread, and for many more, simply another case of social media whipping fantasy into fear. As the reports multiplied, so too did the speculations. Atlas, they said, was not just a ball of rock and ice, but a thinking structure, a body with a mind. It seemed to accelerate and decelerate as if under command. Its tail expelled jets that some described as more like controlled emissions than the natural outgassing of frozen material. More astonishing still were claims about its makeup: pristine water ice, carbon dioxide, nickel, oxygen, and other minerals necessary for sustaining life. If comets are the ancient archives of planetary chemistry, Atlas was presented as something more—a vault stocked with the ingredients of creation. In some theories, it carried not just the seeds of life but the nursery for colonizing Mars, a shortcut to a dream that has eluded human ambition and bankrupt engineering calculations for decades. If Elon Musk and the world’s brightest engineers struggled with the exorbitant demands of turning Mars into a second Earth, perhaps, suggested the more audacious voices, Atlas itself had arrived as nature’s or someone’s ready-made supply ship. The speculation did not stop there. Atlas, according to some, was accompanied by smaller supporting objects, a fleet of escorts that moved in formation, responding to commands rather than to cosmic coincidence. This was not a comet, they whispered, but a convoy. A mothership traveling with attendants, guided by alien intelligence or unknown propulsion, rewriting the laws of motion. Such talk might once have been dismissed as the stuff of pulp science fiction. But the sheer spectacle of the idea, amplified through social media algorithms, gained velocity of its own. Platforms that thrive on engagement saw a surge of clicks, comments, and shares, making Atlas less a scientific observation and more a cultural phenomenon. Into this storm stepped Avi Loeb, the controversial Harvard astrophysicist who previously ignited debate by suggesting that the earlier interstellar visitor, Ou-

muamua, could have been alien technology. Writing about Atlas, Loeb pointed to its retrograde orbit, its alignment with the ecliptic, and its unexplained acceleration as evidence that we should at least remain open to the extraordinary. “We should consider the possibility that Atlas is technological,” he argued, suggesting that its peculiar behavior could not easily be reconciled with the standard toolkit of cometary physics. Loeb’s position, amplified by media headlines hungry for mystery, lent academic weight to what others were too quick to label fantasy. Yet many astronomers recoiled from this leap. Natural explanations, they insisted, remained the safest bet. Comets do outgas in strange ways; icy jets can mimic controlled propulsion; dust tails and solar radiation can disturb paths more than simple equations predict. “We must resist the temptation to let imagination outrun data,” said Professor Karen Meech of the University of Hawai i, who has studied interstellar objects with NASA’s backing. To her, Atlas’s chemistry and behavior, though unusual, were still within the margins of cosmic possibility. Extraordinary claims, she reminded us, demand extraordinary evidence, and in the absence of such evidence, science must remain grounded in caution. Still, in the slipstream of scholarly debate, a flood of less measured voices took hold. Religious preachers framed Atlas as a sign written in scripture, a herald of judgment or renewal. Conspiracy theorists insisted that governments knew more than they admitted, withholding proof of alien fleets. Entrepreneurs of fear churned out videos and posts, monetizing curiosity and anxiety. What had begun as an astronomical observation became a mirror reflecting our own social media ecosystem, where truth often stands little chance against sensation. The deeper danger lay not in Atlas itself, but in what its story revealed about us. People shared and reshared the most speculative claims, rarely pausing to check their sources. Platforms rewarded the loudest, not the most accurate. Anxiety spread like static, especially among those predisposed to mistrust official explanations. As studies from the American Psychological Association have shown, misinformation, once lodged in the mind, is resistant to correction. In the digital age, a comet can be transformed into a spaceship by nothing more than collective imagination, and the correction, even if it comes, arrives too late to erase the impression. This is not the first time our species has faced such a moment. In 1938, Orson Welles’s radio drama-

tization of “War of the Worlds” sparked panic in listeners who mistook fiction for news. Today, Atlas plays a similar role, except that the amplifiers are global, instantaneous, and relentless. The risk is not simply that we misunderstand one comet, but that we normalize a culture where conjecture is sold as fact, where fear is a business model, and where science becomes drowned by noise. The lesson is not that we should shut down wonder or forbid speculation. Wonder is the soul of science. The lesson is that wonder must be married to honesty. It is one thing to ask, “What if Atlas is a probe?” and another to declare, “Atlas is a probe.” It is one thing to invite curiosity, another to inflame fear. Scholars like Loeb remind us that bold ideas have their place, but they must be framed as hypotheses, not headlines. Media must learn to distinguish between what is known, what is possible, and what is pure invention. And platforms, if they are to remain responsible guardians of global conversation, must find ways to check the flood of monetized rumor without strangling free inquiry. Atlas may one day fade from our skies, absorbed into the long list of cosmic visitors that passed through unnoticed. It may shatter, evaporate, or leave quietly into the galactic night. But the story it triggered will remain as a test of how humanity responds when faced with mystery. Do we reach for knowledge or for clicks? Do we calm ourselves with reason or excite ourselves with fear? Do we treat the universe as a source of truth or as a stage for performance? These are questions not about Atlas, but about us. The future of social media and conventional media alike depends on the answers. We need a culture that prizes credible information, that nurtures critical thinking, that separates speculation from deception. Governments and civil society must press platforms to curb deliberate misinformation. Educators must teach skepticism as a civic skill. And as individuals, we must pause before sharing, ask where claims come from, and remember that not every dazzling tale deserves belief. In the end, Atlas may be no more than a lump of ice and rock obeying hidden but natural laws. The real wonder—and the real danger—lies not in the comet, but in the stories we build around it.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attache to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC
Macomb, Michigan, USA

A Child of Gaza Speaks to the World

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



They call Gaza uninhabitable now. I do not know the word, but I know my street has no doors, only broken bricks. I know the school where I learned my letters is now a shelter where even babies weep from hunger. I know my grandfather’s olive tree, older than me, lies uprooted and burned, its roots curled like the fingers of the dead. I do not understand politics, but I understand famine. My belly aches even here...

I DO not know how old I am anymore. The days have lost their names. I only know I was a child of Gaza once, playing between the walls that have now fallen into dust. Now I lie in a hospital bed in a country not my own, with bandages where my arms should be strong, with a window that shows me no home, only a sky I do not belong to. The television at the end of the ward is my only companion, its voices louder than my pain when the doctors grow silent. It shows the rulers of the world in New York, standing at a great hall they call the United Nations, speaking with polished words as if words could rebuild a childhood. They say the United Nations was once the roof under which quarrels ended and peace began. To me it is only a place where speeches are made while we bleed. I heard them speak of Palestine, of Gaza, of recognition, as though giving us a chair in their grand assembly might heal our wounds. They spoke of dignity, but I wonder if dignity can return my father who never left the rubble, or my sister whose small hands now belong to the earth. In Gaza, before the bombs, we had little but we had life. My mother grew strawberries in the cracks of our soil, my brother chased the birds along the shore, and I dreamt of becoming a teacher. But then the skies split open with fire. Now they say more than thirty-eight thousand of us are gone. Numbers, they call us. Numbers that scroll across the screen while I whisper names; my uncle Mahmoud, my cousin Huda, my neighbor who gave me oranges. They are not

numbers. They are my world. I watch the men in suits argue about hostages, about resolutions, about vetoes. They do not argue about my hunger, about the thirst that burned my throat until water tasted of salt and blood, about the medicine that never came until my wounds grew black. They talk of history, of law, of legitimacy, while my friends are lowered into the soil without shrouds. They say Palestine is a “non-member observer,” as if those words mean more than the cries of children running barefoot through smoke. One night on the television, I heard them speak of April 18, when twelve of fifteen countries lifted their hands for us. But one hand, from America, came down heavy enough to silence them all. I am too young to understand power, but I know what silence feels like—it feels like lying in the dark of a collapsing house waiting for someone to come, and no one comes. They call Gaza uninhabitable now. I do not know the word, but I know my street has no doors, only broken bricks. I know the school where I learned my letters is now a shelter where even babies weep from hunger. I know my grandfather’s olive tree, older than me, lies uprooted and burned, its roots curled like the fingers of the dead. I do not understand politics, but I understand famine. My belly aches even here, far from Gaza, because my heart is still there. I understand loss; the strawberry fields my mother loved are gone, and so is she. They say recognition has come at last, that nations have admitted we exist, that we are worthy of statehood.

But can recognition kiss my mother’s forehead one last time? Can it stop my brother’s empty chair from haunting me at night? I listen to their speeches, and they sound beautiful. They speak of humanity, of rights, of peace. But when the screen goes black, I am left with silence—the silence that watched Gaza burn. Recognition, they say, is better late than never. But to me it feels like flowers laid on a grave. Noble, perhaps, but too late for the one buried beneath. I am only a child. I do not ask for thrones or titles. I ask for bread that does not taste of ashes. I ask for water that does not poison my lips. I ask for books, for a school, for a morning without the sound of jets. I ask that when they speak of Palestine, they remember not the halls of New York but the broken toys scattered across the ruins of Gaza. If the United Nations is truly the home of nations, then let them know that Gaza is more than a question on their agenda. Gaza is my home. Gaza is the graveyard of my family. Gaza is the wound of the earth. They may recognize Palestine in their resolutions, but Palestine has already been recognized by blood, by soil, by the tears of mothers who still call their children’s names into the dust. I am that child who still dreams, even from a hospital bed, that one day Gaza will be more than rubble, that the world will remember not only what was destroyed but what can still be saved. But tonight, as I close my eyes, all I see are speeches on a television screen, and all I hear are the echoes of bombs that spoke louder than their words.

Briefs

Hidden hands or internal...

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Both he and his cousin Atif Khan had previously been expelled from ministerial posts by former CM Pervez Khattak over alleged dissent. Their uneasy relationship with PTI leadership continues under Gandhapur. By contrast, the Qaiser family has remained steadfast in PTI ranks since 2013. The removal of Asad Qaiser's younger brother from the cabinet is therefore being read as a strong signal that even loyalty offers no protection in the current power struggle. These internal fissures, combined with Gandhapur's public allegation against Aleema Khan, highlight deep divisions within PTI's ranks at a time when unity is critical. While Imran Khan's incarceration remains the party's rallying point, the energy appears increasingly consumed by internal rivalries and factionalism. No one can deny that the charges against Imran Khan are political in nature and ultimately demand political solutions. Yet, instead of focusing on reconciliation with political contemporaries and state institutions, PTI leadership seems trapped in internal battles. This not only weakens the party's bargaining position but also adds to political instability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a province already strained by governance challenges. If PTI truly wishes to secure Imran Khan's release and stabilize its position, its leaders—including Barrister Gohar Gandhapur, and others—must prioritize unity and political engagement over infighting.

Voters' fundamental political...

FROM PAGE 01

Pakistan's efforts to improve inclusivity. It highlighted "a reduction in the voter registration gender gap from 12% in 2013 to 7.7% in the 2024 election" and praised the expansion of the ECP's Gender and Social Inclusion Wing. It noted improvements in youth voter turnout and measures such as a gender hotline to report election-related harassment. The report said: "The potential of Pakistan's democracy is enormous. Pakistan has a vibrant and diverse media; women and the youth are more engaged than ever; and Pakistan's CSOs play a critical role in the democratic life of the country, continually pushing for reform and improvement." However, it stressed that "the improvement of electoral processes will fundamentally depend on the broader political conditions in which elections are held".

India down Sri Lanka in Women's World Cup 2025 opener

GUWAHATI: India were off to a flying start in their ICC Women's World Cup 2025 campaign as they beat Sri Lanka by 59 runs in the opening game at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium, Guwahati, on Tuesday. The rain-reduced game saw India bundling Sri Lanka out for 211 in 45.4 overs, after the target was revised to 271 in 47 overs as per the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method. India lost Smriti Mandhana early after electing to bat, and Pratika Rawal and Harleen Deol tried to rebuild with a 67-run partnership for the second wicket. Boundaries were hard to come by as Sri Lanka's spinners applied tight control, and wickets began to tumble. Inoka Ranaweera was the key destroyer, dismissing Rawal in the 20th over and then taking three wickets in the 26th over, removing Harleen, Jemimah Rodrigues, and Harmanpreet Kaur in a decisive spell. Richa Ghosh soon fell to Chamari Athapaththu, leaving India struggling at 124/6. The innings was steadied by Amanjot and Deepti, who stitched together a century partnership. Combining caution with calculated aggression, the duo rotated the strike effectively and gradually accelerated the scoring. — Agencies

UNODC and NAB round off a collective journey

This project has laid the foundation for promoting business integrity in the private sector, widely recognized as the engine of economic growth. By combining the preventive role of NAB with active private sector participation, the initiative created a collective will to enable a transparent and growth-oriented business environment

DNA

LAHORE: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in collaboration with the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), concluded its series of business integrity workshops under the Global Action for Business Integrity (GABI) project with a final guest lecture at the University of Lahore. The workshops created a platform for SMEs, the private sector, academia, and youth to learn, share, and act together on integrity. The closing session brought students and faculty into dialogue with NAB and private sector leaders, stressing that young people are vital to building a culture of accountability and transparency. The series showed clear results. NAB was seen not only as an enforcer but also as a partner in prevention. Businesses and SMEs gained practical tools to manage risks and improve compliance. Most importantly, youth pledged to act as integ-



riety ambassadors, making integrity part of their personal and professional values. Trust between institutions, businesses, and young people grew stronger, laying a base for long-term cooperation. This project has laid the foundation for promoting business integrity in the private sector, widely recognized as the engine of economic growth. By combining the preventive role of NAB with active private sector participation, the initiative created a collective will to enable a transparent and growth-oriented business environment. Championing this change are young people, alongside public and private actors, who are emerging as key drivers of change through accountability and reform. NAB and UNODC underlined that real change happens when government and partners work together with citizens. By investing in youth, supporting SMEs, and encouraging collective action, the GABI project has helped advance meaningful reforms for a fairer and more transparent future in Pakistan.

Nooh Butt sets sights on gold at World Championship



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Commonwealth Games hero and weightlifting star Nooh Dastagir Butt is set for a high-profile return at the VIRUS Weightlifting Finals & UMWF World Championships, to be held from December 3-6, 2025, in Daytona Beach, Florida. Famously dubbed the "Hulk of Pakistan" after his record-breaking show at the 2022 Commonwealth

Games, the three-time international strongman and powerlifting champion is eyeing nothing less than gold in his comeback — his first international weightlifting appearance in three years after a prolonged dispute with the Pakistan Weightlifting Federation (PWF). During his absence, Nooh earned multiple gold medals in powerlifting and strongman events in Uzbekistan, South Africa and beyond. With the federation dispute now resolved through the efforts of Madam Nuzhat

and Hafiz Jibran Butt, he has been cleared to represent Pakistan again. His comeback is being backed by Rd. Rizwan Aftab Ahmed, CEO ACTIVIT and Director National Hospital DHA Lahore, who has been sponsoring his training, nutrition and medical needs. "I am grateful to Rd. Rizwan for supporting me and even helping with my parents' medical needs. Now I have only one mission — to win international gold medals for Pakistan," said an emotional Nooh, who trains daily in Gujranwala under the guidance of his father and former weightlifter Ghulam Dastagir. His mother praised his relentless efforts, saying: "Our home feels like a training ground. His dedication is unmatched, and our greatest joy will be to see him win more medals for Pakistan." To further sharpen his skills, a post-tournament training camp in the U.S. is planned, giving him exposure to international coaches and world-class facilities. His roadmap includes the World Championships, the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games, with the ultimate goal of global dominance. Rd. Rizwan summed it up: "I want Nooh to leave a legacy that inspires generations. My only expectation is victory — for him to raise Pakistan's flag high and become synonymous with excellence in world sport."

PSB Summons Athletics Federation Over Election Irregularities

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP) has come under scrutiny after allegations of constitutional violations and mismanagement in its recent elections, prompting the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) to issue a formal notice and summon the federation's office-bearers for a hearing on October 3. The action follows complaints filed by the National Association of Athletics Technical Officials (NAATO), which alleged irregularities in the federation's General Council meeting, decision-making process, and financial transparency. The case has been referred to the adjudicator under the Pakistan Code of Ethics and Governance in Sports 2024, with Senator Pervaiz Rashid set to preside over the proceedings. AFP officials, including the Secretary General, have been directed to submit a written reply along with supporting documents. The PSB has warned that failure to comply may result in ex parte action, where decisions will be made solely on the basis of available records. Sports analysts note that the case once again highlights the governance crisis plaguing Pakistan's athletics. Critics argue that instead of focusing on athlete development and grassroots progress, the AFP remains mired in power struggles, internal disputes, and a lack of accountability. The outcome of the October 3 hearing could carry serious implications for athletics in Pakistan. If the allegations are proven, the AFP may face disciplinary action, further complicating preparations for upcoming international competitions.

Jannik Sinner thrashes Learner Tien to win China Open for 21st title

DNA

BEIJING: Jannik Sinner won the 21st title of his career by thrashing American teenager Learner Tien 6-2, 6-2 in the China Open final on Wednesday. The Italian world number two lifted the trophy for the second time on Beijing's hard courts, where he beat Daniil Medvedev in the final on his tournament debut in 2023. The 24-year-old is the third man to win multiple China Open titles after Novak Djokovic with six and Rafael Nadal with two. His only loss on Beijing's center Diamond Court has been to great rival Carlos Alcaraz, who won last year's championship match in three gripping sets. Alcaraz was not defending his title in the Chinese capital and on Tuesday won the Japan Open in Tokyo.

France honours artist Jamal Shah...

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form of resilience and healing," Galey said. The French envoy underlined that Shah's philosophy of "resistance through art and art through resistance" resonates strongly with France's own cultural identity and diplomatic outlook. He recalled Shah's visit to France in 2017 as a guest of the Ministry of Culture, and his tenure as Pakistan's Federal Minister of National Heritage and Culture in 2023, where he sought to promote tourism, archaeology, crafts, and folk traditions. For Islamabad's cultural scene, Ambassador Galey noted, Jamal Shah had been a driving force—whether as Director General of the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), or more recently as Chairman of the Silk Road Cultural Center. "From art exhibitions to festivals and concerts, you have maintained and strengthened the diversity of partners, art forms, mediums, and themes that have characterized your career of more than 45 years," he said. The ceremony not only recognized Jamal Shah's individual accomplishments but also symbolized the enduring cultural cooperation between Pakistan and France. Jamal Shah in his speech reflected on his lifelong engagement with art, literature, and cinema, which he described as a constant "drift" rather than a specialization. "I consider myself to be a drifter. I drift from one thing to another so that I can enjoy life as much as I can,"

he said, adding that art cannot be expressed effectively without first understanding life. Recalling his formative years in Quetta, Shah narrated how a chance encounter with Jean-Paul Sartre's works introduced him to philosophy. "I picked up Sartre's book Nausea from a stall on Jinnah Road. It was a struggle to read, but when I began to understand, I felt born again—ready to face life as a freer individual," he remarked. He later went on to read Sartre's trilogy, which he said clarified many of his confusions and gave him a new lens to view existence. Shah also shared a personal anecdote from his 2017 trip to Paris, where he attempted to meet Sartre's long-time secretary. Despite his efforts, he missed the meeting, which he called a personal loss. Paying tribute to French art, Shah praised painters like Henri Matisse, Gustav Klimt, and Gustave Courbet, the latter of whom he described as close to his own artistic philosophy of protest. "My art is the art of protest," he declared, linking his work to the tradition of questioning and challenging norms. Concluding his remarks, Shah emphasized that for him, art remains inseparable from life. "Art is for life, and life gives meaning to art," he said, thanking the French government for the honor. The ceremony highlighted France's cultural ties with Pakistan and honored Jamal Shah's contributions as a painter, sculptor, actor, and filmmaker whose work embodies both artistic freedom and social commentary.

Hamis wants to amend Trump plan

FROM PAGE 01

Benjamin Netanyahu, calls for a ceasefire, the release of hostages by Hamas within 72 hours, the group's disarmament and a gradual Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. But the Palestinian source said: "Hamas wants to amend some of the clauses such as the one on disarmament and the expulsion of Hamas and faction cadres". Hamas leaders also want "international guarantees for a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip" and guarantees that no assassinations attempts will be made inside or outside the territory. The source said Hamas was also in touch with "other regional and Arab parties", without giving details. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) has warned in its latest situation report that Israel's escalating military assaults have further crippled life-saving services in Gaza, where famine and displacement are worsening. Al Jazeera reported, citing a report. UNRWA said escalating Israeli attacks on Gaza City, including on tents sheltering displaced people, homes and civilian infrastructure, are causing heavy casualties, blocking aid efforts and forcing more people to flee. In southern Gaza, families are crammed into makeshift tents along the coast, overcrowded schools, or sleeping in the open amid rubble. In the occupied West Bank, it warned that Israeli military incursions have stretched past nine months, with about 32,000 Palestinian refugees from Tulkarem, Nur Shams and Jenin camps still unable to return home.

Russian reaction on Gaza peace plan

FROM PAGE 01

will become sustainable, ultimately leading to a lasting stabilisation of the situation in the Palestinian enclave. The establishment of a durable calm is a fundamental prerequisite for launching large-scale, comprehensive efforts to rebuild the sector's critical infrastructure, which has suffered near-total destruction during the course of hostilities. A successful and unimpeded implementation of this plan must pave the way for the resumption of a constructive dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. The ultimate objective remains a comprehensive political settlement of all outstanding issues on a recognised international legal basis. This foundation provides for the creation of an independent Palestinian state, coexisting in peace and security with Israel and all other states in the region."

US govt shutdown begins

FROM PAGE 01

slow air travel, suspend scientific research, withhold pay from US troops and lead to the furlough of 750,000 federal workers at a daily cost of \$400 million. Trump, whose campaign to radically reshape the federal government is already on track to push out some 300,000 workers by December, warned congressional Democrats that a shutdown could clear the path for "irreversible" actions, including cutting more jobs and programmes. The shutdown commenced hours after the Senate rejected a short-term spending measure that would have kept government operations afloat through November 21. Democrats opposed the legislation over Republicans' refusal to attach an extension of health benefits for millions of Americans, which are due to expire at the end of the year. Republicans say the issue must be addressed separately. At issue on the government funding front is \$1.7 trillion for agency operations, which amounts to roughly one-quarter of the government's total \$7 trillion budget. Much of the remainder goes to health and retirement programmes and interest payments on the growing \$37.5 trillion debt.

Ethiopian envoy Dr. Jemal awarded honorary PhD degree

DNA

KARACHI: H.E. Kamran Khan Tessori, Governor of Sindh, Pakistan, conferred an Honorary PhD degree and a gold medal on H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, for his exceptional work in strengthening the diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Ambassador was honored with the distinction at a special convocation ceremony of the Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology, held at the Governor House Sindh. The event was attended by government officials, Parliamentarians, the diplomatic corps, the business community, civil society representatives, and media. Addressing the convocation, the Governor of Sindh lauded the efforts of Ambassador Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula for his remarkable contributions to strengthening the bilateral relationship be-

tween Ethiopia and Pakistan. He specifically appreciated the Ambassador's critical role in commencing the operations of Ethiopian Airlines in Pakistan, which has served as a key instrument of Pakistan's Look Africa and En-

gage Africa policies. The Ambassador expressed his gratitude to the Governor of Sindh for the honor and recognition of his work. He called the Governor as a "Friend of Ethiopia", recognizing his key role in the establish-

ment of the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad, the exchange of official and business delegations, and the launch of Ethiopian Airlines in Karachi. Following the ceremony, the two sides held a meeting and discussed the grow-

ing bilateral cooperation in areas including trade, investment, aviation, environment, education, health, culture, and tourism. They agreed to further deepen bilateral relations by enhancing cooperation in these diverse areas.



Briefs

PSX gains 146 points to close at 165,640

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, as the benchmark KSE-100 index gained 146.75 points, showing a positive change of 0.09 percent, and closed at 165,640.34 points against 165,493.59 points on the previous trading day.

A total of 1,639,021,153 shares were traded during the day compared to 1,349,798,022 shares the previous day, whereas the share value stood at Rs 69.66 billion against Rs 76.77 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 486 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, out of which 173 recorded gains, 287 sustained losses, whereas 26 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd. with 299,631,391 shares at Rs 7.34 per share, Bank of Punjab with 191,997,025 shares at Rs 29.80 per share, and Pak Elektron with 132,355,135 shares at Rs 59.31 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 445.00 per share, closing at Rs 31,265.00, followed by Supernet Technologies Limited which rose by Rs 135.85 to close at Rs 1,494.33.

On the other hand, PIA Holding Company Limited-B recorded a maximum decrease of Rs 384.99 per share to close at Rs 25,600.00, followed by Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited which declined by Rs 273.71 to close at Rs 10,009.96. In the futures market, a total of 312 companies transacted shares, out of which 108 recorded gains, 200 sustained losses and 4 remained unchanged.—APP

Gold price surges by Rs3,500 to Rs410,278 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs3,500 on Wednesday and was sold all time high at Rs410,278 per tola as compared to Rs406,778 on the last trading day. According to All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs3,001 to Rs351,747 from Rs348,746 whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up to Rs322,446 from Rs319,695, showing a rise of Rs2,751. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$35 and was traded at \$3,890 against its sale at \$3,855, the association reported. The price of per tola silver increased by Rs50 and was traded at Rs4,826 while that of 10 grams silver went up by Rs43 to Rs4,137. Similarly, the international silver price rose by \$0.50 to \$47.27, the association added.—APP

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 281.30 against the previous day's closing of Rs 281.31. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.25 and Rs 282.35, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 0.36 to close at Rs 330.75 against the last day's closing of Rs 330.39, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen increased by 01 paisa to close at Rs 1.91, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound rose by Rs 0.61 to Rs 378.91, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 378.30. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham went up by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 76.59, while the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paisa and closed at Rs 75.00.—APP



Islamabad: Ms. Naz Khan, Acting Country Manager – IFC Pakistan, visited Finance Division to pay a courtesy call on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb.

National AI Policy discussed, project 7–12% GDP growth, 1m jobs by 2030

The session brought together policymakers, academics, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders to deliberate on the transformative potential of AI for Pakistan's economy, governance and society

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a seminar on Wednesday thoroughly deliberated on Pakistan's newly launched National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy from various perspectives, projecting a significant 7–12 percent increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the creation of up to one million jobs by 2030 with its full implementation.

They were participating in a seminar themed "Bridging Gaps in Pakistan's AI Roadmap: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward," organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). The session brought together policymakers, academics, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders to deliberate on the transformative potential of AI for Pakistan's economy, governance and society. The panel featured distinguished speakers including Dr Anil Salman, Chair of the Government of Pakistan's AI Policy Committee; Dr Najibullah, Member Science and Technology at the Planning Commission of Pakistan; Suniya Shahid,

CEO & Co-founder of Techvention Ltd.; and Dr Naveed Iftikhar, CEO of Atomcamp, who joined virtually via Zoom. The discussion was moderated by Wajid Islam, Research Economist at PIDE. Dr Salman explained the policy's vision as bold, ethical, and transformative, stressing inclusivity across economic, social, and technological dimensions. He highlighted that the policy was developed through extensive consultation with domestic and international stakeholders including UNESCO, ADB, and the Commonwealth. He projected that "full implementation can boost GDP by 7–12% and create up to one million jobs by 2030." Dr Najibullah discussed the financial ecosystem and emphasized the importance of venture capital and accelerators to bridge Pakistan's "valley of death" in scaling start-ups. He announced a Public Venture Capital Fund of Rs 2 billion and highlighted the need for global accelerators to support Pakistani innovators. He also stressed sectoral opportunities in agriculture, health,

and education, and pointed out challenges around data infrastructure, payment gateways, and cyber-security. Suniya Shahid presented an industry perspective, stressing the importance of AI adoption in healthcare and the need for ethical auditing mechanisms to ensure responsible AI use. She advocated for dedicated AI funds for women-led startups, retraining programs for displaced workers, and greater use of social media campaigns to raise awareness among youth. She also warned that unless AI models were trained on localized data-sets, Pakistan will continue to face serious implementation gaps. Joining via Zoom, Dr Naveed Iftikhar highlighted the gap between policy formulation and adoption, stressing that AI integration within government, universities, and industries remains slow. He emphasized the urgent need for up-skilling across civil service, academia, and public sector organizations, and called for partnerships with Saudi Arabia, China, and global data centers to bridge Paki-

stan's infrastructure gap. In his concluding remarks, Dr Nasir Iqbal, Associate Professor and Registrar at PIDE, reflected on the macroeconomic implications of AI policy. He stressed that the success of the policy must be judged on three fundamental pillars: productivity, inclusivity, and market competitiveness. He cautioned that while AI holds immense promise, it could also deepen inequality or lead to monopolistic structures if not implemented inclusively. He urged policymakers to think innovatively, beyond a project-based approach, and proposed measures like a "two-minute business registration model" to reduce barriers for entrepreneurs and village economic zones to empower rural communities and women. The seminar concluded with consensus that while Pakistan faces significant challenges in infrastructure, financing, and inclusivity, the National AI Policy has set the right direction. Its success will depend on sustained collaboration between government, private sector, academia, and international partners.—Agencies

Yemen's Houthis claim missile attack on Dutch-flagged ship

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates: Yemen's Houthis early Wednesday claimed the attack that left a Dutch-flagged cargo ship ablaze and adrift in the Gulf of Aden, underlining the range of their weaponry and their campaign targeting shipping over the Israel-Hamas war. The attack Monday on the Minervagracht was the most serious assault by the Iranian-backed Houthis in the Gulf of Aden, some distance from the Red Sea where they have sunk four vessels since November 2023. The attack also comes as Israel engages in a new ground offensive targeting Gaza City as efforts to reach a ceasefire again hang in the balance. Meanwhile, the Mideast also remains on edge after the United Nations reimposed sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program. The Houthis fired a cruise missile that targeted and struck the Minervagracht, Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said. Saree accused the ship's owners, Amsterdam-based Splithoff, of violating "the entry ban to the ports of occupied Palestine." Initially, the US Navy-oversight Joint Maritime Information Center said the Minervagracht had no ties to Israel, but a note Tuesday said the center was "reviewing vessel affiliations for possible links to Israel." The attack wounded two mariners on board the Minervagracht, whose 19-member crew hailed from the Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka and Ukraine.—APP

Morocco's youth protests turn violent on fourth day

The protests come at a time of popular discontent over Morocco's social inequalities, which have disproportionately affected young people and women. Recent reports of the deaths of eight pregnant women at a public hospital in Agadir have been a particular source of public outrage

RABAT: Violent clashes erupted in several Moroccan cities late Tuesday between youths and security forces, local media reported, after days of protests calling for reforms in the public health and education sectors. Videos published by news outlets which AFP was unable to verify showed masked demonstrators in Inezgane, near Agadir, hurling stones at police, setting fires near a shopping center and damaging a local post office. Similar scenes were reported in nearby Ait Amira, in central Morocco's Beni Mellal and in Oujda in the northeast. It remained unclear whether there were any injuries. The youth-led protests were initiated by a collective known as "GenZ 212," whose founders remain unknown. In a statement posted late Tuesday on its Facebook page, the group expressed "regret over acts of rioting or vandalism that affected public or private property." It also urged participants to remain strictly peaceful and avoid any behavior that could "undermine the legitimacy of our just demands." The new protests marked the fourth consecutive day of demonstrations, though there were no reports of violence before today. Moroccan prosecutors have said they will try 37 people for participating in the protests, one of their lawyers said. "Thirty-four individuals will be prosecuted while free on bail, with their trial scheduled to begin on October 7, while three others will face prosecution in detention," lawyer Souad Brahma told AFP, adding that the exact charges against them were not yet known. More than 200 mainly young demonstrators have been arrested over the past three days in Rabat during gatherings that were dispersed by police, said the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH). Most were later released. In Casablanca, the public prosecutor submitted a request Tuesday to open an investigation into 18 individuals for their alleged role in obstructing traffic during a protest over the weekend. Moroccan news agency MAP reported, adding that six minors were referred to a specialized court. In a statement released Tuesday, Morocco's governing coalition, composed of center-right and liberal parties, said it "listens to and understands the social demands" of these young people and was "ready to respond positively and responsibly." GenZ 212 had put out the call for protests days before on the platform Discord, citing issues such as "health, education and the fight against corruption," while professing its "love for the homeland." The protests came at a time of popular discontent over Morocco's social inequalities, which have disproportionately affected young people and women. Recent reports of the deaths of eight pregnant women at a public hospital in Agadir have been a particular source of public outrage.—Agencies

US firm, Pak firm to boost for exploration sector: Ali Pervaiz

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development for Pakistan's energy landscape, a high-level meeting was held today between Mr. Ali Pervaiz Malik, the Federal Minister for Petroleum, and senior leadership from the international and local energy sector to discuss the revival of Peshawar Block. The Minister met with Mr. Pierce Onthank, Chief Executive Officer of Hycarbex-American Energy, and Mr. Faheem Haider, CEO of Mari Energies, at the Ministry of Petroleum. The executives briefed the Minister on a landmark transaction wherein MariEnergies has partnered with Hycarbex American Energy Inc, and Fatima Petroleum for Peshawar Block. The Peshawar Block had remained inactive for several years. The new collaboration between Hycarbex-American Energy, Mari Energies and Fatima Petroleum will form a Joint Venture (JV) to recommence exploration and development activities, injecting new life into the project. Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik commended the companies on their initiative and investment. He termed the revival of the block a positive step towards enhancing domestic oil and gas production. "The commitment shown by these companies to unlock the potential of this block is commendable. It is crucial for our goal of indigenization and sustainability of fuel supplies, and we assure full support in facilitating its advancement," stated the Minister. Minister Malik also highlighted the government's broader reform agenda for the energy sector, focused on ensuring its long-term sustainability and attracting foreign direct investment.—DNA



Myanmar's war torn Rakhine faces hunger catastrophe, aid groups say

BANGLADESH: After Ajib Bahar's six-month-old son fell sick last year in Myanmar's war-torn Rakhine state, the 38-year-old Rohingya mother said she had no medicine or food to give him. The boy died in her arms. "My children cried all night from hunger. I boiled grass and gave it to them just to keep them quiet," Bahar said from a refugee camp in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, where she and her family sought safety after fleeing violence and starvation in Myanmar. Rakhine state, a western coastal region that has suffered years of conflict and ethnic violence mostly targeting the Rohingya Muslim minority, is now facing an "alarming" hunger crisis due to a "deadly combination of conflict, blockades, and funding cuts," according to the United Nations' World Food Programme. At a high-level UN conference in New York on Myanmar's minority groups on Tuesday, the United States and Britain announced that they would provide \$96 million in further assistance to support the Bangladesh refugee camps that house over a million Rohingyas who fled Rakhine.—APP

Poland to extend German border checks until April

WARSAW: Poland on Wednesday said it would extend temporary checks along its borders with Germany and Lithuania by a further six months, until April 4 next year.

Border checks had been reinstated in July, with the Polish government justifying the measure as a way to combat irregular migration.

Warsaw had accused Berlin, which reintroduced checks along their shared border in 2023, of sending migrants back toward Poland — an accusation Germany denies.

"We are extending border controls with Germany and Lithuania to monitor the migration route originating from the Baltic states, passing through Poland, and leading to Western Europe," Polish Interior Minister Marcin Kierwinski stated in a statement.

"We are intercepting individuals attempting to illegally transport migrants to the West," he said.

The minister also referenced "persistent migratory pressure" on the border with Belarus, a country Warsaw accuses of instrumentalising migration to destabilize the region.

"During the first eight months of 2025, nearly 25,000 illegal crossing attempts were recorded at the Polish-Belarusian border," according to the statement. Over the same period, Polish border guards detained 2,400 people attempting to cross the Polish-German border irregularly in both directions, including almost 550 who had already breached barriers along the border with Belarus.—APP

Namibia projects tourism decline after wildfire in game reserve

WINDHOEK: Namibia's tourism industry is expected to suffer over the next three years after a week-long wildfire ravaged over a third of its largest game reserve, Etosha National Park, a senior government official said. Established as a national park in 1907 during German colonization, Etosha is home to diverse wildlife, including lions, elephants, leopards, giraffes, and zebras, and is one of the top tourist attractions in the southern African country. Latest official estimates show the fire damaged 38 percent of the roughly 20,000 square-kilometer park, but unofficial assessments suggest the damage may be worse. Satellite images showed vast swaths of blackened land and authorities said an unknown number of animals had been killed. "It's a hit we've taken in terms of damage to both fauna and flora. Recovery is possible, but it will take a little bit of time," said Sikongo Haihambo, executive director of Namibia's Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism.—APP

Briefs

Philippines
quake death
toll climbs
over 90

MANILA: The death toll from a powerful earthquake in the central Philippines has climbed to over 90 on Wednesday, with injured patients overwhelming hospitals on the island of Cebu as workers carried dozens of body bags away in the chaotic aftermath. The shallow magnitude 6.9 quake struck at 9:59pm (1359 GMT) Tuesday off the island's northern end near Bogo, a city of 90,000 people, according to the US Geological Survey (USGS). Injured children cried and adults screamed while receiving treatment on beds laid out beneath blue tents on the driveway of the Cebu Provincial Hospital in Bogo. They had been wheeled out of the building amid fears of further harm as hundreds of aftershocks rocked the region overnight. Nearby, hospital workers carried black body bags on stretchers into vans that will take them to local mortuaries, AFP journalists saw. Up to 60 people are reported killed so far, Office of Civil Defence deputy administrator Rafaelito Alejandro said. "We are receiving additional numbers of reported casualties so this thing is very fluid," he told reporters in Manila. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council earlier listed 147 injured across the central islands, where 22 buildings were damaged. Rescuer Teddy Fontillas, 56, told AFP he had not slept a wink, adding some patients had to be moved to other hospitals because the one in Bogo was already overflowing. "We are already overwhelmed, so we have to bring them to the city," he said, referring to the provincial capital Cebu, some 100 kilometres (60 miles) to the south. — Agencies

Nine dead in
south India
thermal power
project mishap

NEW DELHI: At least nine persons died and one was injured when a portion of an under-construction thermal power project collapsed in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, confirmed a local cop on Wednesday. The mishap occurred in the state's capital city Chennai. All the deceased were laborers hailing from the north-eastern state of Assam. The laborers were working at a height of over 20 feet when the iron scaffolding installed for the construction of an arch suddenly collapsed, the local cop reportedly added. The mishap reportedly occurred at the under-construction 1,320-Megawatt Ennore Special Economic Zone (SEZ) thermal power project late on Tuesday. The injured worker was undergoing treatment at a local hospital. — APP

'Child marriage not
invalid but facilitators
to face punishment'

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court has disposed of a writ petition related to an underage marriage, while also making broad recommendations for legislative reforms regarding child marriages in Pakistan. Justice Muhammad Azam Khan issued a detailed judgment in a case filed by petitioner Muhammad Riaz, who sought return of his wife, Madiha Bibi, after her family members took her from his home. The couple had married on May 30, 2025, at the Tehsil Courts Complex in Taxila, despite opposition from the woman's family. The case centered on a factual dispute: the marriage certificate (Nikahnama) recorded Madiha's age as "almost 18 years," but a birth certificate registered after the marriage indicated she was born on September 15, 2009, making her only 15 years old. This discrepancy made age a disputed question of fact that would ordinarily require evidence and adjudication by a competent forum. When produced before the court, Madiha said she had married of her own choice and wished to remain with her husband and declined to re-

turn to her parents. Justice Khan allowed her to reside with the petitioner, ruling that the Islamabad Child Restraint Marriage Act of 2025 does not invalidate such marriages, but rather punishes those who facilitate them. The judgment grapples with a legal contradiction in Pakistani law. Under Islamic jurisprudence, a marriage is considered valid if a person has attained puberty, traditionally presumed at age 15, and gives free consent, regardless of statutory age requirements. However, under the Islamabad Child Restraint Marriage Act of 2025, any marriage involving a person under 18 is criminalised, with penalties for the adult party and facilitators. The law, however, does not explicitly declare such marriages void. Justice Khan cited numerous Supreme Court and high court precedents establishing that while child marriages may constitute criminal offenses, they are not rendered invalid under Islamic law. The judgment quoted the 1970 Supreme Court case of Mauj Ali, which held that since a marriage is valid under Muhammadan Law when a girl has attained puberty and married of her own free will, the husband is her guardian and entitled to her custody, despite potential criminal liability under the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

Pakistan, Syria to continue
efforts for regional peace

Ambassador Dr Ramez Alraee thanked Pakistan for its unwavering support and said that Syria highly valued its historic relationship with Pakistan

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan and Syria on Wednesday resolved to further deepen their longstanding relationship and to continue joint efforts for regional peace, stability and prosperity. The bilateral ties were discussed as Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic Dr Ramez Alraee called on Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani here at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The acting president said that Pakistan attached great value to its historic and brotherly ties with Syria, which were rooted in shared faith, history and mutual respect. He said that Pakistan and Syria had always stood shoulder to shoulder in testing times and recalled that Pakistan had maintained its diplomatic mission in Damascus even during the years of internal conflict, reflecting its principled and steadfast friendship with Syria. Highlighting the deep historical connection between the two ancient cities of Damascus and Multan, Acting President Gilani said that both symbolised civilisational depth and resilience.



He observed that Pakistan had consistently supported Syria at international fora, including playing an active role in the restoration of Syria's membership in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). He noted that Pakistan had a large pool of skilled professionals who could contribute to Syria's rebuilding, particularly in the fields of medicine, education, information technology and banking. The acting president said that Pakistan's training and capacity-building programmes were open to Syrian diplomats, educators and medical professionals. He also handed over an invitation for the Speaker of the Syrian Parliament to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference being held next month. Ambassador Dr Ramez Alraee thanked Pakistan for its unwavering support and said that Syria highly valued its historic relationship with Pakistan. He noted that there was vast potential for expanding cooperation in multiple fields, including defence, railways, economy and education, while also stressing the importance of promoting people-to-people contacts.

Pakistan, China to take
enduring friendship
to new heights: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the enduring and unbreakable bond between Pakistan and China had grown stronger over time, expressing the hope that the two countries would elevate their friendship and partnership to new heights. The prime minister, in his message on the 76th National Day of the People's Republic of China annually observed on October 1, felicitated the leadership and brotherly people of China on behalf of the people and Government of Pakistan. Wishing progress, prosperity, and success for the Chinese people, he said that the National Day served as a reminder of China's remarkable national journey, besides acknowledging the progress, stability, and China's role in establishing global peace. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that Pakistan took pride in its brotherly relations with China and that under the visionary leadership of President Xi Jinping, China had achieved progress and prosperity that served as a role model for the world. He said that the relations between the two countries were based on mutual trust, sacrifice and sincerity, which also guaranteed peace, progress, and prosperity for future generations. Calling his recent visit to China "highly fruitful and productive," the prime minister said that historic milestones were achieved in the context of Pakistan-China bilateral relations, including the meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and B2B conference, where investment accords worth billions of dollars were signed. He said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was the most significant joint economic project of Pakistan with China, which had now entered its second phase. — DNA

Earthquake of 3.2
magnitude shakes
Karachi's Malir

No loss of life or property reported so far; PMD says tremors depth recorded at 10km

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: An earthquake of 3.2 magnitude struck Karachi's Malir neighbourhood, PMD said on Wednesday. The quake was recorded to have occurred at 9:34am with its epicentre around seven kilometres northwest of Malir at a depth of 10 kilometres, Met Office added. No loss of life or property has been reported so far. The tremors come days after a 5.5-magnitude quake jolted Islamabad and multiple areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa last week. Earthquakes have frequently rattled the region, especially Pakistan and Afghanistan in recent years. Record shows seismic activity in neighbouring countries lying at the intersection of Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. Last month, Afghanistan witnessed a massive magnitude 6 earthquake in the rugged eastern region of the country, killing more than 2,200 people and injuring several thousand others. Several parts of Pakistan including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Mardan, Chitral, Murree and adjoining areas also felt the tremors in the following days.

Terrorists' access to
emerging technologies
needs to be prevented

Pak-Afghan counter-terrorism landscape had transformed since the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Experts speaking at an event titled "Emerging Technologies and the Future of Counterterrorism Operations in the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Areas" organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) emphasized the need for preventing emerging technologies from landing into the hands of the terrorists. They were of the view that even though the drone technology currently in the hands of terrorists was rudimentary, if the trends continued, it could pose serious challenges for law enforcement and security agencies in the Pak-Afghan border regions. Mr Abdul Basit, Senior Associate Fellow at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, was of the view that the sanctuary provided to the Tehriki-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Afghanistan as well as the ready availability of finances had already enabled it to progress from the experimentation phase in the use of emerging battlefield technologies to an iteration phase. If left unchecked, he maintained, the TTP could advance to the next two breakthrough and competition phases in the use of this technology. He underscored the payload capacity, speed, and range constraints of the improvised commercial drones used by the terrorist groups. He, however, cautioned about the implications of the advancements in the use of drone technologies for urban spaces.

Mr Iftikhar Firdous, Founder and Editor of The Khorasan Diary, stated that the Pak-Afghan counter-terrorism landscape had transformed since the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban. He added that the sophistication of weapon systems used by the TTP since 2021 had considerably increased since then, helped, in part, by the ready availability of NATO's leftover weapons in Afghanistan. The TTP's use of night vision goggles-equipped M4 and M16 rifles to attack Pakistan's posts on the Pak-Afghan border had considerably increased the lethality of the TTP attacks, according to him. Firdous further shared that al-Qaeda was one of the key mentors and sponsors of the use of improvised drone technology by terrorist groups in Pakistan. Dr Simbal Khan, Security and Stabilization Expert and the CEO Crossroads Consultants, maintained that the improvised drone technology used by the TTP could only be effectively controlled through impacting the decisions of the technology's users. She added that if the technology was made difficult to acquire and improvise through a collective regional approach, it could keep the terrorists from further advancements in the field. Mr Aarish U. Khan, the Head of the Afghanistan Program at IRS, highlighted regional cooperation on the subject, which led to the placement of counter-drone cooperation on the regional security agenda of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. He further shared that the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism had launched a global program in 2024 to help member states regulate UAV use by terrorists.

Floods losses \$371 bn
GDP target cut to 3.9%, IMF told

Ministry of Finance high-ups briefed the IMF review mission about external financing needs of \$26 billion

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has apprised the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of economic losses amounting to Rs371 billion in the aftermath of recent floods, which severely damaged infrastructure and agriculture. The government had set a real GDP growth target of 4.2% for the ongoing fiscal year (FY26), approved by the National Economic Council (NEC) and parliament at the time of the budget. However, in light of the flood-related damages, authorities have projected a downward revision of the target by 0.3 percentage points, bringing it to 3.9%. Ministry of Finance high-ups briefed the IMF review mission about external financing

needs of \$26 billion, out of which \$12 billion will be rolled over, citing the example China's ambassador gave commitment before IMF last time that all rollover and refinancing requirements of Pakistan would be fulfilled within the stipulated timeframe. The IMF has also been apprised that Islamabad will reappear on the radar screen of the international bond market during the current fiscal year. It may prefer to launch Eurobond in the last quarter (April-June) 2026 with two pre-requisite conditions, including a further reduction in policy rate by Fed Reserve in US. Secondly, Pakistan's risk premium recedes with the improvement of one more notch from international rating agencies. On macroeconomic modelling and flood damages, Pakistani high-ups informed the Fund review mission recent floods caused 1,006 deaths, 1,063 injuries and 12,569 house damages. The floods also caused damage to 2,133 kilometres of roads, 248 bridges and water infrastructure of 866 in all over the country. The floods damaged infrastructure as 1,098 educational institutions, 128 health facilities and 3.26 million acres of crop area were affected.

DPM
chairs
meeting

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review avenues for enhancing cooperation with regional countries. In the meeting, the participants discussed strengthening cooperation in trade, commerce, connectivity, energy, and people-to-people exchanges. The deputy prime minister underscored that Pakistan would continue to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation to advance regional development and collective well-being. The meeting was attended by the Minister for Petroleum, SAPM Tariq Bajwa, Attorney General, and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant departments. — APP

Survivor pulled
from Indonesia
school collapse

SIDOARJO: Rescuers pulled a survivor from the ruins of a collapsed school in Indonesia on Wednesday, as desperate parents demanded searchers speed up efforts to find dozens more still believed trapped in the rubble. Part of the multi-storey school on the island of Java gave way suddenly on Monday, as students gathered for afternoon prayers. On Wednesday, rescuers said they had retrieved a survivor and a fourth body from the ruined building, but gave no details on either. Based on school records "91 people are suspected to be buried," National Disaster and Mitigation Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said in a statement late Tuesday. Tearingful parents milled near the ruins throughout Wednesday, awaiting news of their children. — Agencies

EU leaders plot
defence boost
in shadow
of Denmark
drones

COPENHAGEN: EU leaders will discuss bolstering Europe's defences and Ukraine's financial firepower at a Wednesday summit in Denmark, where mysterious drone flights have ramped up fears about the threat from Russia. Thousands of police are on high alert, civilian drones have been banned and NATO allies have sent reinforcements as the continent converges on Copenhagen for the long-planned talks, followed by a broader gathering of European leaders Thursday. Denmark — which holds the EU's rotating presidency — has been rattled in recent days as unidentified drones shut down airports and flew near military sites. Nordic neighbours as well as allies from the United States to Ukraine have dispatched anti-drone technology and specialists to bolster Denmark's capabilities ahead of the summit talks. Suspicions have pointed at Russia for what PM Mette Frederiksen called a "hybrid attack" — but so far no culprit has been definitively named. — APP

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