



Islamabad POST

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Any external threat to be matched effectively: ISPR

Detailed News On Page-08

Ishaq Dar Talks to Canadian counterpart

Detailed News On Page-08



Pakistan for ending crisis in Sudan

Detailed News On Page-08



Türkiye role appreciated

Pak hopeful of Nov talks with Taliban

The FO spokesperson said the talks were initially scheduled for two days. "However, in an effort to reach an amicable agreement with the Taliban regime, the Pakistan side, in earnest, continued the talks for four days

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said on Friday that Pakistan hoped for a "positive outcome" of the next round of talks with the Afghan Taliban set to begin on November 6. "Pakistan will continue to remain engaged in the mediation process and hopes for a positive outcome for the November 6 talks," he said during a weekly FO briefing. He recalled that the second round of talks between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban regime in the presence of mediators concluded in Istanbul yesterday evening. "Pakistan participated in the Istanbul talks, which started on October 25, in a good spirit and with a positive intention," he added. The FO spokesperson said the talks were initially scheduled for two days. "However, in an effort to reach an amicable agreement with the Taliban regime, the Pakistan side, in earnest, continued the talks for four days. "Pakistan positively engaged with the Taliban regime without compromising on its clearly stated position that Afghanistan soil should not be used for terrorism against Pakistan." He asserted that Pakistan did not seek further escalation of hostilities but "expects the Afghan Taliban regime to honour its commitment to the international community and address Pakistan's legitimate security concerns by taking concrete and verifiable actions against terrorist entities, including Fitna-al-Khawarij and Fitna-al-Hindustan".

Continued on Page 06

Israel clause in Passport: Pak rebuffs Indian media claim

Islamabad has never recognised Israel and there is no question of military cooperation, says info ministry

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has rebuffed Indian media propaganda claiming the country has removed the clause from its passport that restricts travel to Israel. In a statement issued on Friday, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting dismissed the report of changes in the passport clause as "completely baseless and laughable," saying no such move has been discussed or considered by the government. Indian news channel had alleged that Pakistan had removed the clause from its passport declaring it "not valid for travel to Israel". The channel also claimed Pakistan was preparing to send 20,000 troops to Gaza under the supervision of Western countries and Israel, an allegation already denied by Islamabad.

Continued on Page 06



CHITRAL: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif being briefed about Danish school during his recent visit to CHITRAL. – DNA

Pakistan awards 23 offshore oil exploration blocks

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has said that it has awarded 23 offshore exploration blocks to four consortia led by local energy companies, some partnered with foreign firms, including Türkiye's national oil company TPAO. In Pakistan's first such bidding round in nearly two decades, the Ministry of Energy said on Friday that bids were awarded for 23 of 40 offshore blocks offered, covering around 53,500 square kilometres. The energy ministry listed state-run Oil and Gas Development Co. Ltd (OGDCL), Pakistan Petroleum Ltd (PPL) and MariEnergies, along with privately-owned Prime Energy, which is backed by Pakistan's Hub Power Company (Hubco), among the successful bidders.

Continued on Page 06

PA speaker urges quick 27th Amend.

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly has urged the federal government to immediately introduce the 27th Amendment to the Constitution if necessary, to ensure the empowerment of local governments across the country. Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmed Khan said on Friday that the issue of local governance must be discussed openly.

Continued on Page 06

Unless Kabul reins in TTP

Pak-Afghan relations can never normalize, says defence minister

The defence minister said that he would not blame the entire Afghan government, but many within its ranks are providing support to these groups

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Friday said that relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan can never be returned to normal unless Kabul ends its support for the proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Speaking to Geo News, the defence minister said those sheltering the TTP militants in Afghanistan must stop the terrorists' infiltration into Pakistan. "Peaceful relations with our neighbour are only possible if all support for the TTP is completely ended," he said, adding that it is difficult to trust the Afghan side without firm guarantees against cross-border attacks. He said that the infiltration from Afghanistan is still going on in some form, adding that as long as the same situation continues, the agreement cannot take effect. "Pakistan's biggest demand is that infiltration into Pakistan from Afghan soil should stop," he added.

Continued on Page 06

KP cabinet takes oath

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: A 13-member provincial cabinet picked by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi took the oath of office on Friday in Peshawar. According to a statement from the KP government, the cabinet's swearing-in ceremony took place at the Governor's House in Peshawar. "KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi administered the oath," the statement said. "Those sworn in as provincial ministers included Meena Khan Afridi, Arshad Ayub Khan, Amjad Ali, Aftab Alam Afridi, Fazal Shakoor Khan, Khaleequr Rehman, Riaz Khan, Syed Fakhar Jehan, Aqibullah Khan and Faisal Khan Tarakai.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

PPP ready to take charge of AJK govt: Bilawal



FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Friday that his party was in a position to form and take charge of the government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, whose incumbent prime minister faces a no-confidence motion. In his press conference alongside PPP leaders in Islamabad, Bilawal remained tight-lipped about his party's candidate for the prime minister's slot. "Don't worry, that announcement will be made from Kashmir, not Islamabad," quipped Bilawal, the former foreign minister, when asked about the nominee's name. The PPP chief said that the new Leader of the House would be announced when the no-confidence motion is moved against the incumbent PM. The PPP chairman emphasised that his party was committed to resolving Kashmir's issues, saying that during his tenure as foreign minister, he highlighted the Kashmir issue both domestically and internationally. "For three generations, the PPP has fought Kashmir's cause across the world," said Bilawal, who also led Pakistan's delegation to counter the Indian narrative after the May war.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. – Editor

Russia carries out underwater N. test

Putin hails successful test of nuclear-powered Poseidon unmanned underwater vehicle; says it surpasses Sarmat missile

DNA

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that a new test of the Poseidon unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) equipped with a nuclear power unit was carried out the previous day, calling the trial a "tremendous success."

Speaking during a visit to the Pyotr Mandryk Central Military Clinical Hospital, Putin said that on Oct. 28 the Poseidon was launched from a submarine, its booster engine activated, and then its onboard nuclear reactor started, propelling the vehicle for a period of time. He described the system as exceptionally compact, saying Poseidon's reactor is roughly "a hundred times smaller" than a conventional submarine reactor and that the vehicle's power "greatly exceeds" that of Russia's intercontinental-range Sarmat missile. "No other system in the world matches Sarmat, which is not yet on combat duty

— though it will be in the near future," Putin said, adding that Poseidon surpasses Sarmat in power and that, in his view, there are currently no means capable of intercepting the unmanned system. He also touted Poseidon's speed and operational depth, asserting there is "nothing comparable" to it worldwide. Putin framed the test alongside earlier remarks about other strategic systems, noting Poseidon's compact reactor and asserting the trial marked a significant technological milestone. The Kremlin statement did not provide technical data or independent evidence to substantiate the claims. Further details about the test — including duration, range, and technical specifications — were not released at the time of Putin's remarks. Russian officials have previously described the Poseidon program as a strategic-capable, long-range UUV; however, independent verification of specific test results is typically limited.

US signs 10-year defence agreement with India

Framework is considered cornerstone for regional stability and deterrence, says Defence Sec Pete Hegseth

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: The United States and India on Friday signed a landmark 10-year defence framework agreement aimed at strengthening strategic cooperation, enhancing military coordination, and bolstering regional stability in the Indo-Pacific region. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth announced the signing following his meeting with Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in New Delhi. Hegseth described the framework as a "cornerstone for regional stability and deterrence," emphasizing its focus on deeper collaboration in information sharing, joint exercises, and defence technology. "The United States and India share a common vision for a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific," Hegseth said in a post on X, adding that the framework would serve as the foundation for defence cooperation over the next decade. This was the first in-person meeting between Hegseth and Singh since Washington imposed 50% tariffs on select Indian goods in August. The tariffs were introduced in response to India's continued purchases of Russian oil, a move that strained trade and security ties between the two countries. Following the tariffs, India temporarily paused its purchases of

US defence equipment, prompting both sides to revisit pending arms deals and cooperation plans. Friday's discussions reportedly included a review of India's procurement roadmap and ways to restore defence trade momentum. Welcoming Hegseth, Rajnath Singh expressed optimism about the renewed partnership. "We have held telephonic conversations thrice. I am delighted to meet you in person. With today's signing of the Defence Framework, a new chapter begins. I am confident that under your leadership, India-US relations will further strengthen," Singh was quoted as saying by ANI. The new framework is expected to enhance collaboration in areas such as cybersecurity, maritime security, defence innovation, and intelligence sharing, with a focus on maintaining balance amid China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean regions. During his regional tour, Hegseth is also scheduled to meet the defence ministers of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, as part of Washington's broader strategy to fortify partnerships with key Indo-Pacific nations. Delegations from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Russia are also attending the ADMM-Plus meeting, underscoring the region's evolving security dynamics. The signing marks a significant milestone in US-India strategic relations, reinforcing their shared commitment to peace, stability, and collective security in the Indo-Pacific.

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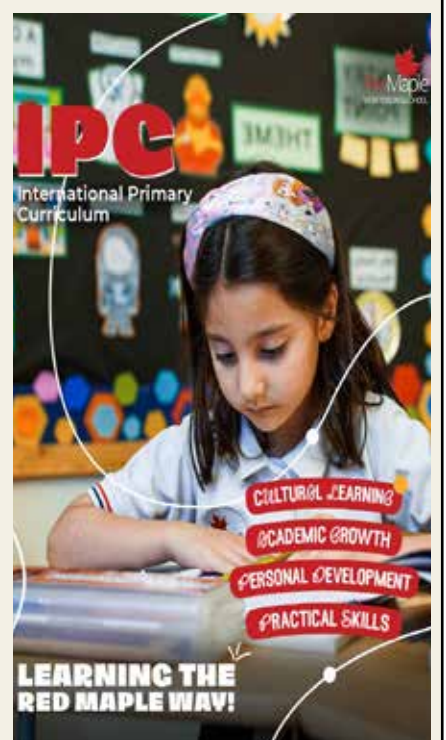
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KP CM discusses regional stability with German envoy

PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Federal Republic of Germany to Pakistan, Ina Ruth Luise Lepel here on Friday called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi at Chief Minister House. The Ambassador was accompanied by Jan Gerald Krausser, First Secretary at German Embassy Islamabad, said a news release issued here. During the meeting, the German Ambassador congratulated the CM on assuming his new responsibilities and expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and hospitality. She also highlighted the ongoing areas of collaboration between Germany and KP Government. The CM thanked the Ambassador for continued partnership and emphasized that KP government is

pursuing a forward-looking development agenda focused on resilience, economic revival and institutional reform. He noted that while the province has faced natural and security challenges in recent years, the government has continued to move forward with resilience and reform. Highlighting priorities in the merged districts, the KP CM said that government was advancing key projects in education, health and infrastructure to bring the region at par with the rest of the province. He shared plans to establish a state-of-the-art university in the merged districts focusing on applied sciences and technical education to meet market demands. The German Ambassador acknowledged the province's efforts and ap-

preciated the presence of German alumni teaching at the University of Peshawar, noting that these individuals represent a positive link between the two nations. On regional matters, the CM briefed the Ambassador on the situation along the Pak-Afghan border emphasizing the importance of peace and dialogue for regional stability. He reiterated that KP government remains committed to humanitarian values in managing the repatriation of Afghan nationals and ensuring their dignified return. The meeting ended with both the CM and German envoy expressing optimism about deepening cooperation and building on the long-standing friendship between KP and Germany.—APP



RAWALPINDI: SSP Investigation Raza Tanveer giving commendation shield to SHO Police Station Westridge Rana Abdul Rehman for his good pence. — DNA

Veteran journalist Syed Ali Nawaz Gillani breathes his last

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Syed Ali Nawaz Gillani, Editor-in-Chief of local Urdu and English dailies and a well-known banker and social personality, passed away early Friday morning at the age of 63. Gillani had suffered a severe heart attack a few days ago and was admitted to a private hospital in Peshawar, where he remained under intensive care. Despite doctors' efforts, he could not recover and breathed his last on Friday morning. His funeral prayer was offered at Askari-6, Nasar Bagh Road, Peshawar, on Friday evening. A large number of relatives, friends, journalists, and well-wishers attended the Namaz-e-Janaza to pay their respects. Belonging to a highly



respected family of Peshawar, Syed Ali Nawaz Gillani was the son of the late Syed Hasan Gillani, a pioneer journalist from the region who served as Dawn's correspondent in Peshawar before and after the creation of Pakistan. Later, the elder Gillani

founded the Urdu daily Al-Jamiat Sarhad in the mid-1960s. After completing his education, Ali Nawaz Gillani began his professional career in the mid-1980s with the Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan. In 1991, he joined the Bank of Khyber as Executive Vice President, where he headed the Marketing and Public Relations Division for many years before retiring. Known for his professionalism, humility, and community engagement, Gillani was also actively involved in social and cultural initiatives. He served as the founding President of the Pakistan-China Friendship Association, Pakistan-France Friendship Association, and several other organizations promoting international goodwill. His demise has been widely mourned across journalistic, banking, and social circles.

Public servants urged to serve people with utmost integrity

PESHAWAR: Director General NIPA/PARD/PPSA Captain (Retd) Usman Gul on Friday said that public servants must utilize their skills to serve people with utmost integrity and sincerity. He was addressing as Chief Guest at the graduation ceremony of the 38th Senior Management Course and 44th Domain Specific MCMC held at NIPA Campus Peshawar. The Director General, in his address, said that civil servants are the main players of national development process, and it is essential that they play a leading role in decision-making, public service, and institutional improvement. He said that the purpose of these training programs is to enhance officers' administrative abilities, analytical thinking, and effective decision-making skills. He congratulated the participants and expressed hope that they would utilize their knowledge and experience to promote good governance in their respective departments. At the ceremony, Chief Instructor Senior Management Course Tariq Bakhtiar and Chief Instructor Domain Specific MCMC Taj Hameed presented course reports of their respective programs.—APP

Pak's gemstones policy in the offing: SAPM

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Friday met with Barneby Plowright, a leading gemstones exporter, and discussed with him the formulation of the upcoming National Gemstones Policy. During the meeting, both sides discussed ways to strengthen Pakistan's gemstone sector through policy reforms, formalization, and international collaboration, a news release said.

The SAPM also visited Barneby's gemstone setup in Islamabad, where he was briefed on the entire process of diamond polishing, grading, and packaging. Haroon Akhtar Khan stated that, on the special directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the National Gemstones Policy was being formulated to facilitate exporters and manufacturers of gemstones. He emphasized that under the new policy, gemstones exporters would be given the status of an industry,

which would help in documenting and regulating this largely informal sector — currently estimated to have around \$2 billion in undocumented trade. He added that the new policy was aimed bringing the gemstone industry into the formal economy, enabling Pakistan to earn billions of dollars in revenue. "The policy will be developed within one month, taking into account international best practices and successful global models," he added.—APP

CDA, SUPARCO, joins hands for smart urban planning

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Friday announced plans to enhance urban planning and land management in Islamabad through advanced satellite technology, in collaboration with the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO). The initiative was discussed during a meeting at CDA Headquarters chaired by Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad. SUPARCO representatives briefed participants on the use of satellite imagery and data-sharing under an existing memorandum of understanding (MoU) with CDA. The technology will be used to identify land-related issues, monitor illegal constructions, and support more transparent and efficient city planning. Chairman Randhawa said the partnership marked "a significant step towards smart and sustainable urban development in the federal capital," adding that the use of satellite imagery would make planning "more effective, transparent, and accountable." Officials were also briefed on progress in Islamabad's new residential sectors. Development work in Sector C-14 has entered its final phase, while construction in Sectors C-15 and I-12 is advancing rapidly. Work has also begun in sub-sectors of E-12 after years of delay. Randhawa directed that all development works be completed promptly with high standards and full provision of civic amenities. He added that the possession of developed plots would be ensured soon, reaffirming that "reviving long-neglected sectors and completing ongoing projects remain top priorities for the CDA." Senior CDA officials, including Member Planning and Design Dr Khalid Hafiz, Member Environment Esfandyar Baloch, and Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, as well as a technical team from SUPARCO, attended the session.

KP students celebrate PM's gift of learning in digital age

Laptops bring new hope

PESHAWAR: When Ehtisham Qaiser, a postgraduate student at the University of Peshawar, used to spend long hours in crowded internet cafés to complete his research, he never imagined that a small device of laptop could change his life "Now I can work from home, save money, and finish my studies faster," he said, a wide smile lighting up his face as he held his new laptop that is a gift under the landmark Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme 2025. "This is not just a gadget but it's a bridge to a new world of opportunity, education and economic empowerment of youth," he reiterated with great smile on face. Across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including erstwhile Fata, similar scenes of joy and gratitude are unfolding as hundreds of thousands of students started receiving laptops under the fourth phase of the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme 2025, launched by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif the other day in Islamabad. From the sprawling campus of the University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar to the serene valleys surrounding the University

of Malakand, from Gomal University DI Khan to lush green University of Chitral, the students are celebrating laptop scheme what many call a lifeline for education in Pakistan's digital age. Muhammad Saad, a student from Charsadda enrolled at the Agriculture University Peshawar, said that the laptop has done much needed support in his studies and also helped him earn for fulfillment of education expenses. "I am now teaching F.Sc. students online," he said proudly. "It's empowering to be both a learner and a teacher. The previous laptop I received under PM laptop scheme changed my life; this phase continues that journey." University professors also see the initiative as a long-term investment in national development. Professor Dr. Muhammad Naem of Swabi University described the scheme as a continuation of the Prime Minister's long-standing vision for youth empowerment. "This programme reflects a strong commitment to education and technology," he said. "It encourages students to explore fields like Artificial Intelligence, engineering, agriculture, architecture, fine

arts, computer science, and information technology, which are areas that are shaping Pakistan's future." For many students in remote regions such as erstwhile Fata, the laptop scheme represents inclusion in a digital bridge connecting them to the world. Ali Jan Afridi, a student from FATA University, shared how receiving a laptop on merit restored his confidence and enhance his prestige. "This programme gave me dignity and hope," he said. "It shows that talent matters, not where you come from." Students from entire KP region made similar sentiments, describing the scheme as a lifeline for those struggling with limited educational infrastructure and financial resources. "Laptops have become instruments of change," said Tasawar Hussain of Agriculture University Peshawar. "They connect us with knowledge, innovation, and the global academic community." The Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme, first launched in 2010, has since distributed more than 100,000 laptops nationwide on merit, with an investment of over Rs 40-50 billion.—APP

LHC rejects Honda Atlas bid to stall inquiry

ISLAMABAD: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has dismissed the petition filed by Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited against the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP), upholding the regulator's authority to seek information and conduct inquiries into possible anti-competitive practices in the automobile sector. Justice Raheel Kamran, in a detailed judgment, ruled that the CCP has clear powers under Sections 36 and 37 of the Competition Act, 2010 to collect data, examine market conduct, and investigate anti-competitive behavior, said a release issued here on Friday.

The court observed that Honda Atlas had initially participated in the proceedings before challenging the CCP's jurisdiction — a move the court said was clearly intended to stall the inquiry. The CCP's inquiry, initiated in November 2018, focused on allegations of on-money payments, delayed deliveries, and price hikes after booking. Between 2018 and 2022, the Commission issued at least five notices seeking details about production, pricing, localization ratios, and dealer arrangements. Honda repeatedly sought extensions but failed to fully comply, despite physical visits by the CCP's inquiry team in 2019 and 2021. Instead of submitting complete data, the company raised technical objections, questioning the legality of the inquiry and the Commission's quorum. In June 2023, APP

Kundi assures support for CNG sector

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has assured the representatives of the All Pakistan CNG Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zone that the government is committed to promoting affordable and environment-friendly energy sources, including Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), in the province. A delegation of the association, led by Chairman Parvez Khan Khattak, called on the Governor at the Governor House, Peshawar, on Friday. The delegation included Fazal Mugeem Khan, Minhaj Khan Mehsud, Muhammad Luqman Shah, Qazi Amjad Ali, Badshah Wazir, Malik Muhammad Niaz, and others. During the

meeting, the delegation discussed in detail the challenges faced by the CNG sector in the province, including issues related to the Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC), problems with the National Highway Authority (NHA), high gas tariffs, and the seasonal closure of CNG stations during winter. The delegation emphasized that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the largest gas-producing province and therefore deserves uninterrupted gas supply for the CNG industry. They also termed the use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as highly dangerous and illegal, urging the Governor to take immediate action to curb its unsafe usage. Governor Fais-

al Karim Kundi appreciated the delegation's concerns and reaffirmed the government's commitment to developing all energy sectors and promoting eco-friendly fuels. He said that expanding the CNG sector not only provides affordable fuel to citizens but also creates employment opportunities. He assured the delegation that he would take up their concerns with the relevant federal authorities to ensure effective measures for resolving the issues confronting the CNG industry. Meanwhile, Director General of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), Khalid Inayatullah Khan, called on Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.—APP

Sindh CM orders immediate disbursement of wheat support funds

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, presiding over a high-level meeting on the 2025 Wheat Growers' Support Programme here Friday, directed the Agriculture Department to start disbursing funds immediately to small growers, enabling them to purchase Urea and DAP fertilisers for timely wheat sowing across the province. In Sindh, the wheat sowing season begins in late October and continues until late December, depending on regional and irrigation conditions. In upper Sindh, including Sukkur, Larkana, Khairpur, and Ghotki, sowing generally starts in late October and continues

through November, while in lower Sindh, such as Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Badin, and Thatta, sowing begins around mid-November and lasts until late December. The process largely depends on the availability of canal water following the Kharif harvest and canal maintenance schedules. The wheat harvest in Sindh usually falls between late March and early May. The Chief Minister emphasised that the programme must reach genuine and small-scale farmers without delay, ensuring maximum coverage before the sowing season ends. The programme aims to achieve self-sufficiency in staple food (wheat), so the

country doesn't need to import wheat and can save foreign exchange by supporting local growers. The meeting at CM House was attended by Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, Secretary Agriculture Zman Narejo, and others. It may be recalled that the Sindh government had given in-principle approval on September 23, 2025, for providing DAP and Urea "in kind" to farmers. Later, on October 24, 2025, the Sindh Cabinet approved a revised mechanism introducing direct cash transfers to ensure transparency and efficiency.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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



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MH.....561116
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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343
Water Tank
Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Aleem for smoother cross-border movement of goods with Iran

The envoy appreciated the Minister’s efforts in uniting regional stakeholders to discuss connectivity and trade-related issues, which he said have played a key role in strengthening Pakistan-Iran collaboration

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Friday reaffirmed his commitment to facilitating smoother cross-border movement of goods between Pakistan and Iran He expressed these views in a meeting with the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, who called on him in here, said a press release. During the meeting, Minister Abdul Aleem Khan conveyed his optimism that bilateral trade between the two brotherly countries could reach Rs 10 billion, emphasizing that all necessary measures would be taken to address issues related to the entry and exit of Iranian trade trucks at border points. The minister said that steps would be taken in coordination with the National Logistics Cell (NLC), while a meeting would also be arranged between the Secretary of Communications and officials of the Iranian Embassy to expedite progress. He emphasized that although bureaucratic red tape sometimes slows down procedures, consistent follow-up and perseverance ultimately help overcome such challenges. Abdul Aleem Khan reaffirmed his support for the vision of the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to further enhance trade and connectivity between the two nations. “The love and goodwill between Pakistan and Iran have increased manifold over the past six months,” he added. The Iranian Ambassador, Reza Amiri Moghadam, expressed gratitude to the Minister for successfully organizing the Regional



Transport Ministers Conference (RTMC), which brought together ministers and transport experts from several countries. He noted that the visit of Iran’s Minister for Transport and Urban Development, Ms. Farzaneh Sadegh, was highly significant, and the conference provided valuable opportunities for dialogue and cooperation among regional partners. The envoy appreciated the Minister’s efforts in uniting re-

gional stakeholders to discuss connectivity and trade-related issues, which he said have played a key role in strengthening Pakistan-Iran collaboration. He further mentioned that Iran plans to import large amounts of meat from Pakistan and is also exploring the possibility of purchasing 200,000 tonnes of maize (corn) from Pakistan as a viable trade option.Ambassador Moghadam remarked that relations between

the two countries are now at their highest point in the last 40 years, adding that a series of high-level visits and follow-up meetings are lined up in the coming weeks to achieve shared targets. He thanked the Minister for the hospitality that was extended during the RTMC Conference. Commercial Councilor of Iran to Pakistan Mohsin Shahbazi was also present during the meeting.—APP

NA lauds PMDC for transparent conduct of MDCAT

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (NHSR&C) on Friday lauded Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), for ensuring the smooth and secure conduct of the examination across the country in close coordination with the provincial governments, health departments, district administrations, police and paramedic staff. The Committee that met here with Dr. Mahesh Kumar Malani, in the chair reviewed the conduct and evaluation of the MDCAT Examination 2025. The Committee unanimously appreciated the Chairman for his tireless efforts in keeping the issue of MDCAT reforms on the agenda and for holding a series of follow-up meetings after the discrepancies reported during MDCAT 2024. It was noted with satisfaction that due to the Committee’s continuous oversight and PMDC’s dedicated efforts, MDCAT 2025 was conducted in a fair, transparent and standardized manner, in accordance with international testing norms. The members observed

that no major complaints or paper leakages were reported from any province. The Committee expressed satisfaction that the collective efforts of all stakeholders bore fruit, reflecting the credibility and improved governance of the testing process. Special appreciation was extended to the Government of Balochistan and the Vice Chancellor of Bolan University of Medical and Health Sciences for successfully conducting the MDCAT in an exemplary manner despite serious challenges in the province. The Committee also commended the Vice Chancellor for personally attending the meeting on short notice, reflecting his commitment to transparency and cooperation. The Committee recognized the transparent and efficient arrangements made at the provincial level and commended the vigilance shown in identifying and addressing impersonation cases. Members also acknowledged the positive role of other provinces and their universities for ensuring smooth coordination, improved logistics and timely evaluation of results. The Committee noted that

based on the Committee’s previous recommendations, for the first time, the PMDC implemented a domicile-based examination system and developed a standardized question pool to ensure uniformity across all provinces. Members praised the enhanced coordination between PMDC and universities, as well as the timely communication and grievance redressal mechanisms introduced this year. While acknowledging the marked improvement in the conduct of MDCAT 2025, the Committee made further recommendations to enhance transparency and equity in future examinations. It was emphasized that the examination software must be strengthened to prevent data errors and duplication of student records, and that uniform documentation requirements be adopted across all provinces to avoid confusion. The Committee directed the PMDC to urgently devise a mechanism for students who had scored 90% marks in previous MDCAT exams but did not appear this year.—APP

27 new dengue cases surfaced in ICT

ISLAMABAD: The district administration has intensified its ongoing anti-dengue campaign across Islamabad, carrying out extensive field operations to control the spread of the virus. According to the latest report, field teams inspected 42,734 sites and conducted fogging at 1,559 high-risk locations during the past 24 hours. The report stated that 27 new dengue cases were confirmed in the federal capital during the same period – 18 from rural areas and 9 from urban sectors. Currently, 68 patients are under treatment at various hospitals in the city. During inspections, larvae were found at 274 sites, while nine sites tested negative, indicating the presence of breeding hotspots that required immediate action. The administration said door-to-door inspections and larvae removal operations are being carried out daily in all union councils as part of the campaign. The district administration emphasized that all anti-dengue teams have been in-

structed to respond immediately to any report of larvae breeding. Teams are also conducting regular surveillance in residential, commercial, and open areas, including under-construction buildings and stagnant water sites. Officials said public cooperation is essential to ensure the city’s protection from dengue. Residents have been urged to keep their homes and surroundings clean and avoid water accumulation in open containers, pots, or rooftops. The administration highlighted that standing water is the main breeding source of dengue mosquitoes and needs continuous monitoring. To further strengthen prevention efforts, the administration has deployed special squads for fogging and spraying operations in dengue-prone localities. These include rural zones, slum settlements, and areas with ongoing construction activities. Health teams are also conducting awareness drives, educating citizens on identifying mos-

quito breeding spots and preventive steps to protect their families. The report reaffirmed that all anti-dengue measures will continue without interruption until the situation is completely under control. The administration said it is working closely with health departments, hospitals, and local bodies to track new cases and ensure prompt medical response.Officials added that data collected from field operations is being regularly reviewed to identify new risk areas and to improve response strategies. The administration assured that every possible effort is being made to eliminate dengue larvae through coordinated action and strict monitoring. Citizens have been reminded to report suspected dengue sites or stagnant water to the local authorities. The administration maintained that only through public participation and timely preventive action can Islamabad be made dengue-free.—APP

Laghari’s latest book “Nafrat Ki Daryaft” launched

ISLAMABAD: In a vibrant literary gathering at The Black Hole Islamabad acclaimed writer and columnist Ashfaq Laghari here on Friday unveiled his newest book “Nafrat Ki Daryaft” attracting a distinguished audience of journalists lawyers writers researchers and social activists who came together to celebrate the thought-provoking release. Speaking at the ceremony, writer and poet Hasan Mujtaba, senior journalist Matiullah Jan, researcher and analyst Dr. Khadim Hussain, youth and peace activist Syed Ali Hameed and transgender rights advocate Reem Sharif highlighted that “Nafrat Ki Daryaft” marks a groundbreaking moment in Pakistan’s literary landscape , the first book in which a cybercrime victim has courageously shared their personal experiences, struggles, and reflections through the written word. Renowned writer and

poet Hasan Mujtaba has lauded Ashfaq Laghari for the powerful title of his latest book, Nafrat Ki Daryaft (The Discovery of Hate). Speaking about the work, Mujtaba remarked that the title aptly captures the essence of the book, describing hate as “a stench and a wall” a barrier that Laghari has courageously dismantled through his writing. Dr. Khadim Hussain praised the author’s evocative style, noting that it rekindles the literary spirit of Qurrat-ulain Hyder and Saadat Hasan Manto. Journalist Matiullah Jan emphasized the importance of amplifying the voices of real cybercrime victims, urging society to confront their stories with empathy and seriousness. Syed Ali Hameed lauded Ashfaq Laghari for his courage and emotional depth, highlighting how the book challenges societal norms that often stigmatize male vulnerability. “Men

feel pain, they cry, and they deserve the space to share their stories,” he said, calling the work a powerful step toward redefining masculinity with compassion. Transgender rights activist Reem Sharif expressed her deep engagement with the book, sharing that she was eager to discover the fate of its central character, Asif. “It’s a book no reader will be able to put down once they start,” she remarked, highlighting its emotional pull and compelling storytelling. The launch event drew a diverse and distinguished audience, including renowned writer Naseer Memon, senior journalist Qurban Baloch, and activist Hussain Jarwar. Lawyers, students, journalists, and representatives from various organisations among them Mehrgarh Islamabad also attended, underscoring the book’s wide-reaching impact and relevance.—APP

7,350 rotten eggs, 70kg liquid destroyed

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) has intensified inspections of egg stores and bakeries as part of its ongoing campaign to ensure safe and hygienic food for residents. During a recent operation, officials destroyed 7,350 contaminated, broken, and fungus-infected eggs along with 70 kilograms of unsafe liquid, which were reportedly being used in bakery products. The crackdown was led by Deputy Director of the Islamabad Food Authority, Dr. Tahira Siddique, who said that the eggs were found unfit for human consumption and were being used in cakes and other baked items. The inspection teams also discovered poor hygiene conditions and a lack of basic record-keeping, including missing expiry dates and production details at the storage facilities. Dr. Siddique said that using broken or spoiled eggs violates food safety laws and poses serious health risks. “The destroyed eggs were being stored for use in bakery products, which could have led to the spread of infectious diseases,” she stated. The deputy director confirmed that legal action is being initiated against the store owners involved in selling broken and hatchery eggs for commercial use. “Such practices are a violation of food safety regulations and will not be tolerated,” she added. According to the Islamabad Food Authority, all food businesses are required to maintain proper records, including the source, storage, and expiry of ingredients used in production. The inspection teams found that the egg store failed to comply with these standards. Dr. Siddique further noted that the use of rotten or fungus-infected eggs can cause serious illnesses, including food poisoning. “Our teams are conducting regular inspections across the city to identify and eliminate such unsafe practices,” she said. The Food Authority has also warned that strict action will be taken against individuals or businesses involved in food adulteration and misrepresentation. “Those running such operations will face severe penalties, and their outlets will be sealed,” Dr. Siddique emphasized. She added that ensuring the availability of safe food is a basic right of every citizen, and the IFA is committed to maintaining strict oversight of food outlets across the capital. “We urge the public to report any suspicious or unhygienic food businesses so that swift action can be taken,” she said. The Islamabad Food Authority continues its daily inspection drive across all zones of the city to monitor food safety compliance and protect public health. The authority has reaffirmed its determination to take decisive action against those compromising food quality in violation of established laws.—APP

Youth hope for a progressive future: Marri

ISLAMABAD: Central Spokesperson of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Shazia Marri Friday said that the youth of Pakistan are the country’s greatest strength and the hope for a progressive future. In a statement issued here, she said that Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari firmly believes Pakistan’s bright future lies in the empowerment of its young generation. “The vision of the Pakistan Peoples Party is to make youth partners in governance and development, not mere spectators,” Shazia Marri added. Highlighting Bilawal Bhutto Zardari’s leadership, she said, “Bilawal Bhutto made history as Pakistan’s youngest Foreign Minister. We take pride in his outstanding diplomacy that elevated Pakistan’s image on the global stage.Shazia Marri said that Bilawal Bhutto envisions Pakistani youth leading the way in addressing challenges such as climate change and digital rights. “The PPP considers education, skills and technology as key tools for empowering the new generation,” she said. She said that the Sindh Job Portal initiative would help fresh graduates begin their professional journeys and contribute to the country’s progress. “Our youth must have a voice in politics and policymaking, and Bilawal Bhutto represents this new generation,” she said. Shazia Marri made it clear that the PPP will not allow the youth to be exploited for temporary political gains. “Pakistan’s young people are not the leaders of tomorrow – they are the leaders of today,” she added. Shazia Marri said, “We aim to nurture the potential of our youth, not exploit it. The PPP wants to give them hope, confidence and opportunity so they can build a brighter and stronger Pakistan. — DNA

PM extends tenure of Nadeem Mahbub

ISLAMABAD: The Federal government extended the tenure of Nadeem Mahbub, Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (FE&PT), as acting Chairperson of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for another three months. According to an official notification F.No.1-18/2025-HEC issued by the M/o FE&PT, the extension is for a period of three months effected from Oct 29, 2025, also informing, Nadeem Mahbub will continue to perform the role in addition to his existing responsibilities as Secretary FE&PT till the extended period or the appointment of a regular Chairperson, which ever is earlier. The decision was approved by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, who serves as the controlling authority of HEC.—APP

Farah inspects Danish School construction work

ISLAMABAD: Farah Naz Akbar, Parliamentary Secretary for Education, on Friday, expressed satisfaction over the development work of Danish School, Kuri Road and hoped that construction will be completed by the end of the year. She expressed these views while talking to the media during the visit to the site. Moreover, she personally went to each and every block and commended the project team for their dedication and professionalism, expressing confidence over the pace and quality of progress of the work. Farah Naz Akbar was optimistic about the completion of work within the given time frame – by December 2025 – so that the upcoming academic session can commence in March 2026. She further informed that similar Danish School projects – a flagship initiative of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif – are also underway across the country, including Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Insha’Allah, these institutions will soon become beacons of learning and opportunity for underprivileged children across Pakistan, she vowed. She also lauded the efforts of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, the Project Management Unit (PMU), the Project Director, and the entire team for their tireless commitment to the Prime Minister’s vision of inclusive and equitable education. “The Danish School initiative, launched under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, reflects our collective resolve to empower the next generation through quality education,” Farah Naz stated.—APP

Meeting to boost surveillance, crime prevention

ISLAMABAD: Director General (DG) Safe City Muhammad Haroon Joya chaired a meeting on Friday, directing enhanced surveillance and operational readiness across the federal capital. An official told APP that SSP Safe City Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, Director IT Atif Abbas, and virtual police officers also attended the meeting. He said DG Haroon instructed officers to intensify monitoring through Safe City cameras, strengthen crime prevention efforts, and ensure smooth traffic flow across Islamabad. Surveillance at recreational areas, markets, key public spots and sensitive locations would be further increased, he added. Additionally, virtual police officers were directed to ensure swift detection of criminal groups and expedite coordinated action for their arrest. The official reaffirmed that Safe City Islamabad is fully committed to harnessing modern technology for real-time crime prevention and the safety of citizens in the federal capital.—APP

Briefs

Pakistani scientist champions AI industrial transformation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani scientist and international science leader, Prof. Dr. Manzoor Hussain Soomro called for AI-driven industrial transformation to accelerate sustainable growth across the developing world. He was addressing the World Science and Technology Development Forum (WSTDF-2025) in Beijing, China. Delivering his keynote presentation on "AI-Driven Industrial Transformation in the Developing World," Prof. Soomro highlighted that while economic development remains a global priority, the essence of development — the welfare of people — is often lost in the pursuit of wealth accumulation. He noted that although all UN member countries are committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, many developing nations still lag behind due to fragmented ecosystems, infrastructure deficits, and limited institutional coordination. Referring to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Prof. Soomro said that over the past 12 years, the BRI has generated strong momentum for economic cooperation through infrastructure-led growth across more than 150 countries. He emphasized that the BRI holds tremendous potential for trade and industrial advancement, provided developing countries adopt innovative and digital technologies, especially artificial intelligence (AI), to enhance productivity and sustainability. —APP

China-Pakistan joint business consortium to develop regional logistics hub

ISLAMABAD: Leading logistics and business companies from Pakistan held an important meeting with Chinese business delegation from the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC). The delegation was currently visiting Pakistan to explore strategic trade and investment opportunities. During the meeting, both sides agreed to establish a China-Pakistan Joint Business Consortium to develop a Regional Logistics Hub, aimed at strengthening regional connectivity and enhancing trade logistics frameworks. It was mutually decided that Pakistan will take the lead in developing and managing this logistics framework, reflecting the country's emerging strategic role in regional trade and transportation. At the conclusion of the meeting, a mutual framework Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed. Under this MoU, it was decided that Pakistan will play a pioneering role in implementing the framework. Following the signing ceremony, both agreed to establish a B2B Working Group comprising key stakeholders from Pakistan and China to execute joint logistics projects. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Women posing for a photo on the occasion of the Defence Day of Japan. DNA

Chinese Honglian hybrid rice delivers impressive yields

ISLAMABAD: China's Honglian hybrid rice achieved promising results in Pakistan, with the yields of its three varieties H13, H14 and H15 reaching 11.3 tons/ha, 12.3 tons/ha and 10.8 tons/ha respectively, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday. Among them, H14 stood out for its large panicles and high grain count, boosting yields by over 12% compared with local mainstay varieties, according to Prof. Zhu Renshan, Director of the China-Pakistan Joint Research Center for Honglian Hybrid Rice. On October 13, Xu Zhiyong from Prof. Zhu's research team visited the demonstration bases of Honglian hybrid rice in Lahore, Multan, Sahiwal, Vehari, etc., and met representatives from the University of Punjab and leading local agricultural enterprises. On October 19, the China-Pakistan Joint Research Center for Honglian Hybrid Rice held an on-site meeting in Vehari to promote the new technologies of Honglian hybrid rice. Over 200 participants attended, including distributors, farmers and agricultural technology experts from Punjab and Sindh. Honglian hybrid rice is an original scientific and technological achievement of Wuhan University, with demonstration and promotion in Pakistan for more than 20 years. In 2020, the China-Pakistan Joint Research Center for Honglian Hybrid Rice was jointly established by Wuhan University, Hubei Association for Science and Technology, and the University of Punjab. —APP

Pak, China partner to reform PARC under strategic plan

The Minister expressed confidence that, with the collaboration of Chinese partners and the dedication of Pakistan's scientific community, PARC will soon emerge as a world-class agricultural research institution contributing effectively to national development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, chaired a high-level meeting with Chairman Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), Dr. Syed Murtaza Hassan Andrabi, to review the Strategic Reform and Cooperation Plan for PARC based on the recommendations of the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS). During the meeting, the Chairman PARC presented the detailed findings of the Chinese delegation, which were prepared after a comprehensive joint study conducted to assess the performance, infrastructure, and capabilities of PARC, NARC, and its eleven research institutes. The joint assessment aimed to identify the structural gaps in Pakistan's agricultural research system and to propose a roadmap for institutional revitalization in line with global scientific standards.

The Chinese report identified several critical challenges faced by PARC, including chronic underinvestment, outdated laboratories and equipment, weak research commercialization, and the persistent issue of brain drain caused by inadequate incentives and seniority-based promotions. It further emphasized that overcoming these constraints requires a holistic reform strategy focused on sustainable funding, efficient performance evaluation, stronger linkages between research and farmers, and enhanced coordination between federal and provincial research bodies. The reform plan also underscored the need for aligning research priorities with national goals of food security, climate resilience, and economic growth through the development of a National Agricultural Science and Technology Roadmap.

The proposed framework places special emphasis on effective technology transfer by establishing Technology Transfer Units (TTUs) in all major institutes, a National Agricultural Technology Transfer Center, and regional demonstration

hubs to ensure that research outcomes are practically applied in the field. The plan also envisions deeper China-Pakistan cooperation in agricultural science and technology through joint laboratories, capacity-building programs, and collaborative research in areas such as climate-resilient crop varieties, water-efficient irrigation systems, pest and disease management, livestock breed improvement, and indigenization of hi-tech farm machinery. Speaking on the occasion, Rana Tanveer Hussain commended the efforts of the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) for their valuable support in preparing a forward-looking reform roadmap for Pakistan's agricultural research sector. He stated that the Government of Pakistan is fully committed to transforming PARC into a modern, efficient, and innovation-driven institution capable of leading the country's food security agenda. The Minister emphasized that the government would implement the MARA-CAAS recommendations in letter and spirit to

make PARC a hub of agricultural advancement, ensuring that farmers directly benefit from modern technology, value addition, and research-based solutions. Rana Tanveer Hussain directed the formation of a high-level implementation committee comprising representatives from the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, PARC, and other key stakeholders to ensure the timely execution of the reform plan with clear milestones and accountability mechanisms. He reiterated that the restructuring of PARC is not merely an administrative exercise but a national priority essential for boosting agricultural productivity, strengthening food security, and achieving sustainable economic growth. The Minister expressed confidence that, with the collaboration of Chinese partners and the dedication of Pakistan's scientific community, PARC will soon emerge as a world-class agricultural research institution contributing effectively to national development.

PEC, NADRA sign MoU

ISLAMABAD: A new era of digital transformation has begun for engineers in Pakistan as the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance collaboration in advanced technology and digital solutions. The signing ceremony, held on Friday, was attended by Chairman PEC Engineer Waseem Nazir and Chairman NADRA Lt. Gen. Muhammad Munir Afzal. The agreement aims to strengthen PEC's systems through modern digital infrastructure and promote transparency by transitioning towards a paperless environment. —APP

Science minister calls for empowering youth

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Khalid Hussain Magsi Friday emphasized the importance of equipping young researchers and scientists with knowledge, skills, and hands-on experience in scientific research to address emerging global challenges. He was speaking as chief guest at the closing ceremony of the five-day 19th International Symposium on Advanced Materials (ISAM-2025) held at the National Centre for Physics (NCP). The minister highlighted that nations like China had achieved technological leadership through continuous learning and innovation. Expressing strong confidence in Pakistan's youth, he said the country's past achievements in institution building and economic progress reflect its capability for excellence. Magsi reaffirmed his belief in a promising and progressive scientific future for Pakistan, driven by research and innovation. Earlier, Dr. Syed Khalid Mehmood Shah, Scientific Secretary ISAM-2025, expressed gratitude to international and local participants for their active engagement and contributions. He shared that the symposium featured 60 oral and 100 poster

presentations, covering themes such as advanced materials, artificial intelligence (AI), additive manufacturing, nanotechnology, renewable energy, and biomaterials. A concurrent technology exhibition, "Revolutionizing Industry Through Science and Engineering (RISE 2025)," showcased innovative research and industrial collaborations. In his remarks, Mirza Rizwan Baig, President of the Pakistan Advanced Materials Forum (PAMF), noted that ISAM has played a vital role in fostering scientific advancement, international collaboration, and industry-academia linkages for over three decades. He announced plans to establish a Center of Excellence in Advanced Materials in Pakistan to strengthen research and innovation in key sectors, including industry, energy, and defense. International delegates praised Pakistan's growing scientific ecosystem, the potential of its young researchers, and the quality of its research institutions. They also welcomed the Government's decision to establish the National Center for Advanced Materials at Quaid-i-Azam University, to be named after Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan in honor of his contributions to national self-reliance. —APP

Chinese company to export donkey meat to China next month

ISLAMABAD: Gwadar North Free Zone Chinese Company "Han Geng" is all set to export donkey meat to China next month as all inspections criteria, certifications and regulations have been completed successfully. Han Geng Official told Gwadar pro that first shipment will be forwarded from company infrastructure including recently established slaughterhouse in Gwadar North Free Zone to China in November. He said that around 50 containers carrying donkey meat will sail from Pakistan to China on monthly basis. Development came after formal lifting of ban on the export of donkey hides to China by government of Pakistan. General Administration of Customs, China conducted online inspection of Hen Geng to seal approval of processes and procedures under prescribed laws. Pakistan's first China-led top-notch construction of modern slaughterhouse for donkey meat and hide has been completed at a cost of 50 million dollars. Groundbreaking took place on 4th May 2024 by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh during unveiling of the Agriculture Industrial Park in Gwadar Free Zone. Ministry for Maritime Affairs official said that donkeys being reared at many farm houses in various parts of Punjab will be slaughtered at state of art Gwadar North Free Zone slaughterhouse. "Their meat and skin will be further processed keeping in view international standards and later be exported to China," he added. On query, he said that Gwadar North Free Zone Donkey slaughterhouse will lay down the foundation of advance slaughter technology in Pakistan to help secure the disease-free donkey meat with high quality preservation through the cold chain.

MoITT launches cloud enablement program

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT), through its flagship organisation Ignite – National Technology Fund, on Friday launched two landmark initiatives – the Prime Minister's Cloud Enablement Program for Startups and the Pakistan Startup Fund (PSF). The event marks a significant milestone in the Government of Pakistan's efforts to strengthen the national innovation ecosystem and promote a knowledge-based digital economy. The ceremony was attended by Federal Minister for IT & Telecom, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Rafique Ahmed Burriro, CEO Ignite, along with founders, co-founders, CEOs, presidents, partners, VPs, directors, and general managers from leading private companies and startups, officials from MoITT and other dignitaries. Speaking at the occasion, Shaza Fatima Khawaja highlighted the government's strong commitment to the Prime Minister's Digital Nation Vision, emphasizing that these initiatives will accelerate innovation, empower entrepreneurs, and position Pakistan as a key player in the global technology landscape. "The launch of the Prime Minister's Cloud Enablement Program, Pakistan Startup Fund, and BridgeStart Pakistan reflects our vision to empower startups, attract global investments, and position Pakistan as a competitive force in the global digital economy," said Shaza. She said that the government is taking concrete steps to provide an enabling environment for youth to pursue innovation and research. She said the Pakistan Startups Fund has been established to further facilitate young entrepreneurs, with the aim of commercialising their innovative ideas into viable solutions for global challenges. Highlighting the country's progress in the information technology sector, she said Pakistan's IT industry is demonstrating remarkable growth, adding that the national leadership is fully committed to supporting its continued expansion and development. Adding to the occasion, Rafique Ahmed Burriro, CEO Ignite, said, "Ignite, under the Ministry of IT & Telecom, is to execute these transformative initiatives. The Cloud Enablement Program, PSF, and BridgeStart collectively provide our startups with the essential pillars for success: infrastructure, funding, and international exposure in creating an ecosystem for sustainable innovation." The Prime Minister's Cloud Enablement Program for Startups aimed to provide access to world-class cloud infrastructure through leading global providers such as AWS, Google Cloud, Microsoft Azure, and Huawei Cloud. The program offers reimbursement-based cloud credits to eligible startups, enabling them to scale efficiently, innovate faster, and adopt emerging technologies such as AI, FinTech, HealthTech, and eCommerce. The Pakistan Startup Fund (PSF) is designed to bridge early-stage funding gaps by offering equity-free grants of up to 30% of an investment round, helping de-risk private investment and encouraging venture capital inflows into Pakistan's startup ecosystem. BridgeStart Pakistan connects startups with global accelerators and investors, supporting their participation in international programs and providing exposure to global markets. During the ceremony, graduating startups under BridgeStart Pakistan were presented cheques and certificates in recognition of their outstanding performance in international acceleration and incubation programs. —DNA



Islamabad : Newly elected office bearers of IMCG, G10/2 pose for group photo with President Dua qamar in oath taking ceremony held on Friday. — DNA

Pakistan Army's Battle Beyond the Battlefield

Defeating Taliban isn't enough; Pakistani nation, society and strata have to defeat Talibanism as well, at all costs

F. Z. KHAN

PAKISTAN'S war against terror has entered its most critical phase. The enemy today is not simply the terrorist with a gun in hand, behind it actually is the ideology that arms him. Our army continues to fight valiantly against the TTP terrorists. This Fitna al-Khawarij is the deviant influenced by Takfiris, who, with a wrong interpretation of an edict of Imam ibn Tamiya, exploit the true essence of religion only to justify violence and rebellion. Yet, the deeper threat is not the TTP alone; it is the Talibanism instead, which is an extremist ideology that distorts the truth of the faith of Islam, that poisons young minds, and seeks to uproot the very foundations on which Pakistan was created. Pakistan Army's role is clear: to fight terrorists, wherever they may be, and to ensure that no hostile element, foreign or domestic, can harm the nation. Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reaffirmed in Peshawar, the day before, that Pakistan will not allow the Afghan soil to be used as a sanctuary for terrorists waging war against the Pakistani State. Speaking to tribal elders, he warned that the Taliban in Kabul continue to "provide all possible assistance" to Indian proxy groups like TTP-Fitna al Khwarij and BLA-Fitna al Hindustan. The question is, while the army is fighting the Taliban terrorists on the battlefield, who is meant to fight Talibanism or the ideology that breeds the Taliban? TTP and its affiliates claim to wage jihad, but its acts (of terror) betray Islam's principles? They kill innocent people, women and children; they attack mosques, schools, and hospitals; they mutilate bodies and "play football with their heads"; and they declare the state of Pakistan, founded in the name of Islam, as kafir (infidel). How come? This warped ideology mirrors the Khawarij of early Islam who rebelled against the legitimate authority; misinterpreted the Quran and Hadith; and justified bloodshed in the name of piety and purity! How come? The problem is larger than cross-border terror; it is the creeping spread of Talibanization, which is the social, political, and religious mindset that sympathizes with such groups. Army can eliminate militants, but it can't by itself or without the help of strata eradicate the ideology that sustains them. Talibanization takes root in the minds of those who, often unknowingly, absorb extremist narratives. When segments of society begin to romanticize the Taliban as defenders of faith, or

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when sympathy is extended to groups who kill in the name of Islam, the threat multiplies as the DG ISPR warned in his recent press briefing at Peshawar. This is why our fight against terrorism must be fought on two fronts: the kinetic and the ideological. The kinetic front belongs to the army and the law enforcement agencies. The ideological front, however, belongs to the society at large. It is a battle of ideas, to be fought in classrooms, mosques, media, and online spaces where young minds are shaped. The handlers of suicide bombers and radicals exploit ignorance. They plant in the minds of youth the false belief that Pakistan's rulers, army, and citizens are kafir. This is very poisonous, designed to fracture Pakistan from within. The same Pakistan they attack is a nation built in the name of Islam, to safeguard the rights of Muslims. So, we stand today at a decisive moment. The Army, as the Field Marshal affirmed, will continue its mission until the last terrorist is eliminated. The security operations in KP, Balochistan and elsewhere reflect this will. But the military victory must be matched by an intellectual and social victory. This requires national consensus; a single, unifying agenda against extremism in all forms. The political leadership, intelligentsia, academia, journalists, influencers, teachers, elders, especially religious scholars must rise together to expose the falsehoods of Talibanism and Talibanization. Silence or ambiguity only strengthens the extremists and terrorists. Religious scholars carry a sacred duty. They must reclaim the narrative from those who have hijacked it. The danger of Talibanization is not confined within our borders. It is part of a regional strategy by hostile India to use Afghanistan as a base for destabilizing Pakistan. This is why the talks in Istanbul-Doha, mediated by Qatar and Tukiye, are crucial. The ceasefire and monitoring mechanisms agreed upon are steps towards containing cross-border terrorism. Kabul must not allow itself to become an Indian proxy. Terrorism can be defeated by force. Talibanism can only be defeated by conviction. The real battle is for the hearts and minds of Pakistanis, especially the youth. Every teacher, parent, and religious leader must help build an intellectual firewall against extremism. The media must educate, not sensationalize. The political class must set aside divisions to forge a common front for national stability. The Army can destroy terror networks, but it is the responsibility of the nation to destroy the ideology that fuels them. As long as Talibanization finds sympathizers, it will continue to regenerate. Pakistan must decide, once and for all, to totally reject this cancerous ideology and reaffirm its founding vision: a modern, moderate, and peaceful Islamic state. In this defining battle, there is no middle ground. Pakistan must not only defeat terrorists; it must defeat Talibanism come what may. The battle against this ideology should be the foundation of a national campaign, cutting across political divides, appealing to teachers, scholars, journalists, anchors, social media influencers, above all ulema and mashaikh, students and youth alike. The battle of ideas, identity, and faith is indeed where the war must now be won. Talibanization is a treason against Pakistan and Pakistanis' faith and future. This is a war not only for the soul of Islam, but the soul of Pakistan.

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How Beijing Reshaped the US Tariff Regime

Qamar Bashir



Xi also announced the resumption of large-scale Chinese purchases of American soybeans and other farm products, a symbolic win for U.S. farmers in the Midwest who had borne the brunt of earlier tariff wars. For Trump, that commitment provided domestic political relief; for Xi, it reaffirmed China's leverage as the indispensable buyer in a fragile global food chain. The meeting's choreography reflected contrasting political cultures but a mutual understanding of necessity. Trump's exuberant declaration that the talks were "twelve out of ten" was classic self-promotion, but analysts...

AFTER months of tension, failures, and near breakdowns, the United States and China finally struck a landmark trade agreement that has reshaped the global balance of economic power. The negotiations culminated in Busan, South Korea, on October 30, 2025, where President Donald J. Trump and President Xi Jinping met face to face to seal a compromise that blended hard politics with pragmatic economics. What began as another episode in Trump's "America First" campaign ended as a stunning reversal of Washington's long-held trade strategy. For the first time in decades, the United States found itself negotiating not from a position of dominance, but parity—perhaps even vulnerability—with an economic rival that refused to bow to pressure.

The Busan summit produced an agreement that went far beyond tariff adjustments. It marked a recalibration of two superpowers' economic engagement, with provisions covering tariff reductions, rare-earth exports, fentanyl-precursor chemicals, and agricultural trade. The outcome reflected necessity as much as diplomacy.

At the center of the breakthrough was a U.S. pledge to cut its combined tariff rate on Chinese imports from around 57 percent to approximately 47 percent, the first major rollback since Trump took over. The move signaled a pivot from confrontation to partial de-escalation and was hailed by economists as a lifeline for world trade.

In return, China suspended new restrictions on rare-earth mineral exports for at least one year, with an understanding that the suspension could be routinely extended. For Washington, this was no small concession. Rare earths—17 metallic elements critical to advanced technologies—form the backbone of America's semiconductor, defense, and electric-vehicle industries. More than 70 percent of global production and 85 percent of refining capacity lie in Chinese hands, and when Beijing curbed exports in retaliation to earlier tariffs, it had paralyzed entire sectors of U.S. manufacturing. Restoring that supply flow was a strategic victory disguised as diplomacy. Pressure on the White House had been mounting for months. Tech corporations and automakers warned of imminent shutdowns. The Pentagon privately admitted that major defense contractors depended on Chinese neodymium and dysprosium magnets for missile guidance and radar systems. A U.S. Geological Survey report had cautioned that rebuilding a domestic supply chain could take up to ten years and cost more than \$80 billion. Faced

with that reality, Trump's negotiators entered Busan with fewer cards than before, and Beijing knew it. Yet rather than triumphalism, China played its hand with deliberate restraint, focusing on pragmatism over posturing. Xi Jinping arrived at the summit not to lecture but to stabilize, projecting the tone of a statesman rather than a strategist of revenge. Alongside the tariff cuts and rare-earth suspension came a surprising humanitarian dimension: a bilateral accord on fentanyl-precursor chemicals. China agreed to tighten monitoring of the compounds fueling America's opioid epidemic, and in return, the U.S. halved its "fentanyl tariff" from 20 to 10 percent.

Xi also announced the resumption of large-scale Chinese purchases of American soybeans and other farm products, a symbolic win for U.S. farmers in the Midwest who had borne the brunt of earlier tariff wars. For Trump, that commitment provided domestic political relief; for Xi, it reaffirmed China's leverage as the indispensable buyer in a fragile global food chain. The meeting's choreography reflected contrasting political cultures but a mutual understanding of necessity. Trump's exuberant declaration that the talks were "twelve out of ten" was classic self-promotion, but analysts quickly noted the absence of concrete enforcement mechanisms. It was a deal built on goodwill and fatigue rather than trust. Taiwan and semiconductor restrictions—particularly on the Nvidia Blackwell chip—were consciously excluded from discussion, a recognition that overloading the agenda could derail fragile progress. The leaders instead opted for a narrow corridor of cooperation, deferring confrontation to another day. Another novel feature of the accord was its annual review mechanism, which replaced the rigidity of long-term treaties with a rolling, year-by-year renegotiation process. Rather than securing permanent peace, both sides built a framework of perpetual bargaining—flexible enough to adjust to political cycles yet risky enough to keep markets guessing. It institutionalized uncertainty as the new normal, but also embedded the principle of dialogue into the heart of competition. For Trump, it ensured headlines and leverage; for Xi, it prevented the U.S. from dictating fixed terms that could constrain China's long-term strategy. Both saw advantage in impermanence. Markets reacted swiftly. The Baltic Dry Index stabilized, Pacific shipping surged, and global equities rose as investors sensed a return to predictability. The IMF projected a 0.4 percent boost to global GDP in 2026, primarily from revived trade flows and restored supply-chain continuity.

Analysts described the accord as a "pause, not peace." It de-escalated the confrontation without resolving its causes. Beneath the smiles, the rivalry over technology, ideology, and global influence remained untouched. But Busan proved that rivalry need not mean rupture.

The deeper significance of the summit lay in what it revealed about the world's economic transition. The age of laissez-faire globalization is fading. What emerged in Busan was the architecture of a managed economy—a hybrid system in which trade is weaponized yet indispensable, competitive yet cooperative. America's "America First" doctrine has evolved into "America Negotiates First," while China's "dual-circulation" model has shifted toward selective globalization. The WTO, once the arbiter of free trade, now stands eclipsed by the pragmatism of direct, leader-to-leader diplomacy. Every commodity—from semiconductors to soybeans—has become a bargaining chip in a global chess game where economic interdependence replaces ideology.

Yet the Busan accord also offered a rare glimpse of statesmanship amid rivalry. Xi Jinping's calm assertion that "dialogue is better than confrontation" signaled a tactical but genuine openness. Trump, for his part, recognized—perhaps reluctantly—that economic coercion had reached its limits. Both leaders understood that in a world of intertwined supply chains, neither can thrive by isolating the other. The agreement thus stands as a testament not to friendship, but to realism: two adversaries choosing stability over escalation because chaos serves neither. As the first container ships carrying newly authorized rare-earth cargoes departed Chinese ports, markets exhaled. The scene encapsulated the fragile peace that now defines global commerce—an uneasy equilibrium between competition and cooperation. The Busan agreement did not end the U.S.–China rivalry, but it transformed its character. It turned open confrontation into managed coexistence and replaced threats with transactions. The world may still be divided by politics, but it is bound by necessity. And in that necessity lies the quiet triumph of diplomacy over dominance—a reminder that in the twenty-first century, power belongs not to those who shout the loudest, but to those who can learn, at last, to deal.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
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Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC
Macomb, Michigan, USA

My Lahore was not like this

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Lahore can do the same. The city needs a comprehensive environmental management strategy—one that is practical, continuous, and enforceable. Planting trees once a year is not enough; it must be a civic habit. The government must encourage the use of electric and hybrid vehicles, introduce stricter emission standards...

TAKE pride in being from Lahore, a city renowned worldwide as the city of vibrant and lively hearts. In Punjabi, it is even said that "Jinne Lahore nai vekhya, o jamya nai"—whoever has not seen Lahore has not been born. Lahore has always been more than a city; it is a feeling, a rhythm, a heartbeat that never stops. Life here moves like a river, constantly flowing day and night, brimming with color, warmth, and energy. Lahoris possess an incredible knack for adapting to any situation. They find joy in small things, gather to celebrate festivals, weddings, and even cricket victories with unmatched zeal. They stand by one another in sorrow and happiness alike. The city's people are hospitable, generous, and ever ready to lend a helping hand. They love gardens, parks, and lively company. Whatever their financial standing, Lahoris take pride in good food, elegant clothes, and open-heartedness. Yet, with a heavy heart, I must admit that the Lahore I grew up in—the city of flowers and fragrance—has now become one of the most polluted cities in the world. The data shared by international environmental monitoring agencies is alarming. According to the Air Quality Index (AQI), Lahore often ranks above 300 on several days of the year, reaching levels considered "hazardous" to human health. This means that simply breathing in Lahore has become dangerous. Smog, which once was an unfamiliar word for Lahoris, now covers the city like a dark shroud from October to February every year. Schools are forced to close; flights are delayed; and hospitals report a surge in respiratory and eye diseases. But Lahore was not always like this. I still remember the time when the mornings in Lahore were filled with mist, not smog—when one could see the Shalimar Garden, the Jahangir Tomb, the Minar-e-Pakistan, and the Badshahi Mosque gleaming in sunlight, not hidden behind a grey haze. Once, Lahore and its surroundings were green and fertile. The fields around Shahdara, Thokar Niaz Baig, and Raiwind were rich with crops and trees. The air carried the scent of earth after rain, and the Ravi River,

though modest in flow, brought life to the city's landscape. In those days, even when farmers burned leftover straw after harvest, the city remained clean and breathable. The smoke dispersed quickly into open air, as there was ample greenery to absorb it. What changed? The change came with unchecked urban expansion and reckless planning. In the last two decades, Lahore's population has increased rapidly, now exceeding 14 million. The city that once ended at Kot Lakhpat and Mughalpur now stretches beyond Bahria Town, Defence Phase VIII, and beyond. Vast agricultural lands have been converted into housing societies. Each society brings with it new roads, vehicles, and commercial plazas—but at the cost of trees, fields, and open spaces. Planners and developers, in their race for profit, seldom paid attention to environmental sustainability. No proper waste management systems were established; industrial units were allowed to operate without emission control; and the city's green lungs were slowly suffocated. Even our symbols of progress, such as the Metro Bus and the Orange Line Train, though convenient for commuters, have come at an environmental cost. Massive concrete structures were built, but little was done to offset the damage to the city's air quality. Trees were felled for road expansion, yet few were replanted. According to the experts, the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project, though ambitious, has further threatened the delicate ecological balance. The shrinking of natural water channels has worsened air stagnation, contributing to smog formation. Today, the people of Lahore—especially children and the elderly—are paying the price. Respiratory illnesses like asthma, bronchitis, and allergies have increased sharply. Doctors at hospitals such as Mayo, Services, and Jinnah report a rise in pollution-related cases during the winter months. Students are compelled to stay home on "smog days," disrupting their education. The once cheerful Lahori evenings, filled with gatherings at Food Street, Gulshan Iqbal or Race Course Park, have turned into hours spent indoors to avoid polluted air.

It is true that development and modernization are essential for a growing population. However, unplanned development is a slow poison. There are cities in the world far older and more populated than Lahore—like London, Paris, and Beijing—that once faced severe pollution but managed to reverse it through discipline and vision. Beijing, for instance, imposed strict regulations on industries, shifted factories away from urban centers, and promoted electric transport. The result is visible improvement in its air quality over the last decade. Singapore and Seoul have also integrated urban greenery into their planning, ensuring that every new development includes green zones and public parks. Lahore can do the same. The city needs a comprehensive environmental management strategy—one that is practical, continuous, and enforceable. Planting trees once a year is not enough; it must be a civic habit. The government must encourage the use of electric and hybrid vehicles, introduce stricter emission standards, and ban the burning of agricultural waste near the city. Industrial zones must be relocated away from residential areas. The Ravi and other waterways must be revived to restore the city's natural ecosystem. Citizens, too, must play their part by reducing waste, conserving energy, and promoting cleanliness. Lahore is not merely a place—it is a living chapter of history. It has witnessed the grandeur of the Mughals, the wisdom of Sufi saints, and the courage of freedom fighters. It is the cultural heart of Pakistan, where poetry, art, and hospitality blend into one soul. But today, that soul is gasping for breath. If we wish to keep Lahore alive as the city of lively hearts, we must first make it a city of clean air and open skies again. The fragrance of Lahore's gardens, the melody of its streets, and the laughter of its people must not be lost under a blanket of smoke. The time has come to act—not tomorrow, not next year, but now—so that the next generation may say with pride: Yes, we have seen Lahore, and it is still the city that was never truly born to die.

Briefs

Pak hopeful
of Nov talks
with Taliban

FROM PAGE 01
Fitna-al-Khawarij is a term designated by the state for banned terror outfit Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and Fitna-al-Hindustan is a term that the state uses for Balochistan-based groups to highlight India's alleged role in terrorism and destabilisation across Pakistan. Andrabi said that Pakistan had been urging the Afghan Taliban for the past four years to take "decisive and effective measures" against terrorist outfits present on Afghanistan soil. "We repeatedly shared credible information about the presence of top leadership of Fitna-al-Khawarij and Fitna-al-Hindustan on Afghan soil with the Taliban regime. However, despite repeated assurances in the past, there has been a surge in terrorist attacks in Pakistan from Afghanistan." He said the "consistent and total disregard" of Pakistan's legitimate security concerns by the Afghan Taliban over the last four years and the "unprovoked aggression against Pakistan with the support of Fitna-al-Khawarij on Oct 11 and 12 and later Oct 14 and 15 led to violent exchanges across the international border". "Pakistan decisively responded to Afghan provocation aimed at destabilising the border area, facilitating terrorism, and furthering the Fitna-al-Khawarij's nefarious designs". Pakistan would respond resolutely if provocations continue in the future, he further warned. The FO spokesperson emphasised that Pakistan had always been desirous of a peaceful, stable and regionally integrated and prosperous Afghanistan, "which is at peace with itself and its neighbours". "With the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021, we expected the vision of regional peace and connectivity to be realised. "In the same spirit, despite our various security concerns, Pakistan took many initiatives this year to support and help Afghanistan and extended a number of concessions to Afghanistan, especially for Afghan transit trade". He further highlighted that Islamabad had elevated its diplomatic representation with Afghanistan from charge d'affairs to the ambassador level and also agreed to expand the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project to Afghanistan.

Israel clause
in Passport:
Pak rebuffs
Indian...

FROM PAGE 01
The ministry had called the reports of deployment of 20,000 troops to Gaza completely false, saying that no discussions or deals took place with the CIA or Israel. Neither the Foreign Office nor military authorised or announced any mission to Gaza. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also clarified that the Pakistani passport has not been changed in any way. The long-standing clause remains printed clearly. Meanwhile, the directorate general of Immigration and Passports confirmed that the passport still reads: "This passport is valid for all countries of the world except Israel." The information ministry, while exposing the false reporting by the Indian media, said that Pakistan's position on Israel has always been crystal clear. "Pakistan has never recognised Israel, and there is absolutely no question of military cooperation," the statement continued. "Our support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination is firm and principled, it has never wavered," the ministry added. The info ministry also noted that Republic TV's story was not picked up by any credible regional or international media outlet, which it said proves how "fabricated and unserious" the claim was. Calling out what it described as a "habit of spreading lies", the ministry said: "Unfortunately, this kind of toxic propaganda has become routine for Indian godi media." "Pakistan will not be distracted by such tactics," the statement concluded. "We will continue to speak the truth and stand by justice, peace, and the rights of the Palestinian people."

AKU-EB celebrates high
achievers 2025 in Gilgit

GILGIT: The Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKU-EB) celebrated the remarkable accomplishments of its students from Gilgit-Baltistan today under the theme "You Are a Drop in the Ocean." The theme serves as a powerful reminder that every student – like a single drop – holds the potential to shape the larger ocean of change. It reflects not only individual excellence but also a shared commitment to collective action against climate change and commitment to environmental sustainability. The ceremony honoured young achievers who have exemplified excellence, resilience, and purpose – qualities that continue to define the spirit of AKU-EB learners across Pakistan.

Welcoming students, parents, and educators, Dr Naveed Yousuf, Chief Executive Officer of AKU-EB, congratulated the high achievers for their remarkable performance. He noted that since its inception in 2002, the Board has graduated more than 80,000 students under its SSC and HSSC qualifications. Addressing the students, Dr Yousuf noted "You are the new chapter in AKU-EB's story – a story of commitment to fairness, innovation, and hope." He further emphasized that "AKU-EB's vision goes beyond access. We stand at the intersection of innovation, ethics, and purpose – leading the way toward a more thoughtful, sustainable, and responsible future for education in Pakistan. We see a future where assessment becomes a catalyst for discovery, where schools become centres of innovation, and where every AKU-EB graduate steps into the world not just ready to succeed – but ready to make a difference." Mr. Imtiaz Momin, Chief Executive Officer, Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKESP), attended as Guest of Honour and



reaffirmed AKESP's strong partnership with AKU-EB. He announced that within the next two years, all AKESP schools will be affiliated with AKU-EB, reflecting the shared vision of raising educational standards and nurturing critical thinking among students. "Eighty percent of AKESP schools already affiliated with AKU-EB achieve A+ results," he noted. "This is a clear reflection of AKU-EB's excellence in promoting higher-order thinking, rigorous assessment, and authentic preparation for higher education. AKU-EB's leadership continues to guide schools not only in improving quality but also in expanding access through scholarships – ensuring

that every learner has a fair opportunity to excel." He further endorsed the deeper message behind this year's theme, adding: "The theme 'You Are a Drop in the Ocean' carries profound meaning – it reminds us that success is not limited to academic achievement but extends to our collective commitment to society and our planet at large." Renowned mountaineer Samina Baig, the first Pakistani woman to summit Mount Everest, attended as Chief Guest and congratulated the high achievers for their dedication and courage. She commended the Aga Khan University Examination Board and the wider Aga Khan Development Network institutions,

"AKU-EB is redefining education across the country," she said. Drawing from her own journey, she encouraged students to embrace challenges with resilience: "No mountain is too high and no dream is too far. Great goals demand preparation, patience, and persistence. Along the way, there will be storms, failures, and fears – but there is also faith and the support that comes with it. Remember, every success begins with clarity of purpose – and you have the best institutions to help you define that purpose." High achiever Shuja, speaking on behalf of the students, called for urgent action against climate change – a crisis deeply affecting Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral.

KP cabinet
takes oath

FROM PAGE 01
"KP Governor Kundi congratulated the newly sworn-in provincial ministers and expressed his best wishes to them," it added. According to an earlier summary sent to the KP governor by the provincial government, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, CM Afridi had selected his cabinet members, while also picking Muzammil Aslam and Taj Muhammad as advisers, and Shafi Jan as a special assistant. The PTI's KP chapter had also confirmed the names in a post on social media platform X. Former KP finance minister Taimur Saleem Khan Jhagra congratulated the new provincial cabinet and wished them all the best. Afridi – who was elected the new provincial chief executive earlier this month – had previously insisted that he would announce his team after meeting incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan. However, after repeated attempts to meet the former premier were unsuccessful, Imran's sister told the newly appointed CM he had "complete authority" to form the provincial cabinet.

Pakistan
awards 23
offshore...

FROM PAGE 01
TPAO secured a 25% stake in one of the awarded blocks and the right to operate it after signing a joint bidding agreement with the PPL earlier this year to explore the country's offshore prospects. Other partners include Hong Kong-based United Energy Group, Orient Petroleum, a major local independent producer, and Fatima Petroleum, part of Pakistan's Fatima Group conglomerate. The four winning consortiums, led by OGDCL, PPL, Mari Petroleum and Prime Energy, collectively pledged about \$80 million in exploration work over the initial three-year period, the energy ministry said.

PA speaker
urges quick
27th Amend.

FROM PAGE 01
He noted that while the National and Provincial Assemblies enjoy five-year terms, citizens lose faith in democracy when they do not experience its benefits directly. The Punjab Assembly unanimously passed a resolution demanding a constitutional amendment introducing a new chapter to make it mandatory to hold local government elections within a stipulated timeframe. The resolution also proposed that no political party should have the authority to shorten the tenure of a local body. The speaker added that the caucus within the Punjab Assembly, comprising 80 members, including 35 from the opposition, is actively playing its role in strengthening local governance. The resolution declared Article 140-A incomplete, emphasising that provinces must establish local governments and devolve administrative and financial powers accordingly. It criticised the abolition of local bodies by the new government, noting that it took three years to draft replacement legislation. "Where I live, drainage and sanitation issues still persist," the speaker remarked.

Pak-Afghan
relations...

FROM PAGE 01
The defence minister said that he would not blame the entire Afghan government, but many within its ranks are providing support to these groups. He said that the Afghan regime is still violating the ceasefire agreement, to which Pakistan is responding in a befitting manner. Asif also confirmed that an interim ceasefire agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan was reached last night (Thursday) under the mediation of Qatar and Türkiye. He said that the next round of talks is scheduled for November 6 in Istanbul, where he said the modalities of the agreement will be finalised. He added that monitoring and verification mechanisms have been agreed upon to ensure full compliance, particularly by the Afghan side.

Trump's shadow looms
over key US state elections

WASHINGTON: A year after Donald Trump swept to power, Republicans face their first major test at the polls, with voters in two of the most populous US states set to deliver their verdict on the president's return to the White House. The high-profile mayoral contest in New York City may be grabbing the headlines, but the races for the governor's mansions in New Jersey and Virginia – home to a combined 18 million people – offer a sharper preview of next year's midterm elections. Both pit centrist Democrats against Republicans aligned with Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, and could signal whether middle-of-the-road voters have made peace with the president's radical cost-slashing agenda – or plan to give his party a bloody nose in 2026. Trump has sent a steamroller through gov-

ernment since returning to office in January, shuttering entire agencies and cutting an estimated 200,000 jobs even before the government shutdown. "If Democrats sweep – or even win – Virginia and edge New Jersey, it signals the suburbs haven't forgiven MAGA," California-based financial and political analyst Michael Ashley Schulman told AFP. The election in Virginia, which is second only to California in the size of its federal workforce, will be a historic showdown between two women vying to become the state's first female governor. Democrat Abigail Spanberger, a former CIA officer and three-term congresswoman, faces Republican Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears, a Marine veteran and staunch Trump ally. Polls show Spanberger – who has leaned on her national security credentials and cast herself as a bulwark against Trump's aggressive federal downsizing – holding a

steady lead of about seven points. She has vowed in stump speeches to be "a governor who will stand up" for the thousands of federal workers laid off by Trump's Department of Government Efficiency. Earle-Sears opened her campaign on red meat to fire up conservatives, mirroring the playbook of outgoing Governor Glenn Youngkin to focus on culture war issues such as transgender athletes and abortion. Her lagging campaign was boosted by an endorsement from Trump and a down-ticket scandal involving Democratic attorney general nominee Jay Jones, who reportedly sent violent text messages about a political rival in 2022. Over in New Jersey, Democrat Mikie Sherrill – another 2018 "blue wave" alum and former Navy pilot – is also ahead, but locked in a tighter battle with Republican businessman Jack Ciattarelli. – Agencies

PSB Shelves
Inquiry Into Dual
Housing Benefits

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board's (PSB) internal inquiry committee has reportedly shelved its investigation report concerning employees allegedly receiving dual housing benefits and unauthorized self-hiring payments, in apparent violation of government rules. According to official documents, several PSB officials – including Assistant Director Ghulam Taqi Khan, Senior Weightlifting Coach Zeeshan Ahmad, Superintendent Muhammad Riaz, Lady Warden Asifa Javed, Wajahat Khan, and others – simultaneously availed hostel accommodation while also receiving self-hiring allowances, a clear breach of government housing regulations. A high-level inquiry committee, led by the PSB Deputy Director General (Administration), was formed to identify those responsible and recommend recovery of unauthorized payments as well as disciplinary action. However, despite a two-week deadline, the committee failed to determine accountability or finalize its recommendations. Sources confirmed that the inquiry report remains pending and that no recovery process has been initiated so far.

Jemimah's century steers India
into Women's World Cup final

Rodrigues top-scored for India with unbeaten 127, featuring 14 boundaries

MUMBAI: Jemimah Rodrigues's unbeaten century propelled India into the ICC Women's World Cup 2025 final, off the back of a five-wicket victory against Australia in the second semi-final at the Dr DY Patil Sports Academy on Thursday. The victory propelled the co-hosts into the final, where they will be locking horns with South Africa at the same venue on Sunday. Chasing a daunting 339-run target, the home side comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of five wickets and nine balls to spare, courtesy of a gutsy century by Rodrigues. India, however, had a contrasting start to the pursuit as they lost returning opener Shafali Verma (10) in the second over with just 13 runs on the board. The early setback paved the way for Rodrigues to come out at number three, and she shared a crucial 46-run partnership for the second wicket with in-form Smriti Mandhana, who made a run-a-ball 24 until falling victim to Kim Garth in the 10th over. Rodrigues was then joined by skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, and the duo anchored the run chase by putting together 167 runs for the third wicket. The vital stand was eventually broken by Annabel Sutherland in the 36th over when she got Kaur caught at deep midwicket. The Indian captain made 89 off 88 de-

liveries with the help of 10 fours and two sixes. Following her departure, Jemimah received notable support from Deepti Sharma (24), Richa Ghosh (26) and Amanjot Kaur (15 not out) to steer India over the line in the penultimate over. Jemimah Rodrigues top-scored for India with an unbeaten 127 off 134 deliveries, featuring 14 boundaries. For Australia, Garth and Sutherland could pick up two wickets each. Australia captain Alyssa Healy's decision to bat first paid dividends as the defending champions finished at 338 all out in 49.5 overs. The holders, however, had a shaky start to their innings as they lost their captain, Healy (five), on the first delivery of the sixth over with just 25 runs on the board. Following the early setback, experienced Perry joined Litchfield in the middle, and the duo shifted the momentum in Australia's favour by knitting an anchoring 155-run partnership for the second wicket. The platform-setting stand was eventually broken by Amanjot Kaur in the 28th over as she cleaned up Litchfield, who remained the top-scorer for Australia with 119 off 93 deliveries, studded with 17 fours and three sixes. Her dismissal sparked a brief middle-order collapse which saw Australia lose four more wickets, including that of Perry, in quick succession. Perry remained a notable run-getter for Australia with an 88-ball 77, featuring six fours and two sixes. – DNA

Aryna Sabalenka targets first WTA Final title
as stars collide in Riyadh

"It's fast enough for her to do damage and slow enough for her to prepare for her shots. She's deadly on this stuff"

WUHAN: Aryna Sabalenka will aim to reinforce her status as the world's top player by winning her first WTA Finals title in Riyadh as the season finale gets underway on Saturday with all four of the year's Grand Slam champions featuring in a strong field. The Belarusian exemplified consistency in 2025 and arrives for the November 1-8 tournament having retained her US Open title in September, after finishing runner-up to Madison Keys at the Australian Open and Coco Gauff at Roland Garros. The only Grand Slam final she failed to reach was at Wimbledon, where Iga Swiatek defeated Amanda Anisimova. "It's easier when you qualify early in the season but I'm super excited," said Sabalenka, who punched her ticket to the WTA Finals in July. "Honestly I cannot wait to get back. I love that place, I love to play there, and I hope that this year I can do better than I did last year." Martina Navratilova said the 27-year-old's sustained high-level performances made her the favourite in the eight-player line-up. "Her consistency is not to be underestimated," 18-times Grand Slam singles champion Navratilova told the WTA website. "There are so many players you can lose to these days, you have to be on your game at all times, and she was. "She's the heavy favourite on any surface but particularly on medium-pace hard courts where you get a solid bounce and good footing. "It's fast enough for her to do damage and slow enough for her to prepare for her shots. She's deadly on this stuff." World number two Swiatek failed to capture a fourth successive French Open trophy in June but excelled on grass a month later to win her first Wimbledon title.



The 24-year-old Pole, whose season stalled late last year when she served a month-long doping ban following a positive test for trimetazidine due to contaminated sleep medication, has won hardcourt titles in Cincinnati and Seoul this season and has been pleased with her "solid performances" this year. "Winning Wimbledon was a unique experience, and then also Cincinnati and Seoul," 2023 WTA Finals champion Swiatek said. "Overall, I would assess my

season as a journey of growth, where I've learned a lot of lessons especially since the end of the last year." Defending champion Gauff is the only other contender to have previously won the WTA Finals title. The American experienced a dip in form following her Paris triumph this year but has turned the corner with a win in Wuhan and a run to the Beijing semis. Anisimova is another one to watch as the debutant looks to make up for two Grand Slam final defeats – at Wimbledon and the US Open – with the WTA Finals title and a big chunk of the \$15.5 million prize money on offer. Former women's number one Tracy Austin believes the American will be a force in Riyadh. "With her recent victory in Beijing followed by two weeks off, the two-times WTA 1000 champion and two-times Grand Slam finalist is rested, match-tough and keen to make a statement," she told Tennis Channel. Keys is another big hitter who can pose a massive threat on hardcourts, like she did in Melbourne at the start of the year to stun Sabalenka and win her first Grand Slam. Others contenders in Saudi Arabia include former WTA Finals runner-up Jessica Pegula, the late-surging Elena Rybakina and twice Grand Slam finalist Jasmine Paolini. Unlike the last two seasons, the year-end world number one ranking will not be decided at the tournament with Sabalenka holding an unassailable lead. The season finale also features the top eight doubles teams in the world. WTA Finals singles draw: Steffi Graf Group: Aryna Sabalenka Coco Gauff Jessica Pegula Jasmine Paolini Serena Williams Group: Iga Swiatek Amanda Anisimova Elena Rybakina Madison Keys. – Agencies

Briefs

Residents of Gaza fear ceasefire collapse

CAIRO: Israeli planes and tanks pounded areas in eastern Gaza on Thursday, Palestinian residents and witnesses said, a day after Israel said it remained committed to a US-backed ceasefire despite launching more lethal bombardments in the territory. Witnesses said Israeli planes carried out 10 airstrikes in areas east of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, while tanks shelled areas east of Gaza City in the north. No injuries or deaths were reported. The Israeli military said it carried out "precise" strikes against "terrorist infrastructure that posed a threat to the troops" in the areas, which Israel still occupies. The strikes were the latest test of the fragile ceasefire that came into effect on Oct. 10 in the conflict between Israel and Hamas. "We're scared that another war will break out, because we don't want a war. We've been displaced for two years. We don't know where to go or where to come," said a displaced man, Fathi Al-Najjar, in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. At the tent encampment where Najjar spoke, girls and boys were filling plastic bottles with water from metal containers along the street, and women were cooking for their families in clay-made firewood ovens. People in the Gaza Strip, most of whom had been reduced to wasteland, feared the tenuous truce would fall apart, saying that the last two days, in which they were deprived of sleep, felt like a revival of the two-year war.—APP

Thai ex-PM Thaksin's party elects new leader

BANGKOK: One of Thailand's largest political parties, founded by ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, elected a new leader on Friday, the party said, following the resignation of his daughter, the former prime minister. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, 39, stepped down as Pheu Thai party chief last week after a court removed her as prime minister in August over an ethics breach linked to a border dispute with Cambodia. Analysts say her departure was a strategic move to shield Pheu Thai from potential legal challenges and could mark the end of the Shinawatra family's decades-long dominance in Thai politics. Pheu Thai members elected Julapan Amornvivat, a former deputy finance minister, as their new leader, according to a livestream on the party's official Facebook page. "I feel honored to receive this privilege and thank all party members for their confidence," the MP from northern Chiang Mai province, a Pheu Thai stronghold, told reporters after the vote. Julapan, 50, is the son of veteran politician Somporn Amornvivat, who served as deputy prime minister and led Pheu Thai in 2019. He was among those promoting the party's flagship campaign policies ahead of the 2023 election, including a proposed 10,000-baht (\$300) stimulus handout and the legalization of casinos.—APP

Taiwan does not want China's one country, two systems: Lai

HUKOU, Taiwan: Taiwan does not want China's "one country, two systems" and must uphold its freedom and democracy, and resolve to defend itself, President Lai Ching-te said on Friday, rejecting Beijing's latest push to get the island to come under Chinese control. China said this week it "absolutely will not" rule out using force over Taiwan, striking a much tougher tone than a series of articles in state media that pledged benign rule if the island comes over to Beijing under a system of autonomy it uses for Hong Kong and Macau. Lai, whom China views as a "separatist," told soldiers at a military base in northern Taiwan's Hukou that only strength can bring true peace.—APP

Pak, ASEAN explore new horizons for investment

During the discussions, Federal Minister Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh highlighted the strategic importance of ASEAN countries as key partners for Pakistan and briefed the delegation on the role of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and the Facilitation Centre in promoting investment opportunities across the country.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Friday hosted a high-level meeting with a joint delegation of Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ambassadors and High Commissioners at the Board of Investment office. The delegation included Rongvudhi Virabutr, Ambassador of Thailand and Chair of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI); Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Chandra Warsenanto Sukoto, Ambassador of Indonesia; Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia; Pham Ahn Tuan, Ambassador of Vietnam; Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez, Ambassador of the Philippines; Wunna Han, Ambassador of Myanmar; and Col. (Rtd.) Pengiran Haji Kamal Bashah Pengiran Haji Ahmad, High Commissioner of Brunei.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary Board of Investment and other senior officials, reflecting the importance Pakistan attaches to strengthening economic ties with ASEAN countries. During the discussions, Federal Minister Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh highlighted the strategic importance of ASEAN countries as key partners for Pakistan and briefed the delegation on the role of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and the Facilitation Centre in promoting investment opportunities across the country. He emphasized that these zones provide a structured and investor-friendly environment, aimed at fostering sustainable industrial growth, attracting foreign direct investment, and generating employment opportu-



nities. All ASEAN countries envoys expressed keen interest in sectors such as tourism, food industry, and other emerging industries, which hold substantial potential for investment and bilateral economic collaboration. The Minister highlighted that Pakistan is actively offering incentives to investors to enhance investment opportunities in different sectors like IT, Infrastructure, Textile, Mining. The delegates collectively acknowledged the presence of significant investment opportunities in Pakistan for ASEAN

countries and underscored their willingness to explore potential collaborations in multiple sectors. Discussions also focused on strengthening trade and investment ties, improving connectivity, and facilitating smoother investment procedures to ensure a mutually beneficial partnership. The ASEAN representatives welcomed Pakistan's investor-friendly policies and highlighted their interest in participating in development initiatives that could promote regional integration and growth. Federal Minister Qaiser

Ahmed Sheikh reiterated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, the Government of Pakistan is focused on an export-led growth economy, aiming to create a sustainable business environment for investors and to enhance Pakistan's role in regional trade networks. The Secretary of the Board of Investment, Jamil Ahmad Qureshi, stated that both the Board of Investment (BOI) and the Special Investment Facilitation Centre (SIFC) are actively working to facilitate and promote investment opportuni-

ties across Pakistan, ensuring a smooth and investor-friendly environment. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation, fostering regional development, and promoting long-term partnerships that support economic growth and stability. Both sides expressed optimism about the opportunities ahead and agreed to continue dialogue and engagement to implement actionable initiatives for investment and connectivity in the region.

Pak-Kuwait sign agreement amount USD 25m for hydro power project

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Fahad Hesham H. A. S. Aldousari, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Kuwait, reaffirmed his Government's commitment to furthering bilateral economic cooperation and assured KFAED's continued support for Pakistan's development initiatives.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Kuwait Strengthen Development Cooperation through Signing of Second Loan Agreement amount USD 25 million for Mohmand Dam Hydropower Project. A signing ceremony was held today at the Ministry of Economic Affairs to formalize the Second Loan Agreement amounting to Kuwaiti Dinar 7.5 million (US\$25 million) between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) for the Mohmand Dam Hydropower Project, said a release issued here Friday. The agreement was signed by Muhammad Humair Karim, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, on behalf of the Government of Pakistan. The ceremony was attended by Mr. Fahad Hesham H. A. S. Aldousari, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the State of Kuwait, Senior officials from Ministry of Economic Affairs and WAPDA. While speaking on the occasion, the Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, expressed profound gratitude to the Government of the State of Kuwait and KFAED for their continued support to Pakistan's development agenda. Mr. Karim stated that this concessional financing reflects the brotherly relations and enduring partnership between Pakistan and Kuwait. He appreciated the Kuwait Fund's financial assistance in energy, water, and social sector projects, which are contributing significantly to Pakistan's socio-economic development. It was recalled that during the 5th Session of the Pakistan-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission held in May 2024, Pakistan had requested the Kuwait Fund for early signing of financing agreement for total of Kuwaiti Dinar 30 million (US\$ 100 million) for the Mohmand Dam Hydropower Project, to be released in four equal tranches. Following the signing of the first loan agreement in June 2024, today's signing marks the second phase of this commitment. Mr. Karim informed that the project is progressing smoothly and that the disbursement under the second loan will further accelerate construction activities on this strategically important project, which aims to enhance water storage capacity, generate clean energy, drinking water supply to Peshawar city and strengthen flood control in Pakistan. He also emphasized the early signing of the third loan agreement and invited the Kuwait Fund to consider additional financing for other priority development projects in Pakistan. Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Fahad Hesham H. A. S. Aldousari, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Kuwait, reaffirmed his Government's commitment to furthering bilateral economic cooperation and assured KFAED's continued support for Pakistan's development initiatives.—DNA

Syrian students return to schools stripped bare by conflict

MAAR SHAMARIN, Syria: In the southern Idlib countryside, once a frontline in Syrian civil war, residents are trickling back to their villages after years in exile. Repairing and reopening damaged and looted schools is key to the return of the displaced, but nearly a year after former President Bashar Assad was ousted in a rebel offensive, hundreds of schools are still destroyed. Millions of children in Syria remain out of school, while others are attending class in gutted buildings without basic supplies. A schoolhouse with no windows or chairs Safiya AlJurok and her family fled the town of Maar Shamamin five years ago when Assad's army wrestled control of the area from opposition forces. After Assad's fall last December, the family returned home and are now living in a tent — the same one they stayed in while displaced — next to the remains of their destroyed house. The local elementary school reopened last month, and AlJurok is sending her three children, in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade, to classes there. The L-shaped school building is disheveled, its walls riddled with bullet holes and its paint peeling in long strips of gray and blue.—APP

Pakistan announces offshore bid round 2025 results

ISLAMABAD: Keeping in view the Prime Minister's vision of indocinating energy security, enhancing indigenization and promoting local resource development, the Ministry of Energy, Government of Pakistan announces the results of the competitive Offshore Bid Round 2025, launched in January this year after a gap of 18 years for the grant of petroleum exploration licenses in forty (40) offshore blocks. Before initiating the process, the Ministry developed a Model Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA), a key document integrated into the bid package, to ensure transparency, competitiveness, and investor confidence. In parallel, the Offshore Petroleum Rules were promulgated to provide a comprehensive regulatory framework, paving the way for renewed offshore exploration in Pakistan's waters. A recent basin study conducted by the U.S. firm DeGolyer and MacNaughton (D&M) has indicated a significant yet-to-find potential of hydrocarbons in Pakistan's offshore basins. Building on this encouraging assessment, the Offshore Bid Round 2025 was launched with a view to offer blocks that allow companies to undertake systematic exploration efforts to test various geological plays across both the Indus and Makran basins. Today, 31st October 2025, the bids were publicly opened transparently by the Bid Opening Committee, chaired by the Director General Petroleum Concessions (DGPC), in the presence of representatives from the provincial governments of Sindh and Balochistan, the two coastal provinces hosting the offshore areas. The response to the bid round has been encouraging, reflecting strong investor confidence in Pakistan's upstream sector. Bids were received for twenty-three (23) offshore blocks, covering a total area of approximately 53,510 square kilometers. Among the successful bidders are Pakistan's leading national companies, OGDCL, PPL, MariEnergies and Prime Energy. In addition, other important international and private-sector partners, like Turkish Petroleum, United Energy, Orient Petroleum, and Fatima Petroleum, have joined as joint venture partners, underscoring growing international interest in Pakistan's offshore potential. M A total of 4,427 work units have been committed during Phase-I of the initial three-year license period, representing an investment of approximately 80 million USD. The companies have submitted work programs designed to progressively mitigate the geological risks, and in the event of exploration drilling, investments could reach up to USD 750 million to USD 1 billion.—DNA

Schengen visa system must be reformed to aid HRs activists: Amnesty

LONDON: European visa systems in the Schengen area are prohibitively strict for human rights figures seeking to enter the continent from impoverished and dangerous parts of the world, Amnesty International has said. In a report, the organization called on Schengen states to close the obstacles to rights and values that they claim to uphold. The report identified 104 visa-restricted countries — mainly in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East — where human rights figures face substantial difficulty in accessing short-term European visas. The applicants intend to travel to the 29 Schengen states in Europe for advocacy, networking, or to flee danger in their home countries, Amnesty said. But through Schengen policies, they face "indirect discrimination" and are racialized as Black, Asian and Muslim, resulting in negative impacts on their mobility. Erika Guevara Rosas, senior director for research, advocacy, policy and campaigns at Amnesty, said: "The inability to access Schengen visas means that the voices and testimonies of human rights defenders from countries in the Global South are excluded from forums where decisions that deeply affect their lives are made.—APP

Sudan's RSF says arrests fighters accused of abuses in El-Fasher

PORT SUDAN: Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said they had arrested several of their fighters accused of committing abuses during the capture of the city of El-Fasher, including a man identified by AFP in multiple execution videos. The RSF, at war with the army since April 2023, seized El-Fasher — the army's last stronghold in western Darfur — on Sunday, after an 18-month siege. In a statement late Thursday, the RSF said it had detained several fighters accused of "violations that occurred during the liberation" of El-Fasher, including one known as Abu Lulu who appeared in multiple videos on his TikTok committing summary executions. In one clip verified by AFP, he is seen shooting unarmed men at close range. Another shows him standing among armed men near dozens of bodies and burnt vehicles. The RSF released a video appearing to show Abu Lulu behind bars in what they claimed to be a North Darfur prison. It said "legal committees" had begun investigations "in preparation for bringing them (the fighters) to justice." The group also affirmed its adherence to "the law, rules of conduct and military discipline during wartime.—APP

Gazans find newly-reopened banks have no cash

GAZA/CAIRO: The ceasefire in Gaza has eased the trauma of Israel's air strikes and blockade but a shortage of cash has left Palestinians unable to spend what little money they have without falling victim to wartime profiteers. Banks, many damaged or destroyed along with homes, schools and other institutions across Gaza during two years of war, began reopening on October 16, six days after the ceasefire was announced. Queues soon formed but people came away disappointed. "There is no money, liquidity at the bank," said father-of-six Wael Abu Fares, 61, standing outside the Bank of Palestine. "You just come and do paperwork transactions and leave." People need cash for most everyday transactions in Gaza, whether to buy food in the market or pay utility bills, but Israel blocked transfers of banknotes along with most other goods following the attack and mass hostage-taking by Hamas-led militants in October 2023.—APP

Smog tower, green roads top agenda in commander-chamber talks



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Brigadier Ali Anjum Syed, Station Commander Rawalpindi, along with his team, visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). He was accompanied by Lt. Col. Shakeel and Lt. Col. Wali. They held a meeting with RCCI President Usman Shaukat, along with Group Leader and Former President Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, former presidents, members of the executive committee, and representatives from various trade associations. The meeting focused on key matters concerning the development and facilitation of the

business community in the Cantonment area, including progress on economic and industrial zones along the Ring Road, Rawat Industrial Estate, carpentry cluster, and access roads. RCCI representatives highlighted several initiatives, such as the First Green Road Initiative, and reiterated the demand for a Smog Tower in the city to address environmental challenges. Discussions also included updates on major development projects like the Ketchery Chowk Underpass and Flyover. Group Leader Sohail Altaf appreciated the constructive and friendly engagement of the Station Commander and remarked that such collaboration would help achieve Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) through the formation of a Joint Working Group. Other matters raised included the absence

of a parking plaza, issues related to the pedestrian-only street, and the need for a more conducive business environment. It was agreed to establish close coordination through focal persons and ensure RCCI representation in assessment committees and other affairs of the Cantonment Board. Matters related to property tax, old grant issues, building map approval processes, and notices were also discussed. Brigadier Ali Anjum Syed assured the business community of his full support, emphasizing that his office is available 24/7. He stressed the importance of joint efforts to promote financial literacy, youth engagement, and Ease of Doing Business, adding that it is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to address civic and commercial challenges for the betterment of the city.

Briefs

Govt weighs slashing solar net metering buyback rate

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The government is considering slashing the buyback rate for solar net metering from Rs22 per unit to around Rs11.30 per unit, after estimates showed the scheme has begun imposing a heavy financial burden, up to Rs2 per unit, on the conventional grid consumers.

According to the official data, the rapid expansion of rooftop solar systems has led to a 3.2 billion units drop in grid electricity sales in FY2024, costing the distribution companies nearly Rs101 billion in lost revenue and prompting an average tariff increase of Rs0.9 per kWh for other users.

Projections by the Power Division warn that by FY2034, this figure could swell to 18.8 billion units, translating into Rs545 billion impact and a possible tariff hike of Rs5-6 per unit of grid electricity consumers. Officials say the issue has become serious enough to draw the prime minister's direct intervention.

PSX climbs on
geopolitical
optimism,
earnings
speculation

DNA

KARACHI: The stock market rose on Friday as risk appetite improved following reports that Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to uphold a ceasefire, while earnings-season speculation added further momentum. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index climbed to an intraday high of 160,535.6, gaining 3,802.73 points, or 2.43%, and recorded a low of 158,195.54, reflecting a gain of 1,462.67 points, or 0.93%. "Bullish activity witnessed after reports of Pak Afghan agree to maintain ceasefire in the cross border conflict. Speculations in the earnings season played a catalyst role in bullish activity at PSX," said Ahsan Mehanti, Managing Director and CEO of Arif Habib Commodities. Turkey's foreign ministry confirmed late Thursday that Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban regime agreed to uphold a ceasefire following a fresh round of talks in Istanbul. It added that meetings held in Istanbul from October 25-30 aimed to solidify the ceasefire first agreed in Doha on October 18-19.

Pak calls on UNSC to help end Sudan's crisis

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: As the fall of El Fasher, capital of Sudan's North Darfur region, to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group deepened the existing chaos, Pakistan has urged the UN Security Council to act "with unity and resolve" to bring about a ceasefire, protect civilians and give the people a chance to rebuild their country. "The people of Sudan have endured unimaginable suffering for far too long," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council when it met in an urgent session on Thursday to discuss the sharp deterioration in the situation in Darfur region. "It is time for this Council to send an unambiguous message that it will not remain a passive spectator while innocent civilians are massacred, hospitals are bombed, and aid workers are targeted with impunity," the Pakistani envoy said. Pakistan, he added, condemns, "in the strongest possible terms", RSF's atrocities and its violent takeover of El Fasher.

NATIONAL DAY OF ALGERIA



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Haroon Akhtar Prime Minister Special Assistant on Industries and Production, Ambassador of Algeria Dr. Brahim Romani and others cutting cake to mark the 71st Anniversary of the National Day of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. – DNA

Pakistan working on reforms to fetch foreign investments

*President of the United States Critical Minerals Forum
calls on Finance Minister*

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Robert Louis Strayer II, President of the Critical Minerals Forum (USA), accompanied by H.E. Ms. Natalie Baker, Chargé d'Affaires of the United States, called on Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue at Ministry of Finance today. Senior officials from the Ministry of Finance and relevant departments also attended the meeting. During the meeting, both sides discussed avenues of cooperation in the minerals and mining sector, strengthening supply-chain security, and encouraging responsible and sustainable investment in Pakistan's critical minerals landscape. Finance Minister welcomed the delegation and underscored Pakistan's steady economic trajectory, noting improvements across macroeconomic fundamentals and governance reforms. "Our priority is fundamental fiscal hygiene-building the discipline where capital flows in, remains invested, and is secured through sound policies," the Minister stated. "This foundation is now translating into

improved sentiment and positive signals from international rating agencies.” Finance Minister highlighted that Pakistan has embarked on deep-rooted structural reforms, including power sector restructuring, tax administration reforms, broadening of the tax base, and a roadmap for fiscal sustainability. He noted that the government is separating tax policy and administration functions by establishing a dedicated Tax Policy Unit within the Ministry of Finance to ensure improved governance and efficiency. On privatisation and SOE reforms, Finance Minister shared that 24 state-owned enterprises have been referred to the Privatisation Commission as part of the government’s commitment to improve service delivery and enhance fiscal discipline. Finance Minister also emphasized Pakistan’s strengthened geopolitical and economic partnerships, stating, “Pakistan today stands at a constructive intersection of global relationships—renewed momentum in Pakistan-U.S. ties, time-tested relations with China, and forward-looking strategic cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.” Finance Minister

stressed that Pakistan's mineral and mining sector represents a transformational opportunity: "This offer Pakistan a pathway to shift from consumption-driven cycles to export-led growth. A strong minerals policy framework will help Pakistan break the cycle of periodic balance-of-payments pressures and reduce future reliance on multilateral support." Mr. Strayer shared that the Critical Minerals Forum, funded by the U.S. Government, works globally to support secure and transparent mineral supply chains for U.S. industry, particularly in emerging markets. He stated that the Forum focuses on rare and niche metals including copper and antimony and aims to de-risk investments from both financial and security perspectives. He reiterated the Forum's commitment to support technology transfer, IP protection, and U.S. private-sector investor confidence. The US delegation observed that the United States views Pakistan's science, engineering, and mathematics talent as a competitive strength and acknowledged Pakistan's potential to become a future hub for critical mineral development. The Chargé d'Affaires noted the

Embassy's support for U.S. commercial engagement in Pakistan and emphasized the importance of ensuring strong investor confidence and enabling regulatory frameworks in the minerals sector. Responding to queries, Finance Minister reaffirmed that Pakistan is working on important legal and regulatory reforms and will welcome structured proposals from the Critical Minerals Forum. "We encourage you to return with a detailed framework for collaboration. Pakistan will evaluate it with a view to facilitating responsible investment and ensuring mutual benefit," the Minister said. Finance Minister shared that he met multiple global financial institutions, including DFC and IFC, during recent engagements in Washington, which expressed interest in expanding investments in Pakistan. He appreciated the support of the U.S. Embassy in facilitating these engagements. The meeting concluded with both sides expressing commitment to continued engagement and collaboration in the minerals sector, aligned with Pakistan's economic reform agenda and shared objectives for sustainable development.

Any external aggression will be met with firm and severe response: DG ISPR

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has reiterated that any external aggression against Pakistan will be met with a "firm and severe" response, a statement from the military's media wing said on Friday. His comments come against the backdrop of recent tensions with Afghanistan over Islamabad's long-standing concern regarding terrorist attacks emanating from Kabul. For its part, Islamabad has demanded that the Taliban stop terror groups from using its soil against Pakistan. The Taliban, however, deny the allegation of allowing terrorists to operate from Afghan soil. Meanwhile, in May, the country faced a military standoff – the worst in decades – with neighbouring India. Following an intense, four-day escalation, the two countries agreed to a ceasefire, mediated by the United States. Addressing

a meeting today with students and academics from universities in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Abbottabad district, the DG ISPR asserted. "The armed forces remain committed to defending the country, and any external aggression will be met with a firm and severe response," as per ISPR. Lt Gen Chaudhry detailed that "Pakistan has taken effective steps against terrorism and Fitna Al Khwarij." Fitna al-Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Since the group ended a fragile ceasefire agreement with the government in November 2022, the country has seen a surge in terrorist attacks, particularly in KP and Balochistan, mostly targeting police, law enforcement personnel, and security forces. The statement further mentioned that during the meeting, Lt Gen Chaudhry also talked about the current security situation, including Pak-Afghan tensions and Marka-i-Haq, "adding that "students and teachers present paid tribute to martyrs. The Pakistan Army has named the period of conflict with India from the April 22 Pahalgam attack to the May 10 conclusion of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos as "Marka-i-Haq". Vice Chancellor Hazara University, Dr Ikramullah Khan, lauded the armed forces' role and vowed to stand with them, the statement said. "Pakistan army's resolve is a metaphor for their love for the country," he was quoted as saying in the statement. Khan was of the view that "terrorist elements are aiming to mislead our youth," emphasising that the situation called for the dissemination of "accurate and reliable information."

Ishaq Dar, Canadian FM discuss strengthening bilateral trade



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand discussed the strengthening of bilateral trade and cooperation between the two countries, the Foreign Office (FO) said on Friday. In a statement, the FO said Dar received a call the previous evening from Anand. "The two leaders discussed strengthening bilateral trade and investment,

including sectors such as agriculture and mines and minerals, and collaboration under the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPPA),” the FO said. It added that the Canadian foreign minister thanked Dar for facilitating market access for imports of Canadian canola to Pakistan. “Both leaders appreciated recent constructive engagements, reaffirmed their commitment to advancing mutually beneficial economic cooperation,” the FO said, adding that the two foreign ministers agreed to remain in close contact. Anand also commented on her phone call with Dar in a post on social media platform X.

“We discussed a range of issues including opening up Pakistan to imports of Canadian canola, the FIPPA model, and bilateral economic engagement,” she said. She also thanked Dar for “productive meetings” over the past few months in Kuala Lumpur and New York as well as the phone call. Pakistan’s imports from Canada mostly include pulses and canola seeds. During the last fiscal year, Pakistan’s merchandise exports to North America grew by 9.97 per cent in FY25, reaching \$6.415bn compared to \$5.833bn in the previous year. Data compiled by the central bank attributed the rebound to increased exports of textiles and clothing to the US, which accounted for nearly 94pc of Pakistan’s total exports to the region; the remaining share was primarily directed towards Canada.

Saudi Arabia introduces new Umrah visa policy

DNA

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has introduced a new Umrah visa policy, reducing the entry period for pilgrims from three months to one month, Arab media reported on Friday. The change is part of the Kingdom's ongoing efforts to streamline visa procedures and regulate the influx of Umrah pilgrims more efficiently.

According to reports, the new visa policy may come into effect next week, pending formal implementation by Saudi authorities. Under the revised policy, pilgrims must enter Saudi Arabia within one month of the Umrah visa being issued. Failure to do so will result in automatic cancellation of the visa, Arab media said. Previously, Umrah pilgrims had a three-month window to enter the Kingdom after receiving their visa, providing greater flexibility for travel planning. The updated policy aims to improve coordination and management of pilgrimage arrivals, particularly during peak seasons.

Case registered against former FBR chairman



DNA

KARACHI: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has registered a corruption case against former Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman Shabbar Zaidi, alleging unauthorised tax refunds running into billions of rupees were issued during his tenure, according to an FIR lodged with the FIA Anti-Corruption Circle, Karachi. Zaidi is a Pakistani chartered accountant and former senior partner at AF Ferguson & Co (PwC Pakistan). He was appointed FBR chairman in May 2019 and left the post in early January 2020. The first information report (FIR), filed on October 29 by Inspector Muhammad Iqbal on behalf of the state, invokes Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947, read with Section 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code,



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