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## Pak-Afghan tensions

# Taliban regime's non-cooperation delayed Türkiye team Pak visit

Pakistan to keep borders closed until Kabul gives assurance on counterterrorism, says spokesperson Andrabi

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi on Friday said that the Taliban regime's lack of cooperation may be behind the delay in the visit of a high-level Türkiye delegation – scheduled to arrive in Islamabad last month to discuss tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan Taliban regime. The planned visit was first disclosed earlier this month by Türkiye President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during his meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Baku last month. Türkiye Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Irfan Neziroglu, who had played an active role in facilitating the Istanbul trilateral talks on Afghanistan, had told the delegation visiting Pakistan will also be accompanied by the Turkish intelligence chief and important ministers. During his weekly briefing, the FO spokesperson said the delay in the visit may also be due to scheduling issues. Andrabi said Pakistan will keep its border with Afghanistan closed until firm assurances are provided by Kabul that terrorists and violent elements will not enter Pakistan. He said that the cross-border terrorism is not limited to TTP or TTA militants, adding that Afghan nationals are also involved in serious crimes inside Pakistan. "The border closure should be understood in this broader security context," Andrabi added. On the reopening of the Torkham and Chaman border crossings with Afghanistan

on Thursday, the spokesperson clarified that the borders were reopened only for humanitarian aid. Pakistan closed the Torkham and Chaman borders with Afghanistan on October 12 after the Afghan Taliban, in association with their affiliated militants, attacked multiple Pakistan Armed Forces posts along the border. The border clashes between forces from the two countries began on the night between October 11 and 12 after the Afghan Taliban and militants launched unprovoked attacks against Pakistan's border posts. The resulting clashes led to the killing of over 200 Taliban and affiliated militants, while 23 Pakistani soldiers were martyred defending the motherland. Pakistan also conducted "precision strikes" deep inside Afghanistan, targeting terrorists in Kandahar province and Kabul. A temporary 48-hour ceasefire was announced on October 15 at Afghanistan's request. The two sides eventually reached an official ceasefire agreement on October 19 in Qatar in talks mediated by Doha and Türkiye. Under the deal, terrorism from Afghanistan on Pakistani soil will stop immediately with Islamabad and Kabul agreeing to establish mechanisms to consolidate lasting peace and stability between the two countries. The two sides then held further talks in Türkiye which collapsed after Pakistan refused to accept the Taliban delegation's "illogical" arguments and refusal to address Islamabad's concerns regarding cross-border terrorism.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan, H.E Mr. Tarik Ali Khan called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters Islamabad. –DNA

## No talks with terrorists Imran Khan narrative has 'evolved into national security threat': ISPR chief

"His ego and desires have grown to such an extent that he says if not me, then nothing," says Lt Gen Chaudhry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General (DG) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has hit out at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) jailed founder Imran Khan for "propagating anti-military and anti-state narrative". "The headquarters of the Chief of Defence Forces has been inaugurated," the ISPR chief said hours after the Ministry of Defence issued an official notification for the appointment of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir as the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF). The ISPR chief said today's briefing was aimed at outlining internal national security challenges, saying that nothing is above the state of Pakistan. Without naming anyone, Lt Gen Chaudhry referred to jailed PTI founder Imran Khan saying: "His ego and desires have grown to such an extent that he says if not me, then nothing." Describing what he called a "delusional mindset" of a "person captive of his

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## Govt's offer for dialogue with PTI remains intact, says Sanaullah

PML-N Senator Talal Chaudhry likens PTI founder Imran Khan to MQM founder

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Adviser on Political and Public Affairs Senator Rana Sanaullah on Friday noted that the government's offer of political dialogue to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) remains intact. Speaking on the Senate floor in response to a point of public interest raised by opposition Senator Mishaal Azam, he noted that Prime Minister

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## Briefs

### OGDCL plans major expansion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The state-run Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) is planning a major expansion of unconventional gas developments from early next year, aiming to boost production and reduce reliance on imported liquefied natural gas. Pakistan has long been viewed as having potential in both tight and shale gas, which are trapped in rock and can only be released with specialised drilling, but commercial output has yet to be proved. Managing Director Ahmed Lak told Reuters that OGDCL had tripled its tight-gas study area to 4,500 square kilometres after new seismic and reservoir analysis indicated larger potential. Phase two of a technical evaluation will finish by the end of January, followed by full development plans.

### Pakistan will launch 'stablecoin'

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) Bilal Bin Saqib announced that Pakistan is set to launch its first "stablecoin" as part of its drive to make virtual assets a part of the economy. The PVARA is an autonomous federal body governed by a multi-stakeholder board including the governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan and the chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue.

### 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

## Brotherly bonds

# Pakistan fully stands with Malaysia at difficult time: PM

PM speaks with Malaysian counterpart, expresses solidarity over losses in floods

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday held a telephonic conversation with the Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim to express solidarity over the recent Cyclone-induced floods. The prime minister, on behalf of the people and Government of Pakistan as well as on his personal behalf, expressed his heartfelt condolences to the Malaysian Prime Minister over the loss of precious lives and damages done to the property as a result of heavy rainfall, floods and landslides in the wake of recent cyclone.

While offering prayers for those who had lost their lives and wishing an early recovery of the displaced and injured, the Prime Minister conveyed complete solidarity with the Malaysian people at this time of grief, a press statement issued by the PM House said.

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## PM Shehbaz Congratulates Asim Munir

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday extended warm felicitations to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir on assuming charge as Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces, calling the appointment "historic" and a defining moment for the country's security framework. The Prime Minister praised Asim Munir's "bold and courageous leadership," noting that his command played a decisive role in

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## Ali Mirza released from Adalia jail

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Religious scholar Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza was released from Adiala jail on Friday, days after the Lahore High Court's (LHC) Rawalpindi Bench approved his bail in a blasphemy case registered in Jhelum. Mirza had approached the Rawalpindi Bench seeking bail in the case. Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan heard the petition on December 3. During the hearing, Mirza's counsel, Tahir Ayubi, presented arguments in support of the plea.

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## Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi agree to expand trade

Russian president challenges US pressure on India not to buy Russian fuel in an interview to Indian media

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed on Friday to expand and diversify trade beyond oil and defence despite Western pressure on New Delhi to scale back its decades-old close ties with Moscow. India, the world's top buyer of Russian arms and seaborne oil, has rolled out the red carpet for Putin during his two-day state visit, his first to New Delhi since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The trip coincides with New Delhi's talks with the US on a trade deal to cut punitive tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump on its goods over India's purchases of Russian oil. Russia has said it wants to import more Indian goods in an effort to

grow trade to \$100 billion by 2030. It has so far been skewed in Moscow's favour due to New Delhi's energy imports.

Describing India's enduring partnership with Russia as "a guiding star", Modi said: "Based on mutual respect and deep trust, these relations have always stood the test of time." "[...] we have agreed on an economic cooperation programme for the period up to 2030. This will make our trade and investment more diversified, balanced, and sustainable," he told reporters, with Putin by his side.

Modi, who warmly embraced Putin on the airport tarmac when he arrived on Thursday, also reiterated India's support for a peaceful resolution to the war in Ukraine. Putin said Russia would continue to ensure "uninterrupted fuel supplies"

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## Defence ministry notifies Field Marshal as CDF

Two-year extension in the tenure of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu also notified

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Defence on Friday issued an official notification for the appointment of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir as the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF). The notification was issued a day after President Asif Ali Zardari approved the appointment on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "President Asif Ali Zardari approved the appointment of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir as COAS concurrently as CDF for five years," read a statement issued by the President House on Thursday. This marks a significant development in the country's military leadership, with Field Marshal Munir taking charge of the newly established position of CDF. Separately, the defence ministry issued another notification extending the service of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu, the Chief of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) by two years. The extension will come into effect once his ongoing five-year term concludes in March 2026. While approving the two summaries, the president extended "best wishes to the COAS, concurrently the Chief of Defence Forces" and the PAF chief for their successful tenures, according to a statement issued by the President's Secretariat. Moments before his appointment,

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# DECEMBER 2025

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# Netherlands to expand trade, investment coop: Envoy

LAHORE: Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Robert-Jan Siegert, has said that while the bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and the Netherlands are strong and continue to grow, there is still a "little bit of catching up to do" to further enhance cooperation, particularly in areas of trade and investment. He emphasized, both sides should work together to make the business environment easier and more attractive for foreign investors by addressing existing challenges. He was talking to business community during his visit to Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) here Friday. He was accompanied by Honorary Consul Asma Hamid, Deputy Head of Mission, Hajo Provo Kluit and First Secretary Alexander Akerbloom. LCCI President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol accorded a warm welcome to the Ambassador, while members of LCCI Executive Committee including Amir Ali, Karamat Ali Awan, Waqas Aslam, and Malik Ahmad Amin were also present. LCCI President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol said that Pakistan considers the Netherlands as an important economy and a key trading partner in Europe. According to the ITC World Trade Map, global imports of the Netherlands exceed 635 billion dollars while exports are above 722 billion dollars. The Netherlands is the third largest export destination for Pakistan in Europe after the UK and Germany, and stands fourth among the top European import markets for Pakistan. He informed that overall bilateral trade

during 2024-25 stood around 1.9 billion dollars. Pakistan's exports to the Netherlands amounted to 1.49 billion dollars whereas imports were recorded at 420 million dollars in the same period. Pakistan mainly exports home textiles, hosiery, rice, and woven fabrics, while its key imports from the Netherlands include petroleum oils, malt extracts, iron & steel scrap, medical appliances, and dairy products. He stressed the need to diversify product lines and explore new avenues of cooperation including information technology, tourism, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, processed food, and automotive production. He also highlighted that the Netherlands could help modernize Pakistan's agriculture through advanced techniques and technology transfer. First Secretary Alexander Akerbloom said that more than 50 Dutch companies are already active in the Pakistani market and are looking to further expand. He cited successful joint ventures as models of future cooperation, especially in livestock, agri-food technology, and halal-based exports. He mentioned that Dutch expertise in high-tech agriculture and greenhouse farming can greatly help Pakistan increase crop yields and reduce production costs. He said the Netherlands, despite its small size, is the second largest exporter of agri-food globally due to its innovative farming methods. He shared examples such as the potato project in Punjab that successfully reduced

fertilizer costs by 30 percent and increased yield by the same proportion. He also referred to recent initiatives like the International Cotton Accelerator, launched in Lahore, which aims to promote organic cotton and strengthen Pakistan's textile-based economy. He stressed that Pakistan needs climate-resilient seeds and advanced water management solutions to cope with growing challenges like floods and drought. The Ambassador said that Pakistan offers a great market, but foreign investors also compare opportunities globally. Therefore, simplification of regulatory procedures, improved ease of doing business, and reforms beyond special economic zones are crucial to attract more Dutch investment. He said both sides should join hands to advocate business-friendly reforms. He invited LCCI and its members to actively participate in the EU-Pakistan Business Forum scheduled for April 28-29 in Islamabad, where companies and institutions from all EU states will explore avenues for deeper trade cooperation. LCCI President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol reiterated LCCI's commitment to working closely with the Netherlands Embassy to identify new tradable goods, enhance B2B linkages, encourage exchange of business delegations, and strengthen the already cordial relations between the two nations. He assured full support from the platform of LCCI for all initiatives aimed at promoting bilateral trade and investment.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Sardar yasir Ilyas Advisor to PM on Tourism visiting stalls on launching ceremony of international Cholistan Desert Rally at Serena hotel.

## KP okays recruitment policy for kids, widows of martyred

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday notified important amendments to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Servants (Appointment, Promotion and Transfer) Rules, 1989, allowing special recruitment of the son or widow of civil servants martyred in terrorist incidents. The amendments have been made under Section 26 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Servants Act, 1973, on the directions of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through a notification issued by the Establishment Department. According to the newly inserted Rule 10 (3A), if a civil servant is martyred during service due to an act of terrorism as defined in the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, the appointing authority will be empowered to directly appoint one child of the martyr to a government post. If the child is underage, the widow of the martyred employee will be eligible for the appointment instead. The appointment may be made in Basic Pay Scales (BPS) 3 to 11 in Provincial cadre posts and BPS 3 to 12 in District cadre posts, provided that the candidate meets the minimum qualification required for the post. In case of two widows, preference will be given to the elder widow. The appointment will be subject to the availability of vacancies. If multiple vacancies in different pay scales are available and the candidate qualifies for more than one post.—APP

## SCCI welcomes abolishment of export development surcharge

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) termed the government's move to abolish 0.25 percent export development surcharge (EDS) as good decision to boost exports and to ease exporters' cost pressure besides enhancing competitiveness in the global market. Junaid Altaf, President, Muhammad Nadeem, Senior Vice President, Sabir Ahmad Bangash, Vice President and Members of the entire executive committee of the SCCI in a joint statement here on Friday said, it is highly welcoming to stop collection of export development surcharge after 35 years, stating that a major step toward streamline the export procedures, promote industrial growth, and encourage value-added trade. The government's move will provide essential relief to exporters and support competitiveness in global markets, they

added. President Junaid Altaf remarked that the instance withdrawal of the EDS and implementation of the decision showed the will and commitment of the government of Pakistan to reduce [the] cost of doing business while providing an enabling environment for investors and exporters. SCCI chief continued to say that businessmen and exporters of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa saw the decision as an extremely commendable achievement of the incumbent government and expressed hope that the business-friendly decisions will be implemented across the board to enhance trade, economic and commercial activities. Touching upon a disproportionately high tax burden on export-oriented businesses, President Junaid Altaf stated that exporters face significantly higher taxes

compared to the domestic industry. He urged the government to provide maximum facilities to exporters and steps to effectively promote and showcase the Pakistani manufacturing products across the global markets. President Junaid Altaf stressed pragmatic steps for simplifying the present tax-system, implementation of the government's decision to bring down electricity tariff to eight cents, reforms in the power sector, and formation of National Industrial Policy (NIP) in consultation with chamber and relevant stakeholders. SCCI chief highlighted the borders, administration and operational related issues, stating that the frequent closure of borders had not only brought negative impacts on the country's exports but also hinder the government's efforts to stabilize the national economy.—APP

## RPO orders strict enforcement of traffic laws

FAISALABAD: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sohail Akhtar Sukhera on Friday chaired a special meeting and ordered for strict enforcement of traffic laws with zero-tolerance policy. The police officers briefed him on traffic management, accident reduction, citizen facilitation and overall compliance with road regulations. The officers also presented a comprehensive briefing on strategies to enhance traffic flow, curb accidents and ensure public convenience through improved law enforcement mechanisms. The RPO directed DSPs and DTOs to ensure their physical presence on roads during peak traffic hours and warned that negligence or absence during rush timings would invite departmental action.—APP

## Dengue health officials honoured

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi has recorded its lowest dengue count in years with only 1,576 confirmed cases and zero deaths throughout the year. A ceremony was held at the District Health Authority office to honour the teams behind the success. MPA Asma Naz Abbasi, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, presided over the event and distributed shields and certificates to outstanding workers. Health Inspectors Maskeen Allah and Khubaib Satti received special awards for their exceptional performance. CEO Health Dr Ehsan Ghani, District Health Officer Dr Hussain Shah Tirmizi and other senior officers attended the programme.—APP

## Ghotki-Kandhkot bridge to be opened by 2027: Murad

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has announced that the Ghotki-Kandhkot Road and Bridge Project connecting Sindh, Punjab, and Balochistan, on which the halted work has been resumed, will be inaugurated in June 2027. He took this decision while presiding over the 49th PPP Policy Board meeting, in which he revised timelines of the project, construction progress, cost escalations, and security challenges. The meeting, held at the Chief Minister's House, was attended by Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho, Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro, Works & Services Minister Ali Hassan Zardari, Special Assistant to CM for Investment Syed Qasim Naveed, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, MPA Ghulam Qadir Chandio, DR Sarosh Lodhi, and other members of the Board. The Chief Minister was briefed on the project's im-

plementation history, cost, and the findings of the Technical Committee. The Ghotki-Kandhkot Bridge Project was initiated by the Works & Services Department, with the Concession Agreement signed in May 2018. The initial hydraulic design was approved by the Indus River Commission (IRC) for a three-kilometre bridge length, and construction began in August 2020. Following the devastating 2022 floods, the IRC observed that bridges constructed bank-to-bank were resilient and allowed floodwaters to pass smoothly, while those not bank-to-bank caused pressure on flood protection embankments and increased lag times. Therefore, the IRC mandated that all future bridges over the River Indus be constructed bank-to-bank. Consequently, the Ghotki-Kandhkot Bridge length increased from three km to 12.2 km, requiring major revisions in scope, timeline, and cost, and amended agreements were signed in

2023. The project cost stands at Rs32 billion, with scheduled substantial completion in June 2029. The Sindh government shall ensure safe law & order at the project site for early completion by June 2027. Despite adverse security challenges in the katcha area, construction has progressed steadily. As of November 2025, segments one and two are nearing completion, while segments three and four have significant work done on piling, shaft construction, and transom installation. Overall progress is 54 per cent in piling, 49 per cent in shafts, and 47 per cent in transoms. Financial close with leading commercial and Islamic banks will be achieved by early December 2025. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah reaffirmed the bridge's strategic importance, describing it as "a vital lifeline that will open new economic corridors for upper Sindh."—APP

## AJK govt restored public trust, claims Rathore

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has said that restoring the trust of the people was a major achievement his government. Addressing a massive public gathering at Abbaspur Friday, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that since he took the reins of the government his focus was primarily been on resolving public issues. He highlighted his special connection with Abbaspur, noting that his father won elections due to strong support from the area. Regarding the rehabilitation of Kashmiri refugees, the PM said that property rights would be granted to refugees of 1965 and 1971. On the occasion, the PM announced a slew of development projects including the establishment of Basic Health Units (BHUs) in all three union councils of Abbaspur, a town committee in Mandhol, and a police station in Sahar Chowki. He announced the elevation of Abbaspur's Town Committee to a municipal committee. He also announced setting up of first aid posts along the LoC, construction of roads such as the Tetri Note-Abbaspur road, and upgrading of educational institutions. He assured that Abbaspur Tehsil Hospital would receive necessary support and announced a grant of Rs. 5 lakh for the Abbaspur Press Club. The Prime Minister said that his government has addressed key issues, including issuance of health cards, the scheduling of the Bank of AJK, electricity and other issues in an effective and timely manner. Describing the current eight-month government as a "trailer" for the upcoming five-year term, he expressed the optimism that the PPP would return to power in the next elections. The PPP, he said, believes in inclusivity with no tribal discrimination. He expressed gratitude to Pakistan for its continued support to the people of Azad Kashmir particularly the provision of affordable electricity and subsidized flour. He pledged that Abbaspur would soon become a district and assured the people that the area would soon witness tangible results of the government's initiatives. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Rathore was accorded a grand welcome by the PPP workers upon his arrival at the venue. He was brought to the meeting venue in the form of a big rally. Party workers and traders showered flowers on the Prime Minister. On this occasion, slogans were also raised in favour of the PPP and the Prime Minister. Former Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, PPP President Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin, Minister for Higher Education Malik Zafar, Minister for Food Javed Iqbal Badhanvi, PPP leaders Amjad Yousaf, Raja Naseer, Faisal Naseem and other leaders were also present on the occasion.—DNA

# CDA chief pledges better facilities for business community

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, held a meeting with Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, Prime Minister's Coordinator for Tourism Affairs Sardar Yasir Ilyas, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajran and other representatives on Friday at the CDA Headquarters. The meeting was also attended by IG Islamabad Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, CDA Board Member Administration Talat Mahmood, Member Engineering Syed Nafasat Raza,

Member Planning and Design Dr. Khalid Hafiz, Member Environment Esfandiyar Baloch, DC Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, and other senior officers. The meeting discussed solutions to

issues related to the business community, industries and main markets in the Federal Capital, Islamabad. The meeting agreed to establish an effective mechanism for communication

and mutual consultation to resolve issues in the federal capital. It was decided to form a working group to address the legitimate demands of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and

Industries, the business community and the traders in Islamabad. In this connection, it was agreed to hold regular follow-up meetings in the first week of every month. The purpose of these follow-up meetings is to review progress on the resolution of various issues. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that CDA's goal is the betterment of the Federal Capital, Islamabad, and they are prepared to take all necessary measures to provide the best facilities to the business community and traders. He said that they are prepared at all times for coordinated communication and mutual consultation with all business stakeholders.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days	
DECEMBER	
Dec 01/Romania	National Day
Dec 02/United Arab Emirates	National Day
Dec 02/Laos Republic	National Day
Dec 05/Thailand	National Day
Dec 06/Finland	Independence Day
Dec 07/India	Armed Forces Flag Day
Dec 09/Tanzania	National Day
Dec 11/Oman	Armed Forces Day
Dec 12/Kenya	Independence Day
Dec12/Turkmenistan	Neutrality Day
Dec 16/Bahrain	National Day
Dec 16/Kazakhstan	Independence Day
Dec 18/Qatar	National Day
Dec 18/Niger	National Day
Dec 23/Philippines	Armed Forces Day
Dec 23/Japan	National Day



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Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank	
Islamabad.....	0321-5744480

# Pak, Ethiopia mark “Consensus for Multinational Unity”

Farah Naz Akbar, Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministries of National Heritage & Culture, and Education & Professional Training, attended the ceremony as Chief Guest, extending warm felicitations to the government and people of Ethiopia on behalf of Pakistan

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD – Pakistan and Ethiopia reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations as the Embassy of Ethiopia in Islamabad marked the 20th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ Day under the theme “Consensus for Multinational Unity. H.E. Farah Naz Akbar, Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministries of National Heritage & Culture, and Education & Professional Training, attended the ceremony as Chief Guest, extending warm felicitations to the government and people of Ethiopia on behalf of Pakistan. In his address, Mr. Chalachew Eshetie, Chargé d’Affaires (a.i.) of Ethiopia, highlighted the historical significance of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ Day, celebrated annually on December 8. He noted that the day commemorates the ratification of Ethiopia’s 1994 Constitution, which guarantees recognition, equality, cultural identity, and the rights of all communities within the country’s diverse social fabric. Mr. Eshetie also reflected on major milestones achieved by Ethiopia under the leadership of Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, including the completion and inauguration of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), accelerated infrastructure development, broad-based reforms, and the country’s ongoing economic resurgence. Parliamentary Secretary Farah Naz Akbar emphasized the shared values between Pakistan and Ethiopia, particularly cultural diversity, strong traditions, and vibrant youth demographics. She reaffirmed Pakistan’s resolve to deepen cooperation with Ethiopia through its “Look Africa”



and “Engage Africa” policies. Commending Ethiopia’s progress, she praised the economic transformation achieved under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and expressed Pakistan’s intent to continue expanding ties in trade, culture, education, and people-to-people exchanges. The event concluded with mutual expressions of goodwill and a shared commitment to advancing multinational unity and bilateral collaboration.

## Elite capture intensifies economic pressure on masses

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: A prominent business leader has warned that Pakistan’s economic stress, worsened by elite capture of public resources, threatens social stability, especially as inflation, unemployment, and poverty erode the resilience of the masses. This should invoke a sense of urgency and shared responsibility among policymakers and citizens. Shahid Rashid Butt, former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, said that recent findings from the World Inequality Database show that the top 10% income group receives about 43% of national income. In comparison, the bottom 50% receive only 13%. Such concentration of wealth restricts broad-based consumption, limits domestic savings, and undermines the long-term development of a skilled workforce. He highlighted that nearly 40 percent of children face stunting, and over 25 million remain out of school, underscoring the need for increased investment in health and education. This should motivate civil society and

policymakers to prioritize social services for a more equitable future. Shahid Rasheed Butt noted the growing outflow of skilled youth as both legal and undocumented migration accelerates. Employers report challenges in retaining experienced workers, while small manufacturers cite high input costs and increased taxes as reasons for scaling back operations. Official data for the last fiscal year shows weak industrial output and limited export growth despite repeated policy pledges to support industry. Small businesses and labour representatives dissent from the current policy direction, saying repeated increases in indirect taxes have raised living costs without strengthening service delivery or regulatory performance. They argue that a rollback of elite benefits, greater transparency in public spending, and reforms in judicial and regulatory institutions must accompany revenue measures. Mr Butt stressed that reducing elite influence over economic policymaking, such as implementing transparency measures and anti-corruption

## Tarar defends FBR’s authority to seek bank data

ISLAMABAD: Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar Friday robustly defended the Federal Board of Revenue’s (FBR) legal authority to obtain and communicate bank information to taxpayers, telling the Senate that such inquiries were fully protected by law and consistent with global anti-money laundering regimes. Responding to a calling-attention notice moved by Senator Asad Qasim regarding FBR text messages sent to filers revealing their bank balances and transaction amounts, Tarar said financial scrutiny was an integral part of tax regulation. “You cannot say FBR should not ask questions,” he asserted. “Banks are legally bound to provide information, and worldwide, tax evasion is now treated as a predicate offence under AML frameworks.” He said modern compliance mechanisms required transparency between taxpayers and regulators. “If someone has five crore rupees in their account but has not declared it, and FBR sends a reminder, there should be no objection,” he maintained. Earlier, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry confirmed that the FBR had issued messages to both filers and non-filers where discrepancies were detected between declared income and bank data. He cited Section 165A of the Income Tax Ordinance, which authorises banks to share deposit information, along with provisions granting FBR access to data from FIA, the State Bank, National Database and Registration Authority and utilities. Dismissing allegations of privacy breaches, he said: “If my account information is sent, it comes only to me. There is no broadcast of anyone’s data.” Despite the government’s stance that the legal framework was clear, the House later decided to refer the matter to the concerned standing committee for further examination in view of the sensitivities surrounding data protection and taxpayer privacy.—DNA

## 23rd Pharma exhibition, moot concludes

ISLAMABAD :The 23rd Pharma Asia Exhibition and Conference concluded on a high note, marking record-breaking participation and business deals, largely attributed to the support of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). More than 27,000 professionals from the pharmaceutical industry attended the three-day event, which generated business agreements and investment opportunities worth over USD 170 million, said a press release on Friday. “The exhibition also saw strong international participation, with over 200 foreign exhibitors from 10 countries showcasing their products. Companies from China, Italy, Türkiye, Switzerland, and Spain presented cutting-edge pharmaceutical machinery, raw materials, packaging solutions, and quality-control technologies,” it added.—APP

## Sanaullah says jail rules must be followed

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Friday said any meetings with under-trial prisoners, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan’s family, must follow legal and prison rules. Speaking in the Senate in response to a point of public interest raised by opposition Senator Mishaal Azam, he said such meetings cannot be allowed if they risk disturbing public order or creating unrest. He added that if the opposition wishes to form a parliamentary committee on this matter, they must first coordinate with their leadership and obtain clear instructions, he said. Rana Sanaullah highlighted that democracy progresses through dialogue and cited past invitations by the Prime Minister for opposition leaders to discuss issues in Parliament.—APP

## Senator Sindhu criticizes PTI

ISLAMABAD: Senator PML-N Tahir Khalil Sindhu strongly critique against PTI, accusing them of undermining the country’s sovereignty and vital institutions, while praising the leadership of the Armed Forces Chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for their efforts to protect Pakistan from international isolation. Speaking exclusively to a local media channel, Senator Tahir Khalil Sindhu began by reflecting on the remarkable achievements of Pakistan in its ongoing struggle to safeguard its sovereignty. He highlighted the country’s historic victory against India, noting that it was not just a military success but a triumph of national unity. “Pakistan stood strong, together as one and overcame significant challenges. Our people, our leadership and our forces all played a crucial role in defending this nation,” he said. Senator Sindhu quickly shifted focus to the leadership that guided Pakistan through these turbulent times, praising the Prime Minister and General Asim Munir for their unwavering dedication. “The Prime Minister’s diplomacy on the global stage, coupled with General Asim Munir’s strategic military leadership was central to ensuring our nation’s security,” he stated. “Their efforts have shielded Pakistan from external threats and allowed us to maintain our global standing, securing not only our borders but also our national dignity,” he mentioned.—APP

## CDA explores AFD support for Islamabad water sector reforms

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Friday held a meeting with a delegation of the French Development Agency (AFD) to discuss potential cooperation in reforms and improvement projects in the water sector. Discussions centred on institutional capacity-building of the Islamabad Water Agency and technical assistance for upgrading water supply systems across the capital. Randhawa told the delegation that CDA was prioritizing modern and sustainable solutions to ensure uninterrupted access to clean and

safe drinking water for residents. He said efforts were underway to equip the Islamabad Water Agency with advanced technology, improved HR systems and modernized operational tools. Measures were also being taken to curb water wastage, reduce line losses and encourage conservation, he added. Officials briefed the delegation that the first phase of reforms would focus on modernizing the institutional and administrative structure of the water agency. This would include digitization, financial strengthening and rehabilitation of key infrastructure such as the Simly Dam treatment plants, transmission mains and service reservoirs. The

implementation of a comprehensive water-metering system in Islamabad also came under discussion. The AFD delegation said a detailed feasibility study would be initiated to assess the technical and financial aspects of proposed water projects. At the conclusion of the meeting, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to utilising AFD’s expertise and technical support for reforms in Islamabad’s water sector. The meeting was attended by Member Administration Talat Mahmood, Member Planning and Design Dr Khalid Hafiz, Member Finance Tahir Naeem, Member Environment Esfandary Baloch and other senior officials.—APP

## PRCS pays tributes to the spirit of humanity

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society marked International Volunteer Day under the theme “Every Contribution Matters” with a vibrant ceremony in Islamabad on Friday, attended by students from Cadet College Hasan Abdal, several other educational institutions, volunteers, PRCS staff and representatives from Partner National Societies. The event featured an impressive march-past by cadets and a stage play highlighting the history and humanitarian legacy of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. In her address, Honorable Chairperson PRCS Mrs. Farzana Naek emphasized the indispensable role of volunteers, calling them a precious asset for the organization. She said that volunteers bring energy, dedication, and compassion to every initiative, strengthening PRCS responses during disasters, community outreach programs, and health initiatives. She highlighted how volunteers are

often the first responders in emergencies, providing critical support and relief when it is most needed. She further urged the youth to engage in voluntary service and paid tributes to all humanitarian heroes

who sacrificed their lives for humanity, noting that their courage inspires generations of volunteers. She added that every person, irrespective of age, should come forth and contribute to humanitarian

causes, because that is what matters the most. In his opening remarks, Secretary General Muhammad Abaidullah Khan welcomed the participants and appreciated the dedication of PRCS volunteers na-

tionwide. He noted that PRCS has developed a highly trained and active volunteer force that has played a key role in responding to floods and other emergencies across Pakistan this year. He also highlighted the organization’s mentorship and training programs, which aim to equip young volunteers with essential skills and foster a culture of community service. Head of Delegation, IFRC Pakistan, Mr. Farid Abdulqadir, honored volunteers for their selfless service and offered special tribute to those around the world who lost their lives in the line of duty. He appreciated the work of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society under the vision of Chairperson Mrs. Farzana Naek and reaffirmed IFRC’s commitment to supporting volunteerism and humanitarian action. Head of Office, German Red Cross, Mr. Asif Aman, commended PRCS initiatives and encouraged people from all segments of society to step forward and give voluntary service. He emphasized the importance of community involvement to build stronger and safer communities.





## Briefs

**BTBU forum charts digital future for belt, road coop**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 10th Forum on Science, Technology and Economic Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) concluded on Nov. 29, charting a collaborative path forward in digital trade and sustainable development. The event, hosted by Beijing Technology and Business University (BTBU), gathered over 60 Chinese and international experts, scholars, and postgraduate students, underscoring the BRI's evolving focus on innovation-driven connectivity. Centered on the theme of digital trade cooperation, the forum facilitated in-depth exchanges on aligning technological advancement with economic integration. A key session featured 11 scholars and graduate students presenting pioneering research on the digital trade framework, green economic transition, and evolving global value chains under the BRI, Gwadar Pro reported. In recognition of academic excellence, a series of awards were presented following a rigorous review. Among the honorees was Dr. Qasim Raza Khan, a Pakistani postdoctoral researcher at Nanjing Normal University, who received a second prize for his work. The strategic role of China-Pakistan collaboration was a prominent focus. **APP**

**BRI science agenda moves forward**

ISLAMABAD: Efforts to implement the Action Plan to Foster an Even Closer China-Pakistan Community with a Shared Future in the New Era (2025-2029) are beginning to take practical shape, with one of its important components, cooperation in medicine and pharmaceutical sciences, now moving toward concrete implementation under the Belt and Road framework. The Action Plan 2025-2029, endorsed during Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's state visit to China from August 30 to September 4, 2025, outlines cooperation across multiple scientific and technological fields. Among these, medicine and health stand out, Gwadar Pro reported. Both governments agreed to "strengthen joint research programs in applied and basic sciences... and jointly support inter-governmental research programs on... medicine and health" while also committing to "work together to implement specialized cooperation programs for scientific and technological innovation in... traditional medicine." These commitments were reflected on the ground this week at the 2025 Annual Academic Conference of the Tianjin Key Laboratory of Molecular Drug Research, where Chinese and Pakistani scholars advanced concrete steps toward deeper collaboration in pharmaceutical sciences.—**APP**

**No province facing discrimination in power, gas supply**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Friday said there was no discrimination against any province in the supply of electricity and gas, and no loadshedding is being carried out in any district across the country. He explained, in response to issues raised by senators in Senate, that power outages lasting between one and six hours are carried out solely in districts where electricity theft and line losses fall within the specified criteria. He stated that all provinces are provided resources on an equal basis and no one can be deprived of their share. He added that unannounced loadshedding is not taking place anywhere in the country. The minister further said measures are being taken to curb oil smuggling, while clarifying that the Pakistan-Iran border remains open.—**APP**



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Fredrico Silva along with others taking interest in art pieces during an exhibition "Totems of Time" in Federal Capital.

# Govt tightens crackdown on fake travel documents

The session was attended by the Secretary and Special Secretary of the Interior, Secretary Overseas Pakistanis, Chairman NADRA, DGs and Directors of FIA, DG Passport & Immigration, and representatives of all relevant departments.

DNA

ISLAMABAD :A high-level special meeting chaired by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain has decided to intensify action against passengers attempting to travel abroad using fake documents. The government has approved measures to make the protector issuance system fully foolproof, while reforms in the immigration process have also been finalised to facilitate passengers. The two federal ministers have directed all departments to submit final recommendations within seven days. A strict crackdown has been ordered against elements and agent networks involved in the fake visa business. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi announced that to curb il-

legal immigration, an AI-based mobile application will be launched as a pilot project in Islamabad starting January. "Through this AI app, authorities will be able to determine in advance who is eligible to travel and who is not," he said. Naqvi added that after the passports of deported individuals are cancelled, the government will ensure they do not obtain new visas. He also confirmed that a uniform international driving licence will now be issued by the National Police Bureau. "We are adopting zero tolerance against fake visas and the agent mafia," he emphasized. "Pakistan is in contact with other countries to improve the global ranking of the green passport. People using illegal means abroad damage the country's reputation." He said the overall objective of immigration reforms is to provide convenience to citizens and enhance Pakistan's in-

ternational image. Federal Minister Salik Hussain said that a transparent protector system is the need of the hour. He stressed that individuals traveling on labour visas must possess authentic documents. "The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis will extend full cooperation to the Ministry of Interior in improving the protector and immigration systems," he assured. The meeting reviewed ongoing actions against illegal migrants and individuals traveling with incomplete documentation. Detailed discussions were held on e-driving licences, protector stamps, and immigration-related matters. The session was attended by the Secretary and Special Secretary of the Interior, Secretary Overseas Pakistanis, Chairman NADRA, DGs and Directors of FIA, DG Passport & Immigration, and representatives of all relevant departments.

## Climate experts stress immediate collective action to preserve tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: Climate experts on Friday warned that climate change is now a fast-growing crisis, stressing that rising temperatures and extreme weather show the planet is under serious threat, urging immediate united action to prevent further damage and protect a safe future for coming generations. Climate expert Usman Abbasi while speaking exclusive with PTV news warned that climate change is accelerating at an alarming pace, with rising temperatures, extreme weather events and dwindling natural resources threatening the balance of our planet. He emphasized that these challenges cannot be addressed by individual efforts alone and call for united, collective action from governments, communities, and industries worldwide. Climate experts cautioned that if these trends will continue unchecked, the consequences will be disastrous for ecosystems, economies, and communities worldwide, adding, floods, droughts, heatwaves and resource shortages are becoming increasingly frequent, highlighting the urgent need for immediate and coordinated measures to mitigate further damage. He emphasized the world must act now to prevent irreversible damage and secure a safer, more sustainable future for generations to come. Experts urged strong policies, mass awareness campaigns, and initiatives like constructing mini dams and water reserves to protect resources and build resilience against the climate crisis. Responding to a query, he said it is predicted that by 2040, Pakistan will face an 80% water shortfall and stressed the urgent need for policy-making, community mobilization, and the construction of mini dams rather than relying solely on large projects. He also urged people to avoid burning garbage and to plant more trees to protect the environment and conserve resources.—**DNA**

## Climate awareness drive to train 5,000 Gwadar residents

The meeting reflects continued coordination between UNDP and GDA on community development, youth empowerment, and environmental preparedness, which are the three areas increasingly seen as essential for Gwadar's sustainable future

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A major climate-awareness drive is set to reach 5,000 residents across Gwadar through 100 community sessions, as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) strengthens its focus on helping the coastal city cope with the growing impacts of climate change. The initiative was outlined on Tuesday during a meeting between UNDP Project Officer Sana Durani and Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Director General Moin-ur-Rehman Khan at his office. Durani briefed

the DG on UNDP's ongoing social and development programmes in Gwadar, including the newly launched climate-change awareness plan aimed at improving community preparedness, Gwadar Pro reported. During the meeting, UNDP officials stressed that climate resilience is particularly critical for Gwadar due to its exposure to rising sea levels, coastal erosion, repeated urban flooding, water scarcity, and increasingly erratic weather patterns, the conditions that place the city at the frontline of Pakistan's climate challenges. Awareness, they noted, is a first step toward

helping citizens adopt preventive measures and adapt to fast-changing environmental risks. DG Moin-ur-Rehman Khan said climate change poses "one of the most serious long-term threats" to Gwadar's development. He underscored the need for coordinated action, adding that GDA is already implementing several environment-focused initiatives across the city and will continue prioritizing climate-resilient planning, public awareness, and sustainable urban development. Alongside the climate programme, UNDP also updated GDA on its tech-

nical-training initiative being carried out through the Gwadar Institute of Technology, where 100 local youth are currently receiving technical and vocational training in multiple trades. The programme aims to build a skilled local workforce capable of meeting Gwadar's growing development and employment demands. The meeting reflects continued coordination between UNDP and GDA on community development, youth empowerment, and environmental preparedness, which are the three areas increasingly seen as essential for Gwadar's sustainable future

## Pakistan showcases Chinese agri models

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan highlighted China's agricultural development models on the international stage during a high-level meeting between Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and FAO Director-General Dr. Qu Dongyu at FAO Headquarters in Rome. According to an official statement, during the "hour-long substantive bilateral discussion," the Minister expressed satisfaction over his participation in the 179th FAO Council and praised the "trajectory of excellent bilateral cooperation with FAO," Gwadar Pro reported. Hussain "highlighted challenges and opportunities emerging from climate change" and emphasized the need for "climate-resilient practices in agricultural productivity, water management, seeds, cutting-edge infrastructure, and strengthened research and innovation." A central theme of the meeting was Pakistan's commitment to learning from Chinese agricultural innovations. The Minister "welcomed deeper FAO technical support and expressed interest in learning from successful models, particularly China, in precision agriculture, intercropping, cooperative farming, geographical indication (GI) products, digital farm management, and food safety standardization." China's advances in digital agriculture, cooperative farming frameworks, and food safety standardization have positioned it as a global trendsetter—capabilities Pakistan aims to adopt as it accelerates agricultural modernization. Dr. Qu Dongyu "conveyed commitment for close cooperation in 'Development Research' as means to a long-term strategy to mitigate challenges" and encouraged Pakistan to prioritize "high-impact investments over short-term spending." The Minister thanked FAO for its support, noting Pakistan's intention to "prioritize transformative projects that deliver lasting benefits to farmers and rural communities." The two sides also "discussed best practices in smallholder farming, local food systems, and green rural development," agreeing that "targeted investment in research... may significantly boost farmer incomes and food security." The meeting in Rome came shortly after Pakistan initiated a major restructuring of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) in early November under a Strategic Reform and Cooperation Plan developed with China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS).—**DNA**

**Naqvi pays tribute to war hero**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has paid rich tribute to Major Muhammad Akram Shaheed, the hero of the Hilli front, who wrote an unforgettable chapter of bravery and sacrifice in the defence of the nation. Mohsin Naqvi said the soil of Hilli still bears witness to the unmatched courage and valour of Major Muhammad Akram. "Major Akram stood like an unbreakable wall against the enemy's onslaught and crushed their malicious ambitions," he added. Highlighting his heroism, the minister said that despite intense shelling and the enemy's advancing forces, Major Akram remained steadfast and demonstrated extraordinary bravery. "He moved from trench to trench to uplift the morale of his soldiers—an act that ensured the defence of Hilli remained unbroken," Naqvi noted. He said the Battle of Hilli proves that even with limited resources, strong resolve, unshakeable faith, and firm determination can stop the enemy in its tracks. "The spirit of martyrdom teaches us that perseverance in moments of hardship is the real strength."

**Ayaz directs fast-track delayed housing project completion**

ISLAMABAD :Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday paid a surprise visit to the Parliament Lodges to inspect progress on the long-delayed construction of 104 additional family suites and servant quarters During the visit, the officials from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) briefed the Speaker on the current status of the project, which was launched in 2011 and originally slated for completion in 2013. The scheme had remained stalled for years due to prolonged negligence and inefficiency on the part of the CDA and its contractors, said a news release issued here. Speaker Sadiq said the long-pending project was revived through his special efforts. After assuming office, he formally requested Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to allocate funds for the scheme. Responding to the Speaker's request, the Prime Minister directed the Ministry of Finance to release the required funds, which have since been provided. Emphasizing the urgency of the matter, the Speaker directed the concerned authorities to ensure the timely completion of the project without compromising construction standards.—**APP**

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## The Crisis of Liberal Democracy

MUHAMMAD WALI JAN

THE world is currently going through what is considered to be the most decisive and uncertain period in the history of liberal democracy. The system that has been a symbol of human freedom, fundamental rights, fair elections and the rule of law for the past two centuries. Now entered a crisis whose severity can be gauged from the fact that according to global reports from 2024, approximately 72% of the world's population now lives in political systems that are not democratic but authoritarian or semi-authoritarian. That is, three-quarters of all humanity has come under governance models that are considered the opposite of liberal democracy. These are figures that indicate not the decline of any political ideology but an intellectual setback at the global level.

In the past few years, authoritative research institutions, such as the V-Dem Institute and International IDEA, have repeatedly emphasized that the world is going through the worst wave of democratic decline. According to the latest reports of 2025, the number of countries worldwide where democratic standards have declined in one or more key areas has reached 94. In comparison, there are only 55 countries where improvements have been recorded in some area. This gap itself shows the depth of this crisis. Moreover, in 2009, the number of countries that can be called "liberal democracies" worldwide was historically the highest, but by 2022 their number had shrunk to just 32.

A major reason for this political decline is the rise of populism, which has caused the most damage to public trust in democratic institutions. Populist leaders have transformed public deprivation and despair into emotional slogans and described institutions, the media and the judiciary as "elite", which has the result that democratic structures are weakened from within. Whether it's the attack on Capitol Hill in the US, questions about the impartiality of institutions in India, or the growing influence of nationalist parties in Europe—they're all manifestations of the same global trend.

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The magnitude of the erosion of public trust in institutions can also be gauged from the data. According to global assessments, 71 countries experienced seven consecutive years of decline in democratic freedom between 2016 and 2023. And the decline was primarily seen in media freedom, judicial independence, and civil liberties—the cornerstones of liberal democracy. International IDEA's 2025 report makes it clear that the biggest decline has come in the "rights category," with freedom of expression and freedom of the press being the areas that have weakened the most. This political crisis is also accompanied by an economic crisis, which is hitting the claims of liberal democracy the hardest. The wealth of the rich has multiplied, the middle class is shrinking, and youth unemployment has reached historic levels. This economic inequality undermines the system's promise that a free economy and democracy can deliver progress and justice.

Social media has compounded this crisis. Misinformation, political propaganda, hate speech, and algorithmic polarization have deepened the ideological divide in societies. In the form of "echo chambers," people now only see information that supports their own views, stifling democratic discourse and fostering extremism. According to global reports, press freedom has fallen to its lowest level in ten years, the strongest sign of this crisis. The growing questioning of the electoral system in the world's most powerful democracy, the new wave of nationalism in Europe, the weakening of civil liberties and minority rights in India, and the rise of military interventions in Africa and Latin America—all of these are part of a global pattern, not individual state problems. The basis of this pattern is data that is not just opinion but also numbers—and it is this evidence that proves that the crisis of liberal democracy is not an intellectual or moral crisis but a historical and structural change. The world is indeed standing at a new political crossroads. If liberal democracy cannot incorporate new elements such as reform, economic justice, institutional transparency, media freedom, and controls on the negative effects of technology, then the system that was once considered a symbol of human dignity and collective prosperity will shrink further in the coming years and become a limited historical experiment. Global data and evidence confirm that this crisis is not temporary but structural—and the future of world politics depends on understanding this crisis and finding a solution to it.

## The Legacy of Major Shabbir Sharif

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Yet, despite this disparity, the Pakistani nation did not lose heart. The limitations in political stability, economic strength or diplomatic support did not diminish its resolve. When India launched its offensive, the Pakistan Armed Forces met it with the courage of a people determined not to let their homeland be overrun by aggression. In those days when military hardware was unevenly balanced and the diplomatic climate seemed unfriendly, it was the indomitable courage of Pakistani soldiers that became the country's true shield. Among the shining names of that difficult period, the example of Major Shabbir Sharif stands in eternal...

IN every age of conflict, nations have understood that the strength of an army does not rest merely in the number of its battalions or the size of its armoury, but in the excellence of its equipment, the discipline of its ranks, and above all, the determination that beats within the hearts of its soldiers. War requires tools that deter aggression and answer it with resolute force, yet history testifies that even the most formidable machinery is powerless without the spirit that guides it. Pakistan learned this lesson not in comfort but in fire, when in 1971 it faced a trial greater than its material capacities.

There is no denying that Pakistan entered the war of 1971 under conditions far less favourable than those of its adversary. Politically, the country was grappling with internal discord, strained governance, and the tragic anxieties emerging in East Pakistan. India, in contrast, enjoyed greater political coherence and international support. Economically as well, Pakistan was more limited in resources, while India, with a larger industrial base and greater financial resilience, possessed a comparative advantage. In matters of defence, India had the benefit of numerical superiority, larger stockpiles, and extensive backing from global partners. In external affairs too, New Delhi benefited from significant diplomatic alignments, particularly its strategic treaty with the Soviet Union, whereas Pakistan's position was more fragile, dependent on distant alliances and insufficiently supported by its immediate region.

Yet, despite this disparity, the Pakistani nation did not lose heart. The limitations in political stability, economic strength or diplomatic support did not diminish its resolve. When India launched its offensive, the Pakistan Armed Forces met it with the

courage of a people determined not to let their homeland be overrun by aggression. In those days when military hardware was unevenly balanced and the diplomatic climate seemed unfriendly, it was the indomitable courage of Pakistani soldiers that became the country's true shield. Among the shining names of that difficult period, the example of Major Shabbir Sharif stands in eternal brilliance. He was a young officer who understood that courage is not measured by the strength of the arms one carries, but by the strength of the conviction one defends. On December 6, 1971, during some of the fiercest clashes of the conflict, he led his men with an unmatched spirit. Under heavy enemy fire, he seized strategic ground, repelled repeated assaults and inflicted decisive losses on the opposing forces. In the final moments of his life, he embodied an unshakeable devotion to duty, offering his life for the defence of the motherland. For his supreme courage and sacrifice, he was awarded Nishan-e-Haider, the nation's highest military honour. His legacy remains a symbol of what Pakistan had in its favour even when the odds appeared overwhelming: courage, faith, and an unbroken will.

From that era to the present day, a great transformation has taken place in the military sphere. The global landscape of warfare has changed, and Pakistan, despite facing geopolitical pressures and financial challenges, has strengthened itself in areas where it once lagged behind. Politically, the country today has a more structured system of governance, while India faces its own internal divisions and growing political polarisation. Economically, though Pakistan continues to address serious challenges, India's own rise has created new strategic vulnerabilities, particularly in the

context of regional disputes and military overstretch. Defence capabilities too have undergone a significant shift. Pakistan's modern missile systems, air defence technology, and nuclear deterrence have created a strategic balance that did not exist in 1971. India may possess larger numbers, but Pakistan today commands a deterrent capability that ensures aggression cannot be contemplated without grave consequences. In external affairs as well, the global environment has evolved; alliances are no longer as predictable as they once were, and Pakistan maintains crucial partnerships that reinforce strategic stability in the region. Thus, when one compares the Pakistan of 1971 with the Pakistan of today, it becomes clear that the nation has travelled a long distance. The disparity that once existed has narrowed. The lesson, however, remains unchanged: equipment may strengthen a nation's hands, but it is the character of its people that strengthens its destiny. The story of Major Shabbir Sharif reminds us that when a soldier fights for honour and homeland, he stands taller than any adversary, regardless of the weapons arrayed against him.

In remembering his sacrifice, we remember the essence of Pakistan's resilience. Though the material balance in 1971 favoured the enemy, the moral and spiritual strength of Pakistani soldiers transformed the battlefield. Today, as the region continues to witness strategic competition and military modernisation, the legacy of that era teaches us that while nations must prepare with the most advanced means of defence, they must also preserve the spirit that gave life to sacrifice. For in the final reckoning, it is not merely the might of the machine, but the courage of the heart, that decides the fate of nations.

## The Crisis of Liberal Democracy

Muhammad Wali Jan



The magnitude of the erosion of public trust in institutions can also be gauged from the data. According to global assessments, 71 countries experienced seven consecutive years of decline in democratic freedom between 2016 and 2023. And the decline was primarily seen in media freedom, judicial independence, and civil liberties...

THE world is currently going through what is considered to be the most decisive and uncertain period in the history of liberal democracy. The system that has been a symbol of human freedom, fundamental rights, fair elections and the rule of law for the past two centuries. Now entered a crisis whose severity can be gauged from the fact that according to global reports from 2024, approximately 72% of the world's population now lives in political systems that are not democratic but authoritarian or semi-authoritarian. That is, three-quarters of all humanity has come under governance models that are considered the opposite of liberal democracy. These are figures that indicate not the decline of any political ideology but an intellectual setback at the global level.

In the past few years, authoritative research institutions, such as the V-Dem Institute and International IDEA, have repeatedly emphasized that the world is going through the worst wave of democratic decline. According to the latest reports of 2025, the number of countries worldwide where democratic standards have declined in one or more key areas has reached 94. In comparison, there are only 55 countries where improvements have been recorded in some area. This gap itself shows the depth of this crisis. Moreover, in 2009, the number of countries that can be called "liberal democracies" worldwide was historically the highest, but by 2022 their number had shrunk to just 32.

A major reason for this political decline is the

rise of populism, which has caused the most damage to public trust in democratic institutions. Populist leaders have transformed public deprivation and despair into emotional slogans and described institutions, the media and the judiciary as "elite", which has the result that democratic structures are weakened from within. Whether it's the attack on Capitol Hill in the US, questions about the impartiality of institutions in India, or the growing influence of nationalist parties in Europe—they're all manifestations of the same global trend. The magnitude of the erosion of public trust in institutions can also be gauged from the data. According to global assessments, 71 countries experienced seven consecutive years of decline in democratic freedom between 2016 and 2023. And the decline was primarily seen in media freedom, judicial independence, and civil liberties—the cornerstones of liberal democracy. International IDEA's 2025 report makes it clear that the biggest decline has come in the "rights category," with freedom of expression and freedom of the press being the areas that have weakened the most.

This political crisis is also accompanied by an economic crisis, which is hitting the claims of liberal democracy the hardest. The wealth of the rich has multiplied, the middle class is shrinking, and youth unemployment has reached historic levels. This economic inequality undermines the system's promise that a free economy and democracy can deliver progress and justice.

Social media has compounded this crisis. Misinformation, political propaganda, hate speech, and algorithmic polarization have deepened the ideological divide in societies. In the form of "echo chambers," people now only see information that supports their own views, stifling democratic discourse and fostering extremism. According to global reports, press freedom has fallen to its lowest level in ten years, the strongest sign of this crisis. The growing questioning of the electoral system in the world's most powerful democracy, the new wave of nationalism in Europe, the weakening of civil liberties and minority rights in India, and the rise of military interventions in Africa and Latin America—all of these are part of a global pattern, not individual state problems. The basis of this pattern is data that is not just opinion but also numbers—and it is this evidence that proves that the crisis of liberal democracy is not an intellectual or moral crisis but a historical and structural change.

The world is indeed standing at a new political crossroads. If liberal democracy cannot incorporate new elements such as reform, economic justice, institutional transparency, media freedom, and controls on the negative effects of technology, then the system that was once considered a symbol of human dignity and collective prosperity will shrink further in the coming years and become a limited historical experiment. Global data and evidence confirm that this crisis is not temporary but structural—and the future of world politics depends on understanding this crisis and finding a solution to it.



Briefs

Defence ministry notifies Field Marshal...

FROM PAGE 01

COAS Munir said that, from here onwards, Pakistan would soar to greater heights. "Everything is fine; it's all in front of you. Things are moving towards improvement, and Pakistan will now soar to greater heights from here," he told journalists during an informal conversation at the Awain-e-Sadar in Islamabad. The establishment of new military title follows President Zardari's assent on November 15 to the Pakistan Army, Air Force, and Navy (Amendment) Bills 2025, after their approval by parliament. Under the amended provisions, Article 243, which governs the powers and responsibilities of a Field Marshal, will also apply to any General promoted to the rank. The federal government may authorise the Vice Chief of Army Staff or Deputy Chief of Army Staff to exercise the powers of the COAS under written orders issued on the recommendation of the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF). The legislation further stipulates that once the first notification for the dual office of COAS and CDF is issued, the incumbent COAS' tenure will be considered to have recommenced from the date of that notification. The federal government will determine the specific duties and responsibilities of the CDF, which will include multi-domain integration, restructuring, and ensuring jointness across the armed forces. A significant structural change introduced under the amendment is the abolition of the post of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC), which will now be replaced by the Commander of the National Strategic Command. The prime minister may appoint the Commander from among serving Pakistan Army generals for a three-year term, based on the recommendation of the COAS/CDF.

Imran Khan narrative has 'evolved into...

FROM PAGE 01

own thoughts," Lt Chaudhry said that the narrative promoted by a particular political figure has "evolved into a national security threat". The DG ISPR said the jailed party's founder's narrative has become a threat to Pakistan's national security. The ISPR DG said that anyone who attacks the armed forces or its leadership is effectively "creating space for another army". Lt Gen Chaudhry asserted that the PTI founder keeps the Constitution, the law and established rules aside while promoting this narrative. "Under which law or Constitution do you meet a convicted individual?", the DG ISPR asked, adding that this person sends a narrative against the military and its leadership out of the prison whenever a meeting is held. Declaring PTI founder Imran Khan "mentally ill", he questioned what kind of Constitution and law is it under which you meet a convicted person. "You meet a convict and he creates a narrative against the army and its leadership." The DG ISPR further that the same individual previously tried to create a narrative urging people abroad to stop remittances so that Pakistan would default. "We respect Pakistan's political leadership but keep the army away from your politics," the military's spokesperson said, adding that: "We will not allow anyone to create a rift between Pakistan's army and the people". "We will not allow you to incite the people against the army." Lt Gen Chaudhry remarked. Noting that the freedom of expression is allowed under Article 19 of the Constitution, ISPR DG said that it carries certain restrictions with it as well and does not permit anyone to speak against the state and national security. Lt Gen Chaudhry said the "mentally disturbed individual" had recently posted a tweet and asked his supporters to target military leadership that stood firm against an enemy eight times stronger in the Operation Bunyamum Marsoos.

Nawaz nominated for ICC Men's Player of the Month award

*Two spinners, Simon Harmer and Taijul Islam are also in the list of the ICC Men's Player of the Month award, said a press release*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's all-rounder Mohammad Nawaz has been nominated among other players in contention for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for November. Two spinners, Simon Harmer and Taijul Islam are also in the list of the ICC Men's Player of the Month award, said a press release. In the women's shortlist, two contenders from the recently concluded inaugural ICC Women's Emerging Nations Trophy, Esha Oza and Thipatcha Putthawong, and ICC Women's Cricket World Cup final Player of the Match, Shafali Verma have made it to the women's shortlist. Nawaz was a key component with both bat and ball in the recently concluded Tri-Series at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, involving Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, Harmer and Islam were instrumental in the Test series wins of South Africa and Bangladesh against India and Ireland respectively. Putthawong bowled over the opposition as Thailand snatched a famous victory in the first Women's Emerging Nations Trophy competition which took place in Bangkok, where all-rounder Oza led the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to their runner-up position. Verma's batting heroics, particularly in the final, which helped lead to India's first ICC Women's Cricket World Cup success saw her added to the November list. Men's shortlist: Mohammad Nawaz- Pakistan enjoyed Nawaz' all-round prowess in their Tri-series triumph over Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. He scored 104 ODI runs at an average of 52.00 with a strike rate of 114.28, while also taking four wickets. In T20Is, the left-arm spinner added 52 more runs and claimed an impressive 11 wickets at just 12.72. His match-winning three for 17 in the Tri-Series final against Sri Lanka capped a standout campaign and secured his Player of the Series honour. Simon Harmer (South Africa)- South Africa's experienced



off-spinner was at the heart of their historic 2-0 Test series win over India, which was the Proteas' first in 25 years. Harmer claimed an outstanding 17 wickets at an extraordinary average of 8.94 across the two Tests in Kolkata and Guwahati. The 36-year-old took eight wickets in the first Test match, where he was named the Player of the Match and backed it with nine more in the second, which included a match-winning haul of six for 37 as India fell by 408 runs to give the Proteas a series sweep. His dominance throughout the series earned him the Player of the Series award. Taijul Islam (Bangladesh)- Bangladesh's left-arm spinner continued his match-winning ways in home conditions as

Bangladesh claimed both Tests against Ireland. Taijul picked up 13 wickets at 26.30 in the 2-0 series win, finishing as the leading wicket-taker. His consistent impact rewarded him with the Player of the Series. Women's shortlist: Esha Oza (UAE)- UAE all-rounder and captain, Esha Oza once again showcased her match-winning pedigree during the ICC Women's Emerging Nations Trophy. In seven T20Is during the month, she compiled 187 runs at a strike rate of 137.50, anchoring and accelerating innings with equal authority. She also contributed significantly with the ball, claiming 7 wickets at an average of 18.14 to underline her all-round value. Her standout performance came in the UAE's final match against Namibia, as she scored an unbeaten 68 and took two wickets as she helped her side secure a 28-run victory. Her consistent excellence earned her the Player of the Tournament award, highlighting her central role in the UAE's impressive campaign. Shafali Verma (India)- An injury replacement selection to the India team, Shafali Verma produced a standout performance in the ICC Women's World Cup final, where she top-scored and helped set up her side's maiden title in Mumbai. In her only ODI appearance this month, she scored an impressive 87 runs off 78 balls, striking at 111.53 to set the tone at the top. Her contribution with the ball was equally valuable, claiming two crucial wickets of Suné Luus and Marizanne Kapp for 36 runs off her seven overs. Her all-round brilliance in the final showcased her prowess in those pressure moments, earning the World Cup Final Player of the Match award. Thipatcha Putthawong (Thailand)- Thailand's left-arm spinner Thipatcha Putthawong enjoyed a sensational month, winning the ICC Women's Emerging Nations Trophy and finishing as the joint leading wicket-taker in the tournament with 15 wickets. She was in scintillating form as she left batters bamboozled, with a standout performance in the tournament final, where she took four crucial wickets against Scotland at an economy of 4.25.

Pakistan fully stands...

FROM PAGE 01

He offered Pakistan's full support for relief and rescue operations, as well as any assistance that the Malaysian side requires to deal with this natural disaster. Prime Minister of Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim thanked the Prime Minister of Pakistan for his kind and thoughtful telephonic call, which he said reflected the close brotherly ties between Pakistan and Malaysia.

Vladimir Putin, Narendra...

FROM PAGE 01

to India, signalling a defiant stance in the face of US sanctions, and also flagged a project underway to build India's largest nuclear power plant at Kudankulam. A joint statement issued following the summit said: "The leaders emphasised that in the current complex, tense, and uncertain geopolitical situation, Russian-Indian ties remain resilient to external pressure."

PM Shehbaz Congratulates Asim Munir

FROM PAGE 01

unifying the Armed Forces and galvanizing the nation during what he described as the "Battle for Truth." He said the people of Pakistan would always remember his wartime leadership, which proved instrumental in securing a "historic victory for our homeland." PM Shehbaz also congratulated Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu on the extension of his tenure, lauding the Pakistan Air Force under his command for destroying seven enemy aircraft and advanced missile defence systems "with unmatched professionalism," thereby reinforcing Pakistan's air superiority. The Prime Minister reaffirmed that all national institutions stand united for the defence, development, and prosperity of Pakistan, adding that together, "we will make our country's defence truly invincible, InshaAllah."

Govt's offer for dialogue with PTI...

FROM PAE 01

Shehbaz Sharif's invitation for talks "still stands today," adding that political issues could only be resolved through engagement. Prime Minister Shehbaz has time and again invited jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party to resume its reconciliatory talks, with the most recent one being during Pakistan-India's four-day armed conflict. Despite the two sides holding three rounds of negotiations on December 27, 2024, January 2, 2025, and January 16, the dialogue process hit a snag after the PTI refused to continue with the talks, first saying that they had been called off by its incarcerated founder, Imran Khan and then later backtracking and noting that they had only been put on hold. With the PTI skipping the fourth session, the PM had offered to form a parliamentary committee to advance the talks. The offer, however, was turned down by the PTI.

Ali Mirza released...

FROM PAGE 01

After hearing the arguments, the court accepted Mirza's bail petition and ordered his release, directing him to submit two surety bonds worth Rs500,000 each. He instructed that the mandatory sureties must be deposited before the bail takes effect. Following the approval of his bail and submission of the sureties, Mirza was released from Adiala jail earlier today. A blasphemy FIR had been lodged against Mirza in Jhelum, leading to his petition for protective relief. The religious cleric was arrested on August 26 and moved to jail under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order, 1960 (MPO). Section 3 of the MPO 1960, commonly known as 3-MPO, empowers the government to direct the arrest and detention of a person to prevent him from "acting in any manner prejudicial to public safety or the maintenance of public order".

After 15 years, Dutch anti-blackface group declares victory

AMSTERDAM: Cherished Christmas tradition for some, profoundly insulting for others, the Dutch character "Black Pete", a servant who helps Santa Claus distribute presents, has divided opinion in The Netherlands for decades. Until recently, Santa's arrival on the eve of Saint Nicolas Day (December 5) – a major Yuletide celebration for the Dutch – was marked by many people dressing up as Black Pete, complete with blacked-out faces and often afro wigs, creole earrings and make-up to plump out lips. Stung by the caricature that harks back to Dutch colonial times, Jerry Afriyie founded the "Kick Out Black Pete" (KOZP) movement in 2010 to fight racism and is now wrapping up with the battle won. "Around this time of the year, you would pass hundreds of Black Petes (Zwarte Piet in Dutch), hundreds of white people in blackface.

Today, it is different," he told AFP. "Even small children are correcting me. When I say 'Zwarte Piet,' they say 'Piet,' added the 44-year-old poet in an interview in Amsterdam. In 2010, Afriyie's foundation "Nederlands Wordt Beter" ("The Netherlands is improving") set three objectives. They wanted Dutch colonial history, heavily dependent on slavery, taught in schools, an annual commemoration for the victims and Black Pete to get the boot. KOZP activists organised peaceful protests whenever Santa came to town with Black Petes in tow. Some were pelted with eggs or even fireworks by Black Pete backers. The movement hit global headlines, tarnishing the country's reputation for tolerance, and reached new heights amid the 2020 "Black Lives Matter" protests. Then Prime Minister Mark Rutte – who had said for years that "Black Pete is just black" – urged the

US Supreme Court allows texas to use Trump-backed voting map

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court on Thursday allowed Texas to use redrawn congressional districts for the 2026 midterm elections, boosting the hopes of President Donald Trump's Republicans to retain control of the House of Representatives. The push by Texas – which carves out five more Republican-friendly districts and came at the behest of Trump – kicked off a series of similar efforts in states around the country. The decision by the conservative-dominated high court stayed a lower ruling which had said the redrawn maps had incorrectly used race to set district lines. "Texas needs certainty on which map will govern the 2026 midterm elections, so I will not delay the Court's order," Justice Samuel Alito, one of six conservatives on the bench, wrote in his concurring opinion. The three liberal justices all dissented with the order, which was unsigned. "The District Court conducted a nine-day hearing...And after considering all the evidence, it held that the answer was clear. Texas largely divided its citizens along racial lines to create its new pro-Republican House map," Justice Elena Kagan wrote in her dissent. While the ruling is technically only a temporary halt to the lower court ruling, with a candidate filing deadline next week in Texas, it effectively ensures the Republican-favored map will be in effect for the 2026 midterms. – AFP

Oil refinery shutdown could cost Serbia for years

BELGRADE: The fallout from the shutdown of Serbia's only oil refinery could last years, experts told AFP, putting thousands of jobs and the state's budget at risk – as well as exposing the country to further sanctions. The Petroleum Industry of Serbia's (NIS) refinery has been unable to receive crude oil since October 9 after its Russian majority owners were swept up in US sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Washington is demanding a complete exit of Russian shareholders, but talks over its potential sale have dragged on, forcing the company to shut the refinery on Tuesday. "Any reduction in its activity would have a substantial impact on overall economic activity," Dejan Soskic, an economics professor and former central bank governor, told AFP. The closure could shrink economic growth for years, he warned. The loss of the refinery, which provided 80 percent of Serbia's fuel needs, also means a massive increase in imports to fill the gap. Hungarian energy firm MOL agreed last month to increase oil shipments to Serbia, but experts have warned that relying on fuel imports is costly and unfeasible in the long term. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said the company could continue accessing the country's payment systems until at least the end of the week to pay wages and settle with suppliers. Beyond this period, the situation is less clear. – Agencies

PSB Gets Interim Relief from PHC against KP Government

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued a stay order against KP government's decision to retrieve land from the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), directing authorities to immediately unlock the sealed PSB sports venues and offices in Peshawar. A two-member bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Khurshid Iqbal heard the petition filed by the Pakistan Sports Board challenging the KP government's action. PSB's legal advisor, Saif ur Rehman, appeared before the court and presented arguments.

Hope's resistance keeps West Indies alive in New Zealand Test

CHRISTCHURCH: A sparkling century by Shai Hope ably supported by Justin Greaves had the West Indies 212-4 at stumps on Friday and clinging to the remote chance they can save the first Test against New Zealand in Christchurch. Hope was 116 not out and Greaves 55 with the pair putting on 140 for the fifth wicket after the West Indies were in dire straits at 72-4. New Zealand need six more wickets with the new ball six overs away while the West Indies, set a mammoth 531-run target, need a further 319 runs. The tourists' cause was helped by injuries to New Zealand's pace ranks which have forced captain Tom Latham to be creative with how he managed his bowlers. A side strain sidelined seamer Nathan Smith for the remainder of the Test and lead bowler Matt Henry was restricted to 11 overs because of a hamstring issue. That brought off-spinner Michael Bracewell and part-timer Rachin Ravindra into the attack earlier and longer than expected. But that takes nothing away from the stubborn performance of Hope, who is enjoying a purple patch despite battling an

eye infection, with 56 in the first innings and coming to New Zealand off a century against India. He played briskly with 15 fours and one six and the delight was evident when he raised his bat after driving Ravindra to the covers for a single to bring up his century. Greaves played his support role admirably, offering two faint edges but both fell well short of the slip cordon. After the West Indies went to lunch at 11-0, New Zealand dominated the second session with four wickets. Jacob Duffy removed John Campbell for 15 in the second over after lunch with a seaming delivery that clipped the edge of the bat and Bracewell held the catch diving in front of first slip. At the start of his next over Duffy had Tagenarine Chanderpaul caught behind for six. Right-arm spinner Bracewell picked up an easy wicket when he accounted for Alick Athanaze (five). A gentle long-hop which should have been despatched to the boundary went instead to Zak Foulkes at mid-on. Henry made a brief return to the attack to removed captain Roston Chase for four. – Agencies

Donald Trump set for soccer – or football – diplomacy at World Cup draw

*Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has visited the White House twice but it will be his first encounter with Trump since briefly meeting in South Korea in November, after Trump suspended trade talks in a bizarre row over an anti-tariff ad*

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump still seems unsure whether to call it soccer or football. But the US president's aim is truer when using the world's favorite sport to score diplomatic goals. Trump will try to do so again on Friday when he meets the leaders of 2026 World Cup co-hosts Canada and Mexico at the tournament's draw in Washington. As the first World Cup hosted by three countries simultaneously, it should be a golden opportunity to show North American unity, with the three leaders reportedly set to take part in a ceremonial draw. But Trump's aggressive stance towards his allies on trade, migration and drug-trafficking since his return to power means they will have thorny issues to tackle on the sidelines of the gala event. For Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum it will be her first meeting with Trump. She told reporters they would discuss bilateral trade during the "small meeting" before the draw, in which the 48 qualifying teams

are divided into 12 World Cup groups. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has visited the White House twice but it will be his first encounter with Trump since briefly meeting in South Korea in November, after Trump suspended trade talks in a bizarre row over an anti-tariff ad. They will have a "brief meeting during their time together at the Kennedy Center," the venue for the tournament draw, Carney's office told AFP Thursday, adding that he would also meet briefly with Sheinbaum. Trump has slapped steep tariffs on exports from Canada and Mexico that do not fall under the USMCA trade agreement that Washington is seeking to renegotiate next year. He has threatened further punishment if they fail to curb cross-border migration and drug trafficking – and irked Sheinbaum by saying he would be "OK" with airstrikes on Mexico to tackle traffickers. Canada meanwhile was outraged by Trump's calls earlier this year for it to

become the 51st US state. Yet the three countries now find themselves hosting the world's biggest sporting event together, having launched their joint bid in 2017 during Trump's first term in the White House. He has unashamedly seized on the World Cup to score political and diplomatic points – even though the golf fan's knowledge of the beautiful game may come from his son Barron, 19. The US president has struck up a close friendship with FIFA boss Gianni Infantino, who also has close ties with a number of authoritarian leaders including Russia's Vladimir Putin. Trump dangled the carrot of the chance to compete at the 2026 World Cup as a possible "incentive" for Russia – banned from international football since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine – to end the war. Infantino is set to play to Trump's love of flattery when he presents a new FIFA "peace prize" on Friday that the US leader is widely expected to win.

Trump has hosted Infantino several times at the White House – as he did Portuguese superstar Ronaldo at a dinner for visiting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in November. But Trump's football diplomacy has also risked colliding with his domestic priority of a massive crackdown on immigration. Trump recently unveiled a special fast-track visa process for people with World Cup tickets, but Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that a ticket would not guarantee admission to the United States. More recently, Trump responded to an Afghan national allegedly shooting two National Guard members in Washington by slapping a freeze on all asylum decisions from 19 countries. They include World Cup participants Haiti and Iran. Trump has also caused jitters at FIFA and in foreign capitals by threatening to move World Cup matches from Democratic-run cities where he has launched anti-crime and immigrant operations. – Agencies



## Briefs

Taiwan says  
China deploys  
warships  
in 'military  
operations'

TAIPEI: Taiwan said Friday that China had deployed warships for "military operations" stretching hundreds of kilometers from the Yellow Sea to the South China Sea, posing a "threat" to the region. Beijing, which claims self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory, neither confirmed nor denied the maneuvers. Taiwan's defense ministry and other security agencies were monitoring China's activities and had a "complete grasp of the situation," presidential office spokeswoman Karen Kuo told reporters. She did not say how many Chinese ships were involved in the deployment, but a security source told AFP the number was "significant." The source spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. The operations were not limited to the Taiwan Strait, but extended from the southern Yellow Sea, to the East China Sea near the disputed Diaoyu Islands and on into the South China Sea and even the Western Pacific, Kuo said.—APP

Italy to open  
Europe's  
first marine  
sanctuary for  
dolphins

ROME: The Mediterranean's first sanctuary for dolphins that have lived in captivity will open off Italy next year, as demand for re-homing rises with the closure of marine parks across Europe. "We must develop a new model for managing dolphins in a natural but supervised environment," Carmelo Fanizza, head of the San Paolo Dolphin Refuge, told AFP. Located off the coast of Taranto in the southern Italian region of Puglia, the sanctuary still needs a final green light from the government. But the site will be ready by the end of this month and the first dolphins are expected to arrive "no later than May or June 2026," Fanizza said. Animal rights concerns have driven countries such as Canada and France to ban the capture of dolphins, porpoises and whales, while growing numbers of marine parks are shutting. That has created a burning question: what to do with the cetaceans, which can live for decades and have mostly only known life in captivity, so cannot be released into the wild? The San Paolo Dolphin Refuge got permission from the Italian government in 2023 to use a seven-hectare (2.5-acre) area in the Gulf of Taranto, near the island of San Paolo. The spot is "sheltered and protected from the sea, winds and prevailing ocean currents," said Fanizza, brushing off concerns the site was near the industrial coastal city of Taranto.—APP

Belarus eager to  
expand presence  
on Brazilian  
market

MINSK: A business meeting titled as "Brazil: The way to success on the Latin American market" organized by the business school 21st Century Consult took place in Minsk. Deputy Director of the National Center for Marketing Yevgeny Rusak was one of the key speakers. He talked about opportunities for Belarus to export to the Brazilian market, the press service of the National Center for Marketing told BelTA. The speech focused on Brazil as the largest economy in Latin America. Brazil vigorously imports machines, vehicles, equipment, industrial goods, and high-tech products. With its strong positions in mechanical engineering industry and specialized segments, Belarus has real chances of expanding its presence on this market. According to the International Trade Center, Belarus' unrealized potential for export to Brazil exceeds \$450 million. It opens up opportunities for growth in such areas as agricultural machines, mechanical engineering products, industrial parts, and high-precision instruments. Brazil is built into the system of regional trade agreements, which make its position on the world market stronger.—APP

Meeting discusses national  
digital asset framework

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level consultative meeting was convened today at the Finance Division, co-chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and Chairman of PVARA Bilal Bin Saqib, to discuss and advance work on Pakistan's National Digital Asset Framework. Governor State Bank of Pakistan along with presidents and executives of Pakistan's leading commercial banks and senior leadership from Binance, including Global CEO Richard Teng, participated in the discussion. The session reviewed Pakistan's next steps toward building a secure, well-regulated, and innovation-driven digital asset ecosystem, with a particular emphasis on responsible operationalisation of on- and off-ramp infrastructure, enhanced compliance standards, improved market transparency, and stronger integration of regulated financial institutions. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb reiterated Pakistan's commitment to establishing a robust and forward-looking regulatory environment that supports technological innovation while safeguarding national economic interests. He noted that close coordination between government agencies, licensed global exchanges, and domestic banks remains essential for modernizing the payments landscape, improving financial inclusion, and aligning national systems with international standards. The Binance delegation, comprising senior leaders including the CEO, Richard Teng, provided insights on global market trends

and Pakistan's rapidly expanding role in the digital asset space. Senator Aurangzeb acknowledged that Pakistan's rapid digital asset

status on digital assets. Participants reviewed opportunities to modernize Pakistan's digital payments landscape, noting that

The meeting examined sovereign debt tokenization to enhance liquidity, widen investor access, and position Pakistan as

ering a time-bound amnesty to encourage users to move assets onto regulated platforms. They stressed the need for strong

and protect Pakistani users from the risks associated with unregulated offshore platforms. Bank presidents conveyed perspectives on risk management, custody requirements, compliance frameworks, and areas for collaboration once national regulations are finalized. The Finance Minister emphasized that a regulated environment would promote market stability and encourage users to transition to licensed domestic platforms, further advancing the objective of building a responsible and globally competitive digital asset environment that supports economic growth, attracts investment, and accelerates technological progress. In his concluding remarks, Chairman PVARA Bilal Bin Saqib highlighted Pakistan's unique opportunity to shape global norms rather than merely adopt them, stressing the value of coordinated engagement between regulators, banks, and global exchanges. He underscored the importance of viewing digital assets as critical financial infrastructure with significant potential to support financial inclusion, expand access to services for the unbanked, and create new opportunities for banks through innovative products, expanded deposits, and new customer segments. Chairman Bilal Bin Saqib reaffirmed PVARA's commitment to a Pakistan-first approach grounded in multi-stakeholder collaboration, regulatory alignment, and the development of sandboxes and committees to support responsible digital adoption.



adoption reflects an irreversible global trend and underscored the economic opportunity to bring citizen-held virtual assets within formal monitoring structures. Such integration would strengthen financial visibility, support creditworthiness assessments, and enhance national asset reporting without conferring legal tender

blockchain-based systems could significantly reduce costs from the country's USD 38 billion annual remittance flows. Discussions also emphasized building local talent pipelines to meet rising global demand for blockchain and Web3 skills, creating high-value employment prospects for Pakistani youth.

a regional frontrunner in compliant blockchain-based financial instruments. Participants further outlined principles for a practical taxation and compliance framework, including shifting primary oversight to licensed exchanges, designing a gradual capital gains structure to promote stability, and consid-

verification and risk-mitigation systems to ensure sustainability and compliance with international standards. The meeting also reviewed the development of a structured licensing regime for Virtual Asset Service Providers to enhance transparency, meet global AML/CFT standards, attract institutional participation,

Chaos erupts at Indian  
airports as country's largest  
airline cancels flights

NEW DELHI: Chaos gripped major Indian airports Friday as passengers of the country's biggest airline, IndiGo, scrambled to cope up with widespread flight disruptions and cancellations triggered by newly enforced rules limiting working hours for crew and pilots. Scenes of frustration played out as passengers slept on airport floors, queued for hours at customer service counters and waited without clear communication from the airline. Friday was the fourth straight day of disruptions as the low cost carrier struggles with new regulations that mandate longer rest periods and limit night flying hours to address concerns about fatigue and safety. The first phase of the rules came into effect in July while the second phase kicked in November. IndiGo struggled to adapt its rosters in time, resulting in widespread cancellations and disruptions. On Thursday, more than 300 IndiGo flights were grounded while several hundreds delayed. A passenger advisory from the Delhi airport Friday stated that all domestic IndiGo flights will remain canceled until midnight. Other major airlines, including Air India, have not faced similar issues so far. IndiGo operates around 2,300 flights daily and controls nearly 65 percent of India's domestic aviation market. Senior citizen Sajal Bose was scheduled to travel with his wife Senjuti Bose early Friday from Kolkata to New Delhi to attend a friend's silver jubilee celebration. His flight was canceled an hour before the scheduled take off. Bose told The Associated Press he was now taking a nine-hour train ride to the city Bagdogra, where he plans to get a flight to New Delhi on another airline. "Its very irresponsible and complete negligence. Very difficult for older people like us," he said. In an internal email to employees this week, seen by The Associated Press, IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers apologized, and cited technology glitches, schedule changes, adverse weather conditions, heightened congestion and the implementation of the new rules as the reasons for flight disruptions. The Civil Aviation Ministry said in a statement that the disruptions arose primarily through misjudgment and planning gaps as the airline implemented phase two of the new rules, and that the airline acknowledged that the effect on crew strength exceeded their expectations.—DNA

Spain, Morocco  
sign 14  
cooperation deals

MADRID: Spain signed 14 cooperation deals with Morocco in Madrid on Thursday, strengthening ties with the EU's North African neighbor. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez hosted his Moroccan counterpart Aziz Akhannouch for talks in Madrid before presiding over the signing of 14 agreements. These included cooperation in education, sport, agriculture, fishing, and natural disasters, according to a statement from Sanchez's office. A joint declaration reaffirmed "both countries' desire to strengthen political dialogue," the statement added. Sanchez also urged both countries to seize the "economic, cultural and social opportunities" offered by the 2030 football World Cup, which Spain and Morocco will host alongside Portugal. The statement made no mention of Western Sahara. Morocco is seeking to manage its airspace, controlled by Spain from the Atlantic archipelago of the Canary Islands. Immigration is another major topic of common interest. Morocco is a key EU partner in managing irregular migration, as it shares the bloc's only land border with Africa at the Spanish exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Moroccan Trade Minister Ryad Mezzour had told El Mundo newspaper that his country was "making every effort" to combat illegal immigration.—DNA

Lebanon president says  
country does not want  
war with Israel

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun urged a United Nations Security Council delegation on Friday to pressure Israel to respect a year-old ceasefire and to support his army's efforts to disarm Hezbollah. Despite a November 2024 ceasefire that was supposed to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group, Israel has kept up strikes on Lebanon and has also maintained troops in five south Lebanon areas it deems strategic. Aoun "stressed the need to pressure the Israeli side to implement the ceasefire and withdraw, and expressed his hope for pressure from the delegation," according to a statement from the presidency. He also noted "Lebanon's commitment to implementing international resolutions" and asked the envoys to support the Lebanese army's efforts to disarm non-government groups. The Lebanese government ordered its military to fully disarm Hezbollah in August, and the army expects to complete the first phase of its plan by the end of the year. The UN delegation visited Damascus on Thursday and after its meeting with Aoun was due to inspect the border area in southern Lebanon on Saturday, accompanied by US envoy Morgan Ortogus. The visit comes as Lebanese and Israeli civilian representatives held their first direct talks in decades. On Thursday, Information Minister Paul Morcos quoted Aoun calling the initial negotiations "positive" and stressing "the need for the language of negotiation — not the language of war — to prevail." That same day, Israel struck four southern Lebanese towns, saying it was targeting Hezbollah infrastructure including weapons depots to stop the group from rearming. UN peacekeepers called the strikes "clear violations of Security Council resolution 1701," which ended the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel. The peacekeepers also said their vehicles were fired on by six men on three mopeds near Bint Jbeil on Thursday. There were no injuries in the incident. "Attacks on peacekeepers are unacceptable and serious violations of resolution 1701," the international force added. Hezbollah refuses to disarm but has not responded to Israeli attacks since the ceasefire.—APP

## MAP holds 40th corporate excellence awards

KARACHI: The Management Association of Pakistan (MAP) organized the 40th Corporate Excellence Awards (CEA) in Karachi, celebrating four decades of promoting excellence, governance, and best management practices across Pakistan's corporate landscape. The Minister of Labor, Human Resources and Social Protection, Government of Sindh, Mr. Saeed Ghani, graced the occasion as Chief Guest and presented awards to the top-performing companies in both the Industrial and Financial sectors. He represented the Honorable Chief Minister of Sindh, who was attending the National Finance Commission meeting in Islamabad. In his welcome address, the President of MAP, Senator Sarmad Ali, marked the Awards as a landmark moment in MAP's journey and reiterated the association's long-standing commitment since 1964 to advancing management excellence in Pakistan. The President emphasized that modern excellence requires agility, technological readiness, and strong governance. He reaffirmed MAP's commitment to supporting the corporate community through enhanced professional development, knowledge-sharing, and strategic capacity-building initiatives. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Sindh, especially the Honorable Chief Minister, for extending continued support to MAP's mission. He also acknowledged the vital role of sponsors and MAP's evaluation partner, FAMCO Associates, in ensuring the Awards' transparency and credibility. Congratulating the winners, he stated that their achievements reflect the highest standards of corporate professionalism and serve as an inspiration for all. He expressed heartfelt thanks to the Government of Sindh for its support, to sponsors for their partnership, and to the evaluation partner FAMCO Associates for ensuring transparent and credible awards processes. Minister Saeed Ghani lauded MAP's contribution to institutional development and governance. He congratulated this year's award winners and underscored that adopting disciplined systems

and best practices is key to organizational progress. In his remarks, the Minister appreciated MAP's role in nation-building and emphasized the importance of strong systems, governance models, and learning from nations that have successfully progressed. He reaffirmed the Government of Sindh's support for MAP's mission of promoting professionalism and stronger governance across the corporate sector. Winners in the Financial Sector included, OLP Modaraba (Modarabas); Standard Chartered Bank (Commercial Banks); EFU General Insurance (Non-life Insurance); Jubilee Life Insurance Company Ltd. (Life Insurance). Winners in the Industrial Sector included, Feroze 1888 Mills Ltd. (Textile Composite); Al-Abbas Sugar Mills Ltd. (Sugar & Allied Industries); Lucky Cement Ltd. (Cement); Hub Power Company Ltd. (Power Generation &

Distribution); Pakistan State Oil Company Ltd. (Oil & Gas Marketing); Oil & Gas Development Co. Ltd. (Oil & Gas Exploration); International Steels Ltd. (Engineering); Pakistan Cables Ltd. (Cable & Electrical Goods); Indus Motor Company Ltd. (Automobile Assembly); Atlas Battery Ltd. (Automobile Parts & Accessories); Fauji Fertilizer Company Ltd. (Fertilizer); Abbott Laboratories (Pakistan) Ltd. (Pharmaceuticals); Lucky Core Industries Ltd. (Chemical); Security Papers Ltd. (Paper & Board); Colgate-Palmolive (Pakistan) Ltd. (Food & Personal Care); Pakistan Tobacco Limited (Tobacco); Image Pakistan Limited (Synthetic & Rayon); Shabbir Tiles & Ceramics Ltd. (Glass & Ceramics); Javedan Corporation Ltd. (Property); and Shifa International Hospital Ltd. (Miscellaneous). Runner-up companies were also presented with runners up awards.

Iran launches massive  
missiles during naval  
drill

TEHRAN: Iran launched massive missiles in the Sea of Oman and near the strategic Strait of Hormuz during the second day of a naval drill, state TV reported Friday. The report said the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard launched the missiles from the depth of Iran's mainland, hitting targets in the Oman Sea and neighboring area near Strait of Hormuz in a drill that began on Thursday. It identified the missiles as cruise Qadr-110, Qadr-380 and Ghadir that have a range of up to 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles.) It said the Guard also launch a ballistic missile identified as 303, without elaborating. TV footage showed the missiles' launch and hitting their targets. The drill is the second one following the Israel-Iran war in June that killed nearly 1,100 people in Iran, including military commanders and nuclear scientists. Missile attacks by Iran killed 28 in Israel. Since the end of the war, Iran has increasingly insisted that it is ready to counter any future Israeli attack. Iran launched its first naval drill in the area in August. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard is mainly in charge of operations in the Arabian Gulf and its narrow mouth, the Strait of Hormuz. The national navy is in charge of Sea of Oman and beyond.—APP

PRA uncover  
major tax  
evasion by  
housing  
societies

LAHORE: A large number of housing societies, builders and farmhouses across Punjab have been found non-tax compliant. Significant manipulation in the sales records of several major hotels, food chains and restaurants was also uncovered. This was disclosed in a meeting chaired by Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) Chairman Moazzam Iqbal Sipra here on Friday. The Chairman directed the Commissioner Lahore Division to issue immediate notices for registration and tax payments to all defaulters. It was further informed that vigilance teams have compiled bill records, after which enforcement actions will be initiated. More than 100 farmhouses in the provincial capital alone were identified as non-compliant.—APP

Gold price  
rises by Rs  
3,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of per tola 24-karat gold increased by Rs3,000 on Friday, reaching Rs444,462 compared to Rs441,462 a day earlier, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold rose by Rs2,572 to Rs381,054, while the rate of 10 grams of 22-karat gold increased by Rs2,358 to Rs349,312. In the international market, gold gained \$30, settling at \$4,221 per ounce. The price of 24-karat silver per tola went up by Rs72 to Rs6,072, whereas the rate for 10 grams of silver increased by Rs61 to Rs5,205. International silver rose by \$0.72 to \$58 per ounce.—APP

Rupee gains  
03 paise  
against US  
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs280.42 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs280.45. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 281.3 and Rs 283.2, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 10 paise to close at Rs 327.07, from the previous day's close of Rs 327.17, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paise to close at Rs 1.81, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs0.27 and closed at Rs 374.39 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.12.—APP



## Briefs

## Shahzad Akbar declared proclaimed offender

Islamabad court also issues arrest warrant over repeated non-appearance in controversial statements case

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in the federal capital declared former prime minister Imran Khan's adviser on interior and accountability Shahzad Akbar a proclaimed offender. The court, in its written order, also directed to issue arrest warrant for Akbar, citing his failure to appear before the court despite multiple summons in a case pertaining to his alleged controversial statements on social media. Meanwhile, challan of case against him has also been submitted to the court. The court's decree comes a day after Pakistan formally commenced the extradition process for Akbar, residing in the United Kingdom since April 2022, with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi submitting the relevant documents in a meeting with UK High Commissioner Jane Marriott. During the meeting, Naqvi said that he "fully believed" in freedom of expression but no country can allow slander and defamation of the state and institutions from abroad.

## HRCP condemns attack on Aurat march activists

## DNA

KARACHI: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Friday condemned police action against Aurat March activists in Karachi a day earlier, calling on authorities to respect people's access to civic spaces. On Thursday, a rights activist was 'briefly detained' from outside the Karachi Press Club (KPC), ahead of a press conference by Aurat March over the alleged abduction of two Baloch girls. The organisers said classical dancer and human rights activist Sheema Kermani was also manhandled by police, while other women participants were also "mistreated" by female officers on their way to the press club. Journalist Zofeen Ebrahim was also barred from attending the press conference, which was eventually held at the KPC. In a post on social media platform X today, the HRCP said it condemned the police obstruction of Aurat March's scheduled press conference and the brief detention and manhandling of activists and reporters, including Kermani.

## SC issues notices to bar councils

ISLAMABAD: The Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court has issued notices to all bar councils, including the Islamabad Bar Council, in appeals challenging the fixation of court fees at Rs 15,000 in civil cases. The court also directed the Attorney General for Pakistan and the provincial Advocates General to appear in person at the next hearing. A five-member Shariat Appellate Bench headed by Justice Shahid Waheed heard the case on Friday. The bench made it clear that the matter is being taken very seriously and no further adjournments will be granted. The hearing was adjourned till 2 February. During the proceedings, the court observed that several appeals have been filed against the decision to set the court fee at Rs 15,000, and that the issue is closely linked with public rights. Justice Aqeel Abbasi remarked that a large number of people in the country are poor and unable to afford the costs of accessing justice. He said providing justice is the fundamental responsibility of the state and it cannot be treated as a source of revenue. — Agencies

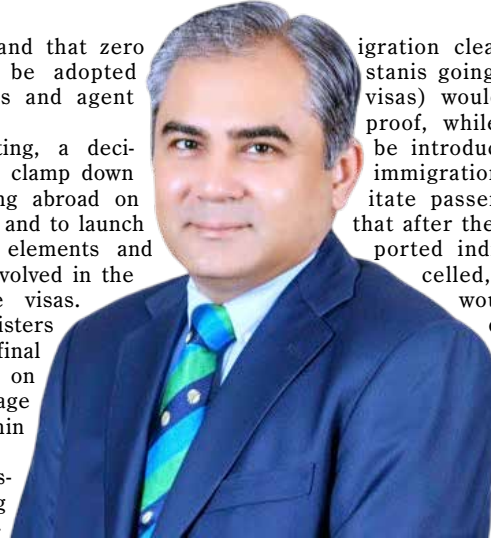
## Naqvi unveils AI-based app to curb illegal immigration

Interior ministry moves to tighten checks on forged documents and agent mafias

## SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday announced the launch of an artificial intelligence-based application as a pilot project to curb illegal immigration and clamp down on fake travel documents. He was speaking while co-chairing a meeting with Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain, where the two reviewed "immigration reforms" aimed at facilitating citizens and improving the country's image at the international level. Naqvi said the AI-based app would help authorities determine "who is fit to travel and who is not". He said the measures were aimed at stopping ille-

gal immigration and that zero tolerance would be adopted against fake visas and agent mafias. During the meeting, a decision was made to clamp down on those travelling abroad on forged documents and to launch a crackdown on elements and agent networks involved in the business of fake visas. The federal ministers also ordered that final recommendations on the reform package be submitted within seven days. Naqvi said the system for issuing Protectors (em-



igration clearances for Pakistanis going abroad on work visas) would be made fool-proof, while reforms would be introduced in the wider immigration system to facilitate passengers. He added that after the passports of deported individuals are cancelled, the government would ensure they do not receive a visa again. The interior minister further announced that a uniform international driving licence would be issued

by the National Police Bureau.

He said the government was in contact with other countries to improve the ranking of the green passport and warned that people going abroad through improper means were damaging the country's reputation. "The purpose of immigration reforms is to provide convenience to the public and improve the global image," Naqvi said. Federal Minister Salik Hussain underlined the need for authentic documentation for those travelling on labour visas, saying it was essential that their papers be genuine. He assured that the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis would extend all possible cooperation for improvements in the Protector system and the immigration system.

## Govt preparing stricter regulatory framework for used car imports

Only vehicles meeting safety and environmental standards will be allowed to enter Pakistan, says PM's aide

## NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to protect local industry and manufacturing, the government is working on new legislation and a stricter regulatory framework to control used car imports, The News reported on Friday. The plan was discussed on Thursday at a detailed meeting between Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan and a delegation of the auto industry to review key challenges facing the sector. Secretary Industries Saif Anjum and Engineering Development Board CEO Hammad Mansoor also attended. Industry representatives, including members of the Pakistan Auto Manufacturers Association, told the meeting that tax reforms and tighter controls on used car imports were critical to stabilising domestic production. They warned that liberal import policies were eroding the

local industry's hard-won gains, weakening vendor networks and discouraging fresh investment. Khan said the auto industry plays a vital role in Pakistan's large-scale manufacturing sector and assured the delegation that their concerns were fully understood at the highest level. He said that on the prime minister's directives, new laws and regulations were being introduced to deal comprehensively with issues related to used vehicle imports. "Only those used vehicles that meet safety and environmental standards will be allowed to enter Pakistan," Khan emphasised. He said increased competition would help improve efficiency and steer the sector toward low-cost and competitive local manufacturing, while ensuring consumer protection through better regulatory oversight. Secretary Industries Anjum said key safeguards on commercial imports would remain in place. Three years of overseas residency and at least one year of registration of the vehicle in the owner's name would continue to be mandatory for import eligibility.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Coordinator on Tourism Sardar Yasir Ilyas taking interest in various handicrafts displayed on the occasion of Pakistan Desert Rally Cultural show at Islamabad Serena Hotel. — DNA

## Islamabad court issues non-bailable arrest warrant for Gandapur, again

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Friday issued non-bailable arrest warrant against former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur in connection with an audio leak case. The court has directed the police to arrest Gandapur and produce him before the court. Additional Sessions Judge Nasr Minallah Baloch presided over the hearing. A suspect named in the case alongside Gandapur appeared in court. Due to Gandapur's absence, the proceedings for the framing of charges were adjourned until January 20. It is to be noted here that the case was registered at the Golra Police Station after an audio leak surfaced in which the KP chief minister was purportedly asking about the number of weapons, licences,

*The development adds to the legal woes of the firebrand PTI leader, who was recently ousted from KP's CM post, as the same court and magistrate issued his arrest warrant in the said case in September as well*

and people. The development adds to the legal woes of the firebrand PTI leader, who was recently ousted from KP's CM post, as the same court and magistrate issued his arrest warrant in the said case in September as well. Before this, multiple non-bailable arrest warrants have been issued against the former CM in other cases as well over his continued absence from court proceedings. On November 17, a judicial magistrate issued the arrest warrant for Gandapur in a liquor and arms recovery case after he failed to appear before the court despite repeated summons. The case was lodged against the PTI leader after the recovery of five Kalashnikov rifles, a pistol, six magazines, a bulletproof vest, three teargas shells, and bottles of alcohol in October 2016. Gandapur, who was a provincial minister in KP back then, was charged under the illegal arms and anti-drugs laws after illicit arms and a bottle of liquor were allegedly recovered from his car.

## US slashes work permit validity period for foreign nationals

## DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) on Thursday announced changes that sharply reduced the maximum validity period for employment authorisation documents (EADs) for several categories of foreign nationals, citing security concerns and legislation signed earlier this year. The move, the latest in a sweeping immigration crackdown by the administration of US President Donald Trump, took place just two days after it halted immigration applications for citizens from 19 nations. Under the new rules, the maximum validity period for initial and renewal EADs has been shortened from five years to 18 months for categories including refugees, asylum seekers, those granted withholding of deportation or removal, and applicants with pending adjustment-of-status or relief applications. Additional categories, including those paroled as refugees, granted temporary protected status (TPS) or under entrepreneur parole, will see the validity of their work permit reduced to one year or the end date of their authorised parole or TPS period, whichever is shorter. These changes apply to applications pending or filed on or after Dec 5, 2025, or Jul 22, 2025, depending on the category. "The reduced maximum validity periods will result in more frequent vetting of aliens who apply for authorisation

to work in the US," the agency said.

The agency added that after the attack on National Guard service members in Washington earlier this month, "it's even more clear that USCIS must conduct frequent vetting of aliens". USCIS Director Joseph Edlow linked the change directly to safety concerns. "Reducing the maximum validity period for employment authorisation will ensure that those seeking to work in the US do not threaten public safety or promote harmful anti-American ideologies," he said. US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said on Thursday the US plans to expand the number of countries covered by its travel ban to more than 30. After a meeting with Trump on Monday, she said she recommended a full travel ban on "every damn country that's been flooding our nation with killers, leeches, and entitlement junkies." All asylum cases on hold: Earlier this week, the Trump administration has imposed the most sweeping internal freeze on immigration benefits in decades, ordering USCIS to halt all asylum adjudications and suspend a wide range of applications from nationals of 19 "high-risk" countries, while reopening thousands of previously approved cases for fresh security screening. The directive, issued to USCIS field offices, followed a series of violent incidents involving Afghan nationals admitted under earlier programmes. Those cases prompted the White House to conclude that vetting procedures between 2021 and 2024 were "dangerously insufficient", triggering a system-wide overhaul of immigration screening.

## Imaan, husband file distrust petition against judge

## DNA



ISLAMABAD: Lawyer Imaan Mazari and her husband Advocate Hadi Ali Chattha on Friday filed a application in the Islamabad High Court (IHC), expressing distrust in Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka and seeking transfer of controversial tweets case to another court. The plea argues that transparency requirements are not being met in the trial, therefore, the case should be transferred to another court. The said case against the lawyer couple relates to a first information report (FIR), registered by the National Cybercrime Investigation Agency, accusing the couple of inciting divisions on linguistic grounds through social media posts. The FIR, registered against the couple, invoked Sections 9, 10, 11, and 26 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), 2016. During the hearing of the case at district and sessions court in Islamabad today, lawyer Mazari said: "Hand me seven years in prison, I am ready [for it]" — a remark which drew no response from Judge Majoka.


## Sindh dengue death toll nears 40

KARACHI: A seven-year-old girl died of dengue in Hyderabad, taking the death toll to 39 in Sindh this year, sources within the provincial health department said on Friday. At least 173 more cases have also been reported during the last 24 hours, the health department confirmed. In an alarming situation, dengue cases are on the rise in Sindh, with Karachi being the most affected. A total of 1,984 tests were conducted in public and private laboratories during the past 24 hours. Out of 173 new cases, 117 were reported in Karachi, and 56 individuals tested positive for the virus in Hyderabad. As many as 21 new dengue patients were admitted to government hospitals across the province, while 25 new patients were admitted to private hospitals. With these admissions, the total number of hospitalised dengue patients in the province has reached 48. The rising cases reflect a pattern seen in recent years, as Sindh reported a total of 2,704 dengue cases in 2024, and 2,880 in 2023. — APP


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