



Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-08

Pak to export excess gas from January 2025

Detailed News On Page-02



No major changes in the T20 squad for world cup

Detailed News On Page-06



US Watchdog

Abandoned US weapons powering Taliban forces

The report cited Pakistani officials as saying that some of these rifles and carbines are “significantly superior” to the weaponry commonly used by TTP fighters before 2021

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: A final report by a US watchdog has confirmed that billions of dollars' worth of American-supplied weapons, military equipment, and security infrastructure left behind during the 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan now form the backbone of the Taliban's security apparatus. Parallel findings from UN monitoring teams and a Washington Post investigation indicate that some of these weapons have already filtered to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), strengthening a group responsible for escalating attacks inside Pakistan. The 137-page report, released this week by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), recounts the scale of the two-decade American project to rebuild Afghanistan. Congress, it notes, provided roughly \$144.7 billion between 2002 and 2021 to reconstruct the country and to support a democratic

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23 Afghan Taliban soldiers killed over ceasefire violation at Chaman border

On facing substantial losses, Taliban forces raised white flags, besides announcement of ceasefire: sources

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: In a strong response to a ceasefire violation, security forces destroyed three Afghan Taliban regime posts at the Chaman border on Friday and Saturday, killing at least 23 Afghan soldiers, on Sunday. Around midnight, the Taliban regime soldiers violated the ceasefire and initiated an unprovoked small arms fire along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Chaman Sector, Balochistan. Pakistan's security forces responded immediately, initially with small arms, precisely targeting Afghan Taliban posts

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ISLAMABAD: Portraits of President, Prime Minister of Pakistan and President of Indonesia installed at various points as the foreign dignitary arrives in Islamabad today on a two-day visit. – DNA

Imran's tone toward military led to ISPR reaction: PTI

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Within the party circles, some senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders have conceded that Imran Khan's persistent use of derogatory language in his X posts against the military command played a key role in triggering Friday's strong reaction from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). According to party sources, matter came under discussion within the PTI leadership, where it was admitted by some that Imran Khan, in his social media posts,

‘No military operation going on in Balochistan’

DNA

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti on Sunday said that there was no military operation underway in Balochistan, clarifying that only intelligence-based operations (IBOs) were being conducted in the province. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, he stated that the government's policy toward those who take up arms was clear, adding that the state

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FO says

Indian FM Remarks about armed forces baseless; concocted

India must investigate the fascist and revisionist Hindutva ideology that has unleashed a reign of mob justice, lynchings, arbitrary detentions and demolition of properties and places of worship”

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) rejected and condemned on Sunday the “highly inflammatory, baseless and irresponsible” remarks by Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar about Pakistan's armed forces, terming them “misleading”. The FO's condemnation came a day after Jaishankar alleged that India's core challenges with its neighbouring country stemmed directly from Pakistan's military establishment. In its reaction to his remarks, the FO underscored that Pakistan was a responsible state, and all its institutions, including armed forces, were

a pillar of national security, dedicated to safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. The FO's statement also referred to a brief four-day conflict between India and Pakistan in May, saying that it “vividly demonstrated Pakistan armed forces' professionalism as well as their resolve to defend the motherland and the people of Pakistan against any Indian aggression in a befitting, effective yet responsible manner”. “No amount of propaganda can belie this truth,” the statement added. It labelled attempts by the Indian leadership to defame Pakistan's state institutions and its leadership as “part of a

Continued on Page 06

ECP formally declines to accept Gohar as PTI chief

Gohar says he received ECP letter stating the commission does not recognise him as party chief

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has formally written to Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, stating that it does not accept him as the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Gohar disclosed the development at a news conference, held in response to Friday's briefing by the ISPR director general, saying: “Today, I have been informed through a letter

that the Election Commission does not recognise me as the chairman of PTI.” A senior ECP official told that the letter to Barrister Gohar is dated November 26 and bears the signature of the commission's Additional Director General (Elections), Syed Nadeem Haider. It has been written in response to the application Gohar had written to the commission in relation to the recently elected PTI-backed senators from

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

12 terrorists killed in Kalat area

DNA

QUETTA: Pakistan's security forces on Friday carried out a major intelligence-based operation in Kalat district of Balochistan, targeting the reported presence of militants affiliated with Fitna al Hindustan, an outfit described as an Indian proxy network. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), security personnel effectively engaged the terrorist hideout. Following an intense exchange of fire, twelve Indian-sponsored terrorists were eliminated. The ISPR stated that a cache of weapons, ammunition and explosives was recovered from the militants. The group had been actively involved in multiple terrorist attacks in the region, posing a persistent threat to local security and stability. Security forces have launched area sanitization operations to clear any remaining threats.

Sindh Culture day rally turns violent

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Police detailed several people after a Sindh Culture Day rally on Shar-e-Faisal turned violent on Sunday. According to Karachi police, participants of the rally pelted police vehicles with stones, breaking the glass of patrol vans and a water tanker. The clash reportedly began when police asked the demonstrators to move the rally from Kala Pul towards Saddar. The participants, however, resisted and resorted to stone-pelting, causing property damage. Police used shelling to disperse the crowd, arresting two individuals for attacking police vehicles. Meanwhile, traffic authorities said Shar-e-Faisal remained closed at the FTC, with vehicles being redirected from Kala Pul towards Saddar.

Indonesian President Prabowo arrives today

The visit carries special significance as it coincides with the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Indonesia

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Prabowo Subianto, will arrive in Islamabad on 8 December 2025 for a two-day official visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. The Indonesian leader will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including key ministers and senior officials, marking his first visit to Pakistan since assuming office. The visit carries special significance as it coincides with the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Indonesia—an important milestone underscoring decades of friendship, shared values and longstanding cooperation between the two Muslim-majority nations. This will also be the first presidential visit from Indonesia to Pakistan since President Joko Widodo's trip in 2018. During his stay in Islamabad, President



Prabowo will hold delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, where the two sides are expected to discuss a comprehensive agenda aimed at further strengthening bilateral cooperation. The discussions will span a wide range of sectors, including trade, investment, defence, health, information technology, climate action, education and cultural exchange. Both countries will also review avenues to enhance coordination at regional and global forums. President Prabowo will also meet President Asif Ali Zardari. In addition, Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, will call on the Indonesian President, highlighting

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Why Imran Khan remains politically relevant

OPINION

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

THE latest press conference by the Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) marked perhaps the harshest institutional criticism of Imran Khan to date. While previous briefings had carried undertones of disagreement or veiled admonitions, this one was direct, pointed, and focused particularly on the controversial interview given by the former prime minister's sister to an Indian media outlet. The military spokesperson termed the move unacceptable and deeply irresponsible, and to an extent, he was not wrong. No matter the political circumstances, using Indian media as a platform especially at a time when relations remain strained was ill-advised and bound to create national discomfort. However, the argument offered by Imran Khan's camp also carries weight: they allege that Pakistani media is so tightly controlled that the opposition is denied meaningful coverage. According to them, interview slots, airtime, and narrative-shaping opportunities are skewed to the point that opposition figures must look elsewhere to get their message out. Yet, even then, resorting to a hostile foreign platform was not an excuse. It gave ammunition to critics and raised unnecessary suspicions. The truth is that problems exist on both sides. Political actors consistently cross red lines, while state institutions respond with disproportionate measures. But within this entire debate lies a fundamental reality that Pakistan as a nation must confront: the pri-



“Like him or hate him, he is the only major leader who disrupts the traditional two-party monopoly that has dominated Pakistan for decades. Removing him entirely would only strengthen those two parties and make them even more unmanageable”

mary responsibility for the rise, fall, and resurgence of Imran Khan lies with those who brought him to power in the first place. Everyone knows the role the establishment played in shaping and sustaining Imran Khan's political career. Therefore, the introspection that is being demanded today must begin at home. One cannot create a phenomenon and then expect it to disappear through force and coercion. Imran Khan's governance record was far from ideal. In fact, to many, his rule was chaotic. Corruption remained widespread, governance suffered, and institutional paralysis deepened. Mismanagement was visible across multiple sectors, and had he been allowed to complete five years unhindered; it is very possible that public disenchantment would have naturally peaked. Many argue that by the end of five years, no one would even be willing to speak his name politically. That is how poor the performance was. But the way he was removed from power and more importantly, the way he and his family have been treated since turned him into something far more powerful than a politician: a symbol of victimhood. The entire narrative shifted. His flaws were overshadowed by the perception that he was wronged. Every attempt to discredit him, instead of diminishing his popularity, only increased it exponentially. The more he was pushed to the wall, the stronger his public support grew. Why? Because the method adopted to neutralize him has been deeply flawed. In politics, perception is stronger than facts. And the perception created over the past two years is that Imran Khan is being singled out unfairly, persecuted, and silenced. This is why all efforts to damage him politically have failed.

There is only one credible way to make Imran Khan politically irrelevant: good governance. Not press conferences, not media restrictions, not court cases, and definitely not confrontation. People today are struggling. They cannot afford basic necessities. Inflation is crushing households. Jobs are drying up. There is no sense of security, political stability, or economic direction. Under such conditions, no one is ready to listen to lectures or accusations. People judge governments by what ends up in their kitchen, not by press briefings. All credible national and international surveys repeatedly highlight the same depressing picture: Corruption remains rampant, Poverty has surged, foreign investment has evaporated. The country's international image has been damaged, CPEC stands frozen, businesses are shutting down, public frustration is at its peak. Add to this the controversial lifetime immunity granted to certain figures, and the public anger becomes understandable. In such an environment, Imran Khan can never be defeated through force or narrative manipulation. The only force powerful enough to counter him is performance real, tangible, visible governance that delivers relief to ordinary people. This is why, if free and fair elections were held today, PTI would likely win by a landslide. This victory would not necessarily be because PTI is a highly organized or ideologically superior party. Rather, it would be because of how the party has been treated and continues to be treated. The sense of injustice, deprivation, and victimization resonates with millions. The operational strategy toward PTI must change if the goal is to stabilize the political landscape. However, it is equally important to recognize that

completely eliminating Imran Khan from politics is neither feasible nor desirable. Like him or hate him, he is the only major leader who disrupts the traditional two-party monopoly that has dominated Pakistan for decades. Removing him entirely would only strengthen those two parties and make them even more unmanageable. From a strategic standpoint, the establishment also understands this. A controlled, balanced political system requires more than two poles of power. Eliminating Imran Khan may satisfy certain short-term impulses, but in the long run, it will create a vacuum that will be quickly filled by forces less predictable and harder to negotiate with. At the end of the day, no one in Pakistan is a traitor. They all believe they are acting in the interest of the country, even if their methods or interpretations differ. A more inclusive approach is needed. Dialogue is needed. Tolerance is needed. The economy is in shambles, inflation is at historic highs, foreign investment has dried up, and CPEC—once hailed as a game-changer—is practically dormant. This is not the time for internal wars. It is the time for reconciliation and reconstruction. The DG ISPR's press conference may have been aimed at correcting narratives, but the real correction that Pakistan needs goes far deeper. Until governance improves, institutions learn from past mistakes, and genuine democracy is allowed to function, Imran Khan will remain an unstoppable political force. And perhaps, despite everything, Pakistan needs him not necessarily in power, but in the system to prevent a return to the suffocating two-party formula that has already inflicted decades of damage.

PN seizes 1,500kg Hashish in Arabian Sea

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship YAMAMA, while deployed on Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP) in the Arabian Sea, successfully conducted an anti-narcotics operation, leading to the seizure of 1,500 Kilograms of Hashish valued at approximately 3 million US Dollars. This successful interdiction at sea underscores Pakistan Navy's unwavering commitment to combating illicit activities and ensuring security in the maritime domain. Pakistan Navy routinely undertakes RMSP missions to safeguard national maritime interests through robust vigilance and effective presence at sea. The Navy also continues to play a proactive role in collaborative and coordinated maritime security efforts with regional and international partners, contributing significantly to a safe and secure maritime environment.—APP

AIOU awards 480 degrees in Punjab chapter convocation

ISLAMABAD :Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) organized its Punjab chapter Convocation 2025, at the Aiwan-e-Iqbal Complex in Lahore, where 480 Degrees were awarded to male and female graduates, while 90 high-achieving students received gold, silver, and bronze medals. Addressing the ceremony, AIOU, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood said that the number of students enrolled in Punjab this year has exceeded upto 500,000, including 280,000 female students, an encouraging reflection of the university's commitment to promote women's education, said a press release on Sunday He added that the university had fully waived the fees of 10,000 deserving students belonging to flood-affected areas of Punjab. The Vice Chancellor further stated that through short-term technology and skill-based courses offered under the University's Lifelong Learning Centre, students are being equipped with practical competencies. He said AIOU has always prioritised the inclusion of marginalised and underprivileged communities in the national mainstream. As a result, students from Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan, and the merged districts are provided free matric education, while scholarships are awarded to transgender persons, persons with disabilities, children of martyrs, and prisoners.—APP

COURT NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF SHAMA YASEEN JUDGE CIVIL/FAMILY COURT RAWALPINDI
Suit For Recovery Maintenance Allowance etc. Mst. Iqra Gull etc. Versus Muhammad Bilal Notice to Muhammad Bilal s/o Muhammad Nawaz R/o Mohallah Kashmirian, Chur Harpal, Rawalpindi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 08-12-2025 at 9 am avoid ex-parte proceeding.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Salem Alzaabi, Principal SZIA and others taking interest in various items displayed at the Turkiye stall on the occasion of International Day held at the Sheikh Zayed International Academy.

Pak, Qatar explores avenues of coop

KARACHI: Governor of Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori met with the Consul General of Qatar, Nayef Shaheen R. M. Al-Sulaiti, and held detailed discussions on Pakistan-Qatar bilateral relations and avenues of cooperation in various sectors. During the meeting, the Consul General extended an invitation on behalf of the State of Qatar to the Governor Sindh to attend Qatar's National Day ceremony as a special guest, which the Governor Sindh termed an honour. The Governor Sindh emphasized the importance of strengthening brotherly relations between the two countries and promoting trade and investment cooperation, while also conveying his best wishes for the leadership and people of Qatar. and governor of Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori, while addressing a ceremony held at the Governor House on the occasion of Sindh Culture Day, said that Sindh is a land that embraces every nation, civilization, and culture. He stated that this is the soil where Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Sachal Sarmast, and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai taught the lessons of peace, love, and tolerance. The Governor Sindh said that the arrival of Muhammad bin Qasim made Sindh the gateway of Islam

and spread the light of Islam in the region. He described Mohenjo-daro as a living example of Sindh's ancient and glorious civilization. While congratulating the nation, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori said with great passion: "Sindh Jaye, Sindh Wara Jeean!" He termed the day as a grand celebration of Sindh's love, culture, and heritage. Talking about the national situation, he said that faith is linked with conviction and that gratitude to Allah Almighty must be expressed in every condition. Referring to the events of May 10, he said that Pakistan defeated a country five times stronger and that the nation stands as a victorious nation. He appreciated the efforts of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for economic stability and said that Pakistan has now taken off towards progress. He also paid tribute to the sacrifices of Pakistan Army soldiers in the fight against terrorism.

Speaking about the public welfare initiatives of the Governor House, he said that 50,000 children are being provided free IT education without discrimination, more than one million

ration boxes have been distributed among deserving people, and a "Bell of Hope" has been installed for resolution of public issues across Pakistan.

He announced that under the Governor Initiative, the journey of public service will continue and that Sindh Culture Day has been organized at the Governor House for the third consecutive year. Meanwhile, Governor of Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori lauded the successful operation carried out by security forces in Qalat district of Balochistan, in which 12 Indian-sponsored terrorists were killed.

He said that this success has sent a clear message to anti-state elements that no Indian proxy can succeed against Pakistan's security.

The Governor Sindh further stated that under "Azm-e-Istehkam," security operations will continue until the complete elimination of terrorism, and that the determination and sacrifices of the security forces are a source of pride for the entire nation.

He added that efforts to establish peace will continue across Balochistan and the entire country, and that through the sacrifices of the security forces, peace and stability in Pakistan are being ensured.—APP

Malik for steps to expand economy, investors' participation

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president Iftekhar Ali Malik has called for building vibrant and inclusive capital markets to support economic expansion, broaden investor participation and advance the ongoing structural reforms. Talking to media persons here Sunday, he said developing a modern, integrated and investor-friendly capital market ecosystem must be a key national priority, essential for improving access to finance, promoting savings, deepening market activity and strengthening Pakistan's long-term economic resilience. Hailing the judicious decision of creation of Capital Market Development Council (CMDC) at Ministry of Finance, he said, "It is a right step in right direction and the council must also focus on meeting the genuine requirements of cross-border market integration, technology alignment, regulatory modernisation and incentives for issuers to raise funds through debt—APP

Hanif accuses PTI founder of undermining national security

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Sunday said the entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistan Armed Forces and will not allow anyone to jeopardize the country's security and sovereignty. Addressing a press conference in Rawalpindi, Abbasi strongly criticised the founder of PTI, accusing him of deliberately damaging national stability and pursuing a narrative hostile to Pakistan's integrity. He said the former prime minister had "proved through his actions and statements" that he was part of a dangerous campaign targeting state institutions. The minister said the people of Pakistan firmly support the armed forces, which under the leadership of Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir had dealt India a "historic defeat". He added that the sacrifices of the martyrs have ensured Pakistan's honour remains high across the world, but the PTI founder continued to issue statements "contrary to the national interest".

Abbasi said the PTI founder turned against the very army that earned global recognition for its professionalism only because he could not endure the difficulties of imprisonment. Referring to the events of 9 May, he said memorials of martyrs were desecrated, violent attacks were launched on the Corps Commander House and GHQ, and the "enemy's long-standing plot" was executed on the ground. He reiterated allegations that PTI received foreign funding from India and Israel, adding that he raised these concerns in the foreign funding case. "Had decisions been taken on merit, the country would not have suffered political instability and social division," he said. The minister said Pakistan's political history was full of leaders who endured exile, imprisonment, execution and martyrdom, yet none worked against the state or its security institutions. He cited the example of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, saying his governments were toppled three times and Maryam Nawaz

also faced imprisonment, but they never harmed national security. Criticising the governance record of PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abbasi said the province has suffered 13 years of mismanagement, leaving people without basic services such as health, clean drinking water and education. "Patients are compelled to come to Rawalpindi for treatment," he said, alleging the KP government had become an instrument in the hands of extremists, while the chief minister was seen protesting outside Adiala Jail. Abbasi said the PTI founder's posts and statements continue to target state institutions, adding, "No Pakistani has ever concluded with Afghanistan or India to attack national security. Anyone playing with the country's integrity is mentally unstable, not a patriot. You have crossed all limits for the sake of power, but we will not allow your narrative to succeed." He also criticised the PTI founder's sisters for giving statements on Indian media that he said were "entirely against Pakistan's interests".—DNA

PRs earns over Rs 300b in 4 years

LAHORE: The Pakistan Railways (PR) continues to move toward financial stability, as it has earned over Rs 300 billion in four years from various revenue streams. According to the documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the department has earned a total of Rs306.203 billion from FY2021-22 to FY2024-25. Year-wise revenue stands at Rs60.092 billion in 2021-22, Rs 63.718 billion in 2022-23, Rs 88.792 billion in 2023-24, and Rs 93.601 billion in 2024-25. Similarly, the department incurred operating expenses of Rs67.699 billion in 2021-22, Rs 72.178 billion in 2022-23, Rs88.380 billion in 2023-24, and Rs 89.269 billion in 2024-25. According to the documents, the Pakistan Railways generates revenue through several major streams, with passenger services as the primary source. Freight operations form another key revenue stream, transporting petroleum, coal, cement, agricultural products, and other items across the country. Rented or leased railway property and assets, and management of trains, stations, and terminals through public-private partnerships are also sources of revenue generation. The department has recently taken several steps, such as executive washrooms, free Wi-Fi, escalators at major stations, modern dining cars with hygienic food, and improved cleanliness standards in partnership with the waste management department. The department's management efforts have had a very positive impact on passenger satisfaction levels. Train punctuality has significantly improved, as it was 81 percent in 2021-22, 79 percent in 2022-23, and 82 percent in 2023-24. The ministry is proactively engaging private parties through leasing and outsourcing of services, such as commercial management of trains, terminals, and stations. So far, six passenger trains have been outsourced, while the outsourcing of 11 more passenger trains is in process. Moreover, the commercial management of 20 brake vans and 14 simple vans has been outsourced. The document further reveals that the department has undertaken a third-party audit by the Auditor General of Pakistan to ensure transparency. A senior official of the Ministry of Railways told Wealth Pakistan that the focus is now on long-term reforms to improve operational efficiency and financial stability of the department. He said some other improvements, such as upgradation of tracks and modernization of the signaling system, are direly needed. The official said prioritizing digital transformation by promoting online booking systems is also essential, adding that mobile applications and automated ticketing services across the railway network will enhance the department's efficiency and performance. Efforts are underway to expand the freight corridor to attract larger commercial clients and increase the cargo handling capacity. "These initiatives will strengthen the PR's revenue base and reduce its reliance on government subsidies," the official said.—DNA

Model Cart markets to be expanded: Commissioner

More model markets are being set up to provide free and regulated spaces for vendors to ensure a cleaner, safer and better-managed urban environment, he added

FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Raja Jahangir Anwar said that divisional administration has expedited efforts to transform model cart markets across the city into state-of-the-art commercial spaces for ensuring better facilities, regulation and urban order. Chairing a high-level meeting, he said that 12 model cart markets are currently operational in the city while 8 more are being

added to accommodate street vendors in an organized manner. He announced that third-party inspections would be conducted to monitor cleanliness, maintenance and price control across all model markets. Help desks are also being established to facilitate vendors and resolve on-site issues promptly, he added. He said that special inspection teams would remain present at each

market to ensure strict compliance with SOPs and smooth functioning of the upgraded vending zones. As part of the second phase, the authorities would give a one-week grace period to the vendors roaming with carts on five major roads and afterward, the action would be taken to remove roaming carts in order to restore traffic flow and preserve aesthetics of the city, he added. He said that under new

policy, street vendors would be provided free-of-cost facilities while establishing model markets along major roads. Awareness banners outlining necessary requirements have also been displayed for convenience of the vendors, he added. He urged the cart owners to submit their old carts to the Municipal Corporation and register new model carts worth Rs. 150,000 to conduct their businesses in an organized and pre-

sentable manner. He made it clear that once the policy comes into full effect, no roaming cart would be allowed on major roads as such movement disrupts traffic and contributes to encroachments, negatively affecting beauty of the city. More model markets are being set up to provide free and regulated spaces for vendors to ensure a cleaner, safer and better-managed urban environment, he added.—APP

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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



Emergency
Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police...9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20
Enquiry
Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals
CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666
Departments
CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



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

Thailand Marks National Day

Thailand reaffirms commitment to deepening partnership with Pakistan

Touching upon economic cooperation, Ambassador Virabutr emphasized Thailand’s strong commitment to concluding the Pakistan–Thailand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) at the earliest

ANSAR M. BHATTI

ISLAMABAD : The Royal Thai Embassy hosted an impressive reception in Islamabad to celebrate the Thai National Day, the Birthday Anniversary of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, and Thailand’s Father’s Day. The event was attended by a large number of diplomats, dignitaries and members of the Pakistani government. In his keynote address, Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan, H.E. Rongvudhi Virabutr, paid rich tribute to the late King Bhumibol—revered for his 70 years of service, more than 4,000 development projects and his globally admired Sufficiency Economy philosophy. The Ambassador recalled the King’s timeless message that “the suffering of the people cannot wait,” a principle that continues to guide Thailand’s domestic and foreign policy. He also expressed deep sorrow over the recent passing of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, the Queen Mother, praising her life-long dedication to culture, heritage and rural communities. A special exhibition in her honor was also arranged at the venue. Ambassador Virabutr highlighted that this year carries special importance as Thailand and Pakistan prepare to celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations in 2026. He noted that 2025 had been a year of “intense progress,” marked by deeper cooperation and people-centered initiatives. A short video presentation showcased various development partnerships and community projects undertaken by the Embassy across Pakistan. A major portion of his speech focused on women’s empowerment — a priority area for Thailand. The Ambassador spoke passionately about the Royal Thai Embassy’s collaboration with UN Women to uplift women entrepreneurs in Swabi and Sialkot. Training programs in the beauty sector and regenerative agriculture have helped equip women with practical skills and income-generating opportunities.



He particularly acknowledged the contribution of Ms. Jennifer Innes Taylor (“Jane”), owner of Udon Organic Farm, whose mentorship has inspired rural women to embrace sustainable farming practices. Touching upon economic cooperation, Ambassador Virabutr emphasized Thailand’s strong commitment to concluding the Pakistan–Thailand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) at the earliest. He expressed confidence that bilateral trade—cur-

rently around USD 1.6 billion—could grow significantly once the FTA is finalized. He also underscored Thailand’s interest in expanding investment in Pakistan’s growing halal industry, an area where Thailand holds global leadership. As current Chair of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad, the Ambassador reaffirmed Thailand’s determination to strengthen ASEAN–Pakistan cooperation under the theme of “Visibility, Tangibility,

and Bringing into Reality.” He noted that ASEAN’s enhanced engagement will help Pakistan advance towards becoming a full dialogue partner in the future. Concluding his address, Ambassador Virabutr said that the Thailand–Pakistan friendship is defined not only by agreements but by the “smiles we create together.” He reaffirmed Thailand’s commitment to working closely with Pakistan for shared prosperity and development.

DG announces PAFDA’s int’l testing, training and awareness program

ISLAMABAD:Punjab Agriculture Food and Drug Authority (PAFDA) Director General, Dr. Talat Naseer Pasha, announced on Sunday that the department is making significant progress under the Chief Minister’s supervision, introducing international standard-based testing for cosmetics, dairy, and other industry products while actively promoting public awareness During an exclusive conversation with PTV news , DG Dr. Talat Naseer Pasha highlighted the department’s ongoing efforts to raise quality and safety standards across the province. He emphasized that, under the close supervision of the Chief Minister, PAFDA is working tirelessly to implement measures that align with international standards. Dr. Pasha announced that the authority will soon introduce international standard-based testing for cosmetics, dairy, leather,

drugs and other industry products. Alongside these initiatives, he said PAFDA is launching a comprehensive public awareness campaign through its Communication Department, adding, the campaign aims to educate consumers on how to identify safe, high-quality products while also empowering them to recognize counterfeit or substandard items in the market. Dr. Pasha further emphasized that the public will be encouraged to report complaints and flag products that do not meet the required standards, ensuring greater accountability and consumer protection. This initiative is part of PAFDA’s broader commitment to safeguarding public health and maintaining market integrity. Responding to a query, Dr. Pasha acknowledged that in previous years, testing and regulations were often neglected. However, he emphasized that the present govern-

ment is taking a proactive approach, working to implement international testing standards with the involvement of all stakeholders. He added that PAFDA is collaborating with other countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and others to ensure the credibility of its testing results, and is focused on building a robust framework for report acceptance and transparency. Furthermore, Dr. Pasha outlined a 10-year vision for PAFDA, which includes specialized training for staff and the establishment of scientific labs to further strengthen the testing mechanism and ensure compliance with global standards In conclusion, Dr. Pasha emphasized that PAFDA is committed to a strict crackdown on fake cosmetics. He assured that the authority will take decisive action against counterfeit products, protecting consumers and ensuring that only safe.—DNA

RCCI to host ‘4th Pindi FoodFest’ on Dec 12

RAWALPINDI:The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) is all set to host the three-day Pindi Food Fest, scheduled to start from December 12 to 14 at Ayub National Park. The annual festival aims to celebrate traditional and regional cuisine, introduce innovative flavors, and create valuable networking and branding opportunities for SMEs, startups, and women entrepreneurs, particularly those in the food sector. RCCI President Usman Shaukat, in a brief interaction with APP today highlighted the festival’s core objectives, emphasizing the promotion of local culinary traditions, promoting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the empowerment of women-led food businesses “More than 70 food stalls will be featured, showcasing a wide variety of flavors and cuisines, an initiative that provides women entrepreneurs a platform to launch and grow their brands while building connections with others in the industry”, he said. He added that the festival would also serve as inspiration for aspiring women entrepreneurs. “Our goal is to create opportunities and motivate women who have yet to start their entrepreneurial journey”, RCCI President said. To a question he informed that over 15 stalls have been allocated exclusively for women at the year’s festive, especially those running home-based food ventures. Marking its fourth edition, the ‘Pindi Food Fest’ has grown steadily, following overwhelmingly positive feedback from previous events. Along with the vibrant food stalls, the festival will feature a musical evening and a kids’ carnival, offering entertainment for the entire family. The President RCCI invites families, food lovers, and entrepreneurs to join this exciting celebration of food, culture, and community. -DNA

MCI launches city-wide drive to replace damaged manholes

ISLAMABAD – On the special direction of Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) has initiated a comprehensive campaign for immediate replacement of all damaged manhole covers in the Union Councils of Islamabad. This public safety initiative is being executed under the direct supervision of Dr. Anam Fatima, Chief Officer MCI, who has issued strict instructions to all Union Council Secretaries to ensure timely reporting, replacement, and monitoring of unsafe and broken manholes in their respective areas. To date, significant progress has been made in the operation. A total of 97 damaged manhole covers have been replaced today in various locations, with priority given to high-traffic roads, public pathways, and areas frequently used by children and senior citizens. The campaign is aimed at safeguarding pedestrians, preventing potential accidents, and improving the city’s sanitation and drainage infrastructure. MCI is moving rapidly to address all reported locations and ensure enhanced public safety across Islamabad. Dr. Anam Fatima reaffirmed MCI’s commitment to delivering efficient municipal services and creating a safer, well-maintained urban environment for the citizens of Islamabad.—APP

MARITIME SECURITY WORKSHOP (MARSEW-8)

PAKISTAN NAVY WAR COLLEGE, LAHORE

02 Dec to 12 Dec 2025

Offshore Exploration

Maritime Transport

Ship Building & Repair

Fisheries

Pakistan Navy is hosting the 8th Maritime Security Workshop (MARSEW), a flagship forum that brings together key maritime stakeholders to assess the nation’s extensive maritime potential and identify strategies to better utilize this vital domain. Since its launch in 2017, MARSEW has evolved into a premier event on Navy’s calendar, cultivating a broad understanding of maritime security among government officials, military leadership, academia, industry, and the media. Through informed dialogue and expert exchange, the workshop reinforces the importance of maritime stability and contributes to the sustainable growth of Pakistan’s Blue Economy.

Multi Dimensional Force

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Briefs

Search operation conducted in Aabpara PS limits

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police conducted a search and combing operation in the jurisdiction of Aabpara Police Station under the supervision of SP City, as part of ongoing efforts to curb crime and enhance security across the federal capital. An official told APP on Sunday that during the operation, 25 individuals, 20 houses and several motorcycles were thoroughly checked, while three suspicious persons were shifted to the police station for further legal action. Ladies police personnel also took part in the operation, ensuring proper checking of women and family areas. The official added that a detailed briefing was given to all participating personnel prior to the operation to ensure coordinated movement and effective execution. He further said the operation was carried out in continuation of security measures being implemented across the city. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi has directed all zonal and sector commanders to intensify such operations, ensuring strict vigilance in sensitive areas. SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza said the primary objective of these operations is to tighten security around criminal elements and strengthen the overall law-and-order framework in Islamabad. He reaffirmed that the ICT Police will continue indiscriminate action against criminals, land grabbers and drug traffickers.—APP

One fake applicant held from taking driving test

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police's driving test officer detained a man who attempted to take a driving test on behalf of another applicant, handing him over to the police for legal action. An official told APP on Sunday that the case was later registered as FIR No. 272/25 at Aabpara Police Station. The incident occurred at the Shakarparian driving test centre, where ASI Azam Saleem noticed that the young man appearing for the test did not match the photograph on the submitted form. Upon questioning, the individual first claimed to be Tasawwur Hussain, whose name was written on the form. However, he later admitted his real name was Safer Iqbal, a resident of Kot Momin, Sargodha. He confessed that Tasawwur Hussain "did not know how to drive," so he attempted to take the test in his place. Police seized the driving test form (No. 1071096) as evidence. The act was declared a deliberate attempt to mislead authorities and is punishable under Sections 417 and 419 of the Pakistan Penal Code. The suspect was taken into custody, and the case file was forwarded to Aabpara Police Station, where FIR No. 272/25 was registered. Further investigation is under way. Islamabad Traffic Police said strict action will continue against anyone attempting impersonation or fraud during the licensing process to ensure transparency and road safety.—APP

LARAIB ALI

MARSEW is a national-level workshop organised by Pakistan Navy that focuses on various themes related to maritime security and the prosperity of Pakistan. It plays a crucial role in maritime national discourse within a state dominated by land-centric discussions. This workshop is not only significant for understanding the evolving nature of threats and challenges in the maritime zones of Pakistan, but it also provides deep insights to ensure maritime security and delivers practical solutions sustainable Blue Economy. Through this workshop, the gaze of Pakistani strategic community is not only shifting from land to the sea but expanding the vision by adding the sea to the land-dominant discourse for better policy and decision-making. Seas connect the world. The seas are a major source of economic activities,

Poland, Pakistan enjoy excellent business ties

ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood appreciated Poland's advanced capabilities in engineering machinery manufacturing, mining equipment, renewable energy, agriculture technologies and industrial machinery

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Poland enjoy longstanding, warm and cooperative relations with vast untapped economic potential that both sides must work together to unlock. This was underlined by Pawel Mokrzycki, Economic Secretary of the Polish Embassy, during a meeting with Sardar Tahir Mehmood, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI). Mokrzycki said that Polish firms operating in oil & gas, green technologies, wastewater treatment, IT, textiles and particularly agricultural machinery are eager to develop joint ventures with Pakistani businesses for mutual economic growth. He emphasized the need to establish sectoral working groups and enhance two-way business delegations to build awareness and tap emerging opportunities. He added that the Polish Embassy is keen to connect ICCI with leading Polish Chambers in order to strengthen institutional linkages, facilitate B2B contacts and explore new avenues of trade, investment and technology co-operation. ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood appreciated Poland's advanced capabilities in engineering machinery manufacturing, mining equipment, renewable energy, agriculture technologies and industrial machinery. He said the Preferential Trade Arrangement (PTA) between Pakistan and Poland



has supported Pakistan's export growth through improved access to EU markets. He noted that Pakistan's large consumer base and rapidly evolving industrial landscape offer tremendous opportunities for Polish investors. He highlighted promising sectors for joint ventures including IT, renewable energy, agro-industry, food processing, textiles, pharmaceuticals, sports goods, surgical

instruments and various manufacturing segments. He assured that ICCI will soon share sector-specific profiles and product lists with the Polish Embassy to connect relevant stakeholders on both sides. ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub underscored Pakistan's strong potential in fruit exports, and sought Polish support for upgrading Islamabad's cold-storage and logistics infrastructure

to international standards. ICCI Executive Member Ms. Fatima Azim stressed the importance of frequent business delegation exchanges to better understand the wide range of opportunities for bilateral cooperation. Secretary General Ghulam Murtaza highlighted Pakistan's rich reserves of minerals, metals and gemstones, emphasizing

the need for advanced Polish mining and processing machinery to enhance value addition. Vice President Irfan Chaudhry reaffirmed ICCI's readiness to organize B2B matchmaking sessions, trade exhibitions and sector-specific interactions, and welcomed the Polish Embassy's support for encouraging Polish trade delegations to visit Pakistan.

Pak, US agree to intensify coop on security matters

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United States have agreed to intensify cooperation on counter-narcotics and security matters, following a meeting in Islamabad on Saturday between Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Acting US Ambassador Natalie Baker. Natalie Baker, met Minister Mohsin Naqvi in the ministry, with both sides discussing ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in counter-narcotics, security, and the prevention of illegal immigration. The meeting focused on strengthening collaboration in intelligence sharing, curbing drug trafficking, and expanding joint measures to stop illegal migration. The US envoy offered full technical assistance to Pakistan in combating narcotics and preventing unauthorized cross-border movement. "Our policy on illegal immigration is very clear," Naqvi stated, emphasizing the government's firm stance on the issue. He said the identification of drug trafficking cases at airports remains a top priority, adding that state-of-the-art scanning machines are being installed at all major airports across the country. Naqvi reaffirmed that Pakistan is strictly implementing a zero-tolerance policy against narcotics. "Even today, drugs originating from Afghanistan are reaching dozens of countries and destroying young generations," he noted, welcoming US technical support to bolster Pakistan's counter-narcotics capabilities. The interior minister informed the envoy that, on the prime minister's directive, the National Narcotics Coordination Centre would be established soon. During the meeting, officials presented a detailed briefing on the performance of the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and ongoing nationwide operations. Under this year's annual counter-narcotics campaign, 134 tonnes of drugs were seized, 2,001 suspects—including 75 foreigners—were arrested, and narcotics worth \$12.797 billion were confiscated. Additionally, 110 Afghan nationals were arrested in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh, while 40,659 acres of land were cleared to maintain "poppy-free" status. Acting Ambassador Baker praised ANF's performance and reiterated that the United States attaches special importance to its relations with Pakistan and will continue cooperation across all sectors. Minister Naqvi said Pakistan and the United States share an important partnership for promoting peace and stability in the region. "We are committed to further strengthening our longstanding bilateral ties," he added. The meeting was also attended by the federal interior secretary, DG ANF, director enforcement, representatives of the US Embassy, and other senior officials.—DNA

CG COMSTECH stresses strengthened academic collaboration

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary Saturday said the future of higher education in the Muslim world depends on forging stronger academic partnerships and addressing the critical shortage of skilled professionals through collaborative innovation. He was speaking at the Annual Meeting of the COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence at the organization's Secretariat in Islamabad. The high-level gathering brought together Vice Chancellors, Rectors, and senior representatives from leading universities across the OIC Member and Observer States in what has become a cornerstone event for advancing scientific excellence and educational cooperation throughout the region. Nearly 30 international delegates representing universities from Iran, Somalia, Palestine, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, Bangladesh, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal joined their counterparts from several prominent Pakistani institutions to chart a collective path forward for tertiary education in OIC countries. Prof. Choudhary emphasized that one of the foremost developmental challenges facing OIC nations remains the limited pool of skilled professionals and workforce, a gap that can only be bridged through strengthened tertiary education systems and expanded opportunities for knowledge transfer. He observed that the global higher education landscape has evolved significantly following the COVID-19 pandemic, with new

digital learning tools and hybrid education models dramatically improving access to skill-based training and short interactive learning programmes across geographical and economic boundaries. "Collaborations, knowledge sharing, best practices, exchange of scholars, technology transfer, and joint academic programmes are vital for overcoming the educational challenges faced across the OIC region," Prof. Choudhary told the assembled academic leaders, underlining the interconnected nature of development challenges and the necessity of collective solutions. The morning session featured two intensive technical discussions focusing on character mastery, future university models, and the evolving nexus between society, economy, and industry. Delegates engaged in structured brainstorming sessions led by senior international trainers and academic leaders, examining how universities must transform to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. The discussions highlighted the urgent need for competency-driven education, modern pedagogical tools, university-industry partnerships, and collaborative training programmes designed to equip graduates with the skills necessary to address emerging global challenges. The annual meeting also included a comprehensive moderated discussion on key thematic areas of CCoE cooperation. Universities presented their visions and shared insights during introductory remarks, while COMSTECH officials detailed the organization's various initiatives and programmes.—DNA

Diamer Basha Dam opens paid internship

ISLAMABAD: WAPDA's Diamer Basha Dam Project (DBDP) has announced the opening of applications for the second batch of its paid internship program, offering seven positions to recent engineering graduates from the project area, according to an official notification. The six-month internship will place successful candidates in various divisions, including construction, quality assurance and control, technical, and surveying. Interns will have the opportunity to work alongside international experts from the project's main contractor, POWERCHINA, and will receive both on-site and office-based training, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro. Applicants must hold a degree in civil engineering or a related field and are required to submit attested academic documents, an updated CV, a copy of their CNIC, and a police character certificate to the DBDP offices in Chilas or Thore by December 11. A DBDP spokesperson stated that the initiative reflects WAPDA's commitment to providing "training opportunities right at the doorstep of local communities," enabling young people to build a strong foundation for their professional careers. He added that the project has also launched technical skills programs aimed at enhancing the employability of less-educated residents in various trades. This internship is part of ongoing efforts by DBDP and PowerChina to increase employment opportunities for residents near the project site. In September 2025, the project announced over 130 openings as part of its Confidence Building Measures, including junior engineer positions, environmental monitoring staff, sub-engineers, and skilled and semi-skilled labor such as heavy equipment operators, masons, steel fixers, and dump truck drivers.—DNA

FIA director for urgent need for public scrutiny

ISLAMABAD: Director FIA Lahore Zone, Capt. (R) Ali Zia warned Sunday that criminal groups based in Southeast Asia are preying on Pakistanis with counterfeit job opportunities, advising people to thoroughly investigate any such offers to avoid falling into fraudulent traps that could have severe legal and financial repercussions. While speaking exclusively under the ongoing FIA awareness drive, FIA Director Ali Zia urged the public to take swift action against the rising job scams emanating from Southeast Asia, adding, the

importance of a rigid verification process to prevent individuals from falling victim to fraudulent job offers. Zia revealed that 79% of people who went abroad this year through these scams have not yet returned, remaining trapped in exploitative conditions. He further added that an alarming 15,000 to 20,000 individuals have fallen prey to these scams, many of whom are stranded in countries facing severe political unrest. The FIA Director pointed out that countries such as Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, already dealing with political instability, have become hotspots for these criminal syndicates. Victims are lured with fake job promises in sectors like IT and call centers, only to find themselves trapped in situations involving illegal border crossings, forced labor and even detention in some cases, he mentioned. Ali Zia urged the public to report any suspicious job offers to the FIA, emphasizing that the agency is committed to taking action against these criminal groups.—DNA

35,000 challan tickets issued for traffic violations

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Traffic Police have intensified action against traffic violations across the city without any discrimination. During the past nine days, over 35,000 traffic challan tickets were issued for various violations, resulting in fines amounting to more than Rs 47.8 million. Police also registered 299 cases and arrested 301 individuals involved in serious violations. As part of the crackdown, 8,301 vehicles were impounded, while challans were also issued to 73 drivers of government departments for violating traffic rules. The enforcement drive targeted offences including riding without a helmet, using mobile phones while driving, one-way violations, creating obstruction in traffic flow, and driving without a licence or registration. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani said adherence to traffic laws is mandatory for everyone and no one is above the law. He urged citizens to follow traffic rules, stating that respecting road regulations is the hallmark of a civilized society.—DNA

Trade deficit signals structural collapse

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's widening trade deficit highlights critical structural issues in manufacturing and export competitiveness, which should concern policymakers about potential industrial instability and economic resilience, a noted trade leader warned on Sunday. Responding to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data showing the trade deficit surged 37.17 percent to 15.47 billion dollars in the first five months of fiscal year 2026, former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, Shahid Rasheed Butt, said the figures expose a deepening crisis where industries consume imported inputs but fail to generate competitive exports, risking long-term economic stability. He pointed to November as particularly alarming, with exports declining 15.35 percent year-on-year to 2.398 billion dollars while imports rose to 5.253 billion, pushing the monthly deficit to 2.85 billion. He said the export-to-import ratio has deteriorated to 0.45 from 0.53 last year, indicating export sectors are losing ground even as they absorb more raw materials.—APP

Maritime security workshop strengthening maritime security, strategic awareness

trade, and commerce that connect people worldwide, therefore, they represent not just a naval domain but also a national issue intertwined with economic resilience, geopolitical positioning, and regional connectivity. Pakistan Navy understands the complexities of the sea and its dynamics, and it strives to bridge existing gaps through the Maritime Security Workshop (MARSEW). Moreover, it dismantles the silos that conventionally divide the military sector, civil sector and academia and builds a bridge among them with collaborative platforms for shared national understanding regarding a holistic view of maritime security. MARSEW convenes people from the wide spectrum of the public and private institutions, including the government sector, senior bureaucrats, maritime industry executives, business executives, educators, intellectuals, media, and other relevant stakeholders, to cross-participate

in informed discussions on pressing issues relating to the sea. They collaborate to map out a safe and prosperous maritime future for Pakistan. Pakistan Navy War College has hosted the Maritime Security Workshop annually since 2017. It's basically a Maritime policy formulation exercise (MPFX) which provides awareness among the participants about the sea and its contemporary dynamics, not theoretically, but practically, through visits to all the installations at the coastlines and other parts of Pakistan, including Islamabad and Lahore. It consists of two phases: firstly, academic debates, and secondly, visits to naval installations. The first phase consists of academic sessions at Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore. In this phase, all participants discuss a wide range of interconnected maritime issues and their multifaceted nature, including both traditional and non-traditional maritime security threats /

challenges (illegal fishing, smuggling, and maritime terrorism), as well as the blue economy. Moreover, it emphasizes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its maritime dimension anchored by Gwadar Port to integrate this port into a broader national maritime strategy. The second phase encompasses field visits to diverse naval commands and all coastal installations, including the Makran Coast. They also visit the development sites for CPEC and Gwadar Port. The purpose behind dividing this workshop into two parts is to engage the experts of each sector with the physical landscape of the maritime frontier, examine the infrastructure capabilities and development, interact with the locals, witness naval operations in Pakistan, and draw a comparison by analyzing the intersections on real grounds. It all results in eco-

nomically and strategic understanding of coastal areas and aids in coastal development, disaster management, protection of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), national planning and development. Furthermore, it plays a key role in overcoming sea blindness. It advances the blue economy through an integrated approach with the aim to develop the maritime sector of Pakistan. This workshop is essential for increasing the understanding of maritime security, geostrategic dynamics of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and enormous opportunities offered by the Blue Economy. Furthermore, it underscores the underused maritime resources in Pakistan and their crucial role in the nation's economy. The years 2020 to 2030 are referred as the ocean decade, and Pakistan is halfway through. Therefore, this workshop allows Paki-

stan to evaluate its position in various maritime sectors. The scope of previous MARSEW workshops extends beyond policy notes and participant feedback. It has awakened a sense of responsibility as well as ambition to claim Pakistan's rightful place among maritime nations. It serves as a platform for building national consensus about the future policy formulation. This platform carries a message for every single actor who wishes to create wide divisions and fragmentation between us: that we as a nation are united and focused not only on land but also on sea. This marks a significant milestone for Pakistan as we now approach the sea with heightened awareness and understanding. The MARSEW 8 hopes to provide a more secure, economically vibrant, and strategically relevant maritime future.—Laraib Ali, Research Associate, Maritime Centre of Excellence, Pakistan College, Lahore.

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.

When Europe Bowed to Beijing

Qamar Bashir



Macron's visit was driven not by ceremony but by necessity. Europe's economy has weakened under the weight of global shocks, strategic overdependence, and America's increasingly punitive tariff regime. President Donald Trump's imposition of heavy tariffs on the European Union has rattled industries across the continent, from steel to aviation, from agriculture to automobiles. Europe finds itself wedged between American economic nationalism and its own industrial fragility. At this moment, Europe needs new markets, new partnerships, new supply pathways, and new investment ecosystems

PRESIDENT Emmanuel Macron's visit to China from December 3 to December 5, 2025 is not merely a diplomatic formality; it is a geopolitical confession wrapped in ceremony. For decades, European leaders dealt with Beijing from a position of moral superiority, economic egoism, and political arrogance. They lectured China on values while depending on its factories, restrained engagement while depending on its imports, and pretended equality while dismissing China's vision. Yet today, Macron stands in Beijing in what resembles a symbolic pilgrimage—an acknowledgment that the global center of gravity has shifted, and that Europe can no longer pretend otherwise. His presence in China marks a moment when Europe openly recognizes China as a world power shaping the contours of the twenty-first century. Western leaders once assumed that China's rise was temporary, fragile, or dependent on Western technology. Those illusions have crumbled. The China of today owns the world's largest manufacturing base, the second-largest economy, the deepest industrial ecosystem, the strongest foreign exchange reserves, and a leadership that thinks in decades, not election cycles. But what has truly transformed China from a rising giant into the world's strategic fulcrum is the Belt and Road Initiative—a project so expansive, so integrated, and so unprecedented that no empire in history has achieved anything comparable. Through roads, railways, ports, fiber-optic networks, energy corridors, industrial parks, and digital highways connecting 152 countries across every inhabited continent, China has woven together the most extensive development network the world has ever seen. Rome captured territories. Britain controlled the seas. The United States built alliances. But China has done something none of them imagined: it has physically and economically connected more than half of humanity into a shared infrastructure and trading system, peacefully and voluntarily. When Macron arrived in Beijing on December 3, he did so not as a leader offering lectures, but as a leader seeking partnership. His discussions with President Xi Jinping quietly acknowledged that China's influence is no longer a projection or a forecast but a living reality. The Belt and Road Initiative, once mocked by Western commentators as overly ambitious, has matured into the most successful development program ever undertaken by a single nation. Through respect, partnership, and non-in-

terference, China has offered world development without humiliation, loans without political dictates, and cooperation without exploitation. It has provided infrastructure to the neglected, dignity to the marginalized, and economic hope to nations locked out of Western financial systems. This is the geopolitical architecture that Macron is walking into, not as a skeptic but as a participant.

Macron's visit was driven not by ceremony but by necessity. Europe's economy has weakened under the weight of global shocks, strategic overdependence, and America's increasingly punitive tariff regime. President Donald Trump's imposition of heavy tariffs on the European Union has rattled industries across the continent, from steel to aviation, from agriculture to automobiles. Europe finds itself wedged between American economic nationalism and its own industrial fragility. At this moment, Europe needs new markets, new partnerships, new supply pathways, and new investment ecosystems. China, with its immense consumer base, advanced technological capabilities, and resilient manufacturing structure, is the only country with the scale and stability to offer Europe a lifeline.

During the three-day visit, Macron and Xi discussed trade, green technologies, electric vehicles, aviation, nuclear cooperation, cultural exchanges, and the stabilization of global supply chains. Agreements were signed in areas ranging from energy and research to industrial collaboration and environmental commitments. Though the details were not broadcast loudly, the essence was unmistakable: Europe seeks economic security, industrial revival, and strategic autonomy, and it sees China as an indispensable partner in each of these domains. These discussions were not superficial. They were rooted in Europe's urgent need to recalibrate its future at a time when American unpredictability has left Europe exposed.

What makes this visit even more striking is not the content of the agreements but the symbolism behind them. Macron may have spoken publicly of strategic balance, but his mere presence in China—touring cultural sites with Xi, engaging business leaders, and emphasizing cooperation—conveyed a deeper truth: Europe is shifting. No longer does Europe see China only through the prism of competition. It sees China as a stabilizing force in a world where the old order is disintegrating. It recognizes that China's diplomacy, unlike America's, is grounded in stability, continuity, and long-term

planning. It acknowledges that China solves conflicts with time and patience rather than sanctions and threats. Macron also raised global issues such as the crisis in Ukraine, knowing that China's influence over Russia could become a valuable lever in future negotiations. Though China did not commit to any specific position, its willingness to listen, engage, and mediate reflects a country increasingly shaping, not reacting to, international affairs. Macron's hope that China could play a constructive role in resolving global crises mirrors Europe's growing realization that the world's diplomatic balance is tilting East, not West.

The deeper meaning of Macron's journey lies in what it signals for the future of Europe. This visit crystallized a shift that had long been whispered but never openly acknowledged: Europe is no longer willing to tie its destiny exclusively to the United States. It is exploring alternatives, recalibrating partnerships, and seeking new economic anchors. China offers what Europe desperately needs—markets, investments, technologies, supply-chain security, and a predictable strategic partner that seeks cooperation rather than subordination.

Macron's journey to China was short in duration but enormous in implication. It marked the moment when Europe, confronted with economic pressure from the United States and geopolitical instability across the West, turned toward China not out of ideological sympathy but out of necessity, realism, and strategic foresight. The three days Macron spent in China may well shape the next three decades of European foreign policy.

This visit did not elevate China; China was already elevated. What it did was expose Europe's recognition of that rise. It revealed a world in transition—a world where China is the gravitational center, where the Belt and Road has redrawn economic maps, where development is measured in corridors rather than conflicts, and where Europe must choose between decline through dependency or renewal through diversification. Macron chose renewal. And by choosing China, he has signaled to the world that the era of unquestioned American primacy is slipping away, replaced by a multipolar reality where China stands at the forefront.

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

A New Soft Power Moment

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Chinese companies continue to expand trade and investment in regions such as Latin America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. However, commercial interests than by state planning. The United States has also stepped back from promoting democracy and human rights, leaving open a space China could theoretically occupy

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has reduced many of the traditional tools through which the United States projected influence abroad. USAID has largely ceased to function, Voice of America is trapped in legal disputes and the State Department has sharply cut back its staff and programs. Stricter visa rules have made the country less welcoming and Trump's confrontational dealings with allies have weakened trust. Observers, including former NATO official Jamie Shea, describe these developments as a form of American "soft power suicide." Many analysts argue that China benefits from this American retreat. Joseph Nye, who introduced the concept of soft power, warned that China might move into the space the United States is leaving behind. Some commentators suggest that Trump's policies have strengthened China's diplomatic appeal. Yet the rivalry between the two powers is not a straightforward contest. The United States historically emphasized values, political principles and cultural attraction. China's method has been more practical, relying on economic incentives, development assistance, infrastructure projects and training programs. Many countries, particularly in the global South, tend to accept both American and Chinese engagement rather than choosing one side. Although China appears more reliable and accessible as Washington pulls back, it has not turned into a global soft-power leader. Beijing continues to promote its economic model and development experience, but it has actually reduced assistance to poorer countries in recent years. Its pledges to Latin American and SCO countries have declined compared with past years. These reductions reflect pressure on China's own economy and concerns about the rising debts of Belt and Road Initiative partners. China still leads to

resource-rich and high-income countries, but it is increasingly cautious toward low-income borrowers, at times suspending new loans entirely, as in Ethiopia. China has also not attempted to replace USAID. Its official aid budget has always been much smaller than Washington's previous levels and most of it has taken the form of loans rather than grants. Recent cases of Chinese humanitarian support, such as in Cambodia and Nepal, remain isolated and do not represent a shift toward broader international assistance.

Chinese companies continue to expand trade and investment in regions such as Latin America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. However, commercial interests than by state planning. The United States has also stepped back from promoting democracy and human rights, leaving open a space China could theoretically occupy. However, China has shown little interest in exporting a political model. Its officials emphasize principles such as noninterference and the idea that modernization can take different forms, but they do not present a clear ideological system for others to adopt. China's diplomatic messaging focuses largely on contrasting itself with the West. Officials often criticize U.S. dominance, accuse Washington of abandoning its international obligations and portray China as a stable and dependable actor. Xi Jinping's recent speeches highlight calls for a "fairer" world order and multipolarity, but they stop short of offering a detailed vision of global governance. In Africa, Chinese diplomats and scholars present China as a partner that respects national choices, unlike the more intrusive United States. Yet when foreign participants ask for clear guidance on how to replicate China's developmental achievements, Chinese officials rarely provide specific steps. They often

repackage Western vocabulary referring to China as a type of democracy rather than outlining unique doctrines. This reluctance limits China's ability to turn admiration into emulation.

Cultural exports have recently helped China's image. Popular products such as the Labubu toys, the animated film Ne Zha 2 and several video games have increased China's visibility among foreign audiences. Technologies like DeepSeek have also enhanced interest in Chinese innovation. However, cultural popularity alone does not necessarily translate into acceptance of China's political or ideological positions. Public opinion surveys show a mixed picture. Latin America and Africa hold generally positive views, while Europe and the Asia-Pacific remain largely distrustful due to security concerns. Even where China is respected as an economic partner, trust in its global leadership remains low. A Pew survey found that most respondents do not have confidence in Xi Jinping to manage international affairs responsibly.

Moreover, countries that depend heavily on Chinese loans often express unease. Ethiopian students and officials worry about high debts and fear that China could control key infrastructure if loans go unpaid. Protests in Central Asian countries against Chinese projects also show rising anxiety. These tensions sit alongside appreciation for China's economic engagement. China's apparent gains therefore come with limits. It benefits from the American withdrawal but is careful not to take on burdens that could expose it to greater criticism or financial risk. It promotes itself as a dependable partner but avoids deeper ideological commitments or the creation of a comprehensive global framework. For now, China prefers to highlight the contrast between its own approach and that of the United States, while maintaining flexibility and avoiding overextension.

Briefs

Abandoned
US weapons
powering...

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transition – “yet ultimately delivered neither.” Recent UN assessments reinforce the regional implications of that failure. A UN panel reported that the Afghan Taliban continue providing logistical and operational support to the TTP, while the Washington Post has documented that dozens of US-origin weapons are now surfacing in Pakistan in the hands of terrorists targeting the state. SIGAR attributes part of this spillover to the abrupt loss of visibility after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. “Due to the Taliban takeover, SIGAR was unable to inspect any of the equipment provided to, or facilities constructed for, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) following the Afghan government’s collapse,” the report states.

23 Afghan
Taliban
soldiers...

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More than two dozen casualties of Afghan soldiers were reported. Afghan soldiers left their posts and ran away in the rear to use civilian areas for another round of small arms fire, which was responded to with another round of heavy weapons, including the use of armed swarm drones, leaving more than two dozen Afghan Taliban soldiers confirmed dead, with multiple injuries also recorded. On facing substantial losses, Taliban forces raised white flags, besides announcements of a cease-fire. Pakistan security forces allowed the Afghan Taliban to commence the casualty evacuation procedure (including both dead and injured), under surveillance. Damage assessment missions revealed at least 23 confirmed dead and multiple injuries.

Indonesian
President
Prabowo...

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the importance both countries attach to defence and security collaboration. Several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) are expected to be signed during the visit, paving the way for deeper institutional partnerships and new channels of cooperation. Officials in Islamabad view the visit as a major diplomatic event that will help expand the scope of Pakistan-Indonesia relations. Both sides are hopeful that the engagements will contribute to the diversification of their partnership, promoting shared economic and strategic interests.

Imran’s
tone toward
military...

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had repeatedly used extremely derogatory and demeaning expressions and terms for the top military leadership. He added that if one starts counting, “maybe a hundred times harsh language was used against the military command from Khan’s X account during the last two years”. Sources said the dilemma for the PTI leadership is that although many leaders do not agree with the jailed founder chairman on various issues, including his consistent personal attacks on military command, they have virtually no say in decision-making and messaging.

‘No military
operation...

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remained open to those who seek forgiveness. However, CM Bugti questioned whether the policy of reconciliation with terrorists could ever be justified. “Should we allow terrorists to reach Islamabad?” he asked. His remarks came a day after security forces killed 12 terrorists during an IBO in the Kalat district. According to the Balochistan chief minister, militants from Balochistan were freed and resettled in 2018, following the same approach used for the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

US- Pakistan business leaders
call on Pakistan ambassador

Pakistani Ambassador to US Rizwan Saeed Shaikh said “We welcome the Yale University delegation and the leadership of USPBA to Pakistan. Such exchanges play an essential role in strengthening bilateral economic and academic linkages,” Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Shaikh said



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of the US-Pakistan Business Alliance (USPBA), Choudary Najeeb, along with founding members of the Alliance and MBA students from Yale University, called on Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Rizwan Saeed Shaikh, at the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, D.C. During the meeting, Choudary Najeeb briefed the Ambassador on the upcoming visit of a 35-member Yale MBA delegation and USPBA representatives to Islamabad in the first week of January 2026. This will be the first official US delegation to Pakistan led by USPBA under the leadership of Choudary Najeeb.

According to the schedule shared, the delegation will visit key national institutions, including National Defence University (NDU), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), FPCCI, meetings with the Chairman Senate, and Speaker National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq. The delegation will also participate in the launch ceremony of the US-Pakistan Business Alliance in Islamabad, which will be attended by senior officials from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Board of Investment, business leaders, the President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh, and senior diplomats from the US Embassy. Pakistani Ambassador to US Rizwan Saeed Shaikh said “We welcome the Yale University delegation

and the leadership of USPBA to Pakistan. Such exchanges play an essential role in strengthening bilateral economic and academic linkages,” Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Shaikh said. He added, “Pakistan offers vast opportunities in technology, energy, agriculture, manufacturing, and innovation. We look forward to constructive interactions that enhance people-to-people ties and build long-term partnerships between the business communities of both countries.” Choudary Najeeb, Chairman USPBA said “This visit marks a milestone for the US-Pakistan Business Alliance,” said Choudary Najeeb. “Our mission is to create meaningful platforms for dialogue, investment, and co-operation. The Yale MBA delegation’s exposure to

Pakistan’s economic potential will help reshape perceptions and unlock new avenues for collaboration. The upcoming launch ceremony of USPBA will further institutionalize this partnership.” Malik Sohail Hussain, Founding Member, Chairman Pakistan chapter of USPBA USPBA and President Hafizabad Chamber of and Industries Said “We are committed to strengthening Pak-US commercial relations through structured engagement and showcasing Pakistan’s real economic strengths,” said Malik Sohail Hussain. “This delegation will help build confidence among US investors and students, highlighting Pakistan’s talent, resilience, and emerging opportunities. USPBA will continue to serve as a bridge between the two business communities.”

Bethlehem Christmas tree lit
up for first time since Gaza war

BETHLEHEM: Christmas cheer returned to the traditional birthplace of Jesus Christ on Saturday as Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank lit up a tree for the first time since the war in Gaza began over two years ago. Covered in red and gold baubles, the Christmas tree standing metres away from the Church of the Nativity on Manger Square has become a symbol of hope. At the end of a two-hour ceremony, the tree was illuminated to cheers, its yellow lights twinkling and a bright red star on top shining against the cloud-

ed night sky irradiated by a luminescent, almost full moon. It is the first time the city has held the usual celebrations since the outbreak of the war in Gaza following Hamas’s attack on Israel in October 2023. “It’s like a symbol of resilience,” said 27-year-old Abeer Shtaya, who works at Al-Zaytoonah University of Science and Technology in Salfit in the West Bank. She had travelled 100 kilometres (60 miles) with a group of the university’s students because “we want to celebrate and be with our brothers and sisters

in Bethlehem to enjoy this day”. “It’s a message for the world that it’s calm,” Mike Shahen, 43, said at his ceramic store on the square, after a handful of visitors came in for purchases. Thousands of people attended, including Christians and Muslims, and many who travelled from Palestinian territories and Israel – some from even further afield – to enjoy the festive spirit return. Nuns could be seen watching from one roof, while many families including small children filled balconies and roofs to catch a glimpse of the tree lit up.

Sounds of laughter filled the air as many could not help but smile despite moments of rain. “This event didn’t happen for the last two years because of the war and it’s quite emotional after two years of nothing but war and death,” said 50-year-old Liyu Lu, who had travelled from northern Israel, close to the border with Lebanon. Originally from China but now living in Israel for decades, she was with a group including Gary Lau, a travelling businessman and Christian staying in Jerusalem for the past couple of months. – Agencies

Divided US Fed
set for contentious
interest rate meeting

WASHINGTON: While the US Federal Reserve’s final interest rate meeting this year could see an unusual amount of division, financial markets view a third straight interest rate cut as nearly certain. When the Fed last met in October, Chair Jerome Powell asserted that another rate cut in December was “not a foregone conclusion,” pointing to “strongly differing views” within the central bank. Minutes from the Fed’s most recent meeting showed many officials expect a further uptick in underlying goods inflation as President Donald Trump’s tariffs bite. But recent comments from leading Fed officials also reflected support for cutting again because of a weakening labor market, even though inflation is still above the Fed’s two percent target. Next week’s outcome in the “deeply divided” Fed was “too close to call,” UniCredit said, also acknowledging that favorable comments from New York Fed bank chief John Williams towards a cut were a notable “intervention.” “As one of the most senior members of the (Fed committee), it seems unlikely Williams would have said this without Powell’s prior approval,” UniCredit said. – Agencies

ECP
formally..

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Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. When approached, Barrister Gohar confirmed that he had received the letter today (Saturday), which was written to him on November 26, but had landed at the party’s Central Office. The issue of PTI intra-party elections has been pending before the ECP for months now due to the stay order the political party obtained from the Lahore High Court. Citing these circumstances, the electoral body has declined to accept him as the chairman of the party, therefore, he has no locus standi. It was learnt that in the given situation, the ECP could soon consider seeking vacation of the stay order to push for arriving at a final verdict with regard to the long-pending case.

Indian FM
Remarks...

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propaganda campaign designed to distract attention from India’s destabilising actions in the region and beyond, as well as state-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan”. “Such incendiary rhetoric only exemplifies the extent of India’s disregard for amity, peace and stability in our region.” The statement said that instead of making misleading remarks about the armed forces of Pakistan, “India must investigate the fascist and revisionist Hindutva ideology that has unleashed a reign of mob justice, lynchings, arbitrary detentions and demolition of properties and places of worship”.

Skipper Salman Ali Agha rules out major
changes ahead of T20 World Cup 2026

Agha also dismisses reports regarding potential change in captaincy ahead of mega event

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan’s T20I captain Salman Ali Agha hinted that no major changes would be made in the national squad ahead of the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup 2026, saying the team combination has already been settled after “months of preparation.” Speaking on the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) podcast, Salman said he does not foresee any big change before the mega event. “I don’t think there will be any major changes before the World Cup. This is the combination we will continue with,” he said. The T20I captain said that all players have been assigned their roles and will move forward with the same structure. The ICC T20 World Cup 2026 – co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka – is scheduled from February 7 to March 8, with Pakistan placed in Group A alongside India, USA, Namibia, and the Netherlands. Agha also dismissed reports regarding a potential change in captaincy ahead of the upcoming mega event and said, “As of now, the Pakistan team will compete in the T20 World Cup under my leadership.” He said that Pakistan still have six T20

matches remaining before the tournament, stressing that consistency will be key. “We cannot make big changes in these six matches. We have played with this group for six months, and the results have started to come,” he said. Agha said that the T20I series against Sri Lanka before the mega event will benefit both senior and young players. “Senior players understand Sri Lankan conditions, and the new players will also gain valuable experience. The series will be important for us, and we will take it seriously,” he said. After the Sri Lanka tour, Pakistan are expected to host Australia for a T20I series, which will conclude shortly before the 20-over World Cup.



Australia crush England by eight wickets for 2-0 Ashes lead

Stokes and Jacks defied the Australian pace attack on a fiercely hot day to edge their way past the initial deficit target and begin to set Australia something to chase

BRISBANE: Australia cruised to an emphatic eight-wicket win over England in the day-night second Ashes Test in Brisbane on Sunday for an ominous 2-0 lead in the series. The hosts chased down the paltry target of 65 in just 10 overs, captain Steve Smith pulling Gus Atkinson for a huge six over square leg for the winning runs. Although not as humiliating as the two-day loss in the first Test in Perth, England were comprehensively outplayed in Brisbane in every department. Their batting, apart from Joe Root and Zak Crawley in the first innings and captain Ben Stokes and Will Jacks in the second, was just as rash as in Perth. They gave their wickets away with poor strokes on the bouncy Gabba surface. They also bowled poorly, pitching too short on the Gabba wicket and wasting the new pink ball in stark contrast to an Australian attack missing spearheads Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood.

To make matters worse England dropped five catches in the first innings, whereas Australia’s fielders caught everything that came their way. Josh Inglis’s brilliant run-out of Stokes in the first innings changed the course of the match. Australia now have a 2-0 lead in the five-Test series and are overwhelming favourites to retain the Ashes with matches in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney to follow. England were behind the game once they let Australia’s tail help the home side post 511 on Saturday, an overall lead of 177. They then lost six second-innings wickets under lights to end the third day 134-6, still 43 runs behind the Australian total. While many expected England to surrender meekly on Sunday, Stokes and all-rounder Jacks led a fighting rearguard action to ensure Australia had to bat a second time. Stokes and Jacks defied the Australian pace attack on a fiercely hot day to edge their

way past the initial deficit target and begin to set Australia something to chase. England batting coach Marcus Trescothick said Saturday his batsmen would not change their aggressive approach, despite a clatter of wickets from poor shots. But Stokes and Jacks did the exact opposite during the first session Sunday. They left balls they didn’t need to play and seemed happy to take their runs in singles rather than expansive boundary shots. They scored just 28 runs in the first hour and passed the 43-run deficit 96 minutes into the session, scoring only 59 runs in the two hours. The Australian bowlers, who ran rampant under lights on Saturday with the pink ball, were far more ineffective on Sunday, despite the wicket beginning to play some tricks. The English offered only one chance when Scott Boland squared up Stokes, who got a thick edge over the slips cordon. They con-

tinued to frustrate the Australians in the second session until just before the drinks break. Jacks got an edge to Michael Neser and Smith snared a breath-taking catch at slip, diving full length to his left and catching it low to the ground. Neser struck again in the next over when Stokes nibbled at a ball outside the off-stump and got a fine edge to keeper Alex Carey to leave England 227-8, a lead of exactly 50. Gus Atkinson, Brydon Carse and Jofra Archer offered no real resistance as Neser recorded career-best figures of 5-42 and Smith equalled Rahul Dravid on 210 outfield catches, three behind current record-holder Root. Sixty-five was never going to be enough and although Australia lost Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne in the chase, Smith and Jake Weatherald guided the home side to an easy win in style. – Agencies

Briefs

Syria transition 'fragile', one year on: UN investigators

GENEVA: Syria's transition is fragile, one year on from the overthrow of ruler Bashar Assad, and the country's cycles of vengeance and reprisal need to end, United Nations investigators said Sunday. Syrians have been marking the first anniversary since Islamist-led forces pressed a lightning offensive to topple Assad on December 8, 2024 after nearly 14 years of war. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria investigates and records all international human rights law violations since March 2011 in the country. The panel congratulated Syria on the steps it has taken so far to address the crimes and abuses inflicted during previous decades. But it said violent events since Assad's downfall had caused renewed displacement and polarization, "raising worries about the future direction of the country." The commission said the "horrific catalogue" of abuse inflicted by Assad's regime "amounted to industrial criminal violence" against Syria's people. "The cycles of vengeance and reprisal must be brought to an end, so that Syria can continue to move toward a future as a state that guarantees full respect for the human rights of all its people, with equality, the rule of law, peace and security for all in name and in deed," the commission said.—APP

UN delegation for int'l backing for country at 'pivotal' juncture

NEW YORK: A UN Security Council delegation wrapped up its visit to Lebanon on Friday, saying the trip underscored international backing for the country at what it described as a pivotal moment for maintaining calm along its southern border and advancing implementation of long-standing UN resolutions. Samuel Zbogor, Slovenia's ambassador to the UN and president of the Security Council for December, said the delegation had received "warm hospitality" from Lebanese officials, and highlighted the council's "strong commitment" to Lebanon's stability and that of the wider region. "The council regularly deliberates on the situation in Lebanon and along the Blue Line," Zbogor told reporters in Beirut. He said the visit is a further demonstration of the council's commitment, coming at a pivotal time for implementing relevant resolutions and the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah brokered in November 2024. During the trip, the delegation held meetings with Lebanon's president, parliament speaker, prime minister and foreign minister.—APP

Syria's Kurds hail 'positive impact' of Turkiye peace talks

ISTANBUL: Efforts to broker peace between Turkiye and the Kurdish militant group PKK have had a "positive impact" on Syria's Kurds who also want dialogue with Ankara, one of its top officials said Saturday. Earlier this year, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) ended its four-decade armed struggle against Turkiye at the urging of its jailed founder Abdullah Ocalan, shifting its focus to a democratic political struggle for the rights of Turkiye's Kurdish minority. The ongoing process has raised hopes among Kurds across the region, notably in Syria where the Kurds control swathes of territory in the north and northeast. "The peace initiative in Turkiye has had a direct impact on northern and eastern Syria," said Elham Ahmad, a senior official in the Kurdish administration in Syria's northeast. "We want a dialogue process with Turkiye, a dialogue that we understand as Kurds in Syria... We want the borders between us to be opened," she said, speaking by video link to an Istanbul peace conference organized by Turkiye's pro-Kurdish opposition DEM party.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Chargé d'Affaires of U.S. embassy in Pakistan Natalie A. Baker cutting the ribbon along with President IWCCI Samina Fazil to inaugurate "Islamabad Expo 2025" at Pak China Friendship Center.

Art, dialogue, and diplomacy shine at Pakistan-China friendship event

Organizers noted that the event not only honored the 75-year journey of partnership but also sparked meaningful, youth-led dialogue on the future of cooperation between the two nations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Art, student dialogue, and academic exchange took center stage at Bahria University Islamabad on Thursday, where an international conference titled "Bridging Horizons: Celebrating Pakistan-China Deep-Rooted Friendship" was held to mark 75 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries. The event was jointly organized by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Institute for a Community with a Shared Future (ICSF) at the Communication University of China (CUC), Beijing, and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan,

according to Gwadar Pro. The conference served as the grand finale of a month-long series of student competitions, including article writing, poster creation, and speech contests, held across the Islamabad campus. Over 150 students participated, showcasing their creativity and perspectives on the multidimensional partnership between Pakistan and China. The day began with an inaugural session featuring keynote speeches on the historical depth and evolving significance of Pakistan-China relations. Speakers underscored the importance of youth engagement in sustaining the "iron brotherhood" that has defined the two nations' partnership for seven decades. Art emerged as a highlight of the event when the Chief Guest and Guest

of Honour inaugurated a poster exhibition to mark the 75th Anniversary of Pakistan-China Friendship. Forty student artworks were selected for display, with three winning top awards. The exhibition received strong praise from faculty, visiting delegates, and students for its visual promotion of cultural understanding and diplomatic goodwill. The spirit of dialogue continued in the second session, where distinguished speakers reflected on the cultural, strategic, and economic dimensions of Pakistan-China cooperation. They emphasized the crucial role of education, research, and youth-driven initiatives in shaping the future of bilateral ties. Sessions three and four ran simultaneously, providing a platform for winners

of the article-writing competition to present their work. Four students presented in each session, offering fresh insights into the political, cultural, and regional significance of Pakistan-China relations. Both sessions concluded with the announcement of the speech competition winners and the distribution of souvenirs to session chairs, co-chairs, and winning participants. With nearly 500 students in attendance, the conference stood out as one of the most well-attended academic events celebrating Pakistan-China friendship. Organizers noted that the event not only honored the 75-year journey of partnership but also sparked meaningful, youth-led dialogue on the future of cooperation between the two nations.

Pink fleet expands Quetta's bus network

QUETTA: Quetta has received a fleet of modern Chinese buses, including four pink units reserved exclusively for women, in a move that coincides with a series of major reforms approved by the Balochistan cabinet, according to Gwadar Pro. Seventeen low-emission buses arrived in the provincial capital this week, adding to the eight eco-friendly vehicles already operating in the city. The expanded fleet will immediately allow new routes across Quetta, linking areas from the University road to Sariab Mill, with a future extension planned towards Kuchlak. The newly introduced Pink Bus Service will run separately for women commuters to provide a safer and more accessible urban transport experience in a city where female passengers often face harassment and limited mobility. The decision was formally endorsed in the 20th cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti. The meeting also approved wide-ranging reforms covering climate resilience, banking procedures, administrative affairs and public service delivery. Speaking at the meeting, the chief minister termed the women-only buses a meaningful step in "restoring confidence and dignity" for female passengers in Balochistan, adding that the government is committed to upgrading public transport and urban mobility. The first batch of eight low-emission buses was imported from China in July 2023 and initially operated only on a single route linking Sariab Road with Airport Chowk through 18 designated stops. The limited fleet led to overcrowding, prompting the provincial government to seek additional units. The newly received buses will now enable wider coverage along key corridors and support gradual expansion towards Kuchlak. Under the provincial transport plan, Gwadar and Turbat are expected to receive four buses each in the next phase, while Pishin, Khuzdar and Sui will be allotted two buses apiece, extending formal public transport services into more districts of Balochistan.—DNA

Macron vows stronger coop with Nigeria after mass kidnappings

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday that France will step up cooperation with Nigeria after speaking with his counterpart, as the West African country faces a surge in abductions Nigeria has been wracked by a wave of kidnappings in recent weeks, including the capture of over 300 school children two weeks ago that shook Africa's most populous country, already weary from chronic violence. Macron wrote on X that the move came at Nigerian President Bola Tinubu's request, saying France "will strengthen our partnership with the authorities and our support for the affected populations," while urging other countries to "step up their engagement." "No one can remain a spectator" to what is happening in Nigeria, the French president said. Nigeria has drawn heightened attention from Washington in recent weeks, after US President Donald Trump said in November that the United States was prepared to take military action there to counter the killing of Christians.—APP

Hong Kong polls turnout in focus amid anger over deadly fire

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's citizens were voting on Sunday in an election where the focus is on turnout, with residents grieving and traumatized after the city's worst fire in nearly 80 years and the authorities scrambling to avoid a broader public backlash. Security was tight in the northern district of Tai Po, close to the border with mainland China, where the fire engulfed seven towers. The city is holding elections for the Legislative Council, in which only candidates vetted as "patriots" by the China-backed Hong Kong government may run. Residents are angry over the blaze that killed at least 159 people and took nearly two days to extinguish after it broke out on November 26. The authorities say substandard building materials used in renovating a high-rise housing estate were responsible for fueling the fire. Eager to contain the public dismay, authorities have launched criminal and corruption investigations into the blaze, and roughly 100 police patrolled the area around Wang Fuk Court, the site of the fire, early on Sunday. A resident in his late 70s named Cheng, who lives near the charred buildings, said he would not vote. "I'm very upset by the great fire," he said during a morning walk. "This is a result of a flawed government ... There is not a healthy system now and I won't vote to support those pro-establishment politicians who failed us." Cheng declined to give his full name, saying he feared authorities would target those who criticize the government. At a memorial site near the burned-out residential development, a sign said authorities plan to clear the area after the election concludes close to midnight, suggesting government anxiety over public anger. Beijing's national security office in Hong Kong has said it would crack down on any "anti-China" protest in the wake of the fire and warned against using the disaster to "disrupt Hong Kong. China's national security office in Hong Kong warned senior editors with a number of foreign media outlets at a meeting in the city on Saturday not to spread "false information" or "smear" government efforts to deal with the fire. The blaze is a major test of Beijing's grip on the former British colony, which it has transformed under a national security law after mass pro-democracy protests in 2019. An election overhaul in 2021 also mandated that only pro-Beijing "patriots" could run for the global financial hub's 90-seat legislature and, analysts say, further reduced the space for meaningful democratic participation. Publicly inciting a vote boycott was criminalized as part of the sweeping changes that effectively squeezed out pro-democracy voices in Hong Kong. Pro-democracy voters, who traditionally made up about 60 percent of Hong Kong's electorate, have since shunned elections. The number of registered voters for Sunday's polls — 4.13 million — has dropped for the fourth consecutive year since 2021, when a peak of 4.47 million people were registered.—APP

Pak, Oman Navies conduct bilateral drills

DNA

KARACHI: Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) flotilla, comprising ROYAL NAVY OF OMAN VESSEL AL RASIKH and AL SHINAS, visited Karachi to participate in the 12th edition of Bilateral Exercise THAMAR AL TAYYIB (TAT) 2025. Exercise aimed at strengthening maritime security cooperation and deepening longstanding bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Oman. Upon arrival at Karachi Port, visiting ships were warmly received in a traditional welcome ceremony attended by senior officials of Pakistan Navy. A band of Pakistan Navy performed during the reception. Exercise TAT-2025 served as an important platform for mutual learning, enhanced interoperability and professional development. Pakistan Navy and Royal Navy of Oman have been conducting the TAT series of exercises regularly since 1980 and TAT-2023 was conducted in Omani waters. The visit included call-ons with senior Pakistan Navy leadership, onboard receptions and visits to key naval installations and training facilities. Personnel from both navies engaged in professional dialogues, operational discussions and exchange of experiences across various maritime domains. Visit culminated in the sea phase, where naval ships from both forces conducted advanced operational maneuvers and joint exercises encompassing major facets of modern maritime warfare. Pakistan Navy remains committed to fostering regional maritime cooperation and strengthening ties with partner navies worldwide. Royal Navy

of Oman's participation in TAT-2025 reflects the growing defence partnership between the two friendly

nations and their shared resolve to promote regional peace, stability, and maritime collaboration.



AU condemns Sudan drone strikes killing civilians

ADDIS ABABA: The African Union strongly criticized on Sunday paramilitary drone strikes killing dozens including children in southern Sudan, condemning the "repeated and escalating atrocities committed against civilians."

The attack on Thursday in the army-held town of Kalogi involved three strikes, "first a kindergarten, then a hospital and a third time as people tried to rescue the children," Essam Al-Din Al-Sayed, head of the Kalogi administrative unit, told MEDIA He blamed the assault on the Rapid Support Forces and their ally, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North faction (SPLM-N) led by Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, which controls much of South Kordofan and parts of Blue Nile state. Since April 2023, the army and the paramilitary RSF have been locked in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands and displaced nearly 12 million. Independent verification in Kordofan remains difficult due to spotty communications, restricted access and ongoing insecurity. In a statement shared on X, the African Union's chairperson, Mahmoud Youssouf, said he was "appalled by the repeated and escalating atrocities committed against civilians in the region.—APP

Bethlehem Christmas tree lit up for first time since Gaza war

BETHLEHEM, Palestinian Territories: Christmas cheer returned to the traditional birthplace of Jesus Christ on Saturday as Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank lit up a tree for the first time since the war in Gaza began over two years ago. Covered in red and gold baubles, the Christmas tree standing meters away from the Church of the Nativity on Manger Square has become a symbol of hope. At the end of a two-hour ceremony, the tree was illuminated to cheers, its yellow lights twinkling and a bright red star on top shining against the clouded night sky irradiated by a luminescent, almost full moon. It is the first time the city has held the usual celebrations since the outbreak of the war in Gaza following Hamas's attack on Israel in October 2023. "It's like a symbol for resilience," said 27-year-old Abeer Shtaya, who works at Al-Zaytoonah University of Science and Technology in Salfit in the West Bank. She had traveled 100 kilometers (60 miles) with a group of the university's students because "we want to celebrate and be with our brothers and sisters in Bethlehem to enjoy this day." "It's a message for the world that it's calm," Mike Shahan, 43, said at his ceramic store on the square, after a handful of visitors came in for purchases.—APP

Morocco to secure 60% of water needs from desalination

MARRAKECH: Morocco, which has endured seven years of drought, plans to supply 60 percent of its drinking water from treated seawater by 2030, up from 25 percent, its water minister said, as Rabat accelerates investment in desalination plants powered by renewable energy. The push is crucial to ensure a steady water supply and to maintain Morocco's status as a key producer and exporter of fresh produce amid climate change, as droughts have dried up some of its main water reservoirs and depleted underground resources. The plant will have a capacity of 350 million cubic meters and will supply urban centers in Morocco's food basket as well as farmlands. The North African country plans to produce 1.7 billion cubic meters of desalinated water annually by 2030 from projects under construction and plants for which it will hold tenders starting next year, Nizar Baraka said on the sidelines of the World Water Congress in Marrakech. The largest plant — with planned investment of about 10 billion dirhams (\$1 billion) — will be located near Tiznit, 615 km south of the capital Rabat. It will have a capacity of 350 million cubic meters and will supply urban centers in the country's food basket as well as farmlands, he said.—APP

Briefs

7.0 quake
shakes
remote area
straddling
Alaska

LOS ANGELES: A powerful 7.0-magnitude earthquake on Saturday shook a mountainous, sparsely populated area straddling the border of the US state of Alaska and Canada's Yukon territory, seismologists said. The tremor at 2041 GMT was followed by more than 30 aftershocks ranging from magnitude 5.1 to 3.3 over the next three hours, according to the US Geological Survey. The epicenter was about 155 miles (248 kilometers) west of Whitehorse, the capital of Canada's Yukon, and 230 miles northwest of Alaska's capital Juneau. In Yakutat, Alaska, near the epicenter, police chief Theo Capes told AFP there were no injuries or damages reported from the quake that "lasted surprisingly long, 15 to 20 seconds." There was no threat of a tsunami, according to US Tsunami Warning System. — Agencies

India
nightclub
fire kills
25 in Goa

MUMBAI: A fire that ripped through an Indian nightclub in the popular tourist resort region of Goa killed 25 people, the state's chief minister said Sunday. Tourists were among the dead in the blaze, which broke out at about midnight at a club in Arpora in the north of the coastal state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a statement that the deaths were "deeply saddening". Goa, a former Portuguese colony on the shores of the Arabian Sea, lures millions of tourists every year with its nightlife, sandy beaches and laid-back coastal atmosphere. "Today is a very painful day for all of us," Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said in a statement, saying that "25 people have lost their lives and six have been injured." Sawant told journalists that "three to four" tourists had died, without giving their nationalities. "I have ordered a magisterial inquiry into the entire incident to identify the cause and fix responsibility," Sawant added. — Agencies

Drone strikes
on Sudan
hospital
kill dozens

PORT SUDAN: A paramilitary drone attack on the army-held town of Kalogi in Sudan's South Kordofan state hit a kindergarten and a hospital, killing dozens of civilians, a local official told AFP on Sunday. The attack, which took place on Thursday, involved three strikes, "first a kindergarten, then a hospital and a third time as people tried to rescue the children", Essam al-Din al-Sayed, head of the Kalogi administrative unit, told AFP using a Starlink connection. He blamed the assault on the RSF and their ally, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North faction led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu. Since April 2023, the army and the paramilitary RSF have been locked in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands and displaced nearly 12 million. Independent verification of reports from the Kordofan region remains difficult due to spotty communications, restricted access and ongoing insecurity. The UN children's agency said the attack killed more than 10 children aged between five and seven, while the army-aligned foreign ministry put the overall death toll at 79, including 43 children. "Killing children in their school is a horrific violation of children's rights," said UNICEF Representative for Sudan Sheldon Yett, urging all sides to halt their attacks and allow humanitarian access. Following their late-October capture of El-Fasher — the army's last stronghold in western Sudan — the RSF has pushed eastward into the oil-rich Kordofan region, which is divided into three states. — APP

Photo exhibition 'Dialogue on Humanity' draws huge interest

Swiss ambassador emphasized that the purpose of the exhibition is not only to showcase striking images but also to encourage critical and independent thinking



ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The National Art Gallery at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) hosted the inauguration of a powerful and thought-provoking photo exhibition titled "Dialogue on Humanity", jointly curated by Photo-Elysée Museum Lausanne, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The exhibition, which marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, will remain open to the public until December 10, 2025. Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan Georg Steiner formally opened the exhibition, welcoming diplomats, art enthusiasts, students, and members of civil society. Despite what he described as "a busy evening with multiple events taking place in Islamabad," the ambassador expressed delight at the strong turnout and appreciation for the importance of the occasion. The exhibition will continue till December 10. Ambassador Steiner extended special thanks to Asma Karim from the Swiss Embassy and the team at ICRC for their dedicated efforts in bringing the exhibition to Pakistan. He also acknowledged the PNCA staff for their cooperation in hosting the event. In his address, Ambassador Steiner high-

lighted the global relevance of the exhibition. "Dialogues on Humanity has already travelled to 11 countries," he noted, adding that the exhibition invites visitors to reflect deeply on the principles that shape modern humanitarian action: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. These principles, he said, lie at the heart of the Geneva Conventions and remain vital amid the complexities of the contemporary world. He emphasized that the purpose of the exhibition is not only to showcase striking images but also to encourage critical and independent thinking. Referencing key themes printed on the invitation card—living in nature, hope and dignity, facts and fiction, truth and lies, digital and data—the ambassador said the photographs urge viewers to contemplate how humanitarian values are applied in daily life. Visitors are encouraged to scan a QR code provided at the venue, which connects them to an online platform to share their reflections with a global audience. Ambassador Steiner expressed hope that Pakistani voices and perspectives would contribute meaningfully to this global conversation. Speaking on the occasion, Christoph Sutter, Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), underscored the significance of visual storytelling in preserving humanitarian memory and promoting deeper understanding of



global crises. He praised the collaboration between Switzerland, Photo-Elysée, and ICRC, stating that such initiatives help bring the principles of humanitarian law closer to the public. The exhibition features a curated selection of powerful photographs that explore conflict, resilience, loss, hope, and the shared human experience. Each frame invites viewers to question, reflect, and reimagine

a more humane future.

Concluding his remarks, Ambassador Steiner invited attendees to revisit the exhibition with colleagues, friends, and families before it closes on December 10. "Take time to experience these remarkable images—each one speaks to our collective humanity," he said. The exhibition is open at the National Art Gallery, PNCA, and welcomes visitors from all walks of life.

17 found dead
in migrant
vessel off Crete

ATHENS: Seventeen men were found dead Saturday after a migrant vessel was found drifting off the Greek island of Crete, a coastguard spokeswoman told AFP. "Two survivors in critical condition have been hospitalised," the spokeswoman added. "Autopsies have to be carried out as the circumstances of the sinking are not known." Greek state television channel ERT said the bodies had been found inside the vessel, which was taking on water and partly deflated. Manolis Frangoulis, the mayor of Cretan port Ierapetra, told reporters that all the victims had been young. "The vessel the migrants were on was deflated on two sides, which forced the passengers into a reduced space," he added. Coroners are looking at the possibility that the migrants died of dehydration, ERT reported. The vessel was found 26 nautical miles (48 kilometres) southwest of Crete, said Greek officials. A Turkish cargo ship spotted it and alerted the authorities, Greek news agency Ana reported. Two coastguard vessels, and another from the EU's border agency Frontex travelled to the scene, as did a Frontex aircraft and Super Puma helicopter, said the coastguard. They added that the two survivors had said that their vessel had become unstable because of bad weather, and they had had no way to cover up nor to eat or drink anything. Migrants have for the last year turned their attention to the Greek island of Crete, in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, as a way of reaching European Union territory from Libya, in north Africa. The UN's refugee agency UNHCR says more than 16,770 people seeking asylum in EU have arrived there since the start of the year. In July, Greece's conservative gov't led by PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis suspended asylum hearings for migrants, particularly targeting those arriving on Crete from Libya. — Agencies

FIA nabs two over
Cambodia forced-
labour scam

ISLAMABAD: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested two key suspects involved in trafficking Pakistani citizens to Cambodia on the pretext of fake jobs and forcing them into illegal online labour schemes. An official told APP on Sunday that the arrests were made by FIA Composite Circle Gilgit during an ongoing crackdown against networks involved in detaining and exploiting Pakistani nationals abroad. The arrested suspects were identified as Adnan Aslam and Inamullah. According to FIA, Adnan Aslam was taken into custody from Hunza, while Inamullah attempted to flee to China but was deported and arrested upon arrival through coordinated action. The investigation team contacted victims and their families to verify the suspects' role in the trafficking scheme. The official said the accused, along with their accomplices, lured citizens — mostly from Gilgit-Baltistan — by offering fake overseas jobs through online interviews. After transporting them from Lahore International Airport to Cambodia, the victims were illegally confined near the Vietnam border. Once held captive, their passports were seized, and they were forced into online scams and hard labour. Families of the victims were then asked to pay ransom between USD 2,000 and USD 5,300 for their release. Many were freed only after paying the demanded amount. FIA said the gang operated a structured trafficking and extortion network that exploited vulnerable citizens and pushed them into criminal digital schemes abroad. The suspects were presented before a court, where FIA obtained 12-day physical remand for further investigation. — DNA

Trump's Pentagon chief under
fire as scandals mount

WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is under mounting pressure from scandals surrounding strikes on alleged drug boats and his use of Signal to discuss sensitive military information, sparking growing criticism and calls for him to quit. Hegseth — a former Army National Guard major who went from Fox News co-host to leader of the world's most powerful military — is no stranger to controversy and was only narrowly confirmed by the Senate earlier this year. The strikes on alleged narcotics smugglers — especially an incident in which survivors of an initial attack were subsequently killed — and his use of commercial messaging app Signal to talk about an impending operation in Yemen, have fueled further opposition to Hegseth. "He's in another difficult position. In fact, his two big problems have now merged," said Mark Cancian, a retired US Marine colonel and senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "But he seems to retain (US President Donald) Trump's confidence, even as he's lost support of some Republicans. So I don't think he's in... (a) fatal situation," Cancian said. Jim Townsend, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for European and NATO policy during the Obama administration, said Hegseth is "on thin ice," and that Trump has "a secretary of defense that is giving him lots of headaches." Townsend agreed that Hegseth is unlikely to be fired immediately, but said if something happens that "really riles up the Republican Party" or embarrasses Trump's Make America Great Again movement, "they'll probably try to move him somewhere else." Hegseth came under fire during his confirmation process over alleged financial mismanagement at veterans' non-profits where he previously worked, reports of excessive drinking, and allegations that he sexually assaulted a woman in California. His time as secretary of defense has also been marred by scandals, including one related to strikes on Yemen that were launched in mid-March.

The Atlantic magazine revealed that its editor-in-chief had been inadvertently included in a Signal chat in which officials, including Hegseth, discussed the upcoming operation. The Pentagon chief sent messages on the timing of strikes hours before they happened and information on aircraft and missiles involved. The incident sparked an investigation by the Pentagon's independent inspector general's office, which concluded in a report released Thursday that Hegseth's actions could have resulted in "potential harm to US pilots." Another controversy stemmed from a September 2 attack on an alleged drug-smuggling boat in the Pacific. An initial strike left survivors, with a follow-up attack killing those two people. Hegseth and the White House have repeatedly said the decision for the second strike was made by the operational commander, Admiral Frank Bradley, rather than the defense secretary. Lawmakers attended a classified briefing on Capitol Hill this week in which they were shown extended video footage of the incident — only a brief part of which has been publicly released — but there are conflicting views about whether the follow-up strikes were justified. The footage showed "the United States military attacking shipwrecked sailors — bad guys, bad guys — but attacking shipwrecked sailors," said Democratic Representative Jim Himes. Republican Senator Tom Cotton — another briefing attendee — described all four strikes on the boat as "entirely lawful and needful," and said the survivors were attempting to flip the drug-laden vessel back over and "stay in the fight." Hegseth has faced calls from some Democratic lawmakers for his resignation or firing over the follow-up strikes and the Signal controversy, but his job seems safe for the moment. Cancian, however, said that another scandal could push the Trump administration to remove him as defense secretary. "If there's maybe another one after this...the White House might lose its patience," he said, describing the controversies that have already occurred as "very embarrassing." — Agencies

Sri Lanka
issues
landslide
warnings
as cyclone
toll hits 618

Disaster Management Centre says monsoon storms adding more rain and making hillsides unstable

DNA

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan authorities issued fresh landslide warnings on Sunday with rains lashing areas already devastated by a powerful cyclone, as the death toll rose to 618. More than two million people — nearly 10% of the population — have been affected by last week's floods and landslides triggered by Cyclone Ditwah, the worst on the island this century.

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said monsoon storms were adding more rain and making hillsides unstable, including the central mountainous region and the north-western midlands. Helicopters and planes were being used on Sunday to supply communities cut off by landslides in the centre of the country.

The Sri Lanka Air Force said it had received a plane-load of relief supplies from Myanmar on Sunday, the latest batch of foreign aid.

The number of people in state-run refugee camps had dropped to 100,000 from a peak of 225,000 as floodwaters receded across the island by Sunday, the DMC said. More than 75,000 homes were damaged, including close to 5,000 that were completely destroyed, it added. The government on Friday unveiled a major compensation package to rebuild homes and revive businesses wiped out by the natural disaster, which hit the island as it was emerging from its 2022 economic meltdown.

Pak to sell excess gas in
int'l markets from Jan 1

ISLAMABAD: Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik said on Sunday that Pakistan would begin selling excess liquefied natural gas (LNG) in international markets from January 1. Malik's statement during a press conference in Lahore came months after it was reported that Pakistan was exploring ways to sell excess LNG cargoes amid a gas supply glut that could cost domestic producers millions in annual losses. He noted that Pakistan had been importing gas from "our friend" Qatar and Italian energy company Eni. But, he continued, there was an excess of this imported gas as the use of this fuel for power generation had reduced in the country during the past few months. Resultantly, "we were compelled to divert it to domestic consumers, due to which circular debt was increasing in the gas sector," he said, adding that it also caused a loss of around Rs1,000 billion to Pakistan from 2018-19 till now. "From January 1, we will sell this excess fuel in international markets and reduce our burden while limiting the loss caused by it," he added. Moreover, he said, the measure would also allow Pakistan's state-owned enterprises in the sector to operate on their full capacity and generate profit. — DNA



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