



Islamabad POST

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Zelensky meets pope, prepares revised plan on Russia war

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Governor rule in KP possible: Faisal Kundi

Detailed News On Page-08



Pakistan rejects maritime domination

Detailed News On Page-08



Brotherly bonds strengthened

Pakistan, Indonesia pledge to diversify relations in all fields

PM Shehbaz Welcomes Indonesian President, says visit marks 'New Horizons' in bilateral ties; Indonesian President thanks Pakistan, sees bright future for bilateral ties

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The leaderships of Pakistan and Indonesia have pledged to further expand and diversify relations adding all efforts shall be made to make optimum use of potential that both countries have. The President of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto, in gracious remarks expressed profound gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and members of the federal cabinet for the exceptional warmth and hospitality extended to him. He said the people of Pakistan had given him a touching reception, noting that "even before landing on Pakistani soil, I was welcomed by your Air Force pilots — a remarkable gesture of friendship." The Indonesian President reaffirmed that relations between the two nations remain "solid and enduring," rooted in decades of mutual respect and shared aspirations. He revealed that Indonesia is embarking on a large-scale education and capacity-building initiative in the health sector, adding that Pakistan's support would be "critical at this stage." He welcomed Islamabad's readiness to send doctors, specialists, and other professionals to contribute to Indonesia's national development. He further shared that he has instructed

Putin, Subianto to hold talks in Moscow

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin will hold talks with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, who will be on a working visit to Moscow, on December 10, the Kremlin said on Tuesday. "On December 10, Russian President Vladimir Putin will hold talks with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, who will pay a working visit to Moscow," the Kremlin said in a statement. Putin and Subianto plan to discuss the development of strategic partnership, current international and regional issues, the statement added. — DNA

ed his ministers to fast-track efforts to rebalance bilateral trade. "We want to move at a fast speed," he stressed, emphasizing the need for practical steps that transform goodwill into tangible progress. He praised the growing alignment between the two countries on regional and global issues, noting that both sides maintain close coordination in foreign policy. Touching upon the situation in Gaza, the President reiterated Indonesia's unwavering commitment to the Palestinian cause. "We will not waver in our support to Palestine," he asserted, adding that his foreign ministry is closely monitoring developments and coordinating with friendly nations, including Pakistan.

Looking to the future, the Indonesian leader said he felt optimistic about expanding cooperation across multiple sectors. Extending an invitation to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he said: "I welcome Prime Minister Shehbaz and other Pakistani leaders to visit Indonesia — come and see what we are doing and share your advice on how we can jointly enhance our partnership." He concluded that this visit was not merely symbolic, but a defining moment that would help both countries accelerate collaboration in health, education, trade, and foreign-policy coordination.

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Defence relations discussed

COAS Asim Munir calls on Indonesian President

Field Marshal Asim Munir reiterated that Pakistan attaches great importance to its longstanding relationship with Indonesia



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, called on President of the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellency Prabowo Subianto, in Islamabad on Monday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the meeting focused on matters of mutual interest, regional security dynamics, and avenues for enhanced bilateral defence cooperation. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the

existing level of military-to-military ties and reaffirmed their resolve to deepen collaboration between the armed forces of the two brotherly nations. President Prabowo appreciated the professionalism and operational readiness of the Pakistan Armed Forces. He acknowledged Pakistan's constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability, and lauded Islamabad's continued commitment to strengthening defence partnerships within the broader framework of ASEAN-South Asia cooperation.

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Approval of IMF tranche

PM praises economic team's efforts, field marshal's role

Praises Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and his team for their tireless efforts

FAIZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday commended his economic team for the effective implementation of the government's reform agenda, following the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) approval of a \$1.2 billion tranche under the ongoing programme. The prime minister, in a statement, lauded the supportive and pivotal role played by Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, in implementation of reforms which paved the way for Pakistan's economic growth. He also praised Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and his team for their tireless efforts, noting that the IMF's expression of satisfaction with Pakistan's performance was a testament to their competence and dedication. "The disbursement of this tranche proves that Pakistan is steadfastly implementing the structural reforms essential

for economic stability and sustainable growth. Steering the country away from the brink of default and placing it firmly on the path of stability and progress has been an extraordinarily challenging journey which was overcome consequent to efforts by political parties which sacrificed their politics and the economic difficulties endured by the nation," he remarked. The prime minister viewed that Pakistan's economic reforms and digitization had become a successful case study and an example for the world. "Insha Allah, the dream of Pakistan's economic prosperity will soon come true," he commented. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that after achieving stability, the economy was moving toward growth which required even more hard work. "As Khadim-e-Pakistan, I will continue working until Pakistan achieves prosperity and gets deliverance from foreign debts. The time is not far when Pakistan will achieve complete riddance from debts and become economically self-sufficient," he added.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari confers prestigious Nishan-e-Pakistan award upon the President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto during an investiture ceremony. — DNA

Nishan-e-Pakistan Indonesian President decorated with award

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A special investiture ceremony was held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Tuesday, where President of Indonesia was conferred the prestigious Nishan-e-Pakistan, the country's highest civil award. The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chairman Senate, Speaker National Assembly, and senior military leadership, marking a significant moment in Pakistan-Indonesia bilateral relations. A dignified ceremony was also held in honour of the visiting Indonesian President, reflecting the deep-rooted ties and mutual respect between the two nations. Later, President of Pakistan held a one-on-one meeting with the Indonesian President, during which

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Microsoft to invest \$17 billion in India

DNA

WASHINGTON: Global technology giant Microsoft announced on Tuesday plans to invest \$17.5 billion to help build India's artificial intelligence infrastructure, with CEO Satya Nadella calling it "our largest investment ever in Asia". Several global corporations have announced large investments this year in the South Asian nation, which is projected to have more than 900 million internet users by year's end. "To support the country's ambitions, Microsoft is committing US\$17.5B (billion) — our largest investment ever in Asia — to help build the infrastructure,

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Better late than never

Local Government elections in Islamabad set for Feb 15, 2026

Headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Raja Sultan, the ECP bench also ruled to complete the delimitation process within two months

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday announced that local government elections in Islamabad will be held on February 15, 2026. In a statement, the election commission said that polling will take place from 8am to 4pm. Returning officers will issue public notices for nomination papers on December 19, 2025, while candidates can submit their nomination papers between December 22 and 27, 2025, the ECP said. The statement further read that the scrutiny of the nomination papers will take place from 30th December 2025 to 3rd January 2026. The commission added that appeals against the scrutiny can be filed from January 5 to 8, 2026, and election tribunals will hear and dispose of these appeals between January 9-13, 2026. Candidates can withdraw their nomination papers until January 15, 2026, while the final list of candidates

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Not in favour of banning political parties: Azma

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari on Tuesday said that she was not in favour of a ban on political parties or the imposition of governor's rule in a province, but stressed that the PTI's "recent actions" were "pushing" authorities in that direction. Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Bokhari, in response to a two-part question regarding the possibility of a ban on PTI and the imposition of governor's rule in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, said, "As a political worker, I do not support that any party should be

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Briefs

IHC declares plea on Justice Jahangiri's degree case admissible

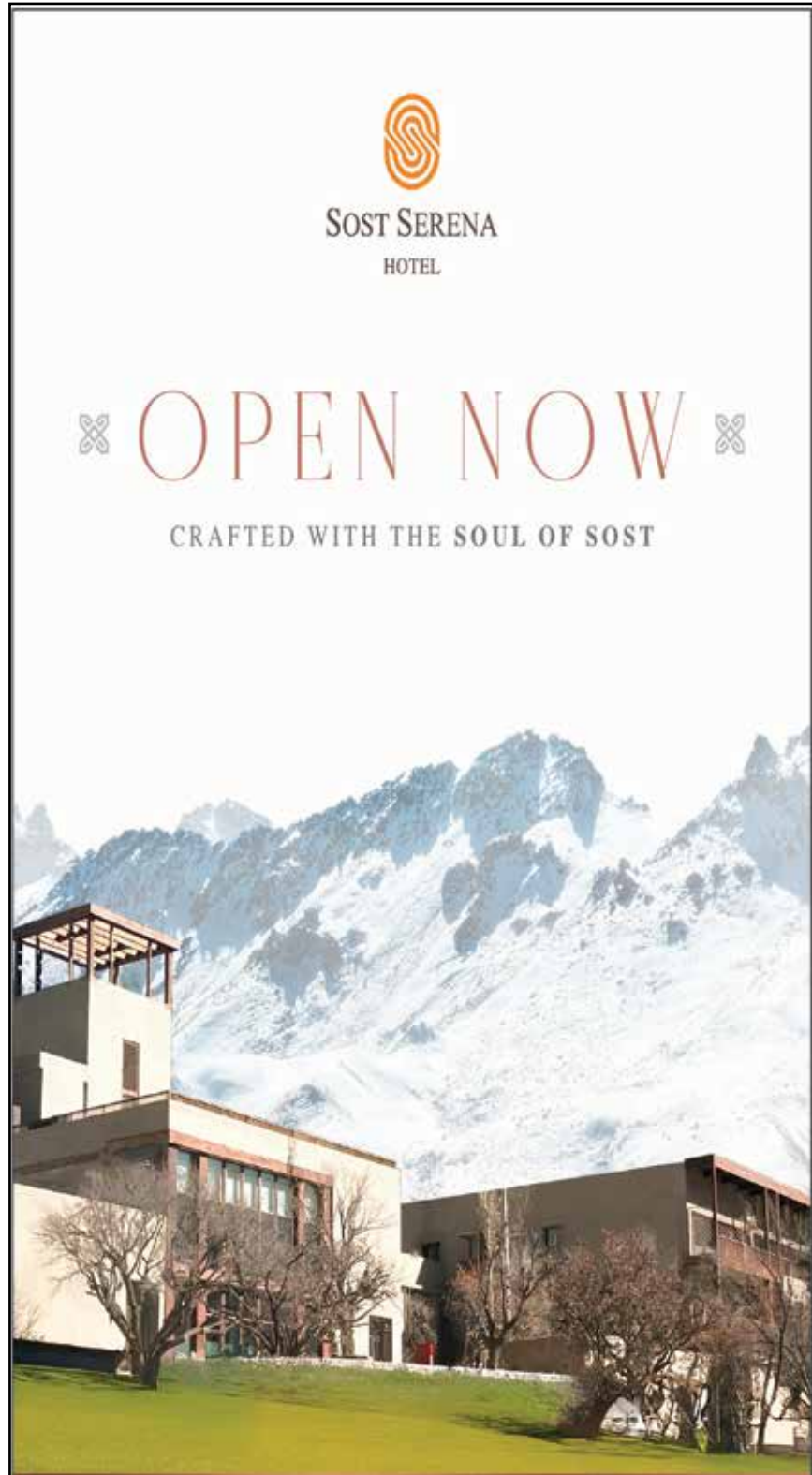
MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday declared a petition seeking the verification of Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri's degree maintainable and directed the judge, along with other respondents, to submit their replies within three days. A division bench comprising IHC Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Azam Khan conducted the hearing on the petition filed by Advocate Mian Dawood. The case centres on a controversy regarding Justice Jahangiri's LLB degree, which was cancelled by the University of Karachi. According to the university's notification dated September 25, the university syndicate, in its meeting on August 31, 2024.

Imran Khan's sisters stage sit-in

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's sisters on Tuesday staged a sit-in near Adiala jail after prison authorities again refused them permission to meet the incarcerated former prime minister. According to police, the official meeting hours had ended, preventing Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Imran's sisters, Noreen Khan, Aleema Khan and Uzma Khan from entering the jail. Officers stopped the family at the Factory checkpoint, where Aleema repeatedly urged PTI workers to remain calm and step back, saying the police were "not our enemies" and were "themselves under pressure".



Stronger punishments vital against corruption: Kundi

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundi has emphasized the need for strict penalties against corruption, saying that eliminating corrupt practices is essential for building an honest and progressive society. He said corruption is not only a financial crime but also a moral failure, a poison for society, and an enemy of merit. The Governor expressed these views on Tuesday while addressing a ceremony held at the Governor House in connection with International Anti-Corruption Day. The event was organized by NAB Peshawar, where he attended as the chief guest. The ceremony was attended by NAB Director General Farmanullah Khan, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Commissioner Peshawar Division, President Women Chamber of Commerce Quratulain Khan, Faryal Ali Gohar, Professor Adnan, administrative heads of provincial departments, vice chancellors, faculty members, and a large number of youth. During the event, the DG NAB briefed participants on the institution's efforts to curb corruption and actions taken against corrupt elements. The ceremony concluded with an awareness walk against corruption. In his address, Governor Kundi said the youth are the future of the country and must use their strength against corruption, bribery, and dishonest practices. He stressed that three pillars must be strengthened for a corruption-free Pakistan, integrity in education, transparency in governance, and honesty in society. He added that society must collectively build an environment where honesty becomes the norm and shortcuts become a source of embarrassment.—APP

Responsible politics stressed for national unity

LAHORE :Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan has said that Pakistan could no longer afford growing political division, institutional conflict or hostility toward the armed forces. Addressing a press conference at the Old Building of the Punjab Assembly, here on Tuesday, he said the country was experiencing heightened instability and internal pressure, adding that the government had already issued a detailed response to the DG ISPR's press briefing which highlighted emerging unrest. The speaker said the nation stood firmly with the Pakistan Armed Forces and added that the state system was being pushed backwards due to certain motives. He criticised parliamentary conduct since 2018, saying that Parliament had been reduced to a venue of noise and disruption where serious legislative debate was obstructed. He recalled members climbing onto the Assembly dais, engaging in disorder and failing to speak on public issues. The speaker condemned the language used in a recent public gathering in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, terming it shameful. He said such remarks were unacceptable both morally and politically. The speaker added that the PTI founder halted political dialogue during his tenure and caused lasting damage to the CPEC.—APP

CM orders aggressive push for polio eradication

KARACHI:Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a meeting of the Provincial Task Force on Polio Eradication at the CM House, reviewing progress and directing further measures to strengthen the anti-polio campaign. The meeting, held at CM House, included Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Inspector General of Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Additional IG Javed Alam Odho, Secretary to CM Abdul Raheem Shaikh, Health Secretary Rehan Baloch, DG Health Dr Waqar Memon, representatives from UNICEF, WHO, Rotary International, EOC Coordinator Sheharyar Gul, and all Karachi deputy commissioners. Commissioners, DCs, DIGs, and SSPs from other divisions joined via video link. Environmental surveillance is a major concern. According to EOC data, 10 of 12 sites in Karachi and 11 of 17 sites in other divisions tested positive for poliovirus in November. Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal and EOC Coordinator Shaharyar Memon briefed the Chief Minister on the latest national and provincial updates. Discussions covered epidemiological updates, environmental surveillance, district performance, front-line worker preparedness, and operational planning for the National Immunisation Days (NIDs), scheduled for 15-21 December 2025. Senior officials from the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC), Sindh Health Department, PPHI, district administrations, and law enforcement agencies attended. Nine Polio Cases in 2025; virus widespread in sewage. The Chief Minister was informed that Sindh recorded nine polio cases in 2025, three in Badin, two in Thatta, and one each in Hyderabad, Kamber, Larkana, and Umerkot. The most recent Karachi case was reported in December 2024 from Gujro, District East. Environmental surveillance is a major concern. According to EOC data, 10 of 12 sites in Karachi and 11 of 17 sites in other

Public warned against fraudulent trading platforms

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) once again warned the general public to avoid unlicensed online trading platforms, websites, and mobile applications that lure users with exaggerated promises of high returns on investments in stocks or other financial products in local or international markets. These illegal platforms heavily promote themselves on social media with false promises of guaranteed, risk-free profits, using unverified apps and links that mimic genuine trading platforms, said a release issued here on Tuesday. They often misuse the identities of licensed securities and commodities brokers, reputable institutions, professionals, influencers, senior government officials, and even

er divisions tested positive for poliovirus in November. Over 75 per cent of samples have tested positive since mid-2023, an unprecedented rate in the past decade. Calling the findings 'deeply worrying,' Murad Shah stated, "This widespread presence of the virus is unacceptable. Only a high-quality, disciplined campaign can break this transmission." Reviewing district-wise performance, Shah expressed dissatisfaction where Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS) results remained intermediate. The October NIDs showed that 87 per cent of lots passed, but 27 of 206 lots (13pc) did not meet standards. The Chief Minister issued clear instructions, "Deputy Commissioners must ensure 100 per cent focus on field activities. No administrative pull-outs will be tolerated during the campaign." "Morning assemblies must be strong, frontline workers motivated, and every child reached during campaign days, not in extended catch-ups." He told DHOs to enforce zero-tolerance for data manipulation and absenteeism, and ordered UC Support Teams to resolve on-ground challenges immediately. December NIDs to cover 10.6 Million Children in Sindh. The meeting learned that 10.6 million children under five will be vaccinated across 1,345 UCs in 30 districts. More than 80,000 frontline workers will participate, with over 21,000 law enforcement personnel including around 400 female constables supporting security and access. Shah stressed, "police must ensure timely deployment at morning assemblies. Lady constables must support access in high-refusal areas." The chief minister commended district innovations. District Central Karachi arranged transport and lunch for 4,000 polio workers with help from NGOs and town administrations. In Sukkur, 100 per cent assessment of 300 AICs, removal of 13 low-performing AICs, enhanced monitoring, and improved coverage in high-risk UCs were reported. — APP

regulatory bodies. Disguised as free investment tips, advisory, or investment-guidance providers, they claim to offer expert recommendations to earn guaranteed profits. Such platforms also display fabricated dashboards showing fake balances and profit figures, despite no real trading taking place. They show fake profits to build trust, allow small early withdrawals, and then push victims to invest more before ultimately blocking access when refunds are requested. The public is warned that in Pakistan, securities and commodities trading can only be conducted through SECP-licensed securities brokers and futures market brokers. Lists of authorized brokers are available on the official websites of the SECP, the Pakistan Stock Exchange, and the Pakistan Mercantile Exchange. The public is strongly advised not to deposit or invest any funds with unlicensed individuals or entities offering unauthorized trading, advisory, or investment services. Investors should always verify the legitimacy of any platform or person by checking SECP's official resources and the contact details provided on the official websites of licensed securities and commodities brokers. — APP

Call for unified action against corruption

Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail expressed confidence that strong anti-corruption measures will not only cleanse society of corrupt practices but also lay the foundation for a prosperous and trustworthy Pakistan

QUETTA: Governor Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail on Tuesday stressed that the eradication of the menace of corruption is essential for building a prosperous society. Governor Mandokhail issued a message on International Anti-Corruption Day, describing corruption as a menace that obstructs both economic growth and social progress. The Governor emphasized that corruption is not merely an individual failing but a systemic issue that affects families and entire communities. He called for collective and conscious efforts by the government, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), and citizens against corruption. He noted that eliminating corruption at all levels is a fundamental prerequisite for national advancement. Jaffar Mandokhail reaffirmed Pakistan's role as a signatory to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). He highlighted NAB's continued dedication to combating corrupt practices and strengthening accountability across the country. The Governor stressed that International Anti-Corruption Day is a reminder to renew national resolve in confronting corrupt elements. He urged all stakeholders to work together to uphold justice, restore public trust in state institutions, promote transparency, accountability, and self-responsibility. Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail expressed confidence that strong anti-corruption measures will not only cleanse society of corrupt practices but also lay the foundation for a prosperous and trustworthy Pakistan.—DNA

PODA calls for action against early marriage

MURREE: Ending child marriages strengthens families, as girls who marry at an appropriate age are physically and emotionally mature, and possess the knowledge, skills, and resilience needed to manage new roles and responsibilities. These views were expressed during a workshop on reproductive health and the complications associated with early and child marriages. The session highlighted how early marriages negatively affect girls' education, health, and overall wellbeing, emphasizing the need for community awareness and stronger legal protections. Agha Zaheer Abbas Sherazi, Deputy Commissioner Murree, and Dr. Azhar Mehmood Abbasi, CEO District Population and Health Department, noted that early marriages deprive girls of their constitutional right to education and expose them to preventable pregnancy-related risks. They stressed that educated and healthy mothers contribute to healthier and more resilient future generations. Dr. Mariam Ali Abbasi, Women

Medical Officer and Incharge Family Planning, Health and Population Department, highlighted serious health complications linked with early marriages, including obstetric fistulas, high blood pressure, eclampsia, and pregnancy-related abnormalities. She emphasized



that girls' bodies are not physically prepared for early pregnancies, putting both mother and newborn

at high risk. Nabeela Aslam, Project Head at PODA, moderated the workshop and reiterated the demand to raise the minimum legal age of marriage for girls to 18 years in Punjab. She noted that Sindh, Balochistan, the Islamabad Capital Territory, and many Muslim-major

ity countries have already enacted laws setting 18 as the minimum age of marriage for girls, establishing

an important precedent for protecting girls' rights and wellbeing. Participants recommended conducting more awareness-raising activities and educating parents and communities at all levels. They stressed the importance of involving key stakeholders—including religious scholars, community elders, lawyers, doctors, teachers, lady health workers, girls, and men—to build collective understanding and commitment to ending early marriages. The workshop saw strong district-level support, with participation from Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Zaheer Abbas Sherazi, Dr. Azhar Mehmood Abbasi, Deputy District Health Officer Dr. Nauman Shoukat, DEA Sidra Batool, and the Deputy Education Officer. The activity was conducted by PODA under the project "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality," supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Islamabad, with collaboration from the District Health and Population Department.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's National Coordinator Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, ICCI President Sardar Tahir, and "Property Ka Dhandha" author Abdul Moiz Tahir inaugurated Asia's first real estate guidebook.

Hundreds of more Afghans depart

PESHAWAR: The repatriation of Afghan nationals continued at a rapid pace at Torkham and Angoor Adda borders. According to the Home Department here on Tuesday, a total of 543 Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders, 114 Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders and 488 undocumented Afghan nationals were sent back to Afghanistan from the Torkham border the other day. Officials stated that thousands of Afghan nationals have also completed their return through the Angoor Adda border crossing. In addition, Afghan residents who had been shifted from other provinces to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have now been included in the repatriation process. The authorities confirmed that the repatriation operation is being monitored on a daily basis to ensure transparency and smooth execution. So far, hundreds of thousands of Afghan nationals have returned to their homeland under this ongoing process.

TDCC, Kohsar University Murree sign MoU to boost tourism skills

RAWALPINDI: The Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab (TDCC), Murree, and Kohsar University Murree signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at a formal ceremony held at the university's main campus on Tuesday, aiming to strengthen education and skills in tourism and hospitality. Under the agreement, training in tourism and hospitality will be expanded through the "ITHM on Wheels" programme to align instruction with modern industry requirements and create professional opportunities for local youth, officials said. Senior officials from both institutions, along with private-sector experts, attended the ceremony and described the partnership as a milestone for skills development and socio-economic progress in the region. Speaking on the occasion, participants said the MoU would help bridge the skilled human resource gap in the tourism sector and provide practical. — APP

CM KP hands over bullet proof vehicles, modern equipment to police

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi visited Police Lines on Monday, where he formally handed over newly purchased bullet-proof vehicles, modern weapons, and security equipment to the police force. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police were provided with drone cameras, anti-drone guns, anti-drone systems, thermal cameras, jammers, bullet-proof jackets, ballistic helmets, armored vehicles, sniper rifles, Dragunov rifles, M-16s, sub-machine guns, heavy machine guns, and other modern equipment. During the briefing, it was said that thermal weapon sights and thermal binoculars would make night surveillance more effective, while bullet-proof vehicles and side-armoring would make police movement safer. On this occasion, the Chief Minister paid tribute to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), and Special Branch for their effective role in combating terrorism and bravely facing current challenges. Addressing the ceremony, the Chief Minister said that the spirit of the police force is high, and they are playing a frontline role shoulder to shoulder with other security forces. He added that the current provincial government is making every effort to make the police force invincible, and more weapons and facilities will be provided to help them deal with the present situation. The Chief Minister said that the police and security forces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have made unparalleled sacrifices in the war against terrorism. He said that when we talk about 80,000 martyrs, thousands of them belong to the police and security forces. The Chief Minister assured that peace will be restored in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and will be maintained at all costs.—DNA

ISSI launched book on transnational terrorism from Afghan to Africa launched

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) organised the launch of its latest book, Crossroads of Conflict: Transnational Terrorism from Afghanistan to Africa, edited by Dr. Amina Khan. The Chief Guest for the event was Engineer Khuram Dastagir Khan, former Foreign Minister of Pakistan. Distinguished discussants included, Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed, Professor Emeritus, School of Politics and International Relations, (SPIR), QAU, Dr. Shabana Fayyaz, Professor Defense and Strategic Studies, QAU. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI; Ambassador Khalid

Mahmood, Chairman BOG, ISSI; and Dr. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA also spoke on the occasion. Engineer Khuram Dastagir Khan, in his address, said that Pakistan had faced terrorism for many years, with the APS attack as a notable example. He noted that military operations, including Zarb-e-Azb, Raad-ul-Fasaad, and many others, yet the menace persists. He commended the book for its international scope and detailed analysis, highlighting third-party perspectives across regions, including Africa, Middle East and South West Asia, as well as the issue of foreign fighters in Syria. He observed that past excuses for terrorism, often invoking reli-

gion, are still echoed today. He praised the authors for addressing the subject comprehensively, stressing that solutions require tackling root causes, strengthening regional cooperation, investing in education, and countering online propaganda. He concluded that while Pakistan has pushed back transnational terrorism, continued efforts remain necessary to effectively push back the recent upsurge. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, while speaking on the occasion, said the publication appeared at a time when global security was turbulent and transnational terrorism was expanding in reach and complexity.—DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

Dec 01/Romania National Day

Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day

Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day

Dec 05/Thailand National Day

Dec 06/Finland Independence Day

Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day

Dec 09/Tanzania National Day

Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day

Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day

Dec12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day

Dec 16/Bahrain National Day

Dec 16/Kazakhstan Independence Day

Dec 18/Qatar National Day

Dec 18/Niger National Day

Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day

Dec 23/Japan National Day



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Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank	
Islamabad.....	0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: UAE nationals presenting a culture show on the occasion of the Eid Al Etihad Day celebrated at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. DNA

Newly launched USEFP building envisioned as center for Pak’s future scholars

The new USEFP building stands as a symbol of the long-lasting and multidimensional U.S.-Pakistan relationship by uniting education, business, and culture in one dynamic space. The facility embodies the shared vision of both nations to invest in the future of Pakistan’s youth and to foster economic development, innovation, and progress

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP) on December 9 continued celebrations of its new state-of-the-art building in Islamabad, designed to empower Pakistani students and expand access to educational opportunities. The new building features a fully equipped auditorium for seminars and cultural events, a Lincoln Corner offering free educational resources and public programming, and EducationUSA advising services for students interested in pursuing higher education in the United States. The outdoor amphitheater will host entrepreneurship fairs, panel

discussions, and cultural events, creating an active space for learning, collaboration, and engagement. During the celebrations, students, civil society, alumni, community partners, digital influencers, and members of the media toured the facility, experiencing firsthand the resources and services that will shape its long-term impact. The U.S. Embassy’s Minister Counselor for Public Diplomacy Andy Halus led a media tour, highlighting the significance of this investment in Pakistan’s educational landscape. “Education, innovation, and entrepreneurship are cornerstones of the longstanding friendship between the United States and Pakistan, and this new facility makes it possible to collaborate on all of them under one roof,” Halus said.

The day-long event also featured an entrepreneurship fair, bringing together students, innovators, and entrepreneurs to explore new opportunities for growth and collaboration. It was complemented by an entrepreneurship panel discussion, featuring speakers from the U.S. Embassy, National Incubation Center Islamabad, and Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN). The panel explored U.S. government support for entrepreneurship, current challenges and opportunities for Pakistani innovators, and the broader entrepreneurial landscape in Pakistan. In honor of USEFP and Fulbright’s 75th anniversary, the Lincoln Corner hosted an open house for members, local univer-

sity faculty, and students. Friends of the Corner volunteers led activities for visitors highlighting the Corner’s free English language resources and programs available to Pakistanis ages 16 and over. Technology demonstrations in the makerspace and creative studio spotlighted the building’s role as a dynamic hub for creativity and learning. The new USEFP building stands as a symbol of the long-lasting and multidimensional U.S.-Pakistan relationship by uniting education, business, and culture in one dynamic space. The facility embodies the shared vision of both nations to invest in the future of Pakistan’s youth and to foster economic development, innovation, and progress.

SC rules termination without evidence violates principles of justice

ISLAMABAD:The Supreme Court has ruled that dismissing an employee without proper evidence is contrary to the principles of justice. The judgement came in an appeal filed by Saeed Ahmed, a former employee of Nestlé Pakistan, challenging his termination. A bench comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, and Justice Ageel Ahmed Abbasi authored the verdict, holding that the failure to summon essential witnesses constituted a serious legal flaw, rendering the Sindh High Court’s decision unsustainable. The court noted that during the departmental inquiry, neither the doctor nor the administrator of the dental clinic—who could verify the disputed

medical bill—were called as witnesses. This omission, the court observed, was a violation of the Inquiry Officer’s basic legal duty. Saeed Ahmed, a permanent employee for 18 years, had submitted a medical claim of Rs10,000 for dental treatment. The company alleged that the actual payment was Rs7,000 and accused him of submitting a forged receipt. Based on this, he was dismissed in 2016. A single-member bench of the NIRC had upheld the company’s stance, but a full bench set aside that decision and ordered the employee’s reinstatement. The Sindh High Court later overturned the full bench’s ruling, reinstating the single-member decision. Saeed

Ahmed then appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court observed that four different receipts were on record, making it essential to clarify the discrepancy. It held that the doctor’s testimony was crucial and could have been the “star witness” of the case. Punishing an employee merely on suspicion without verified evidence, the court said, violates the fundamentals of fairness and natural justice. Concluding that the inquiry suffered from serious procedural defects, the court ruled that the punishment could not stand. It set aside the Sindh High Court judgment and decided the case in favour of the employee.—DNA

ICCI plans various festivals to boost local trade

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood Tuesday said that the chamber was fully committed to addressing the challenges faced by the business community. While talking to a delegation of the Traders Welfare Association (TWA) G-10, he emphasized that ensuring ease of doing business and supporting commercial activity were essential for accelerating the country’s economic growth. The delegation was led by its President Syed Kamran Kakakhel, who visited the ICCI and discussed matters relating to promote trade and business in the capital city, said a press release. Tahir Mehmood shared that in a recent meeting, the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) assured him that development work in the city’s markets would commence

soon. He added that the CDA Chairman had also pledged to keep ICCI on board regarding all initiatives aimed at facilitating businesses, highlighting a renewed spirit of coordination between the two institutions. He said the ICCI is the second home of the business community, and its leadership will continue to play a proactive advocacy role between the government and the private sector. He announced that the chamber is preparing to organize an Islamabad Festival for the benefit of both consumers and traders. In addition, Ramadan, Eid, and Spring festivals will also be organized, and the markets will be decorated to create a lively and attractive shopping environment. Speaking on the occasion, President TWA G-10 Markaz Syed Kamran Kakakhel highlighted various challenges being faced by the traders of his area, including sanita-

tion, sewage, dilapidated condition of footpaths and encroachments. ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub assured the delegation that the chamber’s leadership is determined to restore the dignity of the business community. He said ICCI is actively engaged with relevant authorities to ensure early and effective resolution of the issues affecting traders. Vice President Irfan Chaudhry called upon the business community to maintain unity and extend their full support to ICCI President, whom he described as fully capable of leading from the front to safeguard the interests of traders. The Association’s Chairman Sajid Mughal and Secretary General Syed Aamir Bukhari also spoke on the occasion, emphasizing the need for unity within the business community to strengthen their collective voice and secure their rights through a united platform.—DNA

PIDE showcases vision for data-driven, citizen-centred governance

ISLAMABAD :The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) on Tuesday organized an extensive briefing session for the probationers of the 48th Specialized Training Program (STP) of the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), aiming at to familiarize young civil servants with PIDE’s evolving role as a national think tank, research hub and policy-advisory institution. The PIDE management welcomed the probationers and delivered a comprehensive presentation on PIDE’s legacy, achievements, and national contributions. Since its establishment in 1957, PIDE has emerged as Pakistan’s top-ranked economic research institute and is consistently recognized among the leading think tanks in Asia. Registrar PIDE, Dr Nasir Iqbal, congratulated the probationers and emphasized the importance of their role in shaping Pakistan’s administrative future, said a press release. The probationers were briefed on PIDE’s core services as a policy-oriented research institute working across taxation, public finance, governance, climate resilience, education and economic reforms. As the advisory arm of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, PIDE provides technical analysis, policy evaluation, and reform guidance to support national decision-making. Dr Nasir Iqbal highlighted the gap between citizens and an outdated administrative system, urging new PAS officers to lead the shift toward modern, technology-enabled governance. He emphasized the need to replace manual, fragmented processes with AI-driven, data-integrated, citizen-centered service delivery. Under the current leadership, participants were introduced to the Institutional Development Strategy 2025–2030, which envisions PIDE as a more dynamic and integrated institution. The strategy is built on five pillars—research, engagement, academia, counsel, and hub—with a focus on expanding academic programs, strengthening data systems, enhancing policy engagement, and deepening collaboration with government agencies. Dr Shujaat Farooq, Dean of Research, presented PIDE’s research outcomes and highlighted the Vice Chancellor’s vision for the next five years. He explained how PIDE has significantly reformed its research ecosystem over the past year and briefed the probationers on specialized research centers focusing on macroeconomics, governance, digital economy, agriculture, climate change, and regulatory analysis.—DNA

Digital inspection system for medical colleges

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) has launched the National Inspector Pilot Training Program, marking a major step toward modernizing and standardizing the accreditation processes of medical and dental institutions. The initiative introduces Pakistan’s first digital inspection system and aims to build a highly trained, national pool of inspectors to ensure quality, transparency, and compliance in medical and dental education. The three-day pilot training was formally inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj, President PM&DC, who described the program as a milestone in strengthening inspection standards and advancing digital transformation within the national accreditation system. Dr Taj expressed deep appreciation for the guidance and support of the Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal, noting that the Minister’s forward-looking leadership has enabled PM&DC to undertake key reforms with greater efficiency. He said the Minister’s consistent facilitation has helped create an environment where regulatory bodies can operate with autonomy, clarity, and purpose—ultimately uplifting the quality of medical and dental education across the country. The training brought together master trainers and inspectors from across Pakistan for hands-on sessions, including demonstrations of Digi-Inspect, the country’s first fully digital inspection platform, along with an overview of the updated Inspector Guide. A key objective of the pilot is to prepare a cadre of master trainers who will now lead capacity-building efforts in their respective provinces and regions. The program includes regional rollout planning by newly certified experts, pilot testing of the Digi-Inspect system, and initial implementation and feedback collection for Proforma 350.—DNA

Khawajasara learning Initiative expansion directed

ISLAMABAD: The Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Nadeem Mahbub, directed National Education Foundation (NEF) for expansion of the Khawajasara Learning Initiative in Islamabad, during briefing on Tuesday. According to details, NEF is currently operating a dedicated center in Islamabad under the initiative in Barri Imam structured around four key components: Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Skill Development, Social Awareness and Employability, which remains the leading components of the program. The Barri Imam Centre has been functional for the past two years and is currently serving 25 learners, and an in-house stitching workshop has also been established to equip learners with practical skills. The Secretary further directed that the center should also introduce a market-driven, employable skill to ensure that learners’ abilities are aligned with current industry demands. Recognizing the growing potential of e-commerce and digital marketplaces, he emphasized the importance of training learners in crafting small, high-value accessories and handmade products that can be easily marketed and sold online.—APP

Muqam, AJK PM discuss matters related to Kashmir cause

ISLAMABAD, Dec 9 (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON Engineer Amir Muqam and Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Faisal Mumtaz Rathore held a high-level meeting at Jammu and Kashmir House on Tuesday to discuss the matters related to Kashmir cause and others. During the meeting, the federal minister congratulated the AJK Prime Minister on assuming the office. Both leaders discussed in detail the matters of mutual interest, the latest situation of the Kashmir issue and the ongoing and proposed development projects in AJK. They agreed that the Kashmir issue will be effectively highlighted at international forums.—APP

Briefs

IG chairs high-level meeting on smart traffic management

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi chaired an important meeting to review citizen-facilitation measures, traffic management, and the use of modern technology across the federal capital. An official told APP on Tuesday that DG Safe City Muhammad Haroon Joya, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Hamza Humayun, SSP Security Zeeshan Haider, and Safe City staff attended the meeting. The IGP Rizvi issued directives to further enhance citywide traffic management through AI-based surveillance, smart cameras, and advanced monitoring tools. He emphasized the importance of using modern technology to resolve traffic congestion, improve enforcement, and strengthen the overall safety framework. He instructed the officers to prioritise citizen convenience, ensure quick response mechanisms, and make traffic planning more efficient through digital systems integrated with the Safe City Command and Control Centre. The IGP Rizvi said that Islamabad Police is committed to providing safe, orderly, and technology-driven mobility for all road users across the federal capital.—APP

ANF seizes over 51 kg drugs in nine operations

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 51 kg drugs worth more than Rs 4.7 million and arrested 10 accused including two foreigners and two women.

According to an ANF spokesman, in an operation at the Courier Office in Chakdala Rawalpindi area, 12 grams weed was recovered from a parcel sent from the UK. Near G-11 Islamabad, 300 grams of ice and 3 grams cocaine were recovered from Uganda National Lady. In another operation near Expressway Faizabad, 150 grams of ice and two grams of cocaine were recovered from a Nigerian National. In Belili Quetta, 30 kgs hashish was seized from a tractor trolley and an accused was arrested during the operation. In another operation in Belili Quetta, 6 kgs hashish was recovered from a vehicle and a drug dealer was apprehended. In RCD Road Hub 2 kg ice was recovered from a passenger's possession near a factory. Near a bus terminal in Band Road Lahore, 1,075 kgs hashish and 100 grams ice were recovered from the possession of two accused, a man and a woman riding a motorcycle.—APP

HEC new degree verification system introduced

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has initiated a landmark project to completely revamp its degree attestation system by integrating cutting-edge blockchain technology. This pivotal transition is set to enhance efficiency and transparency across the verification process while eliminating the long-standing requirement for applicants' physical presence at HEC offices. According to HEC on Tuesday, the core benefit of the transition lies in verification and speed: degree verification will take place entirely online, with all records digitally secured to ensure instant, tamper-proof access. Once verified and stored on the HEC blockchain, degrees will enable immediate authentication by all key stakeholders, including government departments, the Foreign Office, embassies, and private organizations. This transition will successfully make the attestation process fully paperless, automated, and transparent, finally removing the need for manual stamping or physical documentation. Acting Chairman HEC, Nadeem Mahbub, underscored the urgency of the initiative, directing the concerned team to prioritise the task and ensure its earliest implementation. He was briefed that the proposed system will completely remove the requirement for applicants to provide physical documents or visit HEC offices for verification.—APP

Pak poised for entry into global carbon systems: Romina

Speaking at a workshop organised by Transparency International Pakistan in Islamabad, Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam said the government was steadily moving to operationalise the National Policy Guidelines for Trading in Carbon Markets, approved by the Federal Cabinet in 2024

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is pushing ahead with plans to establish a structured and transparent carbon market framework, Co-ordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam said on Tuesday, underscoring the country's intention to tap emerging global climate-finance opportunities. Speaking at a workshop organised by Transparency International Pakistan in Islamabad, Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam said the government was steadily moving to operationalise the National Policy Guidelines for Trading in Carbon Markets, approved by the Federal Cabinet in 2024. She noted that the decision marked a turning point in Pakistan's approach to

climate finance, opening the door for participation in both voluntary and compliance carbon markets. The workshop coincided with the launch of Transparency International Pakistan's flagship study, Carbon Markets Readiness in Pakistan: Addressing Governance Gaps and Safeguarding Against Integrity Risks. Against this backdrop, Ms. Alam outlined the government's ongoing work to translate policy commitments into operational systems. She said the Climate Change Ministry was developing regulatory mechanisms for the generation, approval and transfer of carbon credits, along with a national monitoring, reporting and verification architecture designed to ensure the credibility of emissions-reduction claims. A national carbon registry is also under development to prevent double counting

and strengthen transparency across transactions. Ms. Romina Alam said the government was working to improve coordination among federal and provincial institutions, while also engaging development partners to build technical capacity in areas such as renewable energy, forestry and community-based climate projects. Pilot initiatives in these sectors, she added, would help Pakistan test new methodologies and demonstrate market-ready models. Ms. Romina said the overarching goal is to establish a carbon market that is fair, well-regulated and internationally trusted, enabling Pakistan to attract global investment while aligning fully with Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. She welcomed the Transparency International report's recommendations, which call for clearer institutional mandates, stronger data systems, public

disclosure requirements and safeguards to protect community rights in future carbon projects. Participants, at the workshop including policymakers, technical specialists, civil-society groups, private-sector actors and development partners, underscored that Pakistan must embed accountability and transparency from the outset to avoid governance failures seen in some international carbon markets. Speakers stressed that credible systems would not only protect Pakistan's interests but also reinforce its reputation as a responsible recipient of climate finance. The gathering ended with a shared view that coordinated action and sound governance would be essential for Pakistan to advance its carbon-market agenda and position itself effectively in a growing global climate-finance landscape.



ISLAMABAD: Acting Chairman Senate, Syedaal Khan presenting souvenir to Natalie a Baker, Chargé d'Affaires of U.S embassy at a reception hosted in the honour of U.S. physicians delegation for the healthcare symposium at parliament house.

Junaid urges regional coop on climate threats

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry underscored the pressing need for enhanced regional co-operation to confront worsening climate-driven challenges during a media briefing in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The minister, who is on a two-day visit to convey Pakistan's solidarity in the aftermath of Cyclone Dhitwah, reaffirmed Islamabad's commitment to support Sri Lanka's recovery efforts. Conveying sentiments, on behalf of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the government, and the people of Pakistan, Junaid Chaudhry extended heartfelt condolences over the losses caused by the cyclone. "We deeply admire the quick actions taken by the Sri Lankan government and the courage shown by the affected communities," he remarked. Junaid Chaudhry reiterated Pakistan's readiness to provide all possible humanitarian and technical assistance. "As I speak to you, Pakistani teams and rescue personnel are on the ground helping to save lives and support relief operations," he said. The minister said following directives from the Prime Minister, a substantial humanitarian aid package has already been dispatched to Sri Lanka. He noted that Pakistan's High Commissioner in Colombo, Maj. Gen. Faheem ul Aziz, along with the National Disaster Management Authority, is working closely with Sri Lankan authorities to ensure the smooth delivery and timely distribution of relief supplies. Highlighting the historically strong friendship and maritime ties between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Junaid Chaudhry expressed a desire to deepen cooperation in disaster management, maritime safety, and early-warning systems. "Pakistan stands with Sri Lanka as a reliable friend and partner today and always," he said, offering prayers for the resilience of the Sri Lankan people. Junaid Chaudhry also invited media representatives to visit Pakistan, especially the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, aiming to enhance people-to-people contact and further strengthen bilateral relations.—DNA

Pak lauds Azerbaijan's leadership as Baku hosts OIC cultural festival

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi has praised Azerbaijan's leadership for successfully hosting the OIC Cultural Festival: Baku Creative Week – 2025, calling it a landmark initiative for cultural, creative, and intellectual exchange across the Islamic world. Speaking at the festival's inauguration, Khichi said Baku had evolved into a key cultural hub for the Muslim world, offering renewed momentum for cooperation among OIC member states. He highlighted that Pakistan, as a brotherly nation, deeply values Azerbaijan's role in advancing cultural diplomacy on regional and global platforms. Khichi reiterated Pakistan's commitment to meaningful participation in all initiatives aimed at strengthening Islamic solidarity and

promoting shared cultural heritage. "We see this platform not merely as a festival, but as a significant opportunity for cultural rapprochement, creative exchange, and strategic cooperation within the Islamic world," he remarked. Emphasizing the shared history, cultural ties, and religious unity among Islamic nations, the minister said these bonds form the foundation of a strong and enduring partnership. Pakistan, he added, remains dedicated to supporting collaborative efforts that contribute to greater cohesion within the Muslim world. Khichi expressed confidence that Azerbaijan's continued cultural initiatives will further reinforce the collective cultural identity of Islamic countries and deepen cooperation among OIC member states.—DNA

PR to be revamped on modern lines

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways (PR) is set to roll out an extensive package of reforms aimed at transforming the department into a profitable, modern and passenger-centric national transport system. According to an official in the Ministry of Railways, the wide-ranging measures focus on revitalising the freight sector, expanding passenger services, introducing technological upgrades, and improving facilities at railway stations across the country. The official said the reform agenda places strong emphasis on strengthening the freight sector to ensure long-term financial sustainability. New freight wagons have already been added to the fleet, while dedicated freight corridors are under development to accelerate cargo movement. "Measures to improve cargo handling and reduce turnaround time are also underway, along with efforts to establish strategic partnerships with major bulk clients," he added. Pakistan Railways has also introduced online freight booking, additional freight and cargo trains, and the outsourcing of freight wagons. As a result of these initiatives, the average freight payload has increased from 1,800 tons in 2023 to 2,400 tons in 2024—a significant boost to operational efficiency, he added. On the passenger side, the department is now operating at full capacity. "The number of coaches on key trains has increased from 15 to 19, and 10 new passenger trains have been launched in recent months. Improved punctuality, upgraded onboard facilities, and rationalised fares

have contributed to consistent growth in passenger revenue over the last five years," he said. The modern dining cars and upgraded coaches have been introduced on popular trains such as Shalimar Express, Pak Business Express, and Islamabad Express. "LED screens with pre-loaded entertainment, water dispensers, and enhanced janitorial services are further improving the passenger experience," he added. He said the premium dining cars are now functional on Khyber Mail, Al-lama Iqbal Express, and Rehman Baba, while seven premium trains—including the Green Line and Pak Business Express—offer complimentary services such as high tea, bedding, newspapers, hygiene kits, and mineral water. The official said the department has also begun a major upgrade of station-level facilities to improve passenger convenience. "Escalators have been installed at Karachi and Lahore stations, while information desks and free Wi-Fi have been introduced at stations handling nearly 80 percent of passenger traffic," he said. To maintain high cleanliness standards, Pakistan Railways has signed agreements with leading municipal waste management companies in Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, and Multan. Waiting halls at major stations in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Rawalpindi have been modernised, he added. He added that a multi-storey train dispatching building has been completed at Lahore, which will soon be equipped with a computer-based interlocking system.—DNA

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Ambulance carrying body crashes into truck; 1 killed, dozens hurt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An ambulance transporting the body of a deceased family member from Karachi to Larkana collided with a truck near the Sehwan Indus Bypass on Tuesday, leaving at least one person dead and more than 12 injured. According to details, rescue sources said that more than 12 people, including women and five children were travelling in an ambulance carrying the mortal remains of their loved one when a speeding truck struck the vehicle, local media channel reported. The collision killed one person on the spot and left several others injured, rescue sources added. Rescue sources said the injured were shifted to Sehwan hospital, while authorities have launched an investigation into the cause of the accident. The driver of the truck fled the scene immediately after the accident, eyewitnesses added.

Chinese-brand CKD new energy vehicle begins local production

ISLAMABAD: Chinese automaker Chery has started local production of its new energy vehicle (NEV) in Pakistan, with the first Jaecoo J7 SHS hybrid SUV rolling off the complete knocked-down (CKD) assembly line in Faisalabad on Dec. 2, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. It is the first Chinese-branded NEV to enter local CKD production in Pakistan, marking a step forward in industrial cooperation between the two countries in the growing clean-mobility sector. Jaecoo J7 SHS, part of Chery's Omoda & Jaecoo lineup, is designed for global markets and offers a claimed driving range of more than 1,200 km. The model aims to tap into Pakistan's demand for fuel-efficient vehicles amid rising energy costs. The rollout comes about four months after the model's local launch, with strong pre-sales reported, according to Hasan Mansha of Nishat Group, Chery's local partner. He said localization and market response underline the competitiveness of Chinese NEV technology in Pakistan and will support job creation and technology transfer.—APP

Baluchistan delegation heads to China to explore investment opportunities

ISLAMABAD: A 12-member delegation from Balochistan left for China to explore investment opportunities. They will travel to Guangdong, China's southern coastal province, till Dec 13 to boost friendship and people-to-people exchanges between the two regions, officials said, according to Gwadar Pro. The delegation includes representatives from Pakistan Customs, Gwadar Port Authority, Gwadar Development Authority, district police, civil courts, district administration, education authorities, Gwadar Municipal Committee, Gwadar Press Club, the local chamber of commerce, the fisheries department, Quetta Electricity Supply Company, New Gwadar International Airport and Pak-China Friendship Hospital. The group will visit Zhuhai, which became Gwadar's sister city in 2015 to promote cooperation in trade, culture and tourism. Officials told Gwadar Pro that Zhuhai, a special economic zone in Guangdong province, offers insights into urban development and coastal economic growth. The delegation will also travel to Shenzhen. Officials drew comparisons between Shenzhen's transformation into a technology hub and Gwadar's long-term economic ambitions. "Shenzhen is now an economic powerhouse. Gwadar is positioned to follow a similar path," one official told Gwadar Pro. During the trip, the delegation will meet government and business leaders and visit institutions involved in technology, urban planning, transport, sustainability and energy.—APP

Bashar Assad's odd decisions

ABDULRAHMAN AL-RASHED

A YEAR has passed since the fall of the Assad regime. The change has been immense and its consequences are still unfolding. With the first anniversary passing on Monday, key questions remain unresolved, the most prominent being: Why did Bashar Assad and his regime become subservient to Iran so early in his rule? In my view, had he not pursued such a dangerous policy, he might not have ended up exiled in Moscow. This conviction only grows stronger when reviewing his governance over more than two decades, not merely from the outbreak of protests in 2011.

More than eight years before the uprising against him, Assad's regime had already been working closely with Iran at political and military levels across the region. In coordination with Tehran, Syria became a hub for covert operations against the Americans after the invasion of Iraq, at a time when Iran was skillfully playing a double game. Tehran used Assad as a base for "resistance," while simultaneously cooperating with Washington to dismantle what remained of Saddam Hussein's regime.

In an interview I conducted with Assad before those operations began, he vowed to "turn Iraq into another Vietnam." He was convinced the Americans intended to topple him next after overthrowing Saddam. In reality, Washington showed no interest in Damascus and did not target his rule, viewing Syria instead as a security buffer for Israel. Syria became a training ground and transit point for armed groups, with fighters numbering in the thousands.

Between 2004 and 2009, Syria became a training ground and transit point for armed groups – Iraqi, Arab and "jihadist" – with fighters numbering in the thousands. They were smuggled from Syria into Iraq through unstable provinces such as Anbar and Salah Al-Din. These operations strengthened Iran's negotiating position with Washington and they continued for years afterward.

On a second front, Assad also aligned his regime with Iran's agenda in Lebanon, assisting in the elimination of many opposition figures and helping Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, consolidate full control. Tehran's long-term project was to build Lebanon into the most heavily armed front in its regional confrontation with Israel.

When protests broke out in Deraa and later across Syria, it was ex-

IslamabadPOST

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 169

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394

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pected that states harmed by Assad's regime would offer at least partial support to the new movement. The uprising was indeed successful and the regime was close to collapse. It would have fallen had Iran not rushed to save it, sending tens of thousands of fighters from Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

After surviving this phase, Assad grew even more convinced of the strategic bond with Tehran, believing that the regime's survival was safest under Iran's umbrella. In reality, his relationship with Tehran had always been toxic, burdensome and dangerous for him.

His policies show he never understood the region's balance of power or the risky game he was playing. Before the revolution, he was not compelled to ally himself with Iran. Europe opened its doors to him after he succeeded his father. The Arab moderate bloc welcomed him. Even many Syrian opposition figures who had resisted his father were hopeful when he came to power.

Assad's policies show he never understood the region's balance of power or the risky game he was playing. It is also inaccurate to claim that Bashar moved straight from the clinic to the presidency, as often rumored. In the last years of Hafez Assad's life, Bashar participated in presidential activities from the shadows, attended important meetings and was familiar with state files. His later decisions revealed that he was nothing like his father, who had maintained balanced ties with Tehran, Riyadh, Moscow and the West as part of a carefully managed strategy against the Baathist regime in Iraq and against Turkiye. Hafez benefited from Israel's role in safeguarding the minority-based Syrian regime and even welcomed cooperation with the Americans during the 1990 war against Saddam. Bashar did the opposite at every turn.

It must also be said that the Assad regime, a product of the Cold War, had nearly exhausted its political lifespan before Bashar came to power. His rise offered only a narrow window of opportunity. It required him to reposition Syria in line with the post-Cold War era and a region dominated by a single global power. Instead, he repeatedly chose the wrong course, mismanaging every major moment until his final days in office. Recent information confirms that Moscow "abandoned" Bashar roughly 10 days before the regime collapsed, when Ahmed Al-Sharaa's forces carried out a rapid military campaign in Aleppo's countryside and began their march toward Damascus. Russia realized that the fall of the regime was inevitable.

Bashar's downfall reverberated across the region and the world. He collapsed before the eyes of Iran and its allies, who this time were unable to save him. With his departure, Iran's influence also receded and its imperial project in that strategically important region crumbled. Syria was finally freed from a criminal regime, though the regional repercussions are still unfolding.

US Choices in Post-Conflict Syria

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Yet the United States still retains some leverage. Its partnership with local forces in the northeast gives it influence over a critical region. Its ties with European allies ensure that sanctions and diplomatic pressure remain coordinated. And its relations with Turkey, Jordan, Israel and the Gulf states make it an unavoidable actor in any regional negotiation. The challenge is to use this leverage constructively. A policy guided primarily by obstruction—blocking reconstruction, discouraging reintegration and maintaining sanctions—may prolong the status quo without opening space for meaningful change.

FOR more than a decade, Syria has stood as one of the most complex theatres of conflict in the modern Middle East. What began as a popular uprising in 2011 soon turned into a civil war influenced by regional rivalries, ideological divides and major-power involvement. Today, as the conflict's intensity has reduced in many areas, an important question hangs over the region: what will a post-Assad Syria look like, and how does the United States intend to shape that outcome? Assessing Washington's policy demands a close look at its objectives, hesitations, and the contradictory pressures shaping its choices. From the earliest phase of the Syrian uprising, the United States spoke plainly about its desire to see Bashar al-Assad step aside. The reasoning was built on the belief that a government accused of mass atrocities could not credibly remain at the helm of national reconstruction. Yet words did not translate into decisive action. Washington oscillated between calls for political transition and caution about deeper involvement. This hesitancy allowed both the conflict and regional actors to evolve in ways that constrained American choices. Russia's military entry in 2015 fundamentally changed the balance of power, securing Assad's position and limiting the feasibility of any transition that excluded him. As a result, the United States found itself compelled to adjust its expectations. Rather than pursuing abrupt regime change, Washington shifted towards more modest aims: containing extremist groups, supporting local partners in the northeast, and applying economic pressure on Damascus. The use of sanctions, most notably through the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, was framed as an attempt to hold the government accountable for human rights violations. But these sanctions also complicated the daily lives of ordinary Syrians, added strain to an already decimated economy, and pushed Damascus to deepen its reliance on Moscow and Tehran. This approach raises an important question: can the United States influence a post-Assad future without engaging meaningfully in Syria's political landscape? So far, Washington's strategy has rested on the assumption that prolonged pressure will either force change within the ruling elite or motivate external actors to support a political transition. However, the past several years suggest that pressure alone has not yielded significant movement inside Damascus. The Syrian government has weathered economic crises, territorial losses, and international isolation, yet it has not shown willingness to negotiate a transition that threatens its core leadership. Meanwhile, regional dynamics are shifting around Syria. A number of Arab states have reopened diplomatic channels with Damascus, arguing that isolation only strengthened external powers and prolonged instability. Syria's readmission to the Arab League marked a significant symbolic step, even if it did not bring immediate change. These states believe that reintegration could encourage some level of reform, or at least allow for cooperation on pressing issues such as drug trafficking, refugee return and cross-border

security. Washington, however, remains wary. It argues that reintegration without accountability risks legitimizing a government tied to widespread abuses. Yet it also recognizes that it cannot simply dictate the policies of regional partners who are dealing with the direct consequences of the conflict. The United States faces a dilemma: it wants to prevent the rehabilitation of Assad on the world stage, yet it also wants stability in a region strained by refugees, militant networks and economic decline. Reconciling these goals requires policy clarity, something Washington has struggled to provide. Its military presence, confined mainly to the northeast, focuses on preventing the resurgence of the Islamic State group and supporting Kurdish-led forces. This has created an awkward balance. These local forces seek recognition and long-term security guarantees, while neighboring Turkey views them as a direct threat. The United States, caught between these competing interests, has tried to maintain a fragile equilibrium. But this has not translated into a broader political vision for Syria's future. Another dimension of the post-Assad question is reconstruction. Syria's physical destruction is immense: cities such as Aleppo and Homs require decades of rebuilding. Infrastructure across the country needs substantial investment. Yet Washington maintains that no reconstruction funding will flow without political progress. This stance is intended to deny Damascus the resources to consolidate its rule. However, it also limits its opportunities for stabilizing affected regions and improving humanitarian conditions. Countries like China and the Gulf states have expressed conditional interest in reconstruction, but political uncertainty and Western sanctions discourage large-scale commitments. As long as there is no agreement on Syria's political direction, reconstruction remains frozen. In this context, the notion of "post-Assad Syria" has itself become ambiguous. For some, it refers to a complete political transition in which Assad steps down as part of a negotiated settlement. For others, it means preparing for a long-term arrangement where the state remains under its current leadership, but where reforms and power-sharing might gradually emerge. Washington has not clearly articulated which of these outcomes it considers both desirable and realistic. This lack of clarity hampers its diplomatic engagement and limits its ability to influence regional partners. Yet the United States still retains some leverage. Its partnership with local forces in the northeast gives it influence over a critical region. Its ties with European allies ensure that sanctions and diplomatic pressure remain coordinated. And its relations with Turkey, Jordan, Israel and the Gulf states make it an unavoidable actor in any regional negotiation. The challenge is to use this leverage constructively. A policy guided primarily by obstruction—blocking reconstruction, discouraging reintegration and maintaining sanctions—may prolong the status quo without opening space for meaningful change.

If Washington seeks to shape Syria's future, it must consider a more comprehensive framework. First, it

needs a clearer political objective. If the goal is a negotiated transition, then diplomatic efforts should focus on creating the conditions for meaningful dialogue among Syrian actors, rather than assuming external pressure alone will compel change. If the goal is incremental reform within the existing power structure, then Washington must acknowledge that outright regime change is unlikely in the near term and adjust its rhetoric accordingly. Second, the United States must decide how it views Syria's reintegration into regional institutions. Although it opposes normalization without political concessions, it cannot ignore that Arab states are proceeding regardless. Rather than standing apart, Washington could attempt to work with these states to ensure that reintegration is linked to measurable steps: improved humanitarian access, reductions in arbitrary detentions, cooperation on refugee issues and curbs on illicit drug networks. Such an approach recognizes the realities of regional diplomacy while retaining pressure for gradual change. Third, there is the question of reconstruction. Completely withholding reconstruction funding may not produce the intended political results, but unconditional funding would strengthen the current leadership. A middle path could involve channeling aid directly to local communities through international agencies, bypassing central authorities.

This method has been used in other post-conflict settings and could help rebuild essential services without reinforcing the structures that contributed to the crisis. Finally, Washington must reassess its military posture. Its presence in the northeast has provided stability but also created long-term uncertainties, especially regarding relations with Turkey and Iran-backed groups. A gradual shift from direct military involvement to a more diplomatic and developmental role may prove more sustainable. But such a shift requires careful planning and assurances to local partners, who fear being abandoned to regional adversaries.

The question of Syria's international integration cannot be separated from these wider considerations. A country devastated by war cannot remain permanently isolated if lasting stability is the goal. At the same time, reintegration must not become a reward for impunity. Balancing these objectives requires patient diplomacy, regional coordination and a realistic understanding of Syria's political landscape. As the conflict enters a new phase, the United States has an opportunity to re-examine its policies and align them with the changing realities of the region.

The era of sweeping calls for regime change has passed. What remains is the difficult work of shaping a path that reduces suffering, encourages political openness and guides Syria back into a regional order where its people can rebuild their lives. The question is whether Washington can move beyond reactive measures towards a coherent strategy that acknowledges both its limitations and its responsibilities. Only then can it contribute meaningfully to a future in which Syria finds a place within the international community without abandoning the principles of accountability and justice.

Hangor Day: A Legacy of Courage Beneath the Waves

Ali Basit

Despite starting from a position of numerical and material disadvantage, PN embarked on a path of steady growth and professional consolidation. In the decades that followed, it developed a reputation for discipline, tactical clarity, and the ability to optimize limited resources. While building a balanced fleet was a long-term aspiration, Pakistan's strategic planners soon recognised that matching a larger adversary ship for ship was unrealistic. Instead, they focused on areas where Pakistan could establish a credible deterrence, most notably in submarine warfare

THE journey of Pakistan Navy (PN) began in 1947 with limited resources and a responsibility far greater than its size. At the time of independence, Pakistan inherited only a small fraction of the former Royal Navy's assets, many of them outdated and insufficient for the enormous maritime obligations of a young state. Yet the newly formed Navy was immediately entrusted with safeguarding a coastline stretching over 1,000 kilometres, securing vital sea lines of communication and ensuring the smooth functioning of Karachi Port, which served as Pakistan's economic lifeline. From the delivery of essential imports to the export of agricultural produce, Pakistan's survival and early development depended heavily on maritime connectivity. This made the establishment of a competent and reliable naval force not just important but absolutely indispensable. Despite starting from a position of numerical and material disadvantage, PN embarked on a path of steady growth and professional consolidation. In the decades that followed, it developed a reputation for discipline, tactical clarity, and the ability to optimize limited resources. While building a balanced fleet was a long-term aspiration, Pakistan's strategic planners soon recognised that matching a larger adversary ship for ship was unrealistic. Instead, they focused on areas where Pakistan could establish a credible deterrence, most notably in submarine warfare. This decision had become a turning point in PN's evolution. Submarines offered Pakistan a capability that could offset numerical inferiority through stealth, surprise and sea-denial. Training standards were raised, underwater operations were refined and PN built a culture of professionalism where precision, endurance and calm decision-making became essential traits. This investment in undersea warfare had later proved decisive during one of the most critical moments in

Pakistan's maritime history, the 1971 war. When war started in 1971, PN faced a formidable challenge. Indian Navy enjoyed numerical superiority, operated from multiple bases and launched aggressive operations on both eastern and western fronts. Pakistan, with fewer assets and stretched lines of defence, had to rely on skill, resolve and asymmetric strength. It was in this environment that PN submarine Hangor, a Daphne-class submarine under the command of Commander Ahmad Tasnim (later retired as Vice Admiral), embarked on a mission that had soon become legendary. The submarine began tracking Indian naval movements, observing communication patterns and maintaining radio silence while manoeuvring deep in the Arabian Sea. Days passed in tense vigilance as Hangor monitored enemy formations. Meanwhile, Indian naval ships intensified their patrolling, fully aware that the presence of a Pakistani submarine threatened their operational plans. Despite the constant danger, the crew of Hangor remained composed and focused, meticulously analysing sonar readings and maintaining stealth. On 9 December 1971, after shadowing Indian naval ships, the submarine detected what later proved to be the frigates INS Khukri and INS Kirpan. Indian navy ships were coordinating Anti Submarine Warfare operations, unaware that they were themselves being hunted. Commander Tasnim made the decision to engage after confirming the target profile. It was a decision that required extraordinary courage and confidence as a single error may expose the submarine to immediate retaliation. Hangor fired a torpedo which struck INS Khukri, causing catastrophic damage. The ship sank within minutes, taking its crew with it. A second torpedo forced INS Kirpan to withdraw immediately from the area.

The sinking of INS Khukri was more than a tactical

success. It was the first successful submarine kill since World War II and remains one of the most impactful submarine engagements in modern naval history. The action forced the Indian Navy to pull back its western fleet, reassess its operational plans and divert resources to track Hangor, which successfully evaded all pursuit and returned to Karachi safely. For Pakistan, this single engagement demonstrated the value of professionalism, rigorous training and investment in difficult but strategically vital capabilities. The Hangor action quickly became a defining chapter in Pakistan's naval consciousness. It symbolised what the Navy could accomplish through skill, courage and innovation. More importantly, it proved that even in moments of grave disadvantage, the right combination of doctrine, discipline and determination could alter the course of events at sea.

To commemorate the unmatched courage and unwavering commitment of PN submarine Hangor, Pakistan observes Hangor Day on every 9 December. This commemoration serves multiple purposes. It honours the bravery of the crew and it reinforces the importance of a strong maritime defence for a country whose economic future is deeply tied to the sea. The journey of PN, from its modest beginnings to its defining moment in 1971, underscores a larger truth: maritime security is central to national security. In a region where strategic competition in the Indian Ocean continues to intensify, Pakistan cannot afford complacency. The legacy of Hangor offers a blueprint which means invest in capability, prioritise training, adapt intelligently and maintain the will to protect the nation's maritime frontiers. Hangor Day therefore stands not only as a tribute to a remarkable naval victory but as a reaffirmation of PN's enduring commitment to safeguarding the country's seas with professionalism and courage.

Briefs

Pakistan, Indonesia pledge to diversify relations...

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The visit, he noted, sets the stage for a renewed era of engagement between Pakistan and Indonesia, built on trust, shared values and a commitment to progress. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif warmly welcomed Indonesian President on his historic two-day visit to Pakistan, describing the occasion as a “deeply meaningful moment” that underscores the brotherly bond between the two nations. Speaking at the joint press interaction, the Prime Minister said Pakistan felt “indebted and honoured” that the Indonesian President chose to visit Islamabad, the first such high-level visit in seven years. He noted that the presidential aircraft was welcomed by Pakistan Air Force jets — a gesture, he stressed, that was “not merely ceremonial, but an expression from the heart for a brotherly leader and a trusted partner.” PM Shehbaz said the discussions held between the two sides were “exceptionally fruitful”, covering a wide spectrum of cooperation including trade, investment, palm oil procurement, information technology, energy, agriculture, education, and defence collaboration. He highlighted that both sides agreed to expand economic engagement and explore new avenues of partnership. In particular, Pakistan expressed readiness to send Pakistani doctors, medical specialists, engineers, and other experts to Indonesia as part of its contribution to Indonesia’s ongoing national development. “We will be happy to send our doctors, specialists and skilled experts to Indonesia. Pakistan is ready to partner in Indonesia’s progress in health, IT, agriculture and several other sectors,” the Prime Minister said, adding that the visit opens a fresh chapter in people-to-people and institutional cooperation. PM Shehbaz said Pakistan takes immense pride in its 75-year-long diplomatic relationship with Indonesia — one of the earliest countries to establish ties after Pakistan’s creation. “Your visit coincides with the completion of 75 years of our relations. Let us celebrate this journey with zeal and renewed commitment,” he stated. Recalling historical bonds, the Prime Minister noted that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, as President of the All-Pakistan Muslim League, had strongly supported Indonesia’s independence movement. He added that Indonesia has always stood by Pakistan in critical times, particularly during the wars with its neighbouring country, offering unwavering diplomatic and moral support. “Indonesia supported Pakistan wholeheartedly in our hour of need. This is something we have never forgotten and will always cherish,” Shehbaz remarked. He said Pakistan looks forward to increased high-level exchanges, collaboration in emerging technologies, enhanced investments, and joint initiatives in climate resilience, maritime security and halal trade.

Local Government elections...

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will be displayed on January 16 2026. The election symbols will also be allotted on January 16 2026. Polling for the Islamabad local government elections is scheduled for 15th February 2026, and the results will be compiled from February 16 to 19, 2026. The development comes months after the election body in October this year had announced to hold local government elections in Punjab in the last week of December 2025. Headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Raja Sultan, the ECP bench also ruled to complete the delimitation process within two months. “The local government elections have not been held in the country’s biggest province. It is not only an embarrassment for the election commission but also for various governments [ruled during the delay],” CEC Raja remarked during the hearing.

6th Gwadar Day celebrated with national zeal, maritime pride

Gwadar’s integration into Pakistan carries special importance for the Pakistan Navy, whose platoon led by Lt Iftikhar Ahmed Sirohey, later Chief of the Naval Staff and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, first hoisted the national flag in the city



DNA

GWADAR: The 67th Gwadar Day was commemorated with dignity and patriotic fervour to mark the historic accession of Gwadar to Pakistan on 8 December 1958, following 174 years of rule under the Sultanate of Oman. Major General

Habib Nawaz, General Officer Commanding 44 Division, graced the occasion as Chief Guest. The ceremony began with an impressive flag hoisting at the Dimi Zar Flag Post in PNS AKRAM. Smartly turned-out naval guards and platoons presented salute while distinguished civilian guests stood in respect. The proceedings continued with speeches

by prominent members of the local community, including female speakers from Government School Shamba Ismail and Bahria Model School. Gwadar’s integration into Pakistan carries special importance for the Pakistan Navy, whose platoon led by Lt Iftikhar Ahmed Sirohey, later Chief of the Naval Staff and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee,

first hoisted the national flag in the city. A large number of Officers from Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies and civilians attended the ceremony, including Station Commander Pakistan Army, Commander 440 Brigade, Deputy Commissioner Gwadar and faculty members from Government School Shamba Ismail and Bahria Model School.

EU launches antitrust probe into Google’s data use for AI

BRUSSELS: The EU announced Tuesday it had opened a probe to assess whether Google breached antitrust rules by using content put online by media and other publishers to train and provide AI services without appropriate compensation. The European Commission said the investigation would look into concerns that the US tech giant might be distorting competition by imposing unfair terms and conditions on publishers and content creators, or by granting itself privileged access to their output. “A free and democratic society depends on diverse media, open access to information, and a vibrant creative landscape,” the European Union’s competition chief, Teresa Ribera, said. “AI is bringing remarkable innovation and many benefits for people and businesses across Europe, but this progress cannot come at the expense of the principles at the heart of our societies”. The commission, the European Union’s antitrust regulator, said the probe would focus on two issues. It would look into whether Google used YouTube videos to train its generative AI models

without adequately paying the creators who post the clips online – and without offering them the possibility to refuse such use of their content. “Google does not remunerate YouTube content creators for their content, nor does (it) allow them to upload their content on YouTube without allowing Google to use such data,” the commission said. “At the same time, rival developers of AI models are barred by YouTube policies from using YouTube content to train their own AI models.” The probe would also check whether the firm used online content from other sites, such as newspaper websites, to provide generative AI-powered services, again without compensation or an opt-out option. This relates in particular to Google’s AI-generated summaries that pop-up in response to a user’s search query and to the firm’s “AI Mode” – a search tab similar to a chatbot which answers users’ questions, the commission said. “We are investigating whether Google may have imposed unfair terms and conditions on publishers and content creators, while placing rival AI models developers at a disadvantage, in breach of EU competition rules,” Ribera said. – **Agencies**

Azerbaijan joins 23rd International Doha Forum

BAKU: Azerbaijan’s Deputy Foreign Minister Fariz Rzaev visited the State of Qatar to participate in the 23rd International Doha Forum. Addressing the panel session on climate diplomacy, Fariz Rzaev highlighted the country’s policy on the transition to green energy and the use of alternative energy sources, as well as the progress and achievements of Azerbaijan’s Presidency of COP29, its contributions to the COP30 event held in Brazil in November of this year, and the ongoing efforts of the COP Presidencies Troika within the framework of international climate diplomacy. – **APP**

Three to face German court on Russia spying charges

FRANKFURT: Three men go on trial in Germany on Tuesday, accused of tailing a former Ukrainian soldier on behalf of Russian intelligence services for a possible assassination plot. The alleged ringleader, an Armenian partially identified as Vardges L., recruited another Ukrainian, Robert A., and a Russian, Arman S., prosecutors charge. The trio allegedly tried to lure the former Ukrainian soldier to a Frankfurt cafe last year, but the alleged target became suspicious and contacted police. “The spying operation presumably served to prepare further intelligence missions in Germany, possibly including the killing of the target,” prosecutors said. German media have reported that the former Ukrainian soldier knew he was on a Russian “death list” after Moscow had accused him of war crimes, including the alleged execution of Russian soldiers. When the Ukrainian soldier did not show up in the Frankfurt cafe, which was under police surveillance, the three men drove off but were later stopped and arrested by police commandos. According to the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily, police found cash, several passports, both genuine and forged, and GPS tracking devices in their possession. The three defendants have since been remanded in custody. – **Agencies**

Manchester United back on track after Fernandes inspires Wolves rout

WOLVERHAMPTON: Ruben Amorim said Manchester United had “improved a lot” after they climbed back into the race to qualify for the Champions League as Bruno Fernandes inspired a 4-1 rout of woeful Wolves on Monday. Amorim’s side recovered from their disappointing draw with lowly West Ham last week thanks to Fernandes’ double and goals from Bryan Mbeumo and Mason Mount at Molineux. Jean-Ricner Bellegarde had canceled out Fernandes’ opener with Wolves’ first goal in six games in all competitions and their first in the top-flight since October 26. But Mbeumo, Mount and Fernandes netted after the interval to clinch only United’s second win in their last six matches. United suffered an embarrassing 1-0 home loss to 10-man Everton on Nov. 24 and 10 days later boos greeted the final whistle following a 1-1 draw with West Ham at Old Trafford. With Amorim growing increasingly tetchy in recent weeks, it was essential that sixth-placed United avoided an embarrassing result against bottom of the table Wolves as they moved within one point of the top four. “I really enjoyed how we played the second half. We had good pace, good quality in the decisions. We finished the game and Wolves is in a difficult moment. It was a good evening,” Amorim said. “We had some games against teams in better moments and had many shots. We need to improve the quality of the shots. We need to focus not just on scoring but protecting our goal. – **Agencies**

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi vows to make PSL ‘world’s No.1 league’

PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi vows to elevate PSL as world’s top league, backed by advice from legends and players, urging investors to take risks as tournament expands to eight franchises next season

LONDON: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday expressed his determination to make the Pakistan Super League (PSL) the leading franchise cricket league in the world, describing it as “not a difficult task”. Naqvi, during the panel discussion at the PSL Roadshow at the iconic Lord’s Cricket Ground here, also featuring legendary cricketers Ramiz Raja and Wasim Akram, and moderated by PSL CEO Salman Naseer, was asked to share his vision for the league. In response, the PCB chairman shared that his sole aim was to make the league the world’s best, stressing that he was confident about achieving it with the help of esteemed cricketing figures like Akram and Raja. “To make this league [PSL] the world’s



No.1 league. That’s the vision,” stated Naqvi. “And with so many people around like Ramiz and Wasim. I don’t think so, it’s a difficult task, and I’m very much sure that we will make this league’s world No.1,” he added. Naqvi further shared he received “amaz-

ing advice” from former and current national cricketers, including Ramiz, Wasim, Babar Azam, Haris Rauf and Sahibzada Farhan, regarding the league, which he termed worthy of implementing. “Last night, Ramiz was giving us some amazing advice. Even today, when we were sitting with Babar, Haris and Farhan, they were advising us on some things. So this advice is worth implementing,” Naqvi shared. For the unversed, Naqvi was among the bidders at the first auction of the league before its inaugural edition in 2016, but could not secure the ownership rights of the desired franchise. He acknowledged regretting the mistake he made at the auction and cited his own example to advise the potential investors to “take the risk”, emphasising it would be worthwhile. – **DNA**

Not in favour of banning political...

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banned or that governor’s rule should be imposed.” But, she continued, “considering the state of affairs, the PTI is pushing us to go in that direction.” “On the one hand, KP remains most afflicted by terrorism, the police their remain understaffed; they do not yet have a Crimes Control Department (CCD), and police do not have the necessary equipment,” she said. The minister stressed that the PTI’s rhetoric was putting “Pakistan at stake, and if they do not stop, we will not be left with any other options.”

COAS Asim Munir calls on...

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Field Marshal Asim Munir reiterated that Pakistan attaches great importance to its longstanding relationship with Indonesia. He said Pakistan is committed to expanding cooperation in key areas including military training, counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and capacity-building initiatives. The meeting concluded with both sides expressing confidence that the ongoing high-level engagements will pave the way for deeper strategic cooperation and contribute to peace and stability in the region.

Microsoft to invest \$17 billion...

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skills, and sovereign capabilities needed for India’s AI first future,” Nadella said in a post on X. Nadella made the announcement on social media after he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, thanking the leader for “an inspiring conversation on India’s AI opportunity”. In a statement, Microsoft said the investment would be spread over four years. “Together, Microsoft and India are poised to set new benchmarks and drive the country’s leap from digital public infrastructure to AI public infrastructure in the coming decade,” the statement said. The tech giant said one of the key priorities of its investment plan was “building secure, sovereign-ready hyperscale infrastructure to enable AI adoption in India”.

Indonesian President decorated...

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the two leaders discussed historic relations and reaffirmed their shared values and longstanding goodwill. Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation for peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. President of Pakistan expressed heartfelt condolences over the recent floods and landslides in Sumatra, praying for the departed souls and wishing speedy recovery for the injured. Reiterating their commitment to promoting interfaith harmony and tolerance, the two Presidents decided to build the future partnership on principles of inclusive and comprehensive development. Satisfaction was expressed over the steady growth in bilateral trade, with emphasis on diversifying and balancing economic exchanges. The Joint Trade Committee was acknowledged as an effective platform for strengthening business-to-business ties.

Austrian companies explore new projects in Kazakhstan

Austrian companies were also presented with new opportunities for establishing production facilities, localizing technologies and expanding their presence across Central Asia

ASTANA: Kazakh Foreign Minister Yermek Koshbayev met with representatives of leading Austrian industrial and investment companies, Qazinform News Agency cites the Kazakh MFA’s press service. The roundtable, organized during the minister’s visit to Austria, brought together major firms from the machinery manufacturing, green metallurgy, transport development, innovation and high-tech sectors. Representatives of ÖBB, Laselsberger Group, Primetals Technologies Austria GmbH, AVL List GmbH, Steyr Automotive, Rosenbauer International, Magnatech GmbH and other companies shaping Austria’s industrial and technological landscape attended the meeting. Minister Koshbayev briefed participants on Ka-

zakhstan’s current economic trends and highlighted Austria’s role as a reliable European partner. Today, around 170 Austrian-backed companies operate successfully in Kazakhstan, including Laselsberger Group, Liebherr, Andritz Hydro and Swarovski. Kazakhstan also remains one of Austria’s main suppliers of crude oil, accounting for over 40% of the country’s imports. During the discussion, participants explored opportunities for new joint projects in machinery manufacturing, green metallurgy, transport modernization, raw materials processing, and the deployment of intelligent technologies. Special attention was given to enhancing Kazakhstan’s export potential, including agricultural goods,

metallurgical products, chemical industry items, engineering solutions and IT services. Austrian companies were also presented with new opportunities for establishing production facilities, localizing technologies and expanding their presence across Central Asia. “Austria’s business community has consistently demonstrated strong confidence in Kazakhstan. Our partnership is grounded in technological development, long-term cooperation and a shared commitment to progress. Kazakhstan offers a stable macroeconomic environment, access to regional markets and favorable conditions for industrial project implementation. We invite Austrian companies to

further expand their presence and take part in new initiatives,” the Minister stated. Yermek Koshbayev underscored that Kazakhstan remains the regional leader in attracting foreign direct investment. Since independence, the country has received more than \$470 billion, demonstrating sustained international interest and confidence in Kazakhstan’s economy. Both sides agreed to continue detailed work on investment and industrial projects and to intensify cooperation between relevant government agencies and the business communities of the two countries. As Qazinform reported earlier, Kazakhstan and Austria commit to expanding inter-parliamentary ties. – **Agencies**

Briefs

Rupee gains
01 paisa
against US
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs280.40 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs280.41. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 281.4 and Rs 283.25, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 63 paisa to close at Rs 326.36, from the previous day's close of Rs 326.99, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paisa to close at Rs 1.79, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of 04 paisa and closed at Rs 373.83 compared to the previous day's Rs 373.79. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham remained stagnant at Rs 76.34 and the Saudi Riyal went up by 01 paisa to close at Rs74.71. —APP

Gold price
drops by
Rs1,900 per
tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of per tola 24-karat gold on Tuesday decreased by Rs 1,900 to Rs 441,862 compared to Rs443,762 on the previous day, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold fell by Rs 1,629 to Rs 378,825 from Rs380,454, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold dropped by Rs 1,494 to Rs 347,268. In the international market, gold prices declined by \$ 19 to \$4,195. Meanwhile, per tola silver remained unchanged at Rs 6,102, and the price of 10 grams of silver also stayed flat at Rs 5,231. International silver prices stood stable at \$58.30. —APP

Jordan's king
stresses need
to preserve
Christian
presence
in ME

LONDON: King Abdullah II of Jordan emphasized the importance of preserving a Christian presence in the Middle East on Monday during talks with religious leaders. In meetings at Al-Husseiniya Palace with Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East and Archimandrite Metodije of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the king called for an end to the violation of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem by Israel, which he said was seeking to change the historical and legal status quo, the Petra news agency reported. The king reaffirmed Jordan's religious and historical role in protecting holy sites under its Hashemite Custodianship. Crown Prince Hussein, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, the king's chief adviser for religious and cultural affairs, Alaa Batayneh, director of the Office of His Majesty. —APP

Fire breaks
out at seven-
story building
in Jakarta, 20
dead

JAKARTA: A fire broke out at a seven-story building in Indonesia's capital Jakarta on Tuesday, an official said on Tuesday, with 20 people confirmed dead. The fire has been extinguished and efforts to find more possible victims inside the building continue, Susatyo Purnomo Condoro, the head of Central Jakarta police, told reporters. The fire erupted on the first floor at around midday, Condoro said, and then spread to the upper floors. Some of the employees were having lunch in the building at the time while others had left the office, he said. As of Tuesday afternoon, the death toll had reached 20, he said. "Now, we are still focusing on evacuating victims and to do fire cooling," Condoro said. —APP

Business community
backbone of economy,
deserves respect: Tahir

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood has said that the Chamber leadership is fully committed to addressing the challenges faced by the business community. He emphasized that ensuring ease of doing business and supporting commercial activity are essential for accelerating the country's economic growth. He expressed these views while speaking to a big delegation of the Traders Welfare Association (TWA) G-10, led by its President Syed Kamran Kakakhel, during their visit to the Chamber. Sardar Tahir Mehmood shared that in a recent meeting, the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) assured him that development work in the city's markets would commence soon. He added that the CDA Chairman had also pledged to keep ICCI on board regarding all initiatives aimed at facilitating businesses, highlighting a renewed spirit of coordination between the two institutions.

He said the ICCI is the second home of the business community, and its leadership will continue to play a proactive advocacy role between the government and the private sector. He announced that the Chamber is preparing to organize an Islamabad Festival for the benefit of both consumers and traders. In addition, Ramadan, Eid, and Spring festivals will also be organized, and the markets will be decorated to create a lively and



attractive shopping environment. Speaking on the occasion, President TWA G-10 Markaz Syed Kamran Kakakhel highlighted various challenges being faced by the traders of his area, including sanitation, sewage, dilapidated condition of footpaths and encroachments. He regretted that, despite being the economic engine of the country, the business community is often subjected to disrespect by officials of certain government

agencies, causing disappointment and unrest among traders. ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub assured the delegation that the Chamber's leadership is determined to restore the dignity of the business community. He said ICCI is actively engaged with relevant authorities to ensure early and effective resolution of the issues affecting traders. Vice President Irfan Chaudhry called upon the business commu-

nity to maintain unity and extend their full support to ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, whom he described as fully capable of leading from the front to safeguard the interests of traders. The Association's Chairman Sajid Mughal and Secretary General Syed Aamir Bukhari also spoke on the occasion, emphasizing the need for unity within the business community to strengthen their collective voice and secure their

rights through a united platform. The meeting was attended by former ICCI Presidents Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi and Basir Dawood, along with Executive Members Zulqurnain Abbasi, Waseem Chaudhry, Imran Minhas, Mohsin Khalid Malik, Rohail Anwar Butt, and other notable members of the business community. Former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry conducted the ceremony competently.

Pak–Malaysia ties rooted in shared
values, cultural affinities: Gilani

DNA

KUALA LUMPUR: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has said that Pakistan and Malaysia relationship is rooted in shared values, faith and cultural affinities besides a shared vision for regional prosperity and growth. The Chairman Senate held separate meetings with the President of Senate of Malaysia, Senator Dato Awang Benmee Bin Awang Ali Basah, and Tan Sri Dato Dr. Johari bin Abdul, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malaysia. In his meetings, Chairman Gilani highlighted the strong democratic traditions of both Parliaments and underlined the importance of intensifying interactions between parliamentary leaders. He noted that Pakistan has already notified Parliamentary Friendship Groups for Malaysia in both Houses and welcomed Malaysia's establishment of Parliamentary Friendship Groups for South Asia, which will enhance bilateral exchanges. He conveyed his profound appreciation for the Malaysian parliamentary delegation's visit to Islamabad in November. The Chairman thanked the Malaysian Parliament for its support and Pakistan's observer status at the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly

(AIPA) and expressed gratitude for the Government of Malaysia's generous contribution to Pakistan's flood relief efforts. He also appreciated the recent highlighted interactions, noting that such exchanges inject fresh momentum into bilateral relations. Commending Malaysia's effective Chairmanship of ASEAN, Chairman Gilani congratulated the Malaysian leadership on the successful 47th ASEAN Summit held in Kuala Lumpur in October. He reiterated Pakistan's appreciation for Malaysia's continued support for Pakistan's bid to attain Full Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN. On the economic front, Chairman Gilani lauded Malaysian investments in Pakistan and highlighted the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). He added that Pakistan remains committed to supporting Malaysia's manpower requirements, with Pakistani workers known globally for their hard work and reliability. Exchanging views on regional issues, Chairman Gilani praised Malaysia's principled and consistent advocacy for Palestinian rights, particularly in light of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Discussing Afghanistan, Chairman Gilani articulated Pakistan's long-standing policy of supporting a peaceful, stable and prosperous Af-

ghanistan. On the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Chairman Gilani warned that India's aggressive rhetoric and actions are threatening regional peace. He stressed that sustainable peace in South Asia requires a just settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute based on the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Malaysian leadership thanked Chairman Senate for his remarks and underscored the need for more enhanced cooperation between the two countries. Earlier the Senate Chairman addressed the 3rd Global Muslim Business Forum (GMBF) in Kuala Lumpur. Chairman Gilani emphasized the need for deeper economic cooperation, innovation, and unity across the Muslim world. He called for a coordinated economic trajectory and joint ventures to strengthen Muslim nations' economic potential. He also highlighted the importance of Islamic finance, fintech, and sustainable investment in driving economic growth. The Chairman underscored Pakistan's emerging opportunities driven by its young population, expanding consumer base, and growing innovation ecosystem. He invited Malaysian businesses to explore new avenues of collaboration through Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

Oil steadies with
Ukraine peace
talks, US rate
decision in spotlight

LONDON: Oil prices steadied on Tuesday after falling 2 percent in the previous session, with investors keeping a close eye on peace talks to end Russia's war in Ukraine, concerns about ample supply and a looming decision on US interest rates. Brent crude futures edged 22 cents higher, or 0.4 percent, to \$62.71 a barrel at 1145 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude gained 20 cents, or 0.3 percent, at \$59.08 a barrel. Both contracts fell by more than \$1 a barrel on Monday after Iraq restored production at Lukoil's West Qurna 2 oilfield, one of the world's largest. Ukraine will share a revised peace plan with the US after talks in London between its President Volodymyr Zelensky and the leaders of France, Germany and Britain. "Oil is keeping to a tight trading range until we get a better idea of which way the peace talks will go," KCM Trade chief market analyst Tim Waterer said. "If the talks break down, we expect oil to move higher, or if progress is made, and there is a likelihood of Russian supply to the global energy market resuming, prices would be expected to drop," he added. According to sources familiar with the matter, the Group of Seven countries and the European Union are in talks to replace a price cap on Russian oil exports with a full maritime services ban in a bid to reduce Russia's oil revenue. Some analysts were watching for clues on supply in the next International Energy Agency report. "The next (market) driver is likely to be the IEA monthly oil market report for December, released on 11 December, which it has predicted a record surplus in the oil market in 2026, highlighted in previous outlook reports," said OANDA senior market analyst Kelvin Wong. If the IEA continues to flag surplus risk in the oil market in its December report, WTI crude could drift downwards to test the range support zone at \$56.80 to \$57.50 a barrel, he added. "(Brent) is being pushed toward the \$60-line by the booming amount of oil at sea," said SEB's chief commodities analyst Bjarne Schieldrop. "The only reason why Brent crude hasn't fallen faster and deeper is because of the US sanctions related to Rosneft and Lukoil. Also on the radar is the Federal Reserve's policy decision due on Wednesday, with markets pricing in an 87 percent probability of a quarter-point rate reduction. Lower interest rates typically are a positive driver for oil demand given the decrease in borrowing costs, though some analysts were cautious about how much impact this could have on oil prices for now. "Although markets are largely invested in upcoming FED policy decision on Wednesday for a possible 25bp cut, something that could lend short-term support at the lower end of the \$60–65 band, the broader price structure remains anchored by expectations of an oversupplied 2026 (oil market)," said Phillip Nova's senior market analyst Priyanka Sachdeva. —DNA

Israel to reopen crossing with
Jordan to Gaza aid trucks

JERUSALEM: Israel will reopen the crossing on the Israeli-controlled border between Jordan and the occupied West Bank to humanitarian aid trucks destined for Gaza for the first time since late September, an Israeli official said on Tuesday. "Following the understandings and a directive of the political echelon, starting tomorrow (Wednesday) the transfer of goods and aid from Jordan to the area of Judea and Samaria and to the Gaza Strip will be permitted through the Allenby Crossing," an Israeli official said in a statement, using the Israeli Biblical term for the West Bank. "All aid trucks destined for the Gaza Strip will proceed under escort and security, following a thorough security inspection," the official added. Israel closed the crossing, also known as the King Hussein Bridge, after a Jordanian truck driver shot dead an Israeli soldier and a reserve officer at the border in September. The crossing in the Jordan Valley reopened to travelers a few days later, but not to humanitarian aid destined for the Gaza Strip, devastated by more than two years of war. Since the closure at Allenby, Jordan said it had been able to send some aid to Gaza via the Sheikh Hussein crossing, north of the West Bank. The Allenby crossing is the only international gateway for Palestinians from the West Bank that does not require entering Israel, which has occupied the territory since 1967. Tzav 9, an extremist Israeli right-wing activist group seeking to halt any aid arriving in Gaza so long as Israeli hostages are held in the Palestinian territory, condemned Tuesday's announcement. "Hamas is still on its feet and acts every day against our fighters, and the government of Israel continues to send supply trucks and treats directly to the vile murderers who murdered, beheaded, and raped on October 7," the US-sanctioned group said in a statement. Of the 251 people taken hostage during Hamas's unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack that sparked the war in Gaza, all but the remains of Israeli Ran Gvili have been handed over. Under the terms of the US-brokered ceasefire deal that entered into force on October 10, Hamas committed to returning all living and deceased hostages. —DNA

145 years on, Bangladesh's
Gen Z honors Begum Rokeya

DHAKA: Bangladeshis marked Rokeya Day on Tuesday, remembering a 19th-century pioneer of women's liberation and education in the Indian subcontinent and author of one of the world's first feminist science-fiction utopias. Begum Rokeya, also known as Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, was a writer and social reformer born on Dec. 9, 1880 in colonial India, in the Rangpur district of present-day Bangladesh. Widely regarded as one of the earliest voices for women's rights in South Asia, she is best known for her work promoting education. "She went door to door to convince the guardians to send their girls to school. Nowadays, it seems very easy, but in the early 20th century, it was something beyond imagination," said Afsana Rahman, a 21-year-old student at BRAC University. She started reading Rokeya's works at the age of 12, when the school authorities honored her as the best student with a set of books that included "Sultana's Dream" — one of the world's earliest works of feminist science fiction. Rokeya wrote "Sultana's Dream" in English in 1905, setting the story in Ladyland, a country ruled entirely by women. In Ladyland, women managed administration, science, and education,

while men lived in seclusion, reversing the traditional system. The country was peaceful, free of crime, and developed. Powered by solar energy, it used science for social development and innovation, rather than violence or warfare. "I was amazed by her thoughts — how a woman could imagine a women-led society more than 100 years ago, when women were not allowed to go outside their homes," Rahman told Arab News. "Actually, her thoughts were far ahead of her time. Since then, Begum Rokeya has become my source of inspiration and has taught me to think beyond stereotypical ideas." Rokeya received no formal schooling and learned Bengali and English privately at home. She advocated that women could thrive when given freedom and education, which are essential not only for their personal growth but also for the progress of society as a whole. Her main supporter was her husband, Khan Bahadur Sakhawat Hossain, whose role, too, is seen as part of Rokeya's legacy, as her personal life "demonstrates that men can break the cycle of patriarchal oppression and work as equal partners in the struggle for women's rights," said Nayma Jannat, a 23-year-old who studies international relations at

Dhaka University. "Her legacy represents courage, vision and the hope for a more equal society ... Rokeya's works and thoughts remain relevant even after nearly 150 years because the fundamental structures she critiqued continue to shape our society today." In 1911, Rokeya founded the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in Calcutta — one of the first schools founded specifically by and for Muslim girls in Bengal. Later moved to Dhaka, the school remains influential and is still active today. By establishing schools, Rokeya "established women's education as a center of real liberation," and by challenging the patriarchal society and its cultural norms, strengthened the foundation for women's self-identity, paving the way for "decolonized feminism," said Rawank Jahan Rakamoni, 25, who is graduating in information science. "Rokeya did not see women's liberation as a personal outrage. She envisioned it as a structural social transformation ... This integrated approach has established her as a pioneer of women's liberation in the subcontinent." Bangladesh celebrates Rokeya on her birthday every Dec. 9. Her legacy remains influential among the younger generation of both men and women. —DNA

Jakarta
records
nearly 2m
respiratory
infections

JAKARTA: Air pollution in Jakarta has contributed to nearly 2 million cases of respiratory illness in 2025, local health authorities said on Tuesday, raising concerns about the long-term health of the residents of the world's most populous city. Jakarta has consistently ranked among the world's most polluted cities, regularly recording "unhealthy" levels of PM2.5, a measurement of particulate matter — solid and liquid particles suspended in the air that can be inhaled and cause respiratory diseases. There were more than 1.9 million acute respiratory-infection cases between January and October of this year, according to the Jakarta Health Agency. "Based on our data, cases of acute respiratory infection increased from mid-year and peaked in October. We also found that toddlers make up for over 19 percent of the cases ... There are more cases (overall in 2025) compared to 2024," agency chief Ani Ruspitawati told Arab News on Tuesday. Air pollution, as well as high population density and human mobility, were among the risk factors for the high prevalence of acute respiratory infections in Jakarta, she added. These cases of respiratory illness were only recorded among the national capital region's 11 million residents. And did not account for the entire 42 million people living in the greater Jakarta area — which ranked as the world's most populated city in a UN report published last month. —APP

Morocco
to open 2
deepwater
ports

MARRAKECH: Morocco will open a new deepwater Mediterranean port next year and another on the Atlantic in 2028, Equipment and Water minister Nizar Baraka said, as the North African country aims to replicate the success of Africa's largest port, Tanger Med Nador West Med, under construction on the Mediterranean, is scheduled to be operational in the second half of 2026, Baraka told Reuters in an interview. It will offer 800 hectares for industrial activity, with plans to expand to 5000 hectares, surpassing Tanger Med's industrial zones, he said. The port will also host Morocco's first liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal — a floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) — linked by a pipeline to industrial hubs in the northwest, as Morocco pushes investments in natural gas and renewable energy to reduce dependence on coal. Further south on the Atlantic coast, Morocco is building a \$1 billion port in Dakhla, in the disputed Western Sahara region. The facility will be surrounded by 1,600 hectares for industrial activities and 5,200 hectares for farmland irrigated by desalinated water, Baraka said. "The port will be ready in 2028 and will be Morocco's deepest at 23 meters," Baraka said. —APP

Beijing
court orders
Malaysia
Airlines to
pay damages
to families

BEIJING: A Beijing court has ruled that Malaysia Airlines must pay 2.9 million yuan (\$410,000) each to the families of eight passengers who went missing in the mysterious disappearance of the MH370 flight more than a decade ago. The court ordered the airline to pay each family compensation for the death of their loved one, funeral expenses and damages stemming from emotional distress, it said in a statement Monday. Although it is not known what happened to the passengers, they have been declared legally dead. There were 239 passengers and crew members on the flight that disappeared after departing Kuala Lumpur for Beijing in 2014. Despite years of searches, it's unknown why the plane went down or what happened to the people on board. Most of the passengers were Chinese, and their families in China have continued to seek answers. —APP

Briefs

Zelensky meets pope, prepares revised plan on Russia war

European allies back Zelensky after Trump criticism

CASTEL GANDOLFO: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met with Pope Leo XIV in Italy on Tuesday as he prepared to send the United States revised proposals to end Russia's invasion. Zelensky on Monday held talks with European leaders in London and Brussels as US President Donald Trump keeps up pressure on Kyiv for a settlement. Trump has accused Zelensky of not even reading his administration's initial proposals, which were judged by Ukraine's allies to be overly favourable to Russia. Zelensky said that Washington's 28-point plan had been reduced to 20 points after US-Ukraine talks at the weekend. Ukrainian and European officials "are going to work on these 20 points", Zelensky told an online press conference on Monday. "We do not like everything that our partners came back with. Although this issue is not so much with the Americans as with the Russians. "But we will definitely work on it, and as I said, tomorrow evening (Tuesday) we will do everything to send our view on this to the US." Washington's plan involved Ukraine surrendering land that Russia has not captured in return for security promises that fall short of Kyiv's aspirations to join NATO. Zelensky pointed to the land issue and international security guarantees as two of the main sticking points. - APP

Hundreds of more Afghans depart via Torkham

PESHAWAR: The repatriation of Afghan nationals continued at a rapid pace at Torkham and Angoor Adda borders. According to the Home Department here on Tuesday, a total of 543 Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders, 114 Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders and 488 undocumented Afghan nationals were sent back to Afghanistan from the Torkham border the other day. Officials stated that thousands of Afghan nationals have also completed their return through the Angoor Adda border crossing. In addition, Afghan residents who had been shifted from other provinces to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have now been included in the repatriation process. The authorities confirmed that the repatriation operation is being monitored on a daily basis to ensure transparency and smooth execution. So far, hundreds of thousands of Afghan nationals have returned to their homeland under this ongoing process. - APP

Remittances rise 9% to \$16.1bn in first five months of FY26

Over first five months of FY26, remittances from Saudi Arabia amounted to \$3.90 billion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Workers' remittances to Pakistan rose 9% year-on-year to \$16.145 billion in the first five months of the financial year 2025-26 (July-November), even as monthly inflows eased to \$3.19 billion in November, according to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data. The SBP figures show November 2025 remittances were 9% higher than the \$2.92 billion received in November 2024, but 7% lower

than October 2025's \$3.42 billion. The July-November total compares with about \$14.77 billion in the same period of FY25, reflecting a 9% year-on-year increase. Saudi Arabia remained the largest source of inflows in November, with overseas Pakistanis sending \$753 million, followed by the United Arab Emirates, which sent \$675 million. Over the first five months of FY26, remittances from Saudi Arabia amounted to \$3.90 billion, from the UAE to \$3.36 billion, and from the United Kingdom to \$2.34 billion. In the same period, inflows from

the United States stood at \$1.38 billion. Arif Habib Limited noted that remittances by overseas Pakistanis increased 9% year-on-year to \$3.19 billion in November 2025 from \$2.92 billion a year earlier, while declining 7% on a month-on-month basis. It added that cumulative remittances in 5MFY26 rose 9% YoY to \$16.14 billion. In an economy alert issued today, Topline Securities said Pakistan's remittances "came in at" about \$3.2 billion in November, up 9% YoY and down 7%

month-on-month, taking 5MFY26 inflows to \$16.145 billion, also 9% higher than the same period of FY25. According to Topline Research, the current remittance growth is being supported by higher manpower exports in previous years, a narrower gap between formal and informal exchange-market rates and the continuation of the remittance incentive package. The brokerage maintained its FY26 remittance forecast at \$41 billion, which would be 7.5% higher than FY25's level of \$38 billion.

Pak pledges \$639.54 million for global polio eradication

ABU DHABI: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal represented Pakistan here on Tuesday at the "High-Level Pledging Moment for Polio Eradication," hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government in collaboration with the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). The minister conveyed Pakistan's profound gratitude to Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for his unwavering dedication to protecting millions of children from polio and for fostering a partnership rooted in trust, humanity and shared purpose, a news release said. Ahsan Iqbal underscored that polio eradication in Pakistan was a moral obligation and solemn duty to future generations. He emphasized that Pakistan was fulfilling this obligation with unity, determination, and national resolve. He noted that Pakistan was progressing with the virus circulation at its lowest level in decades, vaccination quality continuously improving, surveillance at its strongest, and community trust steadily rising. - DNA

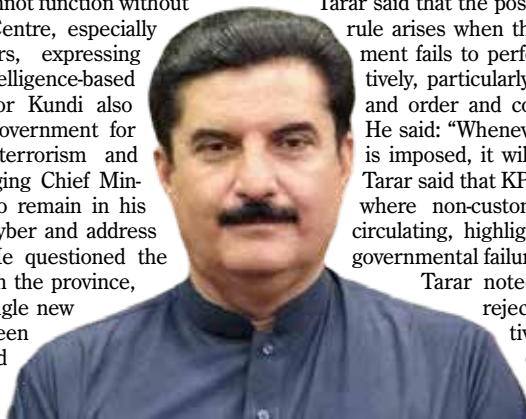


ISLAMABAD: President of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto introduces Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan, to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

KP risks governor's rule if govt resists cooperation: Kundi

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said that governor's rule could be imposed if the provincial government fails to work in coordination with the state. His remarks came a day after State Minister for Law Aqeel Malik had said that the federal government was "seriously pondering" imposing a governor's rule in KP, citing poor governance, terrorism and the border situation with Afghanistan. Governor Kundi said that the Constitution contains provisions for governor's rule, making it a legally valid option, and stressed that its enforcement ultimately depends on the conduct of the provincial government. He said that provincial governments cannot function without support from the Centre, especially in security matters, expressing full backing for intelligence-based operations. Governor Kundi also criticised the KP government for "failing" to curb terrorism and drug trafficking, urging Chief Minister Sohail Afridi to remain in his home district of Khyber and address these challenges. He questioned the utilisation of funds in the province, noting that not a single new police station had been constructed, nor had police been given proper training



or modern weaponry. He said some political leaders demand the withdrawal of the military from the province, yet KP lacks the capacity to manage security for even a few days without army support. Kundi said that other provinces like Sindh and Punjab are competing in major projects, but KP continues to struggle for basic stability. He said that people in KP want education, peace, development, and prosperity, while He also criticised PTI's approach of "shutting down" the province and resorting to protests, questioning who would represent KP's case before the federal government under such circumstances. He further said PTI's founder must face the consequences of his actions, adding that serving only a year and a half in prison does not justify "crocodile tears."

Separately, Federal Information Minister Atta Tarar said that the possibility of governor's rule arises when the provincial government fails to perform its duties effectively, particularly in maintaining law and order and countering terrorism. He said: "Whenever a governor's rule is imposed, it will have justification." Tarar said that KP is the only province where non-custom-paid vehicles are circulating, highlighting clear signs of governmental failure in the province.

Tarar noted that people have rejected anti-army narratives, which was evident in the low turnout at the recent Peshawar rally.

Pakistan rejects any maritime domination, calls for peaceful seas

UNITED NATIONS: Underscoring that world's oceans must remain zones of cooperation and collaboration, Pakistan Monday told the UN General Assembly that it will reject any attempt to dominate maritime spaces or marginalize coastal States. "As a coastal State, Pakistan's security, commerce and trade, and regional connectivity are deeply intertwined with the stability and openness of the maritime domain," Pakistani delegate Zulfiqar Ali said in a debate on 'Oceans and the Law of the Sea and Oceans' The 1982 UN Convention on Law of Seas (UNCLOS) provided a "robust" legal framework for the regulation of all ocean-related activities, said Zulfiqar Ali, a first secretary at the Pakistan Mission to the UN. "The imperatives of 21st century call for turning our maritime zones into regions of cooperation and collaboration, not into the spheres of conflict and competition," he added. The Pakistani delegate welcomed the forthcoming entry into force of the UN Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction on 17 January 2026 that Pakistan signed in July last. In this regard, he said Pakistan emphasized the need for fair benefit-sharing, capacity-building and technology transfer, in line with the principle of the common heritage of humankind and for assisting the Global South in maritime economic development. The Pakistani delegate called for developing a comprehensive regime for exploitation, including rules on equitable benefit sharing before mining could commence anywhere in the "Area", which means the seabed and ocean floor and subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. "Until such time," he added, "we oppose the approval of any work plan for commercial exploitation of mineral resources in the 'Area'." Pakistan also underscored the need for overcoming the plethora of challenges facing the world's oceans, which sustains life on Earth, saying climate change was testing the resilience of coastal communities, disrupting ecological balance, and accelerating habitat loss, food insecurity and changes in weather patterns. "Deteriorating health of world's oceans presents an existential threat to planetary life," Zulfiqar Ali said, while calling for a unified response from the international community. "As a country with unwavering faith in the multilateralism, Pakistan reaffirms its readiness to work with all peace-loving nations for upholding international law to ensure that our oceans remain zones of peace, shared prosperity, and inclusive development." Opening the debate, President of the General Assembly, Annalena Baerbock, said, "Oceans are not only a natural reAnnalena Baerbock, President of the General Assembly. - DNA

Civilians killed as Thailand-Cambodia border clashes escalate

BANGKOK: Seven civilians were killed and at least 20 others were injured on Tuesday after Thai artillery shelling struck Cambodian territory, as violence continued to escalate along the border between the two countries. Spokesperson for Cambodia's Ministry of National Defense, Lt. Gen. Maly Socheata, said the shelling targeted areas inside Cambodia, resulting in the deaths of at least seven civilians and injuries to 20 others.

She described the attacks as "inhumane and brutal," saying they constituted a clear violation of the ceasefire agreement and the joint declaration signed by the prime ministers of both countries on October 26 under the auspices of US President Donald Trump and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who currently chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In Bangkok, the Thai military announced the deaths of two soldiers in border clashes with Cambodia, bringing the total number of Thai military fatalities to three since fighting resumed on Sunday. "A total of three soldiers have been killed, one on December 8 and two on December 9," the military said in a statement, adding that Thailand would take steps to expel Cambodian forces from the Thai territory.

Thailand and Cambodia have long disputed sovereignty over several areas along their shared 817-kilometer land border, a dispute that dates back more than a century. Armed clashes have occurred intermittently, with the most serious confrontation being a week-long exchange of artillery fire in 2011. - APP

Ayaz calls for national unity to tackle water scarcity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Tuesday said water scarcity has emerged as one of the most serious national issues, demanding urgent and coordinated action from all stakeholders. During the meeting with Chairman Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Lieutenant General (R) Muhammad Saeed here, he underscored the need for national unity, collaborative policy-making and a shared commitment to sustainable solutions.

The meeting was attended by Members of the National Assembly and senior officials from the Ministry of Water Resources, said a news release. Ayaz Sadiq said that, given the sensitivity and national significance of the matter, opposition members were also specially invited to ensure that a comprehensive strategy could be shaped through inclusive and collective input.

TIP NCPS finds economy stable

DNA

ISLAMABAD: While police, tender/procurement and judicial system are perceived as the most corrupt sectors in the country, provincial governments are considered more corrupt than the local governments. National Corruption Perception Survey (NCPS) 2025, released by the Transparency International Pakistan (TIP) today shows that overwhelming 77% of those surveyed is dissatisfied with government's efforts to curb corruption. Province-wise dissatisfaction stands at Baluchistan 80%, Punjab 78%, Sindh and KP 75% each. Encouragingly 66% of the respondents nationwide said that they did not encounter any situation where they were compelled to pay a bribe. Economically, 57% citizens said their purchasing power had declined in the past 12 months, whereas 43% felt improvement. Yet, 58% (40% partially + 18% fully) agreed that the government stabilised the economy through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme and FATF exit. Strong public consensus emerges for political finance reform as 42% Pakistanis want business funding to political parties banned completely,

another 41% want it regulated, forming 83% combined demand nationwide. Against what has become a routine in our government advertisements, 55% favour banning the use of party names or leadership photos in government ads. The survey, carried out from 22 to 29 September 2025, reveals that provincial governments are perceived as more corrupt than local governments, with 59% respondents expressing distrust, highest in Punjab at 70%. In a strong indictment of accountability institutions themselves, 78% Pakistanis want accountability of anti-corruption bodies like NAB and FIA, citing lack of transparency in investigations (35%), no independent oversight (33%), and political victimisation (32%) as key concerns. Nationally, 24% respondents ranked police as the most corrupt sector, followed by tender & procurement (16%) and the judiciary (14%). Punjab reported the worst perception about police corruption at 34%, followed by Balochistan (22%), Sindh (21%), and KP (20%). In procurement, Balochistan showed the highest concern (23%), followed by KP (18%), Sindh (14%) and Punjab (9%). Public perception of judicial corruption was highest in KP (18%) and Punjab (17%), compared to 12% in Sindh and Balochistan.

DECEMBER 2025

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