



# Islamabad POST

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**UK launches major partnership reset project with Pakistan**

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**Bilawal opposes banning of any political party**

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## PM Shehbaz says

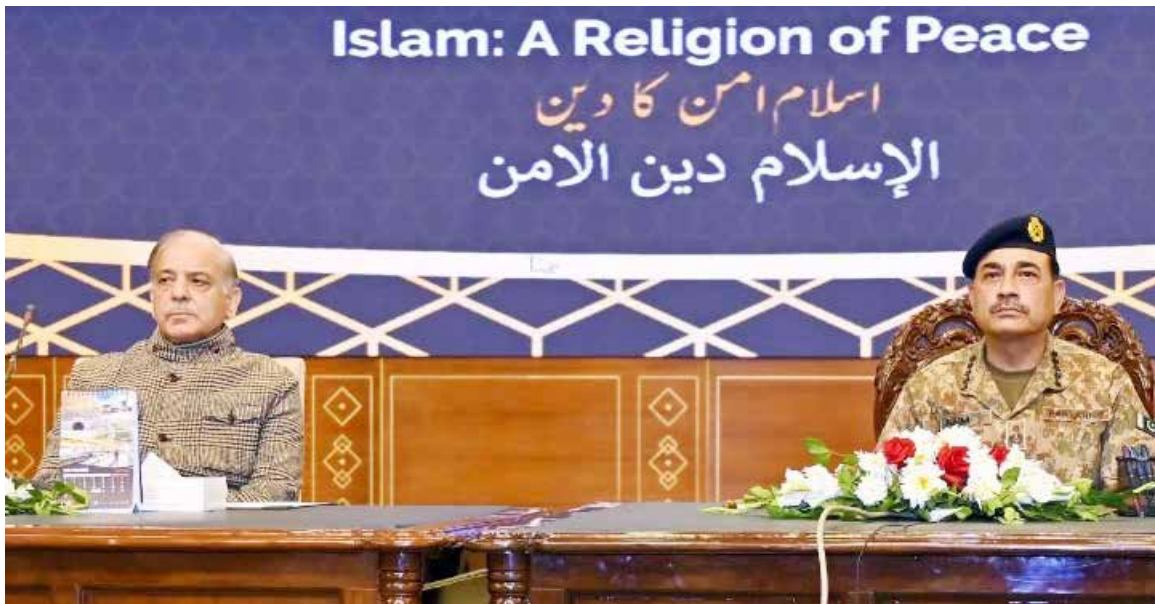
# Not witchcraft but hard work key to Pakistan's progress

Premier says Pakistan cannot progress without eliminating terrorism, extremism, sectarianism

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that the key to Pakistan's progress lies in hard work, not witchcraft, stressing national unity to address the country's challenges. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led government ministers have alleged time and again that when Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was in power, witchcraft influenced high-level decision-making. In his address to the National Ulama Convention in Islamabad, the prime minister said that the country could not achieve sustainable economic development without the complete elimination of terrorism, extremism and sectarianism from the country. PM Shehbaz urged religious scholars to play a proactive role in discouraging sectarianism and promoting unity, harmony and brotherhood among all schools of thought. He said creating an atmosphere of national cohesion was essential for ensuring the country's prosperity and future progress. The convention was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal Chief of Defence Forces Asim Munir, ministers, parliamentarians, and a large number of religious scholars from various schools of thought. The prime minister said that Allah had blessed Pakistan with a great victory in the Maarkae-Haq against India, which he said was due to the profes-

sionalism and bravery of the armed forces, as well as the prayers of the nation. He said Field Marshal Munir had led the war with courage and unwavering resolve, while all services, the Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy, contributed equally to the victory. The world, he added, was acknowledging Pakistan's performance, and Muslim countries were expressing pride over the historic victory. Despite this, he noted, certain elements continued to spread propaganda against the armed forces. Calling out the menace of terrorism, he said the khawarij were carrying out attacks and targeting innocent citizens and security personnel. He said he often met families of martyred soldiers who expressed pride in the sacrifices of their sons for the country. As regards the economy, the prime minister said Pakistan had reached a stage from which it was about to take off towards accelerated growth. He said the country's political and military leadership had worked tirelessly to steer the nation away from the risk of default. He reaffirmed the government's resolve to put Pakistan on the path of economic prosperity, saying this was the time for implementation and hard work. By implementing austerity measures and working collectively, he added, the nation could fulfill the dreams of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. PM Shehbaz Sharif said national unity was indispensable for addressing all challenges facing the country and for achieving long-term stability and development.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of the Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in National Ulama Conference. – DNA

## IMF urges Pakistan to broaden tax regime

Lender's deputy managing director says Islamabad needs to accelerate private sector-led sustainable growth

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Following its approval of two loan tranches totalling \$1.29 billion, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged Pakistan to continue a tight monetary policy, broaden and simplify its tax regime, adjust power and gas tariffs, and pursue structural reforms to fix the ailing economy. The lender, a day earlier, announced that its Executive Board completed the second review of the Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), allowing the authorities to draw the equivalent of about \$1 billion, and the first review of the arrangement under

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## Bilawal opposes banning any political party

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Wednesday voiced his opposition to a ban on any political party, saying imposing governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) was not a demand by him or his party. His remarks come after several ministers of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led federal government called for a ban on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) over what they call the party's "anti-state" and "anti-army" narrative. "I am not in favour of banning any political party, but the

Continued on Page 06

## Regional stability

# Iran to mediate between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Iranian officials have been actively engaging both sides in recent days. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has spoken to his Pakistani and Afghan counterparts, offering Tehran's "good offices" to ease tensions

ALI FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: Iran is preparing to host a fresh round of mediation next week between Pakistan and Afghanistan's Taliban regime, in what is being viewed as the most ambitious diplomatic push yet to break the deadlock between the two neighbours. According to reliable sources, this important meeting will be held of 16th and 17th December in Tehran. The meeting follows earlier rounds of talks in Doha, Istanbul and Jeddah, all of which failed to deliver a breakthrough. What makes the upcoming Tehran session notable is the expected participation of China and Russia, a sign that major regional powers see the escalating Pak-Afghan strain as a threat to broader stability. Diplomatic sources say Pakistan's special envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Muhammad Sadiq, will represent Islamabad. Iranian officials have been actively engaging both sides in recent days. Foreign Minister

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## ECP rejects CM Bugti's plea to postpone LG polls

Election Commission says polling in Quetta district will take place on December 28, 2025

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ECP on Wednesday rejected Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti's petition to postpone local government elections in Quetta. Bugti filed the petition on Monday, citing the deteriorating law and order situation in the provincial capital and the suspension of internet services as reasons for postponing the local government elections in Quetta. In its written order today, the ECP said that the polls will be held as per the previously announced schedule. The Election Commission stated that polling in Quetta district will take place

on December 28, 2025, saying that all institutions must assist in accordance with the Constitution. "Every possible support must be extended to the bodies assigned the responsibility of conducting elections in Quetta," the ECP said. It also directed that foolproof security arrangements be made to ensure the safety of voters, candidates, the public, and polling staff. "Peaceful polling in Quetta must be ensured without interruption," the ECP order read. However, ECP member Shah Muhammad noted in a dissenting note that harsh winter conditions could reduce voter turnout. He highlighted that people often migrate to other districts during the winter season.

## Briefs

### Punjab to celebrate 3-day Basant festival

DNA

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Wednesday announced that the three-day Basant festival will be celebrated from February 6 to 8, 2026, permitting kite flying under strict safety and regulatory measures across the province. The announcement comes just days after the provincial government issued an ordinance, ending a 25-year ban on kite flying in the province. Sources said that special QR codes will be issued for kites and strings, and no aerial firing or unruly behaviour will be tolerated. Recently, the Lahore High Court rejected a plea requesting immediate suspension of the ordinance, instructing the government's lawyer to submit a report on December 22 regarding the festival preparations. Although Punjab banned kite flying in 2001, numerous people have died over the years from injuries caused by chemical or metal-coated kite strings.

### State within state in Karachi, says MQM

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In a fresh jibe at ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) leader Farooq Sattar criticised the recent organisation of Sindh Culture Day in the province, saying that a "state within a state" was established on Karachi's main roads in the name of the festival. Speaking at a press conference alongside leader of the opposition in the Sindh Assembly Ali Khurshidi and other MQM-P leaders, Sattar said that under the guise of Sindh Culture Day, incidents of unrest, rioting and violence took place on Karachi's roads and at various locations on December 7. He said public and private property was damaged, expressions of hostility towards the country were made, and weapons were openly displayed.

## Govt mulls shifting Imran Khan from Adiala amid 'rising political tensions'

Political confrontation reached point "from where return seems impossible," says Ikhtiar Wali

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has begun deliberations on shifting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan from Adiala jail, with Prime Minister's Co-ordinator for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ikhtiar Wali warning that political confrontation has reached a point "from where return seems impossible." Sources told Geo News that the authorities believe PTI was "pursuing an agenda to destabilise the country", saying that attempts were underway to foment unrest under the guise of protest. Addressing a press conference, Wali said the government was seriously examining proposals to move the "prisoner" from Adiala jail. "They want the prisoner shifted from Adiala, and the government is genuinely considering it," he added. Wali also claimed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi has a nexus with drug smugglers. "His performance is not zero – it is minus," he remarked. He further claimed that CM Afridi's family members were engaged in the narcotics business "under his patronage". The remarks come a day after the PTI founder's sisters staged a sit-in near Rawalpindi's Adiala jail after being denied a meeting with their incarcerated brother, which was ended following police action. The protesters gathered at the Factory checkpoint after Noreen Khan, Aleema Khan and Uzma Khan. The police officials

used water cannons to scatter the participants of the sit-in. Some of the protesters resisted the police operation by hurling stones, leading to the arrests of several PTI workers. Meetings with the PTI founder have been a point of contention between the former ruling party and the government for quite some time, with the last meeting held last week when ex-PM's sister Uzma was allowed to meet him.

Tensions have escalated outside Adiala jail recently as PTI protests, including scuffles with police and jail staff, continue over meetings with the ousted prime minister, who has been imprisoned there for over two years. Last month, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi staged a 16-hour sit-in outside the facility. Before this, Imran's sisters Aleema Khan, Noreen Khan Niazi and Uzma Khanum also held a protest outside the jail, which resulted in their brief detention. However, since then, the government, as confirmed by Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, has imposed a blanket ban on meetings with the incarcerated politician. The ban came hours after Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry termed the PTI founder a "mentally ill person" and a threat to national security. Separately, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq said that both Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and he had repeatedly stated their readiness for dialogue. "If the opposition wants to

Continued on Page 06

## US envoy Natalie Baker says Exim financing to bring \$2 billion in mining equipment for Reko Diq

Baker highlights \$1.25bn approval to support Pakistan's critical minerals development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: US Export-Import (Exim) Bank's project financing will bring in up to \$2 billion in high-quality US mining equipment and services needed to build and operate the Reko Diq mine, the US Charge d'Affaires said on Monday. "I'm pleased to highlight the US Export-Import Bank recently approved financing of \$1.25 billion to support the mining of critical minerals at Reko Diq in Pakistan," Natalie A Baker said in a video statement on X. According to her, the approved financing will help facilitate equipment and services for the project "in the coming years", generating an estimated 6,000 jobs in the United States and 7,500 jobs in Balochistan. She said the Reko Diq mine "serves as the model for mining projects that will benefit US exporters, as well as local Pakistani communities and partners". Baker said the initiative aligns with the

Trump administration's approach to emphasise commercial partnerships. "The Trump administration has made the forging of deals exactly like this one central to American diplomacy," she noted. She added that Washington looks forward to further agreements between American companies and their Pakistani counterparts in the critical minerals and mining sector, describing the project as one that aims to "bring employment and prosperity to both our nations." The US diplomat's remarks come weeks after the US Exim announced plans to invest in the country's critical mineral projects, as Washington aims to increase its energy output. In an interview with the Financial Times in an interview published on November 23, Exim chair, John Jovanovic, said that the organisation's deals included \$1.25 billion loan for the Reko Diq mine. The announcement is part of a plan to invest \$100 billion to secure US and allied supply chains for critical minerals, nuclear energy and liquefied natural gas.



ISLAMABAD: US Charge d'Affaires Natalie Baker in a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar. – DNA



# Targeting state institutions harmful to country: Bilawal

Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Nayyar Bukhari, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Faisal Mir and Nargis Khan were also present on the occasion.

LAHORE: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has warned that certain political forces are deliberately targeting state institutions through social media, a trend he termed dangerous for national stability and harmful to the country. Speaking to the media on Wednesday after visiting the residence of late senior party worker Zubaida Jafri in Baghbanpura to offer condolences, Bilawal said Pakistan was once again passing through a critical and dangerous phase. Referring to clashes with India in May, he claimed that Pakistan had responded firmly to Indian aggression by shooting down six Indian warplanes, sending a clear message that the country would never compromise on its sovereignty and defense. He added that threats from India remain present, while terrorism emanating from Afghanistan is becoming an alarming reality. "Terrorists come from Afghanistan, carry out attacks in Pakistan, and

then return. This is a serious security challenge, but Pakistan's courageous forces are confronting these threats," he said. Bilawal stressed that internal challenges were also being addressed, and at such a time, every patriotic citizen must stand with the country and its armed forces. He regretted that some political parties were attempting to create mistrust between the people and the military, saying such behavior weakened national institutions. He said one political party was playing the role of a "political antichrist" by promoting extremism and confrontation. "I am free to criticize the government and praise it where needed; I act according to my mandate," he said. Commenting further on the political climate, he said if any political party adopts extremist tendencies or supports terrorists, questions regarding potential bans would naturally arise. He noted that terrorism-related behavior may even trigger discussions of Governor's rule, although he had

not seen the KP Governor's statement on the matter. Bilawal said he would welcome Maryam Nawaz or any PML-N leader contesting elections from Sindh, adding that election reforms were essential before any upcoming polls to avoid controversies such as accusations linked to Form 47. He urged political parties to review their roles and conduct responsibly. "We do not want a ban on any political party, but political forces must adopt a democratic attitude," he said, adding that it was the government's responsibility to provide political space to the opposition. Expressing his pleasure at meeting workers in Lahore, Bilawal said he had recently met PPP parliamentarians from Punjab and highlighted his party's success in by-elections in Muzaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan. Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Nayyar Bukhari, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Faisal Mir and Nargis Khan were also present on the occasion.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain meets Canadian High Commissioner Tarik Ali Khan to discuss enhanced agricultural cooperation.

## Protection of HRs top priority: Maryam

LAHORE :Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that Islam is the greatest advocate of human rights and that the first comprehensive charter of human rights was delivered in the farewell sermon of Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SAW). In her message on International Human Rights Day, she said the Prophet (SAW) bestowed humanity with an unparalleled, timeless charter that affirms human dignity beyond distinctions of colour, race, religion, gender or status. The CM said that respect for human rights is fundamental to the development and prosperity of any society, adding that the protection and promotion of human rights is a core vision and top priority of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N). She noted that ensuring access to education, healthcare, religious freedom and freedom of expression are essential rights, and the Punjab government is actively working to safeguard them. CM Maryam Nawaz said she envisions a society where every citizen receives equal opportunities, justice and respect. She emphasized that promoting love, respect and tolerance is vital for protecting human rights, as the provision of basic rights is a hallmark of civilized societies and their protection is the foremost responsibility of the state. She said the Punjab government has taken practical steps to eliminate forced labour.—APP

## Kundi opens students talent expo

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday inaugurated the Students Talent Expo Peshawar, organised by Islami Jamiat Talaba and Safe Society at Nishtar Hall. The Governor visited various stalls set up at the expo, including pet foods, handmade items, arts and crafts, and other student-led displays. He appreciated the creativity and talent of the participating students and congratulated the organisers for successfully arranging the event.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Governor Kundi said that the talent expo was a valuable initiative to highlight the skills and abilities of the province's youth. He said that the young generation of KP was talented, capable, and in no way behind students from any other part of the world. He emphasised that youth are the true asset of the nation, and their role is crucial in helping the province overcome its challenges. "The youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa must showcase their abilities and positive character

to project a favourable image of the province globally," he said. Governor Kundi added that both young men and women in KP possess remarkable abilities in their respective fields after completing their education. "Whether it is public issues at the national level or achievements in education, our youth have always excelled," he remarked. He assured full support on behalf of his office to the province's youth and all institutions working to further develop and promote their skills.—DNA

## Shamim successfully defends PhD thesis

DNA

RESHAWAR: Shamim Ahmed son of Karam Din, a research scholar from the Department of English at Qurtaba University Peshawar,



has successfully defended his PhD (English) research on December 6, 2025. His supervisor was Professor Dr. Abdul Hamid Khan and his examiner was Professor Dr. Jamil Asghar Jami from NUML. Dr. Shamim Ahmed expressed happiness over his success and thanked Allah Almighty. Topic of his research study was Impact of Blended Teaching on the Writing Skills of EFL Students at the Intermediate Level: A Comparative Study of Blended Teaching and Grammar Translation Method.

## Lahore's AQI climbs to 237

LAHORE: Lahore's air quality remained hazardous as the AQI climbed to 237, placing the city second on the list of the world's most polluted urban centres. Several localities recorded extremely toxic readings, with levels surpassing 500 in some areas. The AQI reached 542 at the Civil Secretariat, 495 on Barki Road, 385 in Johar Town, 252 in Askari Ten, 233 in Iqbal Town, 231 in Gulberg II, 180 in DHA Phase V, and 168 on Bedian Road.—APP

## Workshop enhances young doctors' surgical skills

LAHORE: A hands-on Endoscopic Sinus Surgery Training Workshop was held on Wednesday at the ENT Department of Lahore General Hospital (LGH), where senior medical experts trained young doctors in modern surgical techniques and instrument handling. Principal Ameer-ud-Din Medical College (AMC) Prof. Dr. Farooq Afzal said that practical training workshops play a crucial role in polishing the professional abilities of young doctors, enabling them to enhance their expertise and ultimately improve patient care. Prof. Dr. Farooq Afzal appreciated the efforts of the organizing committee, including Dr. Adeel Niaz, Dr. Maqsood Ahmed, Dr. Amna Rafiq, and Dr. Zohra Aleem,

for successfully conducting the workshop. He also distributed shields among participants and thanked the master trainers for their valuable contribution, expressing hope for their continued support in strengthening the training programs at PGMI, AMC and LGH. MS Prof. Dr. Faryad Hussain, while addressing the participants, reaffirmed the commitment to continue providing world-class training and up-to-date medical skills to doctors, ensuring that the healthcare system remains aligned with international standards. During the workshop, participants received detailed briefings on advanced endoscopic sinus surgery techniques, equipment usage, and technical procedures.

Senior specialists demonstrated modern surgical methods, offering practical guidance to enhance clinical decision-making and operative skills, which was widely appreciated by attendees. Doctors from Punjab as well as other provinces actively joined the workshop, reflecting the growing confidence of medical professionals across the country in the faculty and advanced training standards of PGMI. The event was attended by Course Directors Dr. Muhammad Ilyas and Dr. Aamir Ayub, Master Trainers Prof. Anwar-ul-Haq, Prof. Najam-ul-Hasnain Khan, Prof. Tahir Rasheed, Prof. Saeed Khan and Dr. Mazhar Iftikhar, along with a large number of doctors.—APP

## KP introduces personalised registration mark system

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has officially launched a new Personalized Registration Mark (PRM) System, under which a vehicle number will now belong to the owner instead of the vehicle. Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Wednesday formally inaugurated the system, stating that under the new policy, vehicle owners will be able to retain their registration number even after selling their vehicle. The number will remain the personal property of the seller, while the buyer will be required to apply for a new registration number. Addressing the launch ceremony, the Chief Minister said that the digitized registration system will help eliminate fake number plates and vehicle cloning, while making the registration process faster, transparent and corruption-free. He emphasized that the government's primary goal is to provide relief to the public. Officials briefed the meeting that under the PRM system, vehicle numbers will be linked to a citizen's CNIC or mobile number, similar to personal identification data. A citizen may also reserve a registration number for up to three years without attaching it to any vehicle. Moreover, no additional fee will be charged for retaining the number after selling a vehicle. The Chief Minister also announced a martyrs' compensation package for Excise Department officers involved in anti-narcotics operations, similar to the police's martyrs' package. He praised the department's performance in drug-control operations and expressed confidence that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will soon become drug-free.—DNA

## ICCI showcases Pakistan's Pharma export potential

ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed Pakistan's deep regard for its brotherly ties with Sudan, appreciating Sudan's keen interest in building strong cooperation with Pakistan in the health sector

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A five-member high-level delegation from Sudan's Ministry of Health, led by Ali Babikir Seid Ahmed, Federal Secretary and Secretary General of the National Medicines & Poisons Board visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to explore avenues of collaboration in pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and manufacturing. In his welcome address, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed Pakistan's deep regard for its brotherly ties with Sudan, appreciating Sudan's keen interest in building strong cooperation with Pakistan in the health sector. He briefed the delegation on ICCI's pivotal role as the

leading representative body of the federal capital, committed to promoting trade and investment by fostering a conducive environment for ease of doing business. He highlighted the export strength of the region in pharmaceuticals, IT, mines and minerals, pink salt,

gemstones, and marble, stressing that enhanced cooperation in these sectors would yield mutual benefit for both countries. He assured the guests that ICCI is fully ready to deepen its institutional linkages with Sudanese chambers, adding that regular delegation

exchanges would play a vital role in connecting the business communities of both nations. Sharing their perspective, the Sudanese officials outlined the challenges currently confronting Sudan's health sector. They also briefed ICCI on a compre-

hensive five-year strategic framework developed by Sudan, consisting of around 45 key projects aimed at health system improvement. The delegation expressed interest in potential cooperation in medical equipment and technology supply, revival of solar energy solutions for healthcare facilities, and broader institutional collaboration. The delegation comprised Dr. Hayder Mohamed Abdel-Nabi, Director Hospitals Department; Mohamed Marwan Awad, Head of Executive Office; Hatim Motasim Mohamed Ali; and Ihab Abdulrazig, Counselor at the Embassy of Sudan in Islamabad. ICCI Vice President Irfan Chaudhry and several chamber members from the pharmaceutical sector were also present at the meeting.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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| 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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| Emergency  |
| Rescue (Police).....15                             |
| Bomb Disposal.....15                               |
| Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16  |
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| RGH.....9290301-7           |
| Holy Family.....9290322-7   |
| PIMS.....9261170-79         |
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| Shifa International 4603666 |



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| CDA.....9208301-04         |
| Met Office.....9250360-6   |
| RDA.....5555864            |
| TMA.....5770886            |
| Cantonment Board 9270151-3 |



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



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar presenting a photo album to Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, in the presence of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

# Pakistan, Türkiye proven reliable friends: Aleem

The minister emphasized that people-to-people connections significantly boost commercial activity, citing the example of direct flights to Baku, which led to an increase in business linkages between Pakistan and Azerbaijan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday said Pakistan and Türkiye are “all-weather, time-tested friends,” stressing that the historic ties between the two brotherly nations continue to strengthen across multiple sectors. He expressed these views during a meeting with a high-level delegation from the Bursa Chamber, Türkiye that called on Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan, here, said a press release. The 15-member delegation represents Türkiye’s Bursa Chamber and Defence Cluster Association based in Türkiye’s 4th largest city and the first capital of the Ottoman Empire and is visiting Pakistan under the umbrella of Türkiye’s Defence

Industry. During the meeting, the two sides held detailed discussions on expanding cooperation in Defence, Communications, Aerospace, Food, Automobile and Manufacturing sectors with a strong focus on strengthening Business-to-Government (B2G) ties. The delegation informed the Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan that all the participating companies have significant stakes in the MILGEM frigate project, reflecting the strategic depth of industrial cooperation between the two countries. They also expressed hope that Türkiye’s leading financial institution, Ziraat Bank, is allowed to open a branch in Pakistan to bolster bilateral trade and investment. Welcoming the delegation,

Abdul Aleem Khan said that Pakistan and Türkiye have always stood by each other in difficult moments and cooperation in defence and communications continues to hold strategic importance. He noted that relations between the two nations had further strengthened during the recent conflict with India. The minister emphasized that people-to-people connections significantly boost commercial activity, citing the example of direct flights to Baku, which led to an increase in business linkages between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. He said that enhanced air connectivity with Türkiye would yield similar benefits. He further stated that every Pakistani stands ready to support their Turkish brothers whenever needed and appreciated the del-

egation’s warm remark that “Jeevay Jeevay Pakistan” is fondly sung in Türkiye, as well. Discussions also covered the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Railway Corridor, where the Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan reaffirmed Pakistan’s full cooperation. The delegation highlighted that Bursa Chamber is among Türkiye’s largest and most influential industrial bodies and that Bursa remains a major centre for advanced manufacturing and exports. They also extended an invitation to the Federal Minister to visit Bursa. The meeting concluded with both sides expressing a strong commitment to deepening bilateral trade, B2G cooperation, industrial collaboration, and building long-term strategic partnerships between Pakistan and Türkiye.

# Pak steps up push for safer chemicals management

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is stepping up efforts to strengthen the safe management of chemicals, improve national chemicals governance and promote safer handling of hazardous substances, Joint Secretary (International Cooperation) at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Nazia Zaib Ali said on Wednesday. Speaking at the inaugural session of a capacity-building inception workshop on scaling up the implementation of the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), Nazia said the government remained committed to meeting its national and international environmental obligations, including those under the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Minamata, Vienna and Montreal conventions. She said the conventions aimed to protect human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and pollutants through international cooperation and regulation. The official, who also serves as the national focal point for

the Global Framework on Chemicals, described the GHS as an internationally recognised system for classifying chemical hazards and communicating them through standardised labels, pictograms and safety data sheets. She said the system ensured workers, consumers and communities received clear and consistent information about risks associated with chemicals. Nazia outlined measures already taken by the government, including the National Hazardous Waste Management Policy (2022) and its implementation plan. She said work was under way on further steps, such as a National Chemicals Management Policy, a Chemicals Control Act and the establishment of a specialised directorate for hazardous chemicals and waste. “These efforts reflect Pakistan’s determination to protect human health and the environment from the adverse impacts of chemicals for current and future generations,” she said. The work-

shop was organised by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (Unitar) in collaboration with UN agencies and the ministry. It aims to review existing GHS-related legislation, introduce technical elements of the system, assess needs across agriculture, workplaces and consumer products, and begin developing a national roadmap specifying roles, milestones and capacity-building requirements. “GHS is the basis for the safe use of chemicals. Through product labels and safety data sheets, the communication of hazards helps to ensure chemicals can be used safely and safeguards people’s health and the environment,” said Oliver Wootton, senior programme specialist at Unitar. Officials said the initiative would also help enhance chemicals management across supply chains, improve workplace safety, support compliance with international standards and contribute to sustainable development goals.—DNA

# 3.9m beneficiaries enrolled in Nashonuma Program, NA told

Imran Ahmad Shah said the government is determined to ensure that no corruption will be tolerated and that reforms will make the country’s flagship social welfare programme more efficient and transparent in the coming days.

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed on Wednesday that approximately 3.9 million beneficiaries have been enrolled in the ‘Nashonuma Program’ over the past five years to address the issue of stunting. Responding to questions during the question hour, Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Syed Imran Ahmad Shah said the enrolled beneficiaries include two million children and 1.8 million pregnant women. Citing an impact evaluation conducted by Agha Khan University, the minister said the programme has had a significant effect on reducing stunting. According to midline study results, stunting among children under two years of age has decreased by 6.4%, while stunting within the 6-month age group has declined by an “enormous” 20%.

He added that low birth weight has reduced by 5.6%, while early initiation of breastfeeding has increased by 11.6%. Imran Ahmad Shah informed the House that the programme—initially piloted in 15 districts—has now expanded nationwide. At present, it is operational in 157 districts through 542 facilitation centres. He clarified that there is no plan for further expansion of Nashonuma at the moment. The minister said over 10 million digital wallets have already been created under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), with SIM distribution underway. He assured that by March 2026, beneficiaries will no longer have to stand in long queues or face deductions and complaints, as payments will be fully digitised. He highlighted that BISP budget has significantly increased

from around Rs 500 billion to Rs 716 billion under Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif’s government. He said the Prime Minister is committed to bringing transparency and improving governance across all institutions, especially BISP. He added that the launch of the digital wallet system will eliminate previous complaints regarding deductions, long queues, or intermediaries. “Those days are now a thing of the past,” he said, expressing confidence that the new system will ensure beneficiaries receive their full payments without inconvenience. Imran Ahmad Shah said the government is determined to ensure that no corruption will be tolerated and that reforms will make the country’s flagship social welfare programme more efficient and transparent in the coming days.—APP

# FCCP seeks replies from power producers

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCCP) has sought replies from power generation companies on appeals challenging the tariff determination made by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA). The court also granted NEPRA additional time to submit the relevant documents and key written arguments. A two-member bench headed by Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi heard the appeals on Wednesday. During the proceedings, counsel for the power-producing companies, Salman Aslam Butt, argued that NEPRA determined the tariff at a time when the position of Chairman was vacant. He contended that in the absence of the Chairman, the Authority could not legally convene a meeting, rendering the tariff determination process unlawful. Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi questioned how the Authority could function without its Chairman, observing that the absence of the head of the regulatory body raised serious concerns about the validity of its proceedings. The counsel further argued that even the Vice Chairman was not authorised to preside over the meeting in the Chairman’s absence. Responding to a court query, he told the bench that the hearing on tariff determination concluded in March 2013, while the Chairman was appointed later in May 2013. He also pointed out that the final tariff determination order did not bear the Chairman’s signature. NEPRA’s counsel requested time to furnish the required documents, upon which the court directed him to submit the complete record along with written submissions.—DNA

# KIIR, KPRI organize seminar on Kashmir to mark HR Day

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, a major seminar titled “Kashmiris are Rights Holders, Not Just Subjects” was organized by Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) and Kashmiri Policy Research Institute (KPRI) at Jammu and Kashmir House, here on Wednesday. The seminar was attended by political leaders, former ambassadors, human rights experts, researchers, media representatives and students. The chief guest of the seminar was Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON Engineer Amir Muqam Speakers at the event included former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan, Senator R. Farhatullah Babar, Osman Atiq Khan of the Muslim Conference, Hurriyat leaders Farooq Rahmani, Abdul Hameed Lone, and Shaikh Abdul Mateen of APHC, human rights activist Dr. Khalid Aftab, Rana Qasim Noon, and youth leader Mahmood Shahzad Khan. The minister for Kashmir Affairs highlighted that Kashmir was a disputed issue whose future should be decided according to the wishes of the Kashmiri people. In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), he said that India used all the tactics of force but could not suppress the spirit of freedom of the Kashmiris. “I pay tribute to the martyrs of IIOJK and salute the Kashmiri people. The victory in the struggle for truth has once again made the Kashmir issue a topic of global discussion, he added. The speakers expressed deep concern over the current situation in IIOJK and the serious violations of human rights. They said that the right to self-determination enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties has been declared as the fundamental right of the Kashmiri people. Rana Qasim Noon drew parallels between oppression in Gaza and Kashmir, noting, “The Kashmir and Palestine causes are very similar. Over 500,000 Kashmiris have been martyred, yet atrocities continue. The issue must be resolved according to UN resolutions, giving Kashmiris the right to self-determination.” Former senator Farhatullah Babar saluted Kashmiri freedom fighters, including Yasin Malik and Masrat Butt, calling the Kashmir cause sacred. He warned against external interference, saying, “Since August 5, 2019, the entire Kashmir has become like a cantonment. The world must know that Kashmir has turned into a prison. Kashmir belongs to Kashmiris and no one else.—DNA

# China awards scholarship grant to KIU university

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Pakistan has awarded a grant of PKR 4 million to Karakoram International University (KIU) under the Ambassadorial Merit-cum-Need Scholarship initiative, further strengthening educational cooperation between the two countries. Gwadar Pro quoting a statement issued by KIU, officials from the Chinese Embassy handed over the grant, which will be used to support deserving and talented students at the university’s main campus and three sub-campuses. “The scholarship aims to empower financially challenged yet academically strong students in pursuing higher education,” reads the statement. Every year, more than 100 students from KIU Gilgit and its affiliated campuses receive scholarships under the Chinese ambassador’s initiative. KIU Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Attaullah Shah expressed gratitude to the Chinese ambassador and the embassy team, calling the support a significant step toward empowering youth in Gilgit-Baltistan. “This scholarship will help produce highly educated and skilled graduates who will contribute positively to society,” he said. “This gesture is highly valuable for the students, the university and the region.” On Nov. 25, 2025, KIU awarded scholarship cheques to 95 PhD, MS and BS students under the China-Pakistan Friendship Merit-cum-Need Scholarship Programme. Since 2022, more than 500 KIU students have benefited from the Chinese ambassador’s scholarships, while the latest assistance will allow additional deserving and meritorious students to benefit in the coming cycle.

# PO brought back from Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD: In a major breakthrough against transnational fugitives, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in coordination with Interpol has successfully arrested and repatriated proclaimed offender Taimoor Hasan from Saudi Arabia. According to an official statement shared by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on his social media account X, the suspect had been wanted by Punjab Police for the past four years. Acting on a Red Notice issued by FIA, Interpol authorities detained Hasan in Saudi Arabia and handed him over to Pakistani officials. FIA Immigration Islamabad formally transferred custody of the accused to Punjab Police upon his arrival in Pakistan. The Interior Minister praised the efforts of FIA’s National Central Bureau (NCB), calling the operation another significant success in the ongoing crackdown on absconders. “Well done, Team FIA,” Naqvi said in his statement.—APP



## Briefs

**Naqvi  
honors war  
Hero Sawar  
Muhammad  
Hussain**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, on the martyrdom anniversary of Pakistan Army's valiant hero Sawar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed, offered heartfelt tribute to the brave soldier whose courage on the Shakargarh front became a timeless chapter in the nation's military history. "I salute Sawar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed, who carved a new legacy of bravery on the Shakargarh battlefield," Naqvi said, praising the soldier's unwavering commitment to defending the motherland. The interior minister highlighted that Sawar Muhammad Hussain stood firm against the enemy with iron resolve, fearlessly marking hostile positions despite relentless shelling and heavy gunfire. "He continued to identify secret enemy positions even under a storm of bullets and artillery," Naqvi noted. Naqvi added that the martyr provided decisive intelligence about enemy strongholds without regard for his own life, significantly aiding the Pakistan Army's strategic advance. "His accurate identification of enemy posts played a crucial role in strengthening our forces' progress," he said. Paying homage to his ultimate sacrifice, Naqvi said, "Amid fire and steel, Sawar Muhammad Hussain embraced martyrdom while pinpointing enemy gun positions until his last breath." The interior minister emphasized that the martyr's sacrifice remains a shining example of steadfastness and courage for every soldier of the Pakistan Army. "His heroism sends a clear message to the enemies of Pakistan – every one of our soldiers considers laying down their life for the country the highest honor," Naqvi remarked.

**HR Secretary  
urges action,  
highlights  
rights  
awareness**

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of World Human Rights Day, Secretary of the Human Rights and Minorities Affairs Department Farid Ahmad Tarar emphasized the government's steadfast commitment to human rights, underscoring that the defense of these rights is a collective responsibility that necessitates a unified approach from all sectors of society. In an exclusive video message to a private news channel on the eve of World Human Rights Day, Secretary Farid Ahmad Tarar highlighted that a comprehensive human rights policy is already in place in the region, supported by a dedicated task force to ensure its effective implementation. He emphasized that safeguarding human rights is a collective responsibility that requires active participation from all segments of society, including government bodies, institutions and civil society organizations. Tarar stressed that only through coordinated efforts can the policy achieve its intended impact. Urging the youth to play a proactive role, he called for increased awareness and engagement in promoting and protecting human rights. He highlighted that the younger generation's involvement is critical in fostering a culture of respect, equality and accountability throughout the community. **APP**

**COURT NOTICE**

IN THE COURT  
SHAHZADA KAMRAN  
JUDGE CIVIL/Family  
COURT RAWALPINDI  
Suit For Dissolution  
Marriage on the basis  
of Khullah Mst. Yasmeen Versus Asif Khan  
Notice to Asif Khan  
s/o Abdul Ghani R/o  
House No. 3, Street  
No. 19, Mohallah Dar  
Ul Islam, Kamal Abad  
Rawalpindi. The service  
through ordinary means  
is difficult, so you are  
informed to attend the  
court personally, through  
counsel or attorney on  
11-12-2025 at 9 am avoid  
exparte proceeding.

# Chinese Foundation hands over water-Rescue Kits to CDA

As storms, floods, and flash-flood risks persist in many parts of Pakistan, the transfer of these rescue kits and the strengthening of local emergency response capacities come at a crucial time

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has received special water-rescue kits from the Blue Sky Rescue (BSR) Foundation, a Chinese rescue organisation, in a signing-ceremony held at CDA headquarters. At the event, CDA Member Administration Talaat Mehmood thanked the

foundation for the equipment, calling it "a valuable gift that will enhance the safety of the federal capital and strengthen our emergency-services capacity." He added, "These modern rescue kits will enable our staff to respond more effectively to water emergencies." Blue Sky Rescue Foundation's team said they would continue cooperation "in pursuit of our shared goal of saving human lives,"

and pledged to provide special training to CDA's relevant personnel on the use of the rescue kits, Gwadar Pro reported. Also present were senior officers from CDA and the Islamabad Emergency Services, who said the new kits, which are provided free of cost, would significantly improve the city's ability to manage water-related accidents and respond rapidly to emergencies. According to

CDA officials, this follows an earlier training program carried out in July, in which Blue Sky Rescue Foundation trained CDA staff in high-flow rescue operations and boat handling. The addition of the new kits is expected to further boost Islamabad's disaster-response readiness. CDA and the foundation have agreed to soon sign a formal memorandum of understanding to expand their

collaboration, including more training and provision of modern rescue gear. The foundation currently operates in over 20 countries, underscoring the international scope of the partnership. As storms, floods, and flash-flood risks persist in many parts of Pakistan, the transfer of these rescue kits and the strengthening of local emergency response capacities come at a crucial time.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari with Ambassador-designate to Djibouti Ms Aqsa Nawaz at Aiwan-e-Sadr. =DNA

## Mobile library unveiled at Pak-China Friendship School Gwadar

GWADAR: The UNICEF's exclusive educational campaign "Mobile Library" has rolled out in Pak-China Friendship School, officially known as "Government Girls Middle School Faqeer Colony, Gwadar on 10th December with zeal and zest. Pak-China Friendship School Gwadar has been selected as starting point for UNICEF's literacy drive for children in Gwadar. More than 500 enrolled students are the first recipients of the campaign through which they get an opportunity to read diverse books free of cost, Gwadar Pro reported. The Mobile Library will later go to other educational institutions in Gwadar. In collaboration with Government of Balochistan, district education Gwadar and Global Part-

nership, UNICEF "Mobile Library program" was inaugurated by provincial lawmaker Hadiath ur Rehman at Pak-China Friendship School Gwadar. During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, district education officer Zahir Husain, district program manager Adeel Noorazi, former municipal chairman Sharif Miandad, school administration, students were present in good numbers. On of the main motive of the UNICEF Mobile Library or Book Van is to foster sense of book friendship among the students, give a boost to book reading habit and motivate students for conducting deep studies. Khadija Baloch, student of 9th class at Pak-China Friendship School Gwadar told Gwadar pro that on the first day, when she entered the Mo-

bile Library or Book Van, she found many books that directly relate to their syllabus. "In Gwadar like remote settlement, UNICEF Mobile Library has opened a new world for us," she added. Pak-China Friendship School focal person Naseem Baloch praised the UNICEF Book Van initiatives in the school saying it marked a healthy study enhancing program. After staying for few days here, the UNICEF Mobile Library or BOOK Van will move to other more than 350 educational institutions in the vicinity of Gwadar. The move, approved by the Balochistan School Education Department, is a significant milestone in improving access to quality education for students in Gwadar.—DNA

## China sends 1,000 winter blankets to flood-hit families

ISLAMABAD: Professor Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, distributed 1,000 winter blankets donated by China among flood-affected villagers in Narowal, saying the support reflects the "enduring bond between Pakistan and China". Speaking to a large gathering of women and men seated in the courtyard, Ahsan Iqbal said the donation was arranged especially for families whose belongings were lost during this year's floods, according to Gwadar Pro. "These blankets that we are distributing amongst you today are a gift from the people of China for those whose blankets and other belongings were damaged in the flood, so they can protect themselves from the cold," he told villagers. Iqbal thanked China for its continued assistance. "Whenever some tough time comes on Pakistan, Chinese people always consider the grief of Pakistan their own," he said. "We are proud of our friendship with China." Alongside winter relief, Iqbal said his team has provided canola seeds for nearly 5,000 acres of farmland in areas where crops were damaged, adding that the seeds were procured through private organisations and individual donors rather than government funds. "This is not from the government," he underlined, saying many farmers lacked resources to sow wheat this season. At the event, women wrapped in winter shawls queued to receive the "We Care" branded blankets, while officials and community elders assisted the distribution. Some families said the aid would help them cope with harsh nights as many homes remain partially repaired. Pakistan suffered severe monsoon flooding in 2025, with the National Disaster Management Authority reporting heavy losses across Punjab, including Narowal, where agricultural land, homes and livestock were inundated. The disaster affected millions nationwide, leaving thousands of families struggling to rebuild livelihoods months after the waters receded. Iqbal said that while reconstruction will take time, targeted winter support and agricultural assistance are steps toward helping families recover and resume farming activities in the coming season.—DNA

**RTO seizes  
3,000 bales  
of raw  
tobacco**

ISLAMABAD: In a significant breakthrough against illicit tobacco and cigarette trade, the Regional Tax Office (RTO) Abbottabad has seized 3,000 bales of raw tobacco, each weighing approximately 80,000 kg, during an extensive enforcement operation. This unprecedented action reflects RTO Abbottabad's firm resolve to curb revenue leakages, dismantle illegal supply networks, and safeguard compliant businesses. The premises involved have been sealed, and a formal investigation has been initiated, said a news release here on Wednesday. This operation, one of the largest tobacco confiscations in the region's history, reaffirms the FBR's commitment to eliminating the menace of smuggling and illicit trade through enhanced monitoring and decisive enforcement. **APP**

**Over 72%  
children  
under 5  
anemic**

ISLAMABAD: The latest data from India's National Family Health Survey has exposed a staggering public health crisis in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, with over 72.7% of children under the age of five suffering from anemia, underscoring the urgent need for immediate intervention to address widespread nutritional deficiencies and protect the health and well-being of the region's most vulnerable population. According to Kashmir Media Service, the survey further shows that 26.9 percent of children under five are stunted, while 19 percent are underweight, indicating severe nutritional deficiencies. Additionally, 9.6% of children are overweight, reflecting a complex nutritional landscape that combines under nutrition and rising obesity in young children.—APP

## Inauguration of Chrysanthemum exhibition

ISLAMABAD: DG RG&SA, Major General Akif Iqbal (Hilal-e-Imtiaz Military), inaugurated the Chrysanthemum Exhibition held on Bank Road under the auspices of the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board. On this occasion, President and Station Commander Ali Anjum Syed, CEO Rawalpindi Cantonment Board Aamer Rashed, DG RDA Kinza Murtaza, Additional CEO Zia Hussain, Deputy CEO Nasir Kamal, Lieutenant Colonel Raja Shakeel, President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce Usman Shaukat, members of the business community, and a large number of citizens were present. CEO Aamer Rashed, along with the relevant officers, briefed Major General Akif Iqbal about various sections of the exhibition. Folk music was also arranged, and stalls featuring handicrafts and other items were set up. Special stalls representing all provinces of Pakistan—including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir—along with other displays showcased Pakistan's cultural traditions, music, and handicrafts. Thousands of colorful and rare flowers, especially chrysanthemums and other autumn blooms are being displayed in the exhibition. The exhibition will continue on Bank Road from December 10 to December 14 and is open to families and children. A large number of citizens attended the exhibition and showed great interest in the beautiful flower stalls. According to CEO Aamer Rashed, the five-day exhibition aims to promote environmentally friendly activities and encourage the public to appreciate and connect with nature.—DNA

## Pakistan's progress lies in protection of human rights: Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Wednesday emphasized that the path to Pakistan's progress lies in the complete protection and promotion of human rights. In his message on International Human Rights Day, the minister said the day reminds society to create ease for one another and adopt attitudes rooted in justice and compassion. "The development of any nation is linked with the dignity of its people, adherence to law, and commitment to public service," he added. Highlighting the government's initiatives for social welfare, Hanif Abbasi said that the current government is undertaking various programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic well-being of citizens. He said these include welfare

schemes, financial support initiatives, and expanded employment opportunities. The minister reiterated that women, persons with disabilities, and the labour community remain top priorities for the government, as part of its broader commitment to inclusive development. Hanif Abbasi said that the principles of human rights are being promoted across all national institutions, including Pakistan Railways. "Empowering youth and providing them with education and employment opportunities is a vital component of advancing human rights in the country," he added. The minister reaffirmed the government's resolve to build a just, respectful, and people-centric Pakistan where every citizen enjoys equal rights and opportunities.—APP

## Short term plan formulated for climate action ahead of monsoon

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharaal on Wednesday informed the National Assembly that the government has launched a short-term, 240-day climate action plan aimed at boosting the country's flood resilience ahead of the upcoming monsoon season. Responding to questions during the question hour, She said the newly approved plan outlines 14 key interventions to be implemented across the country. These include the construction of monsoon ponds in flood-prone districts, upgrades to flood forecasting and early-warning systems, establishment of emergency logistics networks, and integration of flood control, water management, and climate adaptation measures into provincial development strategies. The minister said the plan

was developed following a meeting convened by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on November 19, reflecting Islamabad's recognition of climate change as a dire and growing threat to Pakistan. "Despite our relatively small share of global emissions, Pakistan faces disproportionately severe impacts – from flash floods and cloudbursts to worsening air quality," she told lawmakers. She said water-regulation councils will register the planned interventions, and new "monsoon ponds" will help collect and manage excess rainfall and floodwaters, reducing disaster risk. On pollution and air quality, the minister said the government is taking a series of coordinated measures to address deteriorating air quality, particularly in Punjab's major cities, which remain heavily affected by smog. The minister said all provinces were undertaking efforts to combat air

pollution, adding that Sindh had taken notable steps. She said Punjab, especially Lahore, Faisalabad and other urban centres, had introduced a wide range of initiatives to curb smog and improve air quality. She noted that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif had introduced "smog guns" and established a state-of-the-art monitoring mechanism that provides 24-hour real-time information on air quality across districts. In the agriculture sector, she said the provincial government had deployed equipment such as smart seeders and happy seeders to discourage stubble burning, thereby reducing emissions at source. The minister added that Punjab had also upgraded brick kilns by introducing zigzag technology to eliminate hazardous white smoke, while strict compliance measures were being enforced on industrial waste management.

Regarding Islamabad, she said the major contributor to pollution was the transport sector. Nearly 800 heavy vehicles operating with outdated engines and low-quality fuel had been impounded. She said many brick kilns in the Islamabad Capital Territory had either been shut down or required to shift to modern, cleaner technologies. "Concrete, time-bound actions are the need of the hour," the minister told lawmakers. "This short-term plan reflects the seriousness of the government's commitment under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to protect communities, safeguard natural resources and improve quality of life." The minister added that provincial governments are already being coordinated to begin implementation. She reaffirmed the government's commitment to reducing pollution levels and improving environmental governance nationwide.

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## While others debate, Saudi Arabia builds and adjusts

ALI SHIHABI

**S**AUDI Arabia is often viewed through the spectacle of its megaprojects. But renderings obscure the deeper story: the Kingdom is restoring a capability many advanced economies have lost, namely the ability to plan in decades while adjusting course in real time. In an era where long-term governance has eroded, this capacity is increasingly rare. Across the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, governments struggle to turn ambition into delivery. California's high-speed rail has consumed 16 years and more than \$10 billion without producing a single operating line. Germany's industrial and energy policy shifts with coalition politics. The UK has cycled through five prime ministers in eight years as major infrastructure projects stall in endless consultations. Policy continuity, once a Western hallmark, has frayed. Saudi Arabia's trajectory since launching Vision 2030 in 2016 offers a stark contrast. Non-oil gross domestic product has grown between 4 percent and 5 percent annually since 2017. Tourism exceeded 100 million visits last year, reaching the 2030 target early. Female labor participation has risen from 19 percent to more than 34 percent. Regulations have been modernized, mining has attracted billions, logistics capacity has expanded, and the Kingdom is positioning itself as a leading regional hub for advanced digital infrastructure. These gains reflect coordinated execution. Equally important, the government has shown discipline in adjusting strategy. It has revised or downsized several major initiatives to avoid overstretching capacity and to protect fiscal balance. Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan summarized this approach when he said the Kingdom has "no ego whatsoever" and will accelerate, delay or cancel projects "without blinking" when necessary. This approach differs sharply from, for example, China, which spent decades building ahead of demand. The result is several trillion dollars in wasted investment. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, has shown it will adjust direction before projects become structural liabilities. Flexibility has become even more valuable as artificial intelligence reshapes the economics of energy and industry. While public debate

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often focuses on skylines, a quieter transformation is underway. AI development is increasingly constrained not by chips or talent but by electricity. In Northern Virginia, the world's largest data center hub, utilities warn that new gigawatt-scale connections may take years. In Europe, electricity prices of 15 cents to 20 cents per kilowatt-hour make large-scale model training prohibitively expensive. In a global environment where delays translate into strategic disadvantage, speed has become a competitive asset. Saudi Arabia offers a different model. Instead of exporting energy alone, the Kingdom is beginning to host the computation that energy powers. Solar electricity in the country costs around 1 cent per kWh, compared with 7 cents to 9 cents for US industrial consumers. For AI workloads that demand enormous and scalable power, locating computing resources where energy is cheap and abundant is simply logical. It also reduces pressure on saturated Western grids. This shift has already begun. A 500-MW data center is being built in the Kingdom by xAI. A joint venture with AMD and Cisco aims for up to 1 GW of capacity by 2030. Adobe and Qualcomm are deploying generative AI workloads optimized for regional markets. Blackstone has committed \$3 billion to AI-focused data warehouses. Aramco Digital and Groq are targeting inference speeds of 1 billion tokens per second. National data center capacity is projected to grow from about 350 MW today to 1.3 GW by 2030. Saudi Arabia does not claim technological primacy. It relies on American chips, Western algorithms and global expertise. But it provides what the AI economy now values most: abundant power, the rapid issuance of permits and strong political will. The Kingdom can build digital and industrial capacity quickly and predictably while remaining aligned with US technology and security standards. In a global environment where delays translate into strategic disadvantage, speed has become a competitive asset. These differences in state capability are already influencing global capital flows. Multinational firms increasingly seek jurisdictions that offer clarity, durability and reliable implementation. Saudi Arabia has positioned itself as one of the few emerging economies that can provide these conditions. The presence of large numbers of global CEOs at Saudi investment forums reflects this reality. Risks remain. Overspending and execution challenges must be managed and institutions must continue to evolve. But the broader pattern is unmistakable. At a time when many governments struggle to look beyond immediate pressures, Saudi Arabia is reviving the ability to think in decades while adjusting quickly as circumstances shift. In a world where long-term governance has become the exception rather than the norm, this combination of strategic ambition and disciplined course correction is becoming one of the Kingdom's most significant competitive advantages.

## How Trump 's Tariffs Handed Beijing the Strategic Advantage

Qamar Bashir



Canada's recalibration was more subtle but equally significant. Diplomatic disagreements over minerals, technology cooperation, and U.S. extraterritorial trade measures strained relations.

Ottawa expanded trade dialogues with Beijing and pursued independent access to Chinese markets for agriculture, wood products, and minerals. By mid-2025, Canadian officials publicly emphasized the need for "balanced engagement" with both global powers—a diplomatic signal not seen in decades. America's traditional sphere of influence was shrinking...

**W**HEN Donald Trump returned to the White House in January 2025, he entered office with a renewed conviction that China was the central threat to America's economic supremacy. During his campaign he promised to impose the "highest tariffs ever placed on another nation," and within weeks of taking office he announced a broad tariff package that lifted the average rate on Chinese imports to levels not seen in modern U.S. history. The administration framed it as a strategic correction to decades of unfair Chinese trade practices, but what unfolded over the first months of the new tariff war revealed a very different picture: China absorbing the shock, recalibrating supply chains, and emerging stronger, while the United States confronted rising costs, diplomatic fractures, and strategic vulnerabilities it had underestimated. The backbone of the 2025 tariff package was a sweeping 50 percent levy on a wide category of Chinese industrial goods, consumer electronics, batteries, EV components, and machinery. This instantly reshaped the cost structure for American importers. U.S. Customs data for the first half of 2025 showed Chinese imports dropping sharply, falling from \$427 billion in 2024 to an annualized pace below \$300 billion. The White House celebrated this as proof of success. But a closer look by the Federal Reserve and private research groups painted a darker reality: the tariffs did not revive American manufacturing; they simply diverted sourcing to Vietnam, Mexico, India, and Malaysia, often for the very same Chinese-made components routed through partner countries. Prices for American consumers rose, corporate costs increased, and inflationary pressure resurfaced at a moment when the administration hoped to claim victory over rising prices. Even more troubling for Washington was the fiscal contradiction that unfolded almost immediately. Although the administration touted billions collected in tariffs as a demonstration of strength, those very funds had to be redirected to rescue the sectors devastated by Trump's own tariff shock. Agriculture was the first casualty. As China reduced forward contracts and diversified grain, meat, and oilseed imports away from the United States, American farmers faced sudden price drops, unsold inventories, and shrinking export volumes. To prevent political and financial collapse in farm states, the Trump administration authorized a \$9 billion bailout package in Dec-2025. In effect, money the government collected through tariffs was immediately paid back out to the very industries harmed by the policy. This circular flow of revenue defeated the central logic of tariff imposition. A tariff meant to punish China wound up punishing American producers instead, while China sidestepped the pain by shifting its procurement elsewhere. The policy, which was sold as a tool to strengthen America, became economically self-defeating from its first months of implementation. USDA's July 2025 export report showed a noticeable

softening in forward contracts to China, and analysts warned that the United States was losing ground in markets it once considered secure. The shift was subtle but irreversible: China no longer depended on the United States as a primary food supplier in 2025, a strategic transformation with long-term consequences. The deepest U.S. vulnerability, however, lay in advanced manufacturing inputs. China entered 2025 still controlling more than 85 percent of the world's rare-earth processing capacity and over 90 percent of high-strength magnet production. Within months of the new American tariffs, Chinese regulators slowed export licensing for neodymium and praseodymium magnets—core components for American EV motors, military guidance systems, medical equipment, and renewable energy technologies. U.S. firms across aerospace, automotive, and defense reported delays and rising costs. The Pentagon raised internal alarms that domestic stockpiles were insufficient for a prolonged commercial disruption. This pressure forced the United States back to the negotiation table sooner than anticipated. By late summer 2025, behind-the-scenes discussions between Washington and Beijing produced a partial easing of China's export control enforcement in exchange for the United States scaling back parts of the 50 percent tariff tranche. The revised rate for several industrial categories fell closer to 10–15 percent, reflecting an unspoken acknowledgment that the U.S. economy could not sustain the confrontation without jeopardizing its own technological capacity. Officials avoided calling it a retreat, but markets understood it clearly: America's leverage in the tariff war was far weaker than it appeared. As economic tensions intensified, geopolitical dynamics shifted dramatically. Europe, long America's foundational ally, began charting a more independent course. The most symbolic moment came in December 2025, when French President Emmanuel Macron undertook a multi-day state visit to China that included meetings with Xi Jinping in Beijing and Guangzhou, cultural engagements, and a highly publicized walk among Chinese citizens—an unprecedented gesture of diplomatic warmth. Germany deepened EV and battery cooperation with Chinese firms, while the European Commission resisted U.S. requests to impose parallel tariffs on Chinese goods, arguing that Europe needed stability, not retaliation. The message was unmistakable: Washington's unpredictability was driving Europe to diversify its strategic relationships. Canada's recalibration was more subtle but equally significant. Diplomatic disagreements over minerals, technology cooperation, and U.S. extraterritorial trade measures strained relations. Ottawa expanded trade dialogues with Beijing and pursued independent access to Chinese markets for agriculture, wood products, and minerals. By mid-2025, Canadian officials publicly emphasized the need for "balanced engagement" with both global powers—a diplomatic signal not seen in decades. America's traditional sphere of influence was shrinking, not through conflict but through erosion of trust in Washington's

long-term policy consistency. While the United States confronted inflationary pressure and strained alliances, China's macroeconomic position continued strengthening. MOFCOM reported a trade surplus of \$798 billion in 2024, and the first six months of 2025 indicated a similar trajectory despite reduced exports to the United States. The explanation was simple: China expanded exports to Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe, partially compensating for the American market. Beijing also increased domestic demand stimulus, targeted high-tech investment, and pushed forward EV, robotics, and solar manufacturing expansions. Far from weakening, China's export engine rebalanced toward new partners, reinforcing its status as the world's manufacturing hub. Even more significant was the perception shift globally. Nations increasingly viewed China as the more predictable partner in long-term economic planning. The U.S. political cycle—with sharp reversals every four years—introduced uncertainty that businesses, governments, and investors found destabilizing. China, by contrast, offered continuity. Whether one agrees with its political system or not, Beijing delivered reliability, and in global commerce, reliability is currency. Inside the United States, the consequences became visible. Importers faced higher costs, consumers encountered rising prices, farmers saw shrinking access to China, manufacturers struggled with supply chain bottlenecks, and strategic allies questioned American dependability. The tariff war, intended to reassert American power, instead exposed structural weaknesses that had been growing for years: inequality, fragile supply chains, political polarization, and an economic model increasingly dependent on global components that America no longer produced. Yet the lesson is not that the United States is in decline. It remains an extraordinary nation with vast resources, unmatched innovation, and resilient institutions. But the 2025 tariff confrontation with China revealed a profound strategic miscalculation. China did not defeat America; America undermined itself by acting without a full appreciation of the interconnected global systems on which its own prosperity depends. A course correction is still possible, but it requires rebuilding alliances, stabilizing economic policy, investing in domestic capability, and recognizing that leadership is earned not through confrontation alone but through consistency, partnership, and trust. In 2025, China won the tariff war not by overpowering the United States but by understanding the world better than Washington understood itself. The question now is whether America can learn quickly enough to avoid repeating the same mistake.

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Former Press Minister,  
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Former Press Attaché to Malaysia  
Former MD, SRBC  
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## From the Green Field to the Battle Field

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



General Syed Asim Munir's career reflects a blend of military excellence, diplomatic wisdom, and an astute understanding of Pakistan's economic and security landscape. As a soldier, he has served on critical postings where clarity of mind and firmness of resolve were indispensable. His command in the most sensitive regions...

**O**N Friday April 18, 1986, the final match of the Austral-Asia Cup between Pakistan and India was awaited with a rare intensity. Even a day before the encounter, it felt as if the entire nation had paused in anticipation. The next day, households ensured every task was completed well before time, and people gathered in front of their television sets as though attending a national ceremony. The stadium was filled to the brim with enthusiastic fans from Pakistan and India. Pakistan won the toss and chose to field first. India, with steady composure, posted a total of 245 runs in 50 overs, losing only seven wickets. It was a respectable score, neither modest nor unreachable. But what followed tested the nerves and faith of an entire nation. From the very beginning, Pakistan's batting faltered. Wickets tumbled in rapid succession, and before long, five Pakistani players had returned to the pavilion without even reaching double figures. Each dismissal tightened the atmosphere. Yet, in the midst of this collapse, one man stood firm—Javed Miandad. His presence at the crease was a lesson in courage, strategy, and unwavering belief. With every run he scored, he injected hope back into millions of hearts. He fought like a lone warrior, shielding one end with extraordinary grit, accumulating 110 precious runs. As the match neared its conclusion, the tension was nearly unbearable. It all came down to the last ball; Pakistan was nine wickets down and four runs were required to win. Chetan Sharma charged in to bowl, and every Pakistani watching held their breath. It was a full toss—an error that destiny perhaps had reserved for this very moment. And Miandad, with the calmness of a seasoned maestro and the audacity of a champion, swung it over the boundary. The stadium erupted, and so did the entire nation. Pakistan won the match, but more than that, it won a memory that would live across generations. Today, nearly four decades later, those who wit-

nessed that remarkable day can still recall the roar of triumph, the disbelief, and the sheer exhilaration of that victory against India. Even now, Javed Miandad remains a hero etched in our collective memory. His name evokes pride, gratitude, and admiration for what one man's courage can achieve. Chetan Sharma, though a good and promising fast bowler, saw his career overshadowed by that one unforgettable six. If we, as a nation, do not forget the hero who secured a cricketing victory for Pakistan, then why should we hesitate to honour the commander who secured a real war victory for the country? If a sportsman's triumph earns eternal respect in our hearts, then surely the general who safeguarded the nation's dignity and defended its frontiers deserves even greater reverence. It is in this spirit that the nomination of General Syed Asim Munir as Field Marshal and subsequently as Chief of Defence Forces stands as a testament to his distinguished service, remarkable leadership, and historic achievements. His elevation is not merely a ceremonial gesture; it is recognition of his steadfast devotion to Pakistan, his strategic brilliance, and the honour he has brought to our armed forces across the world. General Syed Asim Munir's career reflects a blend of military excellence, diplomatic wisdom, and an astute understanding of Pakistan's economic and security landscape. As a soldier, he has served on critical postings where clarity of mind and firmness of resolve were indispensable. His command in the most sensitive regions demonstrated his deep understanding of modern warfare, counter-terrorism, intelligence coordination, and the challenges posed by hybrid threats. He proved himself not only as a battlefield leader but also as a guardian of national security who could anticipate dangers before they emerged. On the foreign front, General Asim Munir projected Pakistan's image with dignity and confidence. His engage-

ments with global leaders reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to peace, stability, and responsible partnership in international affairs. He played a vital role in restoring balance to Pakistan's diplomatic relationships, strengthening ties with the Middle East, Central Asian republics, United States, China, and other allies. His ability to articulate Pakistan's strategic concerns with clarity earned respect in foreign capitals and elevated Pakistan's standing at various international forums. Equally important was his contribution to stabilising Pakistan's economic environment. At a time when the country faced acute financial turbulence, General Asim Munir facilitated coordination between security institutions, the economic team, and foreign partners. His efforts to support investment initiatives, including collaboration with Gulf states, contributed to renewed confidence in Pakistan's economic potential. By ensuring internal stability, he directly reinforced an environment conducive to economic recovery—a role often overlooked but vital for national progress. Leadership, in its true sense, is a gift bestowed by Allah upon whom He wills. As the Qur'an reminds us, Allah grants honour to whom He wishes and brings low whom He wishes. When a nation witnesses the rise of a leader whose integrity, discipline, and devotion inspire faith, it must acknowledge that such elevation comes from a higher decree. General Syed Asim Munir's journey reflects that divine principle: perseverance rewarded, sincerity recognised, and service honoured. Just as Javed Miandad's last-ball six became a timeless symbol of victory for Pakistan, the steadfast leadership of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir stands as a beacon of strength, pride, and security for the nation. Heroes in sports give us joy; heroes in uniform safeguard our existence. Pakistan's salute to its defenders is not merely tradition—it is gratitude, carved into the nation's conscience.



## Briefs

## Govt mulls shifting Imran Khan from Adiala...

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advance talks, it is a welcome development," he said. However, he disclosed that the opposition conveyed that it wanted dialogue only with Chief of Defence Staff and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir. "The very forces that defeated India were targeted with offensive language," he lamented. Ayaz Sadiq said the opposition had taken politics to a point "from where return may no longer be possible", noting that the parliamentary floor was repeatedly used for anti-judiciary and anti-army rhetoric. "I moved four steps forward for dialogue, but now I have had to retreat 40 steps," he said. "If Pakistan exists, politics exists, and everything else exists."

## IMF urges Pakistan broaden tax regime

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the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), allowing the authorities to draw the equivalent of about \$200 million. "Accelerating reforms in the energy sector is critical to safeguarding its viability and improving Pakistan's competitiveness. Timely implementation of power tariff adjustments has helped reduce the stock and flow of circular debt," said IMF Deputy Managing Director and EB's Acting Chair Nigel Clarke. Highlighting that subsequent efforts need to focus on sustainably reducing electricity production and distribution costs and addressing inefficiencies in the power and gas sectors, Clarke said that efforts to advance structural reforms should continue to unlock growth potential and attract high-impact private investment. "The publication of the Governance and Corruption Diagnostic report is a welcome step in accelerating governance reforms. Additional efforts should focus on SOE governance reforms and privatisation, enhancing the business environment and improving economic data and statistics," the IMF official noted. The IMF has said that Islamabad's strong implementation of the IMF programme, despite recent devastating floods, has maintained stability and improved financing and external conditions. Policy priorities remain centred on maintaining macroeconomic stability and advancing reforms to strengthen public finances, enhance competition, raise productivity and competitiveness, bolster the social safety net and human capital, reform state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and improve public service provision and energy sector viability. The recent floods highlight the urgency of moving swiftly on climate-related reforms to build resilience to the frequent natural disasters that Pakistan faces. The authorities are making progress on such reforms, supported by the RSF. The completion of the reviews allows for an immediate disbursement of around \$1 billion under the EFF and around \$200 million under the RSF, bringing total disbursements under the two arrangements to about \$3.3 billion.

## Bilawal opposes banning...

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party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa must improve their conduct," Bilawal said while speaking to the media in Lahore. The PPP chairman warned that any interference in ongoing counterterrorism operations could create serious problems, adding that if a political party becomes a facilitator for terrorists, imposing governor's rule might become unavoidable. Debate about ousting the KP government intensified after State Minister for Law Aqeel Malik said that the federal government was "seriously considering" imposing a governor's rule in the province, citing the security situation and poor governance. In response, PTI-backed KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi dared the PML-N-led government to impose the governor's rule.

## Netherlands defeat Pakistan 5-2 in FIH Pro League opener

*The Dutch star Tijmen Reyenga was named Player of the Match for his outstanding performance, contributing significantly to his team's offensive power*

## DNA

ARGENTINA: Defending champions Netherlands began their FIH Hockey Pro League 2025-26 campaign with a commanding 5-2 win over debutants Pakistan. The Dutch side, known for their tactical discipline and attacking flair, dominated large spells of the match, asserting their status as one of the world's top-ranked teams. Pakistan, featuring in the Pro League for the first time, entered the tournament with modest expectations, especially as they currently stand at World No. 15 and face some of the toughest hockey nations in the world. Despite the odds, the Green Shirts managed to make their mark on

the scoreboard. Pakistan's goals came from Sufyan and Hanan Shahid, both of whom showed individual brilliance and took advantage of the few openings created by the Pakistani attack. Their goals provided brief momentum, but the Netherlands quickly regained control with their superior structure and finishing. The Dutch star Tijmen Reyenga was named Player of the Match for his outstanding performance, contributing significantly to his team's offensive power. Pakistan secured their place in this season's Pro League only after New Zealand withdrew from the competition. This opportunity is seen as a valuable learning experience for the young Pakistani squad, who will now face world-class teams throughout the tournament.



## Lionel Messi creates MLS history, wins second consecutive MVP award

ARGENTINA: Argentina's Lionel Messi has won the Major League Soccer (MLS) MVP award for the second consecutive time on Tuesday. Messi has become the first player in MLS history to win back-to-back MVP awards. The 38-year-old Argentine maestro, who helped Inter Miami to win the MLS Cup, has delivered a sensational performance this season. Messi led the league with 29 goals, the fourth most in any MLS campaign and 19 assists during the regular season. Lionel Messi was very happy after receiving the award, saying he is very thankful, but he wants to share the award with his teammates. "I'm happy to receive this award and be the first in the history of this league to win it in two consecutive years," Messi said. "I'm very thankful." "I'm thankful for this recognition. It's always nice to receive individual awards but I want to share it with my teammates. I was also fortunate to win the MLS Golden Boot thanks to the help of my teammates." Besides him, only one player had won two MVP awards in MLS, and it was Preki, who did it in 1997 and 2003. In 2024, Messi secured the MLS MVP award after scoring 20 goals and 16 assists over 19 matches. Messi joined Inter Miami in July 2023 from Paris Saint-Germain and helped the Herons to win the Leagues Cup, a tournament for MLS and Mexican League clubs, that year, and he also succeeded in winning the 2024 MLS Supporters' Shield with a league-best 74 points in the regular season. - APP

## Liverpool Shock Inter; Barcelona and Bayern Claim Wins

*Liverpool stun Inter without Salah as Barcelona, Bayern launch comebacks, Chelsea fall, and Spurs, Atletico, Marseille, Monaco and Olympiakos secure vital Champions League wins across dramatic European night of action*

MUNICH: After leaving Mohamed Salah in England, Liverpool got a much-needed boost with a 1-0 win over Inter Milan in the Champions League on Tuesday, while Barcelona and Bayern Munich celebrated comeback wins and Chelsea lost. With Salah out of the squad following his public criticism of the club last week, Dominik Szoboszlai stepped up instead to score the 88th-minute penalty which earned a 1-0 win over one of the competition's best-performing teams. It was all the more valuable for coming after a run of one win in six games in all competitions for Arne Slot's under-pressure team, which moved up to eighth. Liverpool's players thought they had taken the lead with Ibrahima Konate's header in the 31st minute but, after a video review that lasted more than four minutes, it was ruled out for handball as Virgil van Dijk had earlier

noddled the ball on to the arm of Hugo Ekitike. Having taken away a goal from Liverpool, VAR came to the visitors' aid when it spotted that Alessandro Bastoni had tugged Florian Wirtz's shirt in the area, with the midfielder flailing to the ground. Szoboszlai converted the penalty. Bayern's 17-year-old midfielder Lenart Karl produced an audacious bit of skill to continue his high-scoring start to life in the Champions League in a 3-1 win over Sporting Lisbon earlier Tuesday. Karl scored his third goal in four career Champions League games, controlling a pass from Konrad Laimer in mid-air before volleying a shot from a tight angle over two onrushing defenders and past the goalkeeper. It was part of a 12-minute, three-goal turnaround for Bayern after Joshua Kimmich's own-goal handed Sporting the lead after João Simões put Bayern under pressure on the counter.

Serge Gnabry leveled for Bayern when he was left unmarked at a corner in the 65th, before Karl scored Bayern's second in the 69th and defender Jonathan Tah made it 3-1 in the 77th. Widely viewed as German soccer's best young talent this season, Karl became Bayern's youngest-ever Champions League scorer in October on his first start in the competitions. Late on, Alphonso Davies came off the bench for the Canadian left back's first game since March after a serious knee injury. Chelsea loses: Chelsea was beaten in the Champions League for the first time in nearly three months as Belgium forward Charles De Ketelaere set up the equalizer and scored an 83rd-minute winner as Atlanta came from behind to win 2-1. Chelsea, which went ahead through Joao Pedro, dropped out of the top eight automatic qualifying spots with its second loss. -Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan at the inaugural ceremony of PM's Cricket Talent Hunt League. - DNA

## Islamabad Clinches Maiden Gold at National Games

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad celebrated a defining moment in its sporting journey as the Women's Tennis Team rose to glory, capturing their maiden Gold Medal after a gripping battle against the mighty Pakistan WAPDA at the ongoing 35th National Games 2025 in Karachi. In a thrilling final, Islamabad defeated top-seeded Pakistan WAPDA by 2-1, marking a historic achievement for the capital's tennis community. The final began with WAPDA taking an early lead as star player Ushna Sohail dominated Shandana Rabbi, winning the first singles match 6-0, 6-0. Islamabad responded strongly in the second singles encounter, where Maheen Aftab showcased exceptional skill to defeat Meheq Khokhar 6-2, 6-2, leveling the contest at 1-1. With the championship hanging in the balance, the decisive doubles match turned into a tense three-set thriller. Islamabad's duo Maheen Aftab and Sheeza Sajid delivered a remarkable performance, overcoming the experienced WAPDA pair of Ushna Sohail and Sara Mansoor with a scoreline of 6-4, 1-6, 6-4. Their resilience and teamwork secured Islamabad's historic gold medal. Secretary General of the Islamabad Olympic Association Rizwan ul Haq Razi, and Islamabad Tennis Association Chairman Tariq Murtaza, along with other officials, congratulated the players on this landmark victory.

## 'Proud' Saudi fighters Basahel and Albrahim bask in PFL MENA wins

*Saudi fighters Basahel and Albrahim celebrate PFL MENA showcase wins as four new champions crowned in Dhahran, highlighting Kingdom's rising MMA talent and Eastern Province's growing role in combat sports*

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia fighters Malik Basahel and Ahmed Albrahim have revealed their delight at winning their showcase bouts at "PFL MENA Finals: All or Nothing" at the Dhahran Expo in Alkhobar. The night also saw four new PFL MENA champions crowned as this year's season ended. "Thank God for everything," Basahel (3-0) told said after his flyweight showcase win over Mahmoud Atef (5-4, 1 NC) by TKO at 3 minutes, 13 seconds of round one. "Of course, I'm proud of this performance. On record, my opponent has a stronger record. But glory to God, I got the win. My hard work paid off, and what's coming will be even better, God willing. "The MMA scene in the Kingdom, especially in Dhahran, is developing and God willing, we'll see more and more fighters." "For sure, the sport is developing, you can see it," he added. "There are many fighters coming up, even in the amateur divisions. The national team too, Masha Allah, is truly one of the strongest in the world, not just in the Arab region but worldwide. "Our young athletes, ages 15 to 18 are incredibly talented. Every year, the level keeps improving. PFL is coming here and Insha Allah there will be more opportunities. Thank God, we have many great things happening and a lot of progress." Meanwhile, Albrahim (AM 4-1) defeated Mohamed Nabil (AM 2-1) by TKO at 2:45 of round two in their amateur welterweight showcase bout. "The Eastern Province has always been known for sports in general," the Saudi fighter said. "Many athletes have come from there across various

fields; football, bodybuilding, and many other sports. The Eastern Province has always been a treasure when it comes to sporting talent." "The technique and the talent have been there for a long time, but the media never really highlighted it properly," Abraham added. "But as you can see now, the media has started to shed more light on it, and fighters are beginning to emerge. And honestly, there are many people better than me, many talents. "But once the media shines a light, people finally see



it. The Eastern Province is full of fighters, full of gifted athletes, and you will see more coming very soon, God willing." Abraham dedicated his win to his parents and brothers. "They have always encouraged me," he said. "My father was the first to say, 'people will wonder how he will come back,' but that actually motivated me. They kept supporting me while I was training. "I hope they can see this video, and I dedicate this victory to them. I didn't make this decision to join PFL until I was fully ready. I entered this fight with a professional mindset. We are ready - Saudi always shows up ready." In the main event, Kuwait's Mohammad Alaqrar (10-1) edged out Morocco's Badreddine "Dreamchaser" Di-ani (10-4) by unanimous decision after five hard-fought rounds to win the PFL MENA welterweight championship. In the co-main event, Morocco's Salah Eddine "Supersalah" Hamli (11-0) kept his undefeated record intact as he submitted Iraq's Mohammad "Soulkeeper" Fahmi (6-1) in the second round to become the new PFL MENA lightweight champion. Also, Islam "The Egyptian Zombie" Reda (15-1) scored a second-round submission victory over Algeria's Yanis "The Desert Warrior" Ghemouri (13-4) to become the PFL MENA featherweight champion. In addition, Jordan's Nawras "Honey Badger" Abzakh (15-6, 1 NC) needed just 36 seconds to submit Islam "Moksha" Youssef (7-3) of Egypt and capture the PFL MENA bantamweight championship. - Agencies

## Iran to mediate Between Pakistan and Afghanistan

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they could pose a direct threat to Iran's national security. Iran's renewed involvement comes after the visit of Dr. Ali Larijani, the Supreme Leader's envoy and secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council to Islamabad last month, during which the regional security climate and Pak-Afghan dynamics were central to discussions. Experts suggest that Iran, as a neighbour to both Pakistan and Afghanistan, is better placed than previous mediators such as Turkey, Qatar or Saudi Arabia to take on a more influential role. The inclusion of Russia and China both increasingly wary of instability spilling across borders further raises expectations that the Tehran meeting may offer a more serious attempt at de-escalation. Previous mediation efforts collapsed largely due to the Afghan Taliban's refusal to offer a written commitment or accept a mechanism ensuring "decisive and irreversible" action against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other anti-Pakistan groups. Recent attacks, including a bombing in Islamabad and a foiled assault in South Waziristan, have brought the fragile ceasefire to the brink. With tensions climbing and the diplomatic window narrowing, Iran's initiative is being closely watched across the region. Whether the Tehran meeting will finally deliver progress remains uncertain but for now, it represents the strongest regional attempt to pull Islamabad and Kabul back from a dangerous trajectory.

## Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe doubtful for crucial Man City game

MADRID: Kylian Mbappe is doubtful for Real Madrid's match against Manchester City in the Champions League after missing the club's final training session before Wednesday's match. According to reports, the French forward was playing through the pain in a La Liga match against Celta Vigo on Sunday. A game in which he played for the full 90 minutes. ESPN reported that Mbappe had a muscular problem and will undergo tests on Tuesday, which will decide his fate for the City game. Madrid are going into the match against City after suffering a 2-0 defeat to Celta Vigo in La Liga at home, a game in which Mbappe also broke his finger. Real Madrid have won only one match in their last five league games. According to an ESPN report, club executives are thinking about replacing Xabi Alonso, and the Manchester City game will be key to deciding his future. - Agencies

## Shields set to defend undisputed heavyweight title against Crews-Dezurn

DETROIT: Claressa Shields, the undisputed heavyweight boxing champion, is scheduled to defend her belts against Franchon Crews-Dezurn next February, according to the organisers' announcement on Tuesday. The bout will mark Shields' first fight following her landmark promotional deal. The 30-year-old Shields remains undefeated in her 17 professional bouts and became the first undisputed women's heavyweight champion with a victory over Danielle Perkins in February. Reflecting on her career, Shields noted that after winning two Olympic gold medals, finding suitable opponents became challenging. She praised Crews-Dezurn for stepping up, highlighting their previous encounter and describing the upcoming fight as a chance to settle unfinished business. "I had just come off winning two Olympic gold medals, fresh out of the amateurs, and finding an opponent was tough," Shields said in a press release. "Franchon stepped in. I've grown a lot since that first victory, but Franchon and I have unfinished business that needs to be settled." - Agencies



## Briefs

**OGDC announces major oil, gas discovery at Nashpa Block**

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) on Wednesday announced a major oil and gas discovery at its exploratory well Baragzai X-01 (Slant) in Nashpa Block, in Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The well is currently producing 2,280 Barrels per Day (BPD) of oil and 5.6 Million Standard Cubic Feet per Day (MMSCFD) of gas, through choke size 32/64" at wellhead flowing pressure (WHFP) of 2400 psi, said a press release. This marks the first hydrocarbon discovery from the Kingriali Formation in the Nashpa Block. OGDC is the operator of the Nashpa Exploration License with a 65% working interest, along with its joint venture partners Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) with 30% and Government Holdings (Private) Limited (GHPL) with a 5% carried interest. The Baragzai X-01 (Slant) well was spud-in on December 24, 2024, as an exploratory well and drilled to a depth of 5,170 meters into the Kingriali Formation. A 90-meter-thick interval of the Triassic-age Kingriali Formation was encountered. Encouraging hydrocarbon shows and interpretation of open hole wireline logs led to a successful cased hole drill stem test (DST).—APP

**PSX stays range-bound, sheds 4.52 points**

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday closed almost unchanged, declining slightly by 4.52 points, to settle at 169,451.86 points compared to 169,456.39 points on the previous trading day, according to PSX data. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 1,190.534 million shares with a traded value of Rs50.493 billion, against 1,031.799 million shares valuing Rs51.316 billion in the previous session. Market capitalization increased to Rs19,289 trillion from Rs19.275 trillion. Out of 478 active companies in the ready market, 251 advanced, 188 declined, while 39 remained unchanged. Hum Network led the volume chart with 132.036 million shares, followed by Bank Makramah with 103.486 million shares, and TPL Properties with 52.374 million shares. The top gainers included Khyber Textile Mills Limited, increasing by Rs160.34 to close at Rs1,910.94, and Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited, which rose by Rs100.00 to settle at Rs28,999.00. Major losers were Service Industries Limited, falling by Rs145.89 to close at Rs1,644.17, and Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited, declining by Rs63.92 to close at Rs9,322.08.—APP

**Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar**

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs280.37 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs280.40. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 281.2 and Rs 283.3, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 23 paise to close at Rs 326.59, from the previous day's close of Rs 326.36, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and close at Rs 1.79, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of 21 paise and closed at Rs 373.62 compared to the previous day's Rs 373.83. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained stagnant and closed at Rs 76.34 and Rs 74.71, respectively.—APP

# Pakistan, UAE reaffirm strategic partnership

He conveyed best wishes to the Ambassador for a successful tenure in Islamabad, as both nations work to further deepen their enduring bilateral relationship for mutual progress and prosperity

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the UAE to Pakistan, Salem Mohammed Salem Al Bawab Al Zaabi, paid a courtesy call on the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. The DPM/FM extended warm felicitations on the 54th Eid Al Etihad of the UAE, reaffirming the historic fraternal ties and strategic partnership between Pakistan and the UAE, which continue to grow across all domains. He conveyed best wishes to the Ambassador for a successful tenure in Islamabad, as both nations work to further deepen their enduring bilateral relationship for mutual progress and prosperity.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the UAE to Pakistan, Salem Mohammed Salem Al Bawab Al Zaabi, called on the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

## Sudanese military plane crashes, kills all crew members

CAIRO: A Sudanese military aircraft crashed while attempting to land in the east of the country and killed all the crew members on board in the latest plane crash in the war-torn African nation, military officials said. The Ilyushin Il-76 cargo plane experienced technical failure while attempting to land Tuesday in the Osman Digna Air Base in the coastal city of Port Sudan, two officials said Wednesday. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to brief the media, did not disclose how many personnel were on board. Among the dead was military pilot Omran Mirghani, according to his uncle, prominent Sudanese journalist Osman Mirghani, who mourned his nephew's death on social media. The military didn't comment on the crash. Plane crashes are not uncommon in Sudan, which has a poor aviation safety record. In February, at least 46 people, including women and children, were killed when a military aircraft crashed in a densely populated area in Omdurman, the sister city of the capital, Khartoum. The crash came as the military has suffered multiple setbacks in its war against a notorious paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The military lost el-Fasher, its last stronghold in the sprawling region of Darfur in October, and earlier this week was forced to pull out from the country's largest oil processing facility in the central region of Kordofan. The RSF has been accused of committing atrocities in el-Fasher including summary executions, rape and other crimes, according to the United Nations and international rights groups. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said Wednesday that war crimes and "potentially" crimes against humanity were committed in the city, which the RSF seized in late October. "We are talking about very serious atrocity crimes... war crimes for sure (and) potentially also crimes against humanity," he told journalists in Geneva. "We have an extremely serious situation." Türk warned atrocities also could happen in the central region of Kordofan where the RSF has intensified its attacks in recent months. "We cannot allow a repeat of this absolutely horrific situation in Kordofan," he said, calling for a ceasefire in the country. The war in Sudan began in April 2023 over a power struggle between the military and the RSF. The conflict has killed over 40,000 people, a figure rights groups consider a significant undercount. The fighting has wrecked urban areas and has been marked by atrocities, including mass rape and ethnically motivated killings, that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, especially in the western region of Darfur, according to the United Nations and international rights groups. The war has also created the world's worst humanitarian crisis and pushed parts of the country into famine.—DNA

## FTO highlights record surge in taxpayer confidence

ISLAMABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Dr Asif Mehmood Jah on Wednesday said the FTO Secretariat had emerged as one of the country's most trusted redressal forums, registering an unprecedented surge in complaints, record implementation of recommendations, and growing international recognition of Pakistan's ombudsman framework. Addressing a news conference here, he said the Secretariat's performance over the past four years had demonstrated taxpayers' rising confidence in the institution. "The exponential increase in complaints reflects that aggrieved taxpayers now see the FTO as a credible, effective and responsive forum for grievance redressal," he said. He was accompanied by FTO Advisors Almas Ali Jovindah, Aman Rashid, Arslan Subutagaan Muhammad Nazim Saleem, Muhammad Naseer Butt, and Registrar, Khalid Javed. Dr Jah said when he assumed office on September 30, 2021, the FTO received 2,867 complaints that year. Following extensive nationwide outreach and awareness campaigns led by the FTO and its advisors, he said, the inflow of complaints surged sharply. In 2022, the institu-

tion received 6,106 complaints, followed by 7,889 in 2023 and 12,742 in 2024. He said the momentum reached a historic milestone in 2025, with the Secretariat receiving 35,716 complaints to date. "This remarkable trend is a clear indicator of enhanced trust in the system," he added. The FTO noted that during this period, the Secretariat also ensured near-perfect implementation of its findings. "We achieved a 98 per cent implementation rate of FTO recommendations, while the Hon'ble President of Pakistan upheld around 97 per cent of our decisions," he said. In the remaining cases, the Presidential Secretariat either slightly modified or remanded the matters. Dr Jah said the total number of complaints instituted during his four-year tenure reached 64,664 — surpassing the combined total of 37,118 complaints received during the previous five tenures spanning 21 years. "This is a testament to the Secretariat's strengthened administrative capacity, improved complaint-handling mechanisms and proactive engagement," he added. Highlighting international achievements, Dr Jah said Pakistan's ombudsman community had secured exceptional global recognition in recent years.—DNA

## 51 hurt in Japan quake as warning persists

TOKYO: The number of people injured in a 7.5-magnitude earthquake in Japan rose to 51 on Wednesday, authorities said, after warning an even bigger tremor was possible in coming days. The quake late Monday off the coast of the northern region of Aomori shook buildings, tore apart roads, smashed windows and triggered tsunami waves up to 70 centimeters (28 inches) high. The country's Fire and Disaster Management Agency said on Wednesday the injury toll was 51, rising from 30 initially reported by the prime minister a day earlier. The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) had published a rare special advisory early on Tuesday, warning that another quake of similar or greater size was possible for another week. "Due to the occurrence of this earthquake, it is believed that the relative likelihood of a new large-scale earthquake has increased compared to normal times" in the area, the JMA said the second time it has issued such a warning. "If a large-scale earthquake occurs in the future, there is a possibility of a massive tsunami reaching the area or experiencing strong shaking," it said. The agency put the chance at around one in 100 for the next seven days, local media reported. The advisory covered the Sanriku area on the northeastern tip of Japan's main island of Honshu and the northern island of Hokkaido, facing the Pacific. In August 2024, the JMA issued its first special advisory, for the southern half of Japan's Pacific coast warning of a possible "megaquake" along the Nankai Trough. The 800-kilometer undersea trench is where the Philippine Sea oceanic tectonic plate is "subducting" — or slowly slipping — underneath the continental plate that Japan sits atop. The government has said that a quake in the Nankai Trough and subsequent tsunami could kill as many as 298,000 people and cause up to \$2 trillion in damages. The JMA lifted last year's advisory after a week but it led to panic-buying of staples like rice and prompted holidaymakers to cancel hotel reservations. Geologists Kyle Bradley and Judith A. Hubbard said this week that there was no way to tell whether a strong earthquake will be followed by a similarly strong, or even stronger, one. "Instead, we must rely on historical statistics, which tell us that very few large earthquakes are soon followed by even larger events," they said in their Earthquake Insights newsletter. "It does happen, just not very often.—DNA

**Thousands of Gaza kids suffer from famine conditions**

GENEVA: Thousands of children have been admitted for treatment for acute malnutrition in Gaza since an October ceasefire that was supposed to enable a major increase in humanitarian aid, the UN children's agency said on Tuesday. UNICEF, the biggest provider of malnutrition treatment in Gaza, said that 9,300 children were treated for severe acute malnutrition in October, when the first phase of an agreement to end the two-year Israel-Hamas war came into effect. While this is down from a peak of over 14,000 in August, the number is still significantly higher than during a brief February-March ceasefire and indicates that aid flows remain insufficient, UNICEF spokesperson Tess Ingram told a Geneva press briefing by video link from Gaza. "It's still a shockingly high number," she said. "The number of children admitted is five times higher than in February, so we need to see the numbers come down further." Ingram described meeting underweight babies weighing less than 1 kilogram born in hospitals "their tiny chests heaving with the effort of staying alive."—APP

**US plans to order foreign tourists to disclose social media histories**

WASHINGTON: The administration of US President Donald Trump plans to order visa-exempt foreign tourists to disclose their social media histories from the last five years before entering the country, according to an official notice. The proposal laid out in a notice published Tuesday in the Federal Register would apply to visitors from 42 countries, including Britain, France, Australia and Japan, who do not need a visa to enter the United States. Currently, those travelers only need apply for a waiver known as the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), which still requires them to provide certain personal details. Under the proposed new rules, the collection of social media data would become a "mandatory" part of ESTA applications. Applicants would need to provide their social media histories from the last five years, according to the notice. They would also have to submit other "high-value data fields" including phone numbers from the last five years, email addresses from the past decade, personal details of family members and biometric information. The public has 60 days to comment on the proposal. The Trump administration has tightened curbs on entering the United States, part of a sweeping crackdown on migration.—APP

**Nigerian children reunite with their parents**

PAPIRI: Several parents welcomed the return late Tuesday night of their children, who were abducted last month when gunmen stormed their school. "It has not been easy for me... But today, in fact, I have a little bit of joy, especially because there is still one abducted. But I am now happy with this one that I have gotten," Luka Illaya, one of the parents in the hall, told The Associated Press. One of his sons was released, while another remains with the abductors. His son, who hugged him tightly, is one of the 100 students released over the weekend after they were abducted from a Nigerian Catholic school on Nov. 21. The Papiri school abductions, where more than 300 students and staff were taken, was the latest in a string of mass abductions that have rocked Nigeria in the past decade. Days earlier, 25 students were also abducted in nearby Kebbi state. The government did not release any details about the released Papiri students and the fate of at least 150 other children and staff who remain in captivity. Fifty of the students escaped in the hours following the abductions. "We thank all the security agencies that helped in the rescue of our children. We are pleading that God should give them more strength to be able to rescue the remaining children," Reverend Sister Felicia Gyang, the principal of the school, said.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif with other guests cutting cake to mark Qatar's National Day ceremony.



## Briefs

## Venezuela's Machado 'will not receive Nobel Peace Prize in person'

Norwegian Nobel Institute director says Venezuelan opposition leader's current whereabouts are unknown

DNA

OSLO: Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado will not receive the Nobel Peace Prize in person in Oslo, the director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute said on Wednesday, with her current whereabouts unknown. Machado, 58, was due to receive the award at a ceremony at Oslo City Hall in the presence of King Harald, Queen Sonja and Latin American leaders, including Argentine President Javier Milei and Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa. The ceremony starts at 1 pm (1200 GMT).

Machado was due to receive the award in defiance of a decade-long travel ban imposed by authorities in her home country and after spending more than a year in hiding. "She is unfortunately not in Norway and will not stand on stage at Oslo City Hall at 1 pm when the ceremony starts," Kristian Berg Harpviken, the director of the institute and the permanent secretary of the award body, told broadcaster NRK. Asked where she was, Harpviken said: "I don't know."

## Pakistan population challenge deepens

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Pakistan's population has crossed an estimated 257 million at midyear, placing it among the world's most populous nations even as its fertility and growth rates continue to decline, according to a report released by the US Census Bureau. Demographic databases, including projections by the US Census Bureau and the United Nations, show Pakistan's population density at 333 persons per square kilometre, underscoring the scale of pressure on land and public services. The data depict a country facing one of the most complex population transitions in South Asia — caught between rapid numerical expansion and slow human-development gains. Despite decades of policy debate, Pakistan is still adding millions of people each year.

## Satyani receives Franco-German Human rights, rule of law prize

The French Ambassador highlighted that since 2016, France and Germany have marked International Human Rights Day, observed on December 10, by honoring individuals who have shown exceptional courage in defending fundamental rights



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The French and German Embassies in Pakistan jointly hosted a ceremony to present the 2025 Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law to Mr. Pirbhu Satyani, a distinguished human rights advocate from Sindh. The award was formally presented by French Ambassador Nicolas Galey alongside German Ambassador Ina Lepel, in the presence of civil society representatives, previous award recipients, diplomats, journalists, and members of Mr. Satyani's family. Ambassador Galey congratulated Mr. Satyani for being selected among 14 laureates worldwide, noting that embassies from both countries had

submitted numerous nominations. "Only 14 individuals were selected, including Mr. Satyani — felicitations!" he said. He warmly acknowledged the presence of Satyani's children, remarking that they could be proud of their father's unwavering commitment to human rights. The Ambassador highlighted that since 2016, France and Germany have marked International Human Rights Day, observed on December 10, by honoring individuals who have shown exceptional courage in defending fundamental rights. The prize recognizes journalists, activists, and civil society leaders who work against torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, discrimination, and violence, while promoting equality, dignity, and freedom of expression.



Recalling the previous Pakistani recipients, Ambassador Galey acknowledged Sarah Belal, founder of Justice Project Pakistan (JPP), awarded in 2016, and Nayyab Ali, a prominent transgender and minority rights activist honored in 2020, who was also present at the ceremony. He commended JPP for its continued partnership and impactful work. Addressing the contributions of this year's laureate, Ambassador Galey described Mr. Pirbhu Satyani as a "fervent defender of minority, women's, and children's rights, particularly in Sindh," noting his extensive work with the National Commission for the Rights of the Child. The Ambassador also paid tribute to the Commission's Chairperson, Ayesha Farooq, for her ongoing commitment to child rights.

Mr. Satyani's research and advocacy for the Dalit community, which faces double marginalization within religious minority groups, were highlighted as key factors in his selection. Ambassador Galey praised his "discreet yet persistent and efficient" efforts to champion minority rights — an issue of significant importance not only to France and Germany but to the broader European Union, particularly within the context of the GSP+ monitoring framework. He expressed hope that the award would inspire human rights defenders across Pakistan to continue their work with renewed strength, knowing that their contributions are recognized globally. The ceremony concluded with Ambassador Lepel's address and the formal presentation of the medal and diploma to Mr. Satyani.

## YouTuber Rajab Butt gets transit bail

The court also ordered the two to seek appropriate legal remedies from the concerned court within the given timeframe. The suspects face charges under cybercrime laws for allegedly promoting a gambling application



ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday approved 10-day transit bail for YouTuber Rajab Butt and TikTok star Nadeem Naniwala, who are facing cybercrime cases related to promoting a gambling application. The development comes a day after the United Kingdom deported Butt after revoking his visa. Hearing the bail plea, IHC's Justice Inam Ameen Minhas also directed the suspects to approach the relevant courts. During the hearing today, the petitioners' lawyer requested the court to grant 15-day transit bail, maintaining that a separate case had also been registered against the suspects in Karachi. However, Justice Minhas granted 10-day transit bail, instructing both individuals to approach the relevant trial court within this period. The court also ordered the two to seek appropriate legal remedies from the concerned court within the given timeframe. The suspects face charges under cybercrime laws for allegedly promoting a gambling application. A day earlier, the IHC had directed authorities not to arrest Butt upon his arrival at the airport. Justice Minhas had issued the order while hearing the protective bail plea. Speaking to journalists at the court premises, Butt said that he will appear in Karachi court within the next 10 days. He said he was never deported, saying, "I was not deported; one does not return via business class after deportation." He said that his visa had been cancelled and he had already submitted a request to the UK Home Office regarding the cases filed against him. Butt also confirmed that his name is not on the Exit Control List (ECL) and stressed that he will remain in Pakistan as long as his case is ongoing. — Agencies

## Pakistan pushes for negotiated settlement of Ukraine war

UNITED NATIONS: With the nearly four years old Russia-Ukraine conflict raging, Pakistan has urged the parties to "earnestly engage for making meaningful strides towards a mutually acceptable settlement." "A solution acceptable to all relevant parties, grounded in the UN charter, international law and relevant multilateral agreements is essential to bring peace, which is durable and lasting," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Tuesday. Speaking in a debate on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, he voiced deep concern over the continued fighting and targeting of civilians and civil infrastructure, saying that their protection is a legal obligation. In this regard, the Pakistani envoy reiterated the call for upholding the principles of International humanitarian law. At the same time, Ambassador Jadoon welcomed the renewed momentum towards peace and diplomatic engagements, led by the United States. "We call upon the parties to exercise restraint, demonstrate political will, and earnestly engage for making meaningful strides towards a mutually acceptable settlement." Towards this end, the Pakistani envoy hoped that all sides would be guided by sagacity, mutual understanding, and above all the imperative for saving millions from further suffering. Pakistan, he said, stands ready to support all endeavours aimed at resolving the issue peacefully, and in a just, comprehensive and durable manner. Briefing the 15-member Council, Kayoko Gotoh, Director of the Europe and Central Asia Division at the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, said 2025 has been one of the deadliest years for civilians since Russia's full-scale invasion began nearly four years ago. Civilian casualties between January and November were 24 per cent higher than during the same period last year, she said, as Russian aerial attacks escalated nationwide. Local authorities in Russia have also reported civilian casualties from Ukrainian strikes. Ms. Gotoh stressed that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are prohibited under international law "no matter where they occur, they are unacceptable and must stop." — DNA

## ADB upgrades Asia and Pacific's growth outlook

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has raised its growth forecasts for economies in developing Asia and the Pacific for this year and next, amid stronger-than-expected exports and reduced trade uncertainty following the conclusion of several trade agreements with the United States. Resilient exports, particularly of semiconductors and other technology products, moderating inflation, and stable financial conditions have strengthened the region's growth outlook. The region's economy is now projected to expand by 5.1% this year, compared with

a 4.8% forecast in September, according to Asian Development Outlook (ADO) December 2025, released on Wednesday. The outlook for next year has also been upgraded by 0.1 percentage points to 4.6%. "Asia and the Pacific's solid economic fundamentals are underpinning robust export performance and steady growth, despite a global trade environment clouded by historic levels of uncertainty over the past year," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. "Trade agreements have partly eased that uncertainty, but external and other challenges could still weigh on the outlook. Governments in the region should continue to foster open trade and investment to sustain resilience and growth."

## Over half million evacuated in Cambodia, Thailand border clashes

BANGKOK: More than 500,000 people have fled their homes to safety in Thailand and Cambodia since the start of a reignited border conflict, both governments said on Wednesday, surpassing the total number evacuated during similar clashes earlier this year. "Civilians have had to evacuate in large numbers due to what we assessed as an imminent threat to their safety. More than 400,000 people have been moved to safe shelters," across seven provinces, Thai defence ministry spokesperson Surasant Kongsiri told reporters at a news conference.

In Cambodia, "101,229 people have been evacuated to safe shelters and relatives' homes in five provinces," as of Tuesday evening, defence ministry spokeswoman Maly Socheata told reporters. The Southeast Asian neighbours dispute the colonial-era demarcation of their 800-kilometre (500-mile) frontier, where competing claims to historic temples have spilt over into armed conflict. This week's clashes are the deadliest since five days of fighting in July that killed dozens and displaced around 300,000 on both sides of the border before a shaky truce was agreed, following intervention by US President Donald Trump who co-signed a truce between Cambodia and Thailand in October during a visit to Asia. — Agencies

## UK launches major development partnership reset with Pakistan

The announcement comes as part of an ongoing effort by the UK to go from development donor to investor, using British expertise to support countries to utilise their resources to maximum effect, while delivering growth at home



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Baroness Chapman, the UK's Minister for Development, is set to launch a new chapter in the UK-Pakistan development co-operation relationship through the first bilateral Ministerial federal-level development talks in 8 years. This new chapter is set to be one of mutual partnership, bringing benefits to both nations. The announcement comes as part of an ongoing effort by the UK to go from development donor to investor, using British expertise to support countries to utilise their resources to maximum effect, while delivering growth at home. Her visit comes as the UK-Pakistan relationship has reached new heights, with bilateral trade for the first time crossing £5.5 billion, and over 200 British businesses operating in Pakistan, bringing growth to both economies. Together with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, she opened her visit through launching a package of regulatory reforms that help make Pakistan a better operating environment for business, supporting Pakistan's continued growth and creating future opportunities for UK business.

She then launched the next phase of the Pak-UK Education Gateway alongside Minister for Education Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui. Delivered in partnership between the British Council and Pakistan's Higher Education Commission, this initiative will enable leading academics in both countries to collaborate on shared challenges including climate change and growth. It will launch a start-up fund which will help bring innovative research to the market. And it will promote UK University courses to Pakistani students, giving them the chance to build skills at a British university, without having to leave their home cities. In her visit, she has expanded areas of collaboration between the UK and Pakistan. Alongside Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik, she has launched a new Green Compact between the countries. This is set to establish a framework for how the UK and Pakistan will work together to tackle the climate emergency, protecting nature, and harnessing the green revolution, while pushing global climate ambition forward. The UK's Development Minister, Baroness Chapman, said: 'Pakistan is a crucial partner for the UK. We work together to tackle the drivers behind organised crime and illegal migration, keeping both our countries safer. Our strong bilateral trading relationship brings jobs and growth to us both. And we're working together to tackle climate change, a global threat. We remain firm friends of Pakistan, including in times of crisis, as shown through our floods response; and we know to accelerate growth in both our countries, we must work together in partnership to tackle the problems we face.' During her visit, the Minister is set to see the strength of the UK-Pakistan development partnership first-hand. This includes through seeing the UK's work on health and education; meeting the communities who have been vital to the UK's efforts to support 2.5 million Pakistani people to better adapt to the effects of climate change in the last year; and meeting the UK-trained officers who are preventing human trafficking at airports.

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