



# Islamabad POST

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**Kenya values its relations with Pak, says Kenyan envoy**

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**Pakistan calls for equitable Climate funds**

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**Ukraine president says will seek American support**

Detailed News On Page-01



**Finance Ministry says**

## No new IMF terms, reforms align with agenda

Measures in MEFP reflect agreed reform agenda "rather than imposition of unprecedented conditions": ministry

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Finance on Sunday denied the imposition of any new conditions under the International Monetary Fund's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) loan programme, saying that the lender's structural benchmarks aligned with its own reform agenda. "The measures outlined in the latest Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) represent continuity, sequencing, and deepening of Pakistan's agreed reform agenda under the IMF's Extended Fund Facility, rather than the imposition of abrupt or unprecedented conditions," ministry said in a statement. Clarifying the intent, context, and continuity of reform measures under the EFF while responding to the commentary regarding so-called "new conditions," it said that the measures referenced are part of a phased, medium-term reform agenda agreed with the IMF, many of which are extensions or logical progressions of reforms already initiated by the government. Noting that the EFF is designed to support countries in implementing medium-term structural reforms aimed at achieving agreed policy objectives, the finance ministry highlighted that reforms are implemented in a sequenced and step-by-step manner over the duration of the program. "Each review builds upon prior actions to ensure that the ultimate policy goals agreed at the outset of the program are achieved." "Actions under the EFF are structured as logical steps, with additional measures incorporated at each successive review. The MEFP finalised following the Second Review of the EFF supplements the MEFP agreed during the First Review and reflects this phased approach," the ministry added.

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**Binance, HTX NOCs 'not blanket approval'**

NOCs are the first step in a risk-mitigated, supervised entry, says Bilal bin Saqib

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Bilal bin Saqib, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Finance and Crypto and chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA), said the no-objection certificates (NOCs) issued to global cryptocurrency exchanges Binance and HTX were not a "blanket approval" but the first step under a "risk-mitigated, phased, supervised entry framework". Addressing a press briefing in Islamabad, Bilal said Pakistan has, for the first time, opened a "regulated, transparent and globally compliant pathway" for global exchanges, describing the issuance of the NOCs as a practical step towards a new regulatory vision. He said the newly introduced framework will enable effective monitoring of anti-money

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**Forces kill 13 terrorists in KP areas**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Security forces have killed 13 terrorists during two separate intelligence-based operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the military's media wing said in a statement on Sunday. "On 12-13 December 2025, thirteen khwarij belonging to Indian proxy Fitna Al Khwarij were killed in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Fitna-al-Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It said that the first intelligence-based operation (IBO) was carried out on the reported presence of the terrorists in KP's Mohmand district.

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**PM pays tribute to security forces**

APP

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday paid tribute to security institutions, forces and Balochistan police for carrying out successful operation against terrorists in district Kharan, Balochistan. The premier praised arresting of three high wanted terrorists during the operation. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif stated that successful operations by security forces and Balochistan police against terrorists disrupting law and order situation was a proof of government's resolve against terrorism.

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**Pak raises terrorism issue at Afghan moot**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan participated in a crucial meeting of Special Representatives from Afghanistan's Neighboring Countries and Russia, which commenced in Tehran, Iran, today. The high-level diplomatic gathering was convened to discuss the evolving situation in Afghanistan and its implications for regional stability and security. The meeting was opened with a keynote address by the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran,

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## Briefs

**Zelensky says will seek US support**

APP

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday he hoped the United States would back the idea of freezing the front line in Ukraine along its current shape at their meeting in Berlin. Zelensky said he was ready for "dialogue" at the latest round of high-stakes talks with US President Donald Trump's envoy and European leaders on ending the war with Russia. "The fairest possible option is to 'stay where we are'. This is true because it is a ceasefire... I know that Russia does not view this positively, and I would like the Americans to support us on this issue," Zelensky told reporters shortly before arriving in Berlin.

**Syrian who killed American was part of security**

NEWS DESK

DAMASCUS: Syria's interior ministry on Sunday said the gunman who killed three Americans in the central Palmyra region the previous day was a member of the security forces who was to have been fired for extremism. Two US troops and a civilian interpreter died in what the Syrian government described as a "terrorist attack" on Saturday, while Washington said it had been carried out by a Daesh militant who was then killed. The Syrian authorities "had decided to fire him" from the security forces before the attack for holding extremist ideas and had planned to do so on Sunday, interior ministry spokesman Nouredine al-Baba told state television.

**Violence surge**

**2 dead, 8 critical in shooting at US Ivy League school**

The gunman was last seen leaving the building, and no weapon had been recovered, authorities said

APP

NEW YORK: A gunman killed two people and critically wounded eight others on Saturday afternoon at prestigious Brown University, authorities said, urging people in the area to remain in lockdown as the attacker was still at large. "I can confirm that there are two individuals who have died this afternoon, and there are another eight in critical status, though stable," Providence, Rhode Island Mayor Brett Smiley told a news conference.

The shooting took place at the Barus and Holley building, home to the engineering and physics departments, on the campus of the Ivy League university. Multiple exams had been scheduled to take place in the building at the time of the shooting, the university said. Law enforcement described the suspect as a man dressed all in black. "We're utilizing every resource possible to find this suspect."

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**Deadly firing in Capital leaves two women dead**

APP

ISLAMABAD: Bhara Kahu Police Station limits witnessed a tragic firing incident when unknown armed assailants opened indiscriminate fire inside a house in Mohallah Rajgan, resulting in the death of two women, while another woman sustained injuries. The attackers fled the scene after the incident. An official told APP on Sunday that the assailants forcibly entered the house and opened fire, critically injuring three women. As a result,

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**KP CM Sohail Afridi asks PTI supporters to be ready**

Without naming anyone, the CM further stated: "Those supposed to protect us turn into out killers, and those raised to protect our mandate, stole it. Tell me then, what solution do we have?"

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi asked PTI supporters on Sunday to "be ready" in case a call was made for a protest, adding that "we will together seize [our] Haqiqi Azadi (true freedom)" from the country's current rulers. Afridi's intimation came during a PTI rally in Kohat, where he reminded the crowd that incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan, had delivered the message from jail of "freedom or death". "So if we go this time around, we will either return in shrouds or after getting freedom," he said, adding that Imran had given the responsibility of making decisions – be it about talks with the government or protests – to Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Chairman Mehmood Khan Achakzai and Senator Allama Raja Nasir Abbas. "The two leaders are part of the opposition alliance Tehreek-i-Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) along with the PTI, which has also nominated them as the opposition leaders in the National Assembly and Senate. "For my part," Afridi said, "I met them and assured them of any kind of support." He added, "So whenever a call comes from them, you have

to be ready. And we will together seize Haqiqi Azadi from them (country's current rulers)." The CM claimed that "all institutions and the government want to eliminate the PTI". Even the judiciary did not heed PTI's grievances, he said. Without naming anyone, the CM further stated: "Those supposed to protect us turn into out killers, and those raised to protect our mandate, stole it. Tell me then, what solution do we have?" He said Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz had been issuing advice to him lately but she should focus on her province instead. "I will listen to them now?" he remarked, adding that "our leader is Imran, and we will listen to only him. There will be only Imran's policy and rule here". He said Maryam should focus on her province, where, according to a recent survey, police had turned out to be the most corrupt department in the country. CM Afridi also urged the people to report corruption cases to authorities and his government in KP would take action on the complaints. He also asked the divisional and district administrations to keep their doors open and listen to public issues. Provincial Minister for Law, Parliamentary Affairs, and Human Rights Aftab Alam Afridi lamented that

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**ABU DHABI:** Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of UAE Salem Mohammad Alzaabi. – DNA

**No probe against Bajwa**

**Rana Sanaullah accuses Bajwa of 'instructing' narcotics case against him**

*Sanaullah was arrested in July 2019 during the PTI govt after ANF claimed it recovered 15kg of heroin from his vehicle*

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah has alleged that former army chief Gen (retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa directed the registration of a narcotics case against him back in 2019. Sanaullah was arrested in July 2019 during the PTI government after the ANF claimed it recovered 15kg of heroin from his vehicle, and was later granted bail by the Lahore High Court (LHC). Speaking in a podcast, Sanaullah recalled an exchange with Gen Bajwa and former spymaster Hamid, in which the ex-army chief made remarks about the former's physical condition. "Gen Bajwa said, 'Rana, you have become very fat. You were very smart in jail. Faiz, make Rana sahib smart again,'" he said. Sanaullah said he responded by telling the former army chief that the case against him had been initiated on his instructions. "I told Bajwa that the case against me was made at your behest. May Allah hold you accountable for it in this world," he added. He also rejected the notion that serving military officers could act independently of

the army chief, saying it was impossible for an in-service officer to fabricate a false case without approval. "It is not possible for a serving officer to register a false case without the army chief's consent and not face a court martial the next day," he said. The prime minister's adviser further alleged that during the tenure of PTI founder Imran Khan, state affairs were effectively run with the consent of Bajwa, Hamid. Meanwhile, following the conviction of ex-ISI chief, certain political and media circles have begun speculating about the possibility of legal action against Qamar Bajwa. However, informed sources have dismissed such claims, stating that there is neither any probe nor any proceeding underway against Gen (retd) Bajwa. The Field General Court Martial (FGCM) sentenced the former spymaster to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment for engaging in political activities, violating the Official Secrets Act, misusing authority and causing wrongful loss to persons, according to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on December 11.

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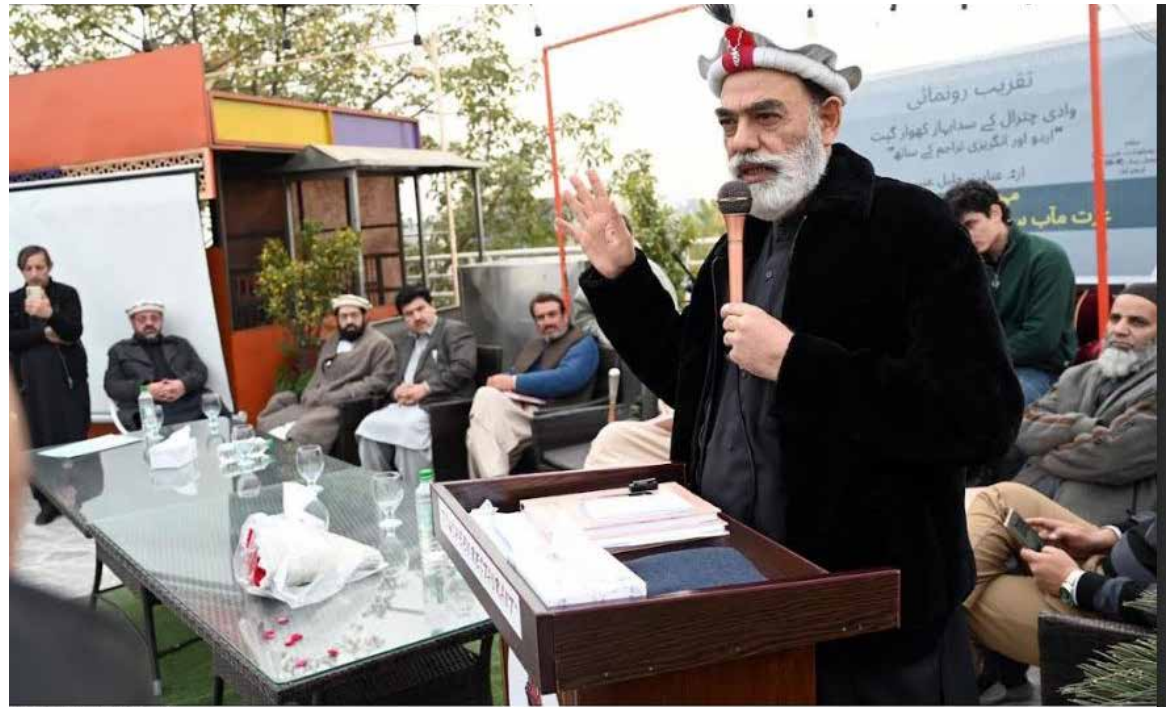


# No govt job on basis of political recommendations: Afridi

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi, said on Sunday that no one in the province will be given a job on the basis of political recommendations. "All recruitments in provincial departments, autonomous bodies, and semi-government institutions will be carried out strictly on merit and through EATA. Our government has a zero-tolerance policy against corruption and the public should bring forward evidence of corruption, and the government will take action without discrimination," said Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while addressing a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) public gathering in Kohat. The Chief Minister said that

16,000 recruitments in the Elementary and Secondary Education Department have been completed 100 percent on merit, and he challenges the entire Pakistani media to prove even a single job given on political recommendation. He said that recruitment of 983 jail wardens, 3,200 lecturers, 1,800 police constables, and 640 CTD personnel will also be completed soon, and all tests will be conducted through EATA. The Chief Minister said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is following the principles of merit, transparency, and good governance and investment in people is the top priority of the government. He said that an open-door poli-

cy has been implemented in the province, and all district, divisional, and provincial administrations have been directed to ensure that no citizen returns disappointed from a government office. He said listening to the public and resolving their issues is the responsibility of the Govt. Muhammad Sohail Afridi announced that the provincial government will provide full funding for a Girls Cadet College in Kohat, a girls' campus at Kohat University, a 1,000-bed hospital, and for resolving the issue of clean drinking water. Deficiencies at the DHQ Hospital will be addressed, and work on blacktop roads and water supply.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Senator Talha Mahmood addresses a ceremony for the book launch of Qazi Inayat Jalil Anbar, a prominent Khovar literature writer, poet, and radio host, on the publication of his new book "Sada Bahar Khovar Geet" (Volume I).

## Dense smog engulfs Bahawalpur

BAHAWALPUR: Dense smog accompanied by biting cold weather gripped Bahawalpur and its adjoining areas on Sunday. The city experienced severe smog along with a significant drop in temperatures, causing difficulties for residents and raising health concerns. Dense fog and smog also resulted in low visibility during the early morning and late-night hours, disrupting road traffic and increasing the risk of accidents on highways and city roads. According to the local Meteorological Office, cold weather accompanied by smog is expected to persist in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, reports received here said that the motorway passing through the Uch area of Bahawalpur district was closed during late-night and early morning hours due to dense smog and poor visibility.—APP

## Over 50 varsities digitally connected

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has provided digital connectivity and advanced IT services to more than 50 universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) located in less-developed areas as part of its efforts to modernise teaching, research and administrative functions across the country. According to documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the initiative is being implemented through the Pakistan Education and Research Network (PERN), which offers high-speed internet connectivity along with supporting digital services to universities in remote and underserved regions. The project aims to ensure equitable access to quality higher education facilities for students and faculty regardless of geographic location. The PERN connectivity project covers a wide range of cities and districts, including Khairpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Bannu, Turbat, Mirpur, Khuzdar, Zhob, Gwadar, Shikarpur, Chitral, Swat, Upper Dir, Shangla, Buner, Battagram, Mastung, Dera Murad Jamali, Wadh, Layyah, Hangu, Panjgur, Loralai, Muslim Bagh, Ghotki, Kharan, Swabi, Dera Ismail Khan and Kandhkot, among others. Under the PERN Core Network expansion, the HEC has extended a long-haul optical fibre network spanning approximately 1,100 kilometres into remote areas.—APP

## IPP welcomes MQM'S support on new provinces

ISLAMABAD: Welcoming the support of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) on the creation of new provinces, the spokesperson of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), has termed it a positive development and a reflection of national thinking. Commenting on the statement of Federal Minister and MQM leader Aminul-Haque, the IPP spokesperson said that MQM's support is a good omen and this good gesture on such an important national issue as new provinces is a positive and commendable step, said a press release issued here. The IPP spokesperson thanked MQM for its cooperation in the matter of new provinces, stating that by supporting the proposals of the President of the IPP, Abdul Aleem Khan, MQM has taken a constructive step towards national interest and public welfare. He added that other political parties should

also demonstrate openness and support the IPP on the issue of new provinces. According to the spokesperson, MQM has spoken in the interest of the country and the fact is that fair distribution of powers, effective resolution of issues at the local level and the establishment of smaller administrative units have become the most pressing needs of the time. IPP spokesperson further stated that a serious political and social debate on the establishment of new provinces is already underway across the country and that this is not a new demand. He said that strict implementation of the report of January 28, 2013, regarding new provinces could pave the way for improved governance. The establishment of new administrative units not only in Punjab but also in other provinces would help promote good gov-

ernance. President of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party, Abdul Aleem Khan has presented a unique and workable vision regarding new provinces which is receiving appreciation from various quarters, spokesperson added. He clarified that new provinces can be established without changing the names of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He termed MQM's proposal of 12 new provinces and its inclusion in the national mainstream as a welcome development. The spokesperson concluded by stating that the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party invites all political parties to adopt a democratic approach and engage in meaningful dialogue on the establishment of new provinces so that the public can be provided with better governance and an effective administrative system.—APP

## CM hails int'l recognition of Punjab Sahulat Bazar Authority

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's team has won another honor for the province, as Punjab Sahulat Bazar Authority becomes the first unique institution of its kind to receive ISO 901 and ISO 27001 certificates from an internationally recognized institution of Switzerland on setting a unique record of establishing more than 17,000 stalls across Punjab. Out of 17,000, 6,000 stalls have been established in 36 districts of Punjab, while 1,000 stalls have been established in the 10 newly-established Sahulat Bazaars. Additionally, more than 10,000 temporary stalls on weekends are also available for the convenience of people across Punjab. CM Maryam Nawaz, chairing a meeting here on Sunday, expressed happiness, and congratulated Chairman Punjab Sahulat Bazar Authority Afzal Khokhar and his entire team on receiving international recognition. During the meeting, she also set a target to launch Sahulat Bazaars in three more districts by January, saying that the role of Sahulat Bazaar Authority in providing affordable and quality consumer goods to people is unforgettable. She added that Sahulat Bazaar Authority has rendered valuable public service by ensuring the provision of fruits, vegetables and other consumer goods at affordable prices in the province. She highlighted that people of Punjab have a right to obtain quality goods at affordable prices. The CM said that Punjab government institutions are being made service centers in the true sense. She added that cheap bread and cheap flour in Punjab are undeniable proof of public service. She underscored that the scope of Sahulat Bazaars is determined to gradually expand from districts, and tehsils to small cities.—APP

## Applications invited for new olive orchards

ISLAMABAD: Applications have been invited from farmers in the Potohar region for the establishment of new olive orchards under a government-backed initiative aimed at expanding commercial olive cultivation, with the deadline set for March 15, 2026. The initiative is part of a broader push to shift farmers toward high-value crops and strengthen Pakistan's domestic olive sector. The programme is being implemented with technical support from the Centre of Excellence for Olive Research and Training (CFORT) at the Barani Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Chakwal. Director CFORT Dr Muhammad Ramzan Anser told Wealth Pakistan that olive cultivation now offers economic returns strong enough to replace low-value traditional crops. He said farmers are being encouraged to adopt olives on a commercial scale, supported by subsidies, research-based guidance and improved processing facilities. Under the programme, farmers owning at least five acres of land are eligible to apply for orchard development. Eligible growers can select certified olive plants directly from approved nurseries, with the government providing a subsidy of Rs360 per plant. Nearly Rs58,000 per acre will be provided to farmers over the three-year duration of the project. Dr Ramzan said the approach gives farmers ownership of their orchards while ensuring quality planting material, which is critical for long-term productivity. He added that CFORT has made advisory services accessible to all growers through a dedicated helpline and online platforms, allowing farmers to seek technical guidance throughout the cultivation cycle. The Potohar region has emerged as a focal area for olive expansion following decades of varietal testing and adaptive research. Since initial trials began in 1991, BARI has evaluated dozens of olive cultivars, developed private-sector nurseries and built a domestic knowledge base to support large-scale plantation. Dr Ramzan said Pakistan's olive sector is now operating on a full value-chain model linking researchers, farmers, processors, entrepreneurs and marketers. More than 85 olive oil brands have emerged across the country, reflecting growing private-sector participation and rising consumer confidence.—DNA

## Hazara Tech Fiesta concludes at Hazara varsity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's largest-ever technology festival, Hazara Tech Fiesta 2025, concluded on Sunday at Hazara University Mansehra, marking a major milestone in the region's academic and digital development. The three-day event brought together national and international speakers, policymakers, technology experts, youth leaders and thousands of students, making it the largest technology-driven gathering ever hosted by a public sector university in the Hazara region. The festival was formally inaugurated by the Vice Chancellor of Hazara University, who described the Hazara Tech Fiesta as a transformative initiative for students and the wider region. He said the university takes pride in hosting an event that bridges academia with industry and global innovation trends, adding that such plat-

forms are vital for preparing students to compete in an increasingly digital world. He reaffirmed the varsity's commitment to promoting research, innovation and technology-based education. Hassan Sajjad Khan, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Thrive Pakistan, told APP that the successful conclusion of Hazara Tech Fiesta 2025 reflected a shared vision of academia, industry and government to empower youth through technology. He said the festival was initiated to provide equal opportunities for students in regions beyond major urban centres, enabling them to access global knowledge, industry exposure and innovation-driven platforms. He added that the strong participation demonstrated the readiness of Hazara's youth to lead Pakistan's digital future with the right guidance and ecosystem. A strong international presence was witnessed during the festival, with representatives from Resecurity, a globally

recognised cybersecurity and intelligence company, playing a key role. Sharafat Khan, Managing Director of Resecurity Pakistan, along with Haris Qureshi, representative of Resecurity Pakistan, addressed participants and highlighted the growing importance of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and digital intelligence in today's interconnected world. They noted that Pakistan's youth possess immense potential to contribute to the global cybersecurity ecosystem if provided with proper exposure and opportunities. Prominent political and public figures also attended the event, including senior political leader Kamal Saleem Swati, who lauded the organisers for holding a technology festival of such scale in Hazara. He said initiatives like the Hazara Tech Fiesta were essential for steering youth towards productive, future-oriented career paths and emphasised that technology-driven youth engagement is crucial for sustainable economic growth. Shahzada Muham-

mad Gushtasap Khan, Member of the National Assembly, attended the event as chief guest and termed the Hazara Tech Fiesta a landmark achievement for the region. He said the scale and diversity of the festival reflected Hazara's emergence as an important hub for technology, education and innovation, and assured his full support for future initiatives focused on digital skills, entrepreneurship and modern education. Speaking at the concluding session, Hassan Nisar, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Metrix Pakistan, said the overwhelming response to Hazara Tech Fiesta 2025 highlighted the untapped potential of youth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said the festival was not merely an event but a movement to connect young people with technology, innovation and global opportunities, adding that Metrix Pakistan remained committed to building sustainable ecosystems for students, startups and professionals.

## Ex ISI chief conviction to strengthen public trust: Gilani

MUZAFFARGARH: Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani said on Saturday that the conviction of former ISI chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed would strengthen public confidence in Pakistan's accountability system. Talking to local media at the residence of former MNA Mehr Irshad Sial in Muzaffargarh, Gilani said there had long been a perception that influential figures were beyond the reach of the law, but recent developments had dispelled that impression. It was believed powerful people can escape accountability, however, this perception has been proven wrong, he added. Gilani reaffirmed his commitment to the development and prosperity of South Punjab, saying efforts in this regard would continue. He said the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had launched several development projects for South Punjab including Muzaffargarh during its tenure, citing the Tayyab Erdogan Hospital and the Head Muhammadwala Bridge, constructed with Turkish assistance. Gilani said the only sustainable solution to end sense of deprivation was the establishment of south Punjab as a separate province. He noted that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had consistently advocated for the formation of new provinces where there existed consensus. Responding to a question, the Senate chairman emphasized dialogue as the preferred way to resolve issues and suggested that goods transporters be engaged in talks to address their concerns.—APP

## Bugti highlights role of Military College Sui in national progress

SUI: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti reaffirmed the government's commitment that education, training, and personality development of the youth remain top priorities, with concrete steps being taken to strengthen institutions like Military College Sui. The Chief Minister emphasized that quality education, character building, and skills training form the bedrock of national progress. Addressing the annual Parents' Day ceremony at Military College Sui, he highlighted the vital role of cadet colleges in shaping disciplined, patriotic, and responsible future leaders.

The Chief Minister noted that institutions like Military College Sui are equipping Balochistan's youth with academic excellence, military traditions, and moral values, preparing them to face future challenges with confidence and integrity. Paying tribute to parents, he acknowledged their guidance and sacrifices as fundamental to the academic and moral success of their children. He added that events such as Parents' Day strengthen trust and coordination between families and educational institutions, creating a supportive environment for student development. CM

Bugti lauded the cadets for their outstanding academic performance, discipline, and achievements in co-curricular activities. He remarked that the youth of Balochistan possess immense potential which, if nurtured with the right direction and environment, can be transformed into a valuable national asset. To further enhance facilities at the college, the Chief Minister announced provision of laptops to second-year students, solarization of the campus, construction and rehabilitation of internal roads, establishment of an outdoor sports complex.—APP

## 78,000 Intelligence-Based Operations conducted in Balochistan: Shafqaat

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has carried out more than 78,000 intelligence-based operations across the province this year as part of its counterterrorism strategy. Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat announced on Sunday. Speaking at a joint press conference alongside DIG Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Aetaz Ahmed Goraya, Hamza Shafqaat revealed that 707 terrorists were either killed or arrested during these operations. The Additional Chief Secretary Home noted that the campaign has come at a significant cost, with 202 security personnel embracing martyrdom while safeguarding citizens' lives

and property. To strengthen law enforcement infrastructure, he revealed that Rs. 2 billion have been allocated for the fortification and improvement of police stations across Balochistan, aimed at enhancing security and preventing future attacks on law enforcement facilities. Hamza Shafqaat confirmed the arrest of three terrorists involved in the murder of SHO Kharan City, Qasim Baloch, during a successful operation. He further highlighted that the U.S. State Department has designated the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and its Majed Brigade as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, calling it an important international step against militant groups in the

region. He added that the provincial government has established a "Red Notice Cell" to pursue suspects orchestrating terrorism from abroad at the international level. DIG CTD Aetaz Ahmed Goraya provided further details, stating that the arrested suspects belong to the proscribed Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and had received terrorist training in Afghanistan. According to Goraya, the terrorists initially planned to kidnap SHO Qasim Baloch, torture him, and record propaganda videos. When the officer resisted, they opened fire, killing him. Government-issued SMGs and the vehicle used in the crime were recovered from the suspects.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

Dec 01/Romania National Day

Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day

Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day

Dec 05/Thailand National Day

Dec 06/Finland Independence Day

Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day

Dec 09/Tanzania National Day

Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day

Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day

Dec12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day

Dec 16/Bahrain National Day


Dec 16/Kazakhstan Independence Day

Dec 18/Qatar National Day

Dec 18/Niger National Day

Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day

Dec 23/Japan National Day



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16


Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police.....9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114


PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4


RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

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# Pehchan Pak prize distribution ceremony celebrates young voices

*The ceremony was attended by parents, teachers, heads of educational institutions, and families of the winners, creating a vibrant and inclusive celebration of learning, creativity, and national pride*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pehchan Pakistan Prize Distribution Ceremony was held at the Pakistan Academy of Letters, Islamabad, celebrating creativity, national identity, and cultural awareness among children and youth from across Pakistan. The ceremony was graced by Mr. Jamal Shah, renowned visual artist, cultural icon, and former Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Division, as the Chief Guest. Participants and winners traveled from all corners of the country, including remote areas such as Booni, Chitral (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), reflecting the truly national reach of the initiative. Addressing the audience, Jamal Shah expressed his honor in being associated with Pehchan Pakistan, stating that initiatives like these are a national service that strengthen cultural roots and identity among the younger generation. Ms. Meera'n Malik, President of the Community Development Council (CDC) and founder of Pehchan Pakistan, highlighted that Pehchan Pakistan is "not merely a contest, but a movement to reconnect children and youth with the soul, heritage, and values of Pakistan." The ceremony was attended by parents, teachers, heads of educational institutions, and families of the winners, creating a vibrant and inclusive celebration of learning, creativity, and national pride.



## Works on Kachehri flyover underpasses gaining momentum

RAWALPINDI: The construction work on Kachehri flyover and related underpasses is gaining momentum as major base beds solidification, guide beams and pile work are near to complete. The timely completion of the project is the crucial target for the government. Video Player A major phase was completed with the casting of the first deck slab on the 567-metre Iftekhar Janjua Underpass, making it the first fully roofed structure among the ongoing projects. Guide beams at the site are now fully complete, while 648 of total 840 piles have been driven, with work continuing on the rest. At the busy Kachehri Chowk, progress is steady on both the 878-metre flyover and the 530-metre underpass. All 101 piles for the flyover are done, four out of eleven pile caps have been cast, and reinforcement work for the pier shafts is going on around the clock. The un-

derpass has its guide beams on both sides fully completed. At Jinnah Park, the 531-metre flyover has all 24 piles and 5 pile caps finished, with steel fixing for piers underway with full speed. About 70 metres of the 258-metre retaining wall are built, and most bed and lean concrete work is complete. The adjacent 480-metre Jinnah Park Underpass has seen 300 metres of guide beams completed, 391 out of 446 piles completed, 140 metres of capping beam, and 120 metres of NJ barrier steel fixing. The project aimed to connect Islamabad Express Highway with the GT Road, Peshawar Road through old Airport Road, making it a signal free route. Rana Qamar Ali, Executive Engineer (EXEN) of the Punjab Highways Department, confirmed APP that the first full deck slab and over 70 percent completion of girders on the longest flyover have

shifted work into high gear. "This will transform Rawalpindi's traffic flow in the coming months," he said. The projects are part of a major urban infrastructure drive by the Punjab government under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, targeting the city's worst traffic issues. Once finished, they will end chronic jams at Kachehri Chowk, Iftekhar Janjua Road and Jinnah Park cross over, cut commute times and create smooth and congestion-free routes. The mega project involves five junctions at main Kachehri Chowk being worked with flyovers and underpasses, Iftekhar Janjua Road, Jinnah Park, Qasim Market on Peshawar Road and remodeling of Ammar Chowk. Approved by the Provincial Development Working Party, the combined projects cost over Rs13.3343 billion.395

## Parliamentary Secretary reviews mega uplift projects

RAWALPINDI: On the special directions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Parliamentary Secretary for Housing, Urban Development and Public Health Engineering (HUD&PHE) Sultan Bajwa visited the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) to review ongoing mega development projects in the city. The meeting was chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary at the RDA Conference room. During the meeting, RDA Director General Kinza Murtaza present-

ed a detailed briefing on ongoing initiatives, key achievements, and future plans of the Authority. Major projects discussed included the Rawalpindi Ring Road, Nullah Lai Project, rehabilitation of the Metro Bus Corridor, and proposed schemes such as the rehabilitation of Murree Road from Flashman to Faizabad, and the construction of joint check posts at Adyala Road, Koral Chowk, and Chur Chowk. The DG also updated on approved, unapproved, and illegal housing

schemes in Rawalpindi, stating that strict action is being taken against illegal developments. She reaffirmed RDA's commitment to modern urban development, transparency, and timely completion of projects to enhance city infrastructure, traffic management, and public service delivery. Parliamentary Secretary Sultan Bajwa appreciated the RDA team's performance in accelerating urban development and addressing civic challenges. He emphasized the importance of sustainable

growth, effective urban planning, environmental considerations, and improved civic infrastructure to enhance the quality of life for Rawalpindi residents. The meeting concluded with actionable directives aimed at expediting project timelines, strengthening inter-departmental coordination, and ensuring that public interest remains at the forefront of all development activities. The officials present at the meeting included Director Engineering Muhammad Anwar Baran, Director Administration Iftekhar Ahmad, Director Land Ghazafar Ali Awan, Director Estate Management Aabgeena, Deputy Director Engineering Muhammad Kamran Chaudhry, and other senior officers.—DNA

## ICCI president terms FBR move an 'assault on economic stability'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood will address a press conference today ( Monday) at 4.00 p.m to announce the business community's unanimous and unequivocal stance against the irrational, unethical, unilateral and highly exacerbating increase in the valuation of residential and commercial properties in Islamabad, by the Federal Board of

Revenue through its notification dated 8 December 2025. Earlier, an emergency meeting was convened under the chairmanship of President Sardar Tahir Mehmood. The meeting will be attended by senior representatives of trade, industry, real estate and the construction sector, where a joint, decisive and time-bound course of action will be finalized. It is noteworthy that the business community has strongly condemned the FBR's move, terming it a reckless assault on economic stability. ICCI leadership has

warned that the arbitrary revision will cripple investment, paralyze the real estate and construction sectors, and severely undermine investor confidence at a time when the national economy is struggling for stability. President Sardar Tahir Mehmood has made it categorically clear that such anti-business, revenue-driven decisions taken without consultation are unacceptable and will be resisted through all constitutional and democratic means unless immediately withdrawn.

## ICCI hosts Google Cloud DevFest 2025

ISLAMABAD: Senior Vice President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), while addressing a hugely attended Google Cloud DevFest 2025 at the ICCI Auditorium, emphasized that technology, innovation, and digital transformation are rapidly emerging as key drivers of Pakistan's economic future. He termed the hosting of DevFest at ICCI a proud moment for the Chamber, reflecting its growing role in promoting the digital and knowledge economy. The Senior Vice President highlighted that cloud computing, artificial intelligence, data analytics, and automation are reshaping global economies, and Pakistan must proactively invest in digital capabilities to remain competitive at the international level. He stressed that technology is not confined to the IT sector alone but acts as a powerful enabler across all industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, retail, logistics, and finance, helping businesses enhance efficiency, scalability, and sustainability. Reaffirming ICCI's commitment, he stated that the Chamber will continue to promote IT development, support digital innovation, and encourage tech-driven entrepreneurship through skills development initiatives and strategic partnerships. He urged developers and students to fully capitalize on the knowledge-sharing and networking opportunities offered by DevFest, noting that such platforms play a vital role in nurturing future innovators and strengthening Pakistan's digital economy. He appreciated the dedicated efforts of Dr. Muhammad Usman, Convener ICCI Software Development Committee, and Aizaz Mohammad, Convener ICCI IT, Telecom and Computer Hardware Committee, for successfully organizing the event. He also acknowledged the valuable partnership of Google Developer Group - Cloud Islamabad for bringing global-level learning opportunities to developers, professionals, students, and the business community. During the day-long event, experts delivered insightful lectures on a wide range of contemporary topics, including effective communication in today's digital era, the use of AI to accelerate innovation, breaking down organizational silos through unified AI platforms, and the development of secure, agent-oriented, and specification-driven AI systems. Participants, particularly young developers and students, described the DevFest as highly informative and thought-provoking, expressing confidence that such initiatives would empower them to move forward with AI-driven technologies and contribute meaningfully to national development.—DNA

## Minister hails new £10m Pak-UK education phase

ISLAMABAD (DNA): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui appreciated the efforts of Higher Education Commission (HEC) and British Council for launching the £10 million second phase of Pak-UK Education Gateway partnership. The Gateway will help the UK's world class institutions work with their Pakistani counterparts on shared challenges from climate change to mobility and growth, he said. According to the HEC on Saturday, a launch ceremony was organized at the HEC Secretariat, which also celebrated the achievements of Phase-I of Pak-UK Education Gateway partnership. Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui graced the event as chief guest. Acting Chairperson HEC, Nadeem Mahbub, Executive Director HEC Dr Zia Ul Haq, British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott and others were also presented during the event. Speaking at the occasion, the federal minister said that Pak-UK Education Gateway has produced tangible results. He commended the efforts of HEC and British Council in fostering this bilateral partnership. The Minister said that the Government is committed to promote higher education in the country through dedicated measures including development of collaborations and partnerships, and equipping country's youth with education and skills. "Education is the bridge that connects people, cultures, and futures," he emphasized. Acting Chairperson HEC, Nadeem Mahbub said that Pak-UK Education Gateway is more than a mere programme, functioning instead as a system-to-system partnership. He shared background of the HEC-British Council partnership and shed light on the achievements marked under the Gateway initiative. The Chairperson expressed gratitude to all the stakeholders including the UK and Pakistani Governments, the higher education sectors, and the HEC and British Council teams for programme's success. He noted that the programme has touched countless lives and continues to benefit the people. British High Commissioner Jane Marriott said, "Education is the building block of growth and prosperity. Our work on education in Pakistan supports people throughout their lives: from helping reform education policy at the school level, to our strong partnership in higher education. This next phase builds on our already strong relationship, and will unlock opportunities to help both our higher education sectors thrive". In his welcome address, Executive Director HEC Dr Zia Ul Haq highlighted the significance of Pak-UK Education Gateway in further strengthening the longstanding partnership. He said the Gateway has proved to be a flagship collaboration in key areas such as leadership development, quality assurance, distance learning, international mobility, and transnational education, etc. —DNA

## Ayaz greets independent group on success in PBC polls

ISLAMABA: Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has extended heartfelt congratulations to Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tatar, Ahsan Bhoon, and other members of the Independent Group on their remarkable success in the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) elections. NA Speaker also conveyed his best wishes to all lawyers elected in the Pakistan Bar Council elections. He said that the role of the legal fraternity in strengthening democracy and promoting democratic values is highly commendable. Ayaz Sadiq emphasized that the lawyers' community plays a pivotal role in safeguarding citizens' rights and ensuring the delivery of justice. He said that lawyers are the custodians of constitutional supremacy and the rule of law in the country. Ayaz assured the newly elected members of the Pakistan Bar Council of his full support in addressing the issues faced by the legal fraternity. He stressed that close coordination and cooperation between the Bench and the Bar are essential for the effective dispensation of justice. Ayaz Sadiq prayed for the success of the newly elected members and expressed hope that they would continue to serve the cause of justice with dedication and integrity. Federal Minister and President of Pakistan Muslim League-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Amir Muqam Tuesday extended his felicitations to the independent group on its victory in the Pakistan Bar Council elections. In a statement issued by his office, Muqam congratulated Federal Law Minister Azam Nazir Tatar and Ahsan Bhoon on their election as members of the Pakistan Bar Council. —APP

## HEC launches quality review of MS/ MPhil, PhD programmes

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has initiated a comprehensive quality review of graduate programmes, particularly MS/MPHil and PhD degrees, offered by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country. The decision follows concerns during a comprehensive presentation by the Quality Assurance Agency to the Executive Director HEC regarding academic rigour and implementation standards of graduate education, especially in cases where PhD programmes are being conducted in part-time formats without meeting essential quality benchmarks, said a press release issued here Saturday. Despite the introduction of the highly flexible Graduate Education Policy (GEP-2023) and HEC's extensive outreach sessions including orientation, and capacity-building workshops, conducted both physically and online, serious gaps remain in the quality, supervision, governance.—APP



## Briefs

SC arts  
opens door  
to science  
groups

ISLAMABAD: Effective from the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) 1st Annual Examination 2026, the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) Forum, in its 183rd meeting, allowed students passing their Matriculation (SSC) in the Arts Group, eligible to register in F.Sc - Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering Groups. This initiative has been taken to facilitate those Martic arts group students who were seeking admission in the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) - Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering Groups. According to the notification issued on dated 12th December, the IBCC Forum in its 183rd meeting held on 4-5 December, 2025 has been taken this decision, following the recommendations of the Sub-Committee and feedback received from key regulatory bodies including Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PM&DC), Higher Education Commission (HEC), National Curriculum Council (NCC) and Provincial Curriculum Authorities. "The IBCC Forum, in its 183rd meeting held on 4-5 December 2025, has unanimously resolved that the students who have passed the SSC (Arts Group) may be allowed to register for HSSC (Pre-Medical and Pre-Engineering Groups), effective from the SSC 1st Annual Examination 2026 onwards," the notification said. The Forum further recommended that concerned institutions may adopt appropriate measures, such as setting minimum marks or merit criteria, and conducting placement or aptitude tests to ensure uniform standards across all boards. However, it clarified that the final implementation decision would rest with the respective boards, subject to approval from their Boards of Governors (BoGs) and other competent authorities, where applicable.=DNA

SSP Operations  
visits duty  
points

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have further strengthened security measures across the federal capital, with SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza visiting various duty points to review on-ground arrangements and performance of deployed personnel. An official told APP on Sunday that the SSP Operations met police officers and personnel at different duty points and inspected the checking process. He directed officers to make checking more effective and purposeful to ensure the protection of citizens' lives and property. During the visit, SSP Qazi Ali Raza instructed police personnel to remain alert at all times, ensure thorough checking of suspicious individuals and vehicles, and immediately report any suspicious activity to senior officers. He also emphasized that officers should deal with citizens in a polite and respectful manner, noting that courteous behaviour plays a key role in strengthening public trust in the police.=APP

Police conduct  
search  
operations

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police conducted search and combing operations in the jurisdictions of Bani Gala, Margalla and Ramna police stations as part of ongoing security measures to curb crime and ensure public safety in the federal capital. An official told APP on Sunday that search and combing operations were carried out under the supervision of the respective zonal SPs. Before the operation, police personnel were properly briefed about operational procedures and security protocols, while women police officers also actively participated in the search process. During the operations, police teams checked 204 individuals, 129 houses, 59 shops and hotels, 155 motorcycles and 44 vehicles. The official added that four suspicious persons and 22 motorcycles were shifted to police stations for further legal proceedings and verification.=APP

Economists warn 19% US tariff  
hitting Pakistan's export engine

According to Gwadar Pro, the study notes that Pakistan "was initially subjected to a 29% tariff," but even after negotiations brought it down to 19 percent in August 2025, the reduction "did not entirely prevent short-term losses," particularly in textiles, the backbone of the country's exports

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's export sector is bracing for a sharper downturn as a new report by the SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI), the apex regional trade body, and the South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA) warns that the United States' 19 percent reciprocal tariff is eroding competitiveness, disrupting orders and deepening economic vulnerabilities. The report, which examines the impact of U.S. tariff escalation across all SAARC countries, identifies Pakistan as among the most exposed due to its heavy reliance on textile and apparel exports to the United States. According to Gwadar Pro, the study notes that Pakistan "was initially subjected to a 29% tariff," but even after negotiations brought it down to 19 percent in August 2025, the reduction "did not entirely prevent short-term losses," particularly in textiles, the backbone of the country's exports. The SCCI-SAFA report states that Pakistan's "export footprint to the United States, primarily in textiles, rendered it vulnerable to reciprocal levies," adding that the new duties "has increased the landed cost of Pakistani textiles and apparel by up to 18 percent," contributing to a "decline in export volumes of 20-30 percent." Think tanks cited in the study warn that export revenues could fall by "20-25 percent" if tariff pressures persist, threatening the rupee, foreign reserves and industrial employment. The report further cautions that Pakistan's "delicate macroeconomic situation

implied that currency, inflation, and fiscal stability could be further affected by diminished export earnings." Textile exporter and former Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI) Vice-President Tanveer Barri said the impact is already being felt on the ground. "The 19% U.S. tariff makes Pakistani exports more expensive for American buyers, which is expected to erode their competitive edge and potentially lead to a decline in exports, job losses, and pressure on the Pakistani rupee," he told Gwadar Pro. He added that Pakistan's key earners—textiles, leather goods, surgical instruments, and sporting goods—operate on tight margins and "will bear the brunt of the added cost." Muhammad Jawed Bilwani, former president of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and a leading voice for textile and value-added exporters, described worsening conditions for manufacturers. "Unemployment has already increased and it's rising every single day. Spinning units in the textile sector are shutting down, weaving units are shutting down as well," he told Gwadar Pro. "The reason is that tariffs have gone up, and on top of that, electricity has become extremely expensive." While acknowledging the external shock of 19% tariff, he cautioned that domestic inefficiencies remain central: "Before blaming tariffs alone, we must confront our own cost structure, energy prices, logistics bottlenecks, and inconsistent policies. A more competitive base lowers vulnerability to external shocks." Islamabad-based economist Malak Tanveer Ahmad said the full effect of the tariff has yet

to unfold due to the way export orders are scheduled. "The US has slapped a 19% tariff on Pakistani products, which will significantly increase their landed cost," he told Gwadar Pro. "The tariff was imposed in August, and... the full impact will appear at the end of January and February. The real hit is coming in the next cycle of orders." Still, some analysts see a mixed landscape. Sardar Shuakat Popalzai, President of the Balochistan Economic Forum, told Gwadar Pro that while the tariff has raised costs, Pakistan's relative position in the region has improved. "The United States imposed a reciprocal tariff... initially around 29%, later revised downward to roughly 19%. While this tariff has increased the landed cost of Pakistani goods..., it has not eliminated Pakistan's competitive edge. In fact, Pakistan currently enjoys the lowest tariff rate in South Asia, with U.S. duties on India and Bangladesh set higher." He argued that this could spur modernization and export diversification, saying the tariff environment "has pushed Pakistani industries to improve efficiency, upgrade quality, and diversify their product range, strengthening long-term resilience." Economist Subhan Ansari said the findings of the SCCI-SAFA report aligns with market observations. "The tariff escalation by the United States would unquestionably tighten the squeeze on Pakistan's textile and garment exporters," he told Gwadar Pro. "When your largest buyer suddenly adds 15-20% to the landed price, you lose competitiveness overnight. So yes, a 20-30% hit to export volumes is very much within

the realm of possibility." The SCCI-SAFA report also stresses broader vulnerabilities. It warns that Pakistan's delicate macroeconomic position means "currency, inflation, and fiscal stability could be further affected by diminished export earnings." The U.S. market accounts for more than 80 percent of Pakistan's textile and apparel shipments, and the report estimates annual revenue losses of up to USD 0.49 billion under the new tariff structure. At the policy level, the study urges Pakistan and other South Asian economies to diversify trade partners to reduce exposure to U.S. tariff volatility. The SCCI-SAFA report finds that "regional trade may allow settlement in local currencies" and that expanding SAARC-based supply chains could "bolster economic resilience," even though South Asia remains one of the least integrated regions globally. Economist Professor Dr. Zilakat underscored this need for broader diversification. "Reducing reliance on the US market cannot be achieved simply by shifting to regional trade," he said. He argued that Pakistan needs a "multi-pronged strategy" extending to ASEAN, the Middle East, and East Africa, paired with upgraded standards and better-negotiated market access. Despite pockets of optimism, exporters warn the immediate environment is tightening. With costs rising, orders shrinking, and global competition intensifying, Pakistan's 19 percent tariff challenge is shaping into a decisive test for the country's most critical export industries, and the livelihoods tied to them



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Frederico Silva, taking interest in paintings during exhibition entitled "Unveiling Persia" at Tanzara Arts Gallery in Federal Capital.

Pak scholar wins China SWJTU's  
outstanding research award

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Zubair Tariq, a lecturer in marketing at Malak Malik Firoz Khan Noon Business School at University of Sargodha (UoS) has won the 2025 Outstanding Academic Research Paper Award from the School of International Education, Southwest Jiaotong University (SWJTU), Chengdu, China. He received the honor as the sole awardee in the Business and Management category, recognized for producing the highest-impact paper among international scholars. Following the announcement, the Pakistan Institute of China Studies (PICS), UOS, congratulated Mr. Tariq on the achievement, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro. Tariq's award-winning paper, published in the Service Industries Journal (SSCI, Q1; impact factor 9.4; CiteScore 16.1), is titled "Transforming retail with humanoid service robots: exploring the impact of customer mindsets on value co-creation via perceived robot anthropomorphism and the moderating roles of robotic service proactivity and customer emotional intelligence." The study explores how customer psychol-

ogy shapes interactions with humanoid service robots as their presence grows in retail. Grounded in implicit mindset theory and service-dominant logic, the research positions customer mindsets as key resources that shape perceptions and engagement within AI-enabled service ecosystems. Survey data from 420 Chinese retail customers show that a growth mindset enhances both perceived robot anthropomorphism and value co-creation, while a fixed mindset inhibits these outcomes. The study further finds that perceived anthropomorphism partially mediates the relationship, offering evidence of how customers cognitively interpret robot behavior. Robotic proactivity and customer emotional intelligence, however, did not significantly moderate the link between mindset and value co-creation, a result suggesting that personal psychological traits may outweigh contextual service factors in shaping customer, robot engagement. PICS officials said the recognition highlights Pakistan's rising visibility in global research networks and reflects the strengthening academic collaboration between the University of Sargodha and Chinese institutions. Tariq's paper is currently showcased at SWJTU among high-impact publications by international scholars.

RCCI's Pindi food fest draws  
massive public interest

This year, over 15 stalls have been allocated exclusively for women, particularly those running home-based food ventures

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) on Sunday successfully organized the three-day Pindi Food Fest-4th Edition at Ayub Park, which attracted a large number of families and food enthusiasts from Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The annual festival aims to celebrate Pakistan's rich traditional and regional cuisines, introduce innovative food concepts and provide valuable networking and branding opportunities for SMEs, startups and women entrepreneurs, particularly in the food sector. Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, Ambassador of Algeria Ibrahim Romani, Station Commander Rawalpindi Cantonment Brigadier Ali Anjum Syed, along with representatives of various trade associations and other distinguished guests, visited the festival and appreciated

RCCI's initiative. During his visit, the minister lauded the RCCI for its proactive role in addressing the issues of the business community while also promoting cultural, social and recreational activities for the public. He congratulated RCCI President Usman Shaukat, his cabinet members and the entire organizing team on the successful arrangement of the food festival. He said that RCCI deserves appreciation for organizing positive, constructive and people-friendly activities such as the annual food festival. Such events, he added, play a vital role in projecting Pakistan's soft image at national and international levels. He noted that the presence of foreign diplomats at the festival would help convey a positive impression of Pakistan abroad. The minister further emphasized that it was wrong to associate Pakistan solely with terrorism, adding that the world must also be intro-

duced to the country's culture, traditions, hospitality and positive societal values. RCCI President Usman Shaukat, while highlighting the core objectives of the festival, emphasized the promotion of local culinary heritage and the empowerment of women-led food businesses. "More than 100 food stalls are participating in the festival, showcasing a wide variety of flavors and cuisines. This initiative provides women entrepreneurs with a platform to launch and grow their brands while building meaningful connections within the industry," he said. He added that the festival also served as a source of inspiration for aspiring women entrepreneurs. "Our goal is to create opportunities and motivate women who have yet to begin their entrepreneurial journey," he said. This year, over 15 stalls have been allocated exclusively for women, particularly those running home-based food ventures.

NHA seeks  
contractors for  
key CPEC M-6  
Motorway sections

ISLAMABAD: The National Highway Authority (NHA) has invited contractors to prequalify for two sections of the Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway (M-6), a major China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) road project that will complete the country's north-south motorway network, Gwadar Pro reported. According to official procurement notices, the prequalification process covers Section 4 (Naushehro Feroz-Ranipur, 60.90 kilometers) and Section 5 (Ranipur-Sukkur, 59.88 kilometers) of the six-lane motorway. As per the documents, Pakistan has applied for financing from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) for construction of the M-6 and plans to use part of the proceeds to fund the two contracts. NHA said it intends to prequalify contractors and firms in line with IsDB procurement guidelines, with bidding expected to begin in March 2026. Prequalification will be conducted under the IsDB Procurement Guidelines for Goods, Works and Related Services (April 2019, revised February 2023) and is open to bidders from eligible source countries, as defined by the bank's rules. Applications must be submitted by January 26, 2026, according to the notices. Interested firms can obtain prequalification documents from NHA headquarters in Islamabad. The 306-kilometer Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway is the last missing link in Pakistan's north-south motorway chain. Once completed, it is expected to significantly reduce travel time across Sindh province and improve freight movement between Gwadar Port and Karachi Port and inland industrial and trade hubs. The multibillion-rupee project is regarded as a critical component of CPEC's transport and logistics framework, supporting Pakistan's efforts to position itself as a regional trade and transit corridor linking South Asia, Central Asia and western China.=DNA

Call for  
equitable  
climate  
finance at  
UNEA dialogue

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik has stressed that environmental degradation poses systemic risks to the global financial system and called for more accessible and equitable climate finance for vulnerable countries. Speaking at a high-level Leadership Dialogue titled "The Bottom Line: Why Tackling Environmental Degradation Is Critical to the Future of the Global Financial System" on the sidelines of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in Nairobi, the minister said that climate action must be treated as a shared global responsibility. The dialogue brought together global leaders, policymakers, financial regulators and experts to discuss how governments are steering private finance towards pathways that strengthen economic and financial stability while addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, pollution and waste management. Participants highlighted the importance of policy coherence, effective regulatory frameworks and whole-of-government approaches to create enabling conditions for sustainable finance. Discussions also focused on mobilising private capital for high-impact sectors and integrating environmental risks into financial decision-making processes. Dr Malik noted that countries contributing the least to global emissions were among those facing the most severe impacts of climate change. He emphasised the need for enhanced climate finance to help such countries build resilience and protect development gains.=DNA

SNGPL  
intensifies  
crackdown on  
gas theft

MULTAN: In a bid to curb gas theft and illegal activities, the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) UFG Control Task Force intensified its operation and disconnected three more gas meters in various areas of the city, here on Saturday. According to details, three meters were disconnected over using compressors to get gas illegally. The door-to-door of 55 consumers was carried out. The measures were part of the company's commitment to combating gas theft and ensuring high-quality, uninterrupted service for all consumers.=DNA

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## What comes after multilateralism

JAVIER SOLANA

THE world is on the cusp of a profound geopolitical restructuring, as escalating great power rivalries erode the multilateral structures that have supported the global order since the mid-20th century. To prevent the international system from sliding into chaos and conflict, those unwilling to accept a world governed solely by raw power must find ways to reinforce today's debilitated multilateral institutions through informal arrangements and bilateral agreements. From the end of the Second World War to the early 2010s, multilateralism provided the framework for international cooperation. Though imperfect and often inconsistent, it was the most effective model of global governance ever created. But after more than a decade of continuous erosion, it is clear that the multilateral system as we know it can no longer facilitate collective action.

Without a framework capable of coordinating relations among countries, the alternatives are stark: a world government – an unfeasible prospect – or a steady drift toward anarchy. Multilateralism emerged as the pragmatic middle ground: collective decision-making and binding rules, rather than a single global authority or none at all. Born of unique historical circumstances, this model took shape as the US – the dominant postwar global power – promoted a treaty-based system guided by enlightened self-interest. That vision was realized at the Bretton Woods and San Francisco conferences, which led to the establishment of the UN, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, as well as its successor, the World Trade Organization. It is now clear that the multilateral system as we know it can no longer facilitate collective action

In principle, if not always in practice, these multilateral institutions were open to all countries, with bodies like the WTO and the International Civil Aviation Organization providing a shared framework of rules, standards and responsibilities. But in recent years, they have been severely undermined by the rise of sovereignty in developed economies like the US and in emerging powers like China. The US, for its part, played a significant role in weakening the very institutions it helped create. The 2003 invasion of Iraq and its intervention in Libya's civil war in 2011 showed that the world's major powers did not see themselves as bound by the so-called rules-based international order. This trend was reinforced by President Donald Trump's election in 2016, while his return to office in 2025 represented an explicit repudiation of the multilateral approach.

Meanwhile, Russia and China have been eager to undermine a system they view

05

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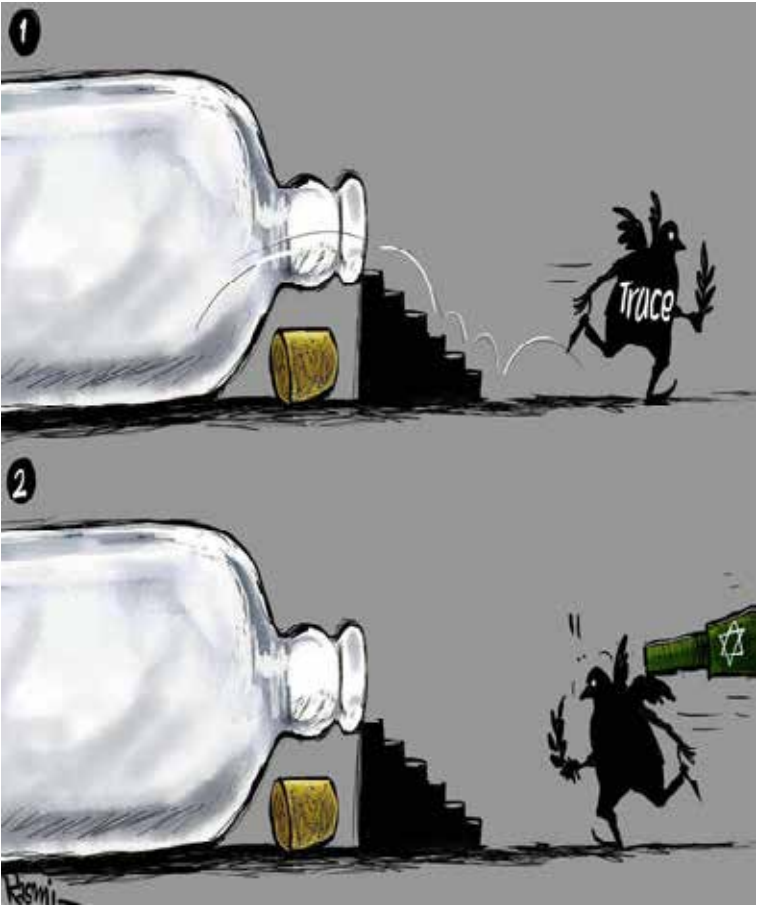
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as detrimental to their interests. Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia and invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022 openly defied international law, bringing large-scale war back to Europe. Likewise, China's "Made in China 2025" industrial strategy violates WTO rules and its aggressive actions in the South China Sea show complete disregard for the 2016 arbitral ruling that rejected its expansive maritime claims. The consequences are now widely evident: on the issues that matter most, multilateral institutions no longer drive global decision-making. Paralyzed by vetoes by its permanent members, the UN Security Council has been largely inactive, with the notable exception of its recent endorsement of Trump's Gaza peace plan. At the same time, the WTO – whose establishment in 1995 was multilateralism's last meaningful achievement – can no longer enforce its own rules since the US rendered its appellate inoperative in 2019.

This institutional paralysis is part of a broader trend. No major multilateral institution has been created in decades, while informal arrangements – lacking binding rules and often involving nonstate actors – have proliferated, offering more agile and adaptable forms of coordination better suited to an increasingly fragmented world. Today, multilateral institutions account for only a quarter of the global governance ecosystem. In this environment, preventing the disintegration of the international order is a daunting task. What is needed are intermediate mechanisms that do not depend on universal participation or the adoption of comprehensive, binding rules. While achieving global consensus is virtually impossible, informal alliances, public-private platforms and flexible coordination mechanisms can help mitigate geopolitical risks. Informal arrangements have proliferated, offering more agile and adaptable forms of coordination Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance – which has immunized more than a billion children since 2000 – offers a useful model, as do the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, with its globally accepted technical standards (including Wi-Fi), and the International Organization for Standardization. Although lacking legal authority, these bodies have achieved technical legitimacy and broad voluntary compliance. Once secondary to multilateral institutions, they may now emerge as pillars of global coordination.

As private actors, subnational governments, academic institutions and professional networks continue to gain influence, diplomacy is no longer the exclusive domain of foreign ministries. Global governance, in turn, is becoming increasingly decentralized, especially in critical areas like cybersecurity. To avert a global catastrophe, today's institutional vacuum must be filled by flexible, workable arrangements: less formal, less universal and less binding, yet still capable of facilitating cooperation among countries and key actors. These include public-private partnerships, interregional agreements such as the EU-Mercosur trade deal and "coalitions of the willing" like the Just Energy Transition Partnerships. Admittedly, this approach involves higher transaction costs and cannot guarantee certainty or uniformity. But the task facing international policymakers is not to design the perfect model – it is to identify the one that is most viable in a rapidly changing world teetering on the edge of systemic collapse.

## When Law Wears a Uniform

Qamar Bashir



Equally consequential is the erosion of judicial independence. A functioning judiciary is not defined by the existence of courts, but by their capacity to restrain power. Where judges operate under intimidation, where constitutional amendments are insulated from challenge, and where prolonged detentions persist without due process, the rule of law becomes performative rather than real. International legal doctrine is unequivocal: when courts can no longer check the executive or the military, constitutional order has collapsed in substance, regardless of its textual survival

A STATE does not collapse the moment tanks roll into the capital or a general announces the suspension of the constitution. History shows that the most enduring and damaging forms of authoritarianism often emerge quietly, through legal amendments, institutional rearrangements, and the gradual subordination of civilian authority to military command. Pakistan today stands at precisely such a juncture. Without a formal declaration of martial law, the country exhibits nearly every substantive characteristic by which political scientists, constitutional scholars, and international legal bodies define military rule. The façade of civilian governance remains, but the substance of power has decisively shifted.

At the heart of this transformation is the structural reconfiguration of the state itself. Across established democracies, civil-military relations rest on a clear and universally accepted principle: the military serves under civilian supremacy, operates within defined constitutional limits, and remains institutionally subordinate to elected authority. Whether in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, or even semi-authoritarian systems, military chiefs hold fixed tenures, retire on schedule, and answer to civilian defense ministers and legislatures. There exists no precedent in functioning constitutional governance for a serving army chief, paid from the civilian treasury, to hold office indefinitely or for life.

Yet Pakistan has moved dangerously close to precisely this anomaly. Through constitutional amendments passed under conditions widely perceived as coercive, the tenure of the army chief has been repeatedly extended, while public discourse has been deliberately conditioned to normalize permanence in a role that, by its nature, must be temporary. When asked about retirement, the response is not institutional humility but visible irritation, coupled with claims of higher national missions that render accountability irrelevant. In comparative constitutional terms, this is not stability; it is personalization of power. Even more striking is the concentration of military command itself. In established systems, the separation of services—army, navy, and air force—is not a matter of tradition alone, but a safeguard against absolute control. Joint coordination exists, but supremacy does not. No single uniformed officer simultaneously dominates all branches without civilian oversight. Such consolidation is historically associated not with national defense,

but with military autocracy. Pakistan's recent constitutional restructuring, which elevates one office above all armed services, represents not administrative efficiency but a profound distortion of command balance, extending martial dominance even within the military itself.

This internal militarization has been matched by an external economic takeover. Across the world, armed forces may execute infrastructure projects during emergencies or provide logistical support for development, but they do not own, manage, or monopolize the national economy. Pakistan's experience diverges sharply from this norm. Military-controlled entities now dominate infrastructure development, often without competitive bidding, while strategic sectors such as agriculture, logistics, and industrial development—particularly under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—have been effectively absorbed into a corporatized military ecosystem. International development models recognize Special Economic Zones as civilian-led instruments for industrial growth, foreign investment, and employment generation. Their capture by military institutions transforms them from engines of inclusive development into closed systems of rent extraction. This shift does not merely distort markets; it entrenches a new political economy in which economic power reinforces coercive authority, and civilian institutions are hollowed out from within.

Equally consequential is the erosion of judicial independence. A functioning judiciary is not defined by the existence of courts, but by their capacity to restrain power. Where judges operate under intimidation, where constitutional amendments are insulated from challenge, and where prolonged detentions persist without due process, the rule of law becomes performative rather than real. International legal doctrine is unequivocal: when courts can no longer check the executive or the military, constitutional order has collapsed in substance, regardless of its textual survival.

Parliament, too, has been reduced to form. Comparative legislative studies demonstrate that assemblies lose legitimacy when they cease to deliberate freely and instead function as instruments for retroactive legal cover. When amendments are passed not through consensus but under duress, law itself becomes a weapon rather than a restraint. In such

conditions, elections do not restore democracy; they merely legitimize its absence.

Control over media completes the architecture of undeclared martial rule. Authoritarian systems rarely silence all voices; instead, they curate narratives, elevate loyal platforms, and delegitimize dissent by branding it treasonous. The role of the military spokesperson in Pakistan has evolved from institutional communication to overt political arbitration, publicly condemning one political force while sanctifying another. This is not information management; it is narrative command.

Taken together, these developments satisfy every internationally recognized criterion of martial law as defined in political theory and comparative governance. Civilian supremacy has been replaced by military dominance. Economic control has shifted from elected institutions to uniformed management. Judicial independence has been neutralized. Parliamentary authority has been subordinated. Media freedom has been constrained. Political opposition has been criminalized. The absence of a formal proclamation does not negate these realities; it merely disguises them.

History offers a sobering warning. States that normalize indefinite military rule do not achieve stability; they accumulate fragility. Institutions decay, merit collapses, economic confidence erodes, and society internalizes fear as a governing principle. Even the armed forces suffer, as blocked promotion pathways and personalized command undermine professionalism and morale. What begins as control ends as corrosion.

Pakistan today stands not at the edge of a constitutional crisis, but deep within one. The question is no longer whether martial law exists, but whether the nation can reclaim civilian sovereignty before irreversible damage is done. Democracies are not destroyed in a single night; they are dismantled piece by piece, until law itself wears a uniform and authority answers to no one. And history is unambiguous on one final point: no state can endure indefinitely when the gun replaces the constitution as the final arbiter of power.

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## When Silence Becomes Safe

Muhammad Asif



The danger of this silent world is profound. When people stop speaking, societies stop thinking. Innovation, justice, and reform all depend on the ability to question, criticize, and imagine alternatives. Silence allows falsehood to flourish, corruption to deepen, and oppression to normalize itself. History shows that no great progress scientific, political...

IN every era of human history, the struggle for free expression has been tied to the struggle for dignity, identity, and power, yet perhaps at no point has this struggle been as complex and quietly dangerous as it is today. The modern world, adorned with the language of rights, democracy, and digital empowerment, ironically finds itself witnessing an unprecedented war on free speech one that is subtle, multilayered, and often disguised as protection, national interest, social harmony, or public morality. This war does not always involve jails, guns, or dictators; instead, it unfolds through cancel culture, digital manipulation, selective outrage, online mobs, sophisticated surveillance systems, and legal loopholes that redefine dissent as disloyalty. In such an environment, silence becomes safer than speaking, conformity becomes easier than questioning, and survival becomes more important than truth. At the heart of this global shift lies a troubling realization: in many societies, people are not silenced by force, but by fear. Fear of losing jobs, fear of being misquoted, fear of misinterpretation, fear of digital character assassination, fear of legal repercussions, and even fear of social isolation. Where once oppressive regimes required physical force to silence their people, today societies produce silence voluntarily, shaped by invisible pressures and internalized censorship.

Technology once believed to be the greatest liberator of speech has paradoxically become a powerful tool for suppression. Social media platforms that promised democracy of voices have instead become battlefields of manipulation where algorithms amplify hatred, governments monitor dissent, corporations gather private data, and mobs enforce ideological purity. In many cases, a single post can cost someone their reputation, livelihood, or safety. When public

opinion weaponizes outrage, free speech becomes a privilege of the brave and a danger for the ordinary. Democracies, too, are not immune. Laws framed to curb "misinformation," "hate speech," or "security threats" are increasingly used to target activists, journalists, and critics. The line between legitimate regulation and political censorship has blurred dangerously. Governments often claim to protect citizens from harmful content while subtly filtering anything that exposes corruption, misgovernance, or abuse of power. As the digital public square becomes more regulated than the physical one, speaking freely is no longer a right exercised without calculation; it is a risk measured carefully. Beyond governments and media platforms, society itself has become a silent enforcer. Social polarization has created echo chambers where dissent is treated as betrayal. People increasingly surround themselves with like-minded voices, and any deviation from group opinion invites hostility. The fear of being misunderstood or attacked has pushed many thoughtful individuals into silence not because they lack opinions, but because they no longer see the value or safety in expressing them. Intellectual humility has been replaced by ideological absolutism; dialogue has been replaced by digital shouting matches. As a result, even well-intentioned debates collapse under the weight of aggression, sarcasm, and intolerance. When every disagreement is interpreted as a personal attack or political offense, honest conversation dies.

The danger of this silent world is profound. When people stop speaking, societies stop thinking. Innovation, justice, and reform all depend on the ability to question, criticize, and imagine alternatives. Silence allows falsehood to flourish, corruption to deepen, and oppression to normalize itself. History shows that no great progress scientific, political, or

moral has ever emerged from societies where people were afraid to speak. The suppression of free speech ultimately leads to intellectual stagnation and dysfunctional governance. A society that fears words eventually fears truth, and a society that fears truth becomes easy to manipulate.

Yet, despite the bleakness, the war on free speech is not irreversible. Courage remains the strongest antidote. Around the world, journalists risk their lives to report truth; activists challenge unjust laws; writers and thinkers use metaphors, satire, and art to say what cannot be said directly; ordinary citizens raise their voices despite threats and pressure. The resilience of human conscience is greater than any system of censorship. But courage alone cannot bear the burden. Societies must reclaim the value of listening, debating, and disagreeing respectfully. Governments must recognize that suppressing speech, even under noble pretenses, ultimately weakens nations by depriving them of critical thought. Educational systems must teach students not what to think, but how to think. Media platforms must prioritize transparency and fairness over algorithmic manipulation and profit. Above all, people must reclaim the forgotten truth that freedom of speech is not merely the right to speak it is also the responsibility to protect the right of others to speak, even when we disagree with them.

The war on free speech will not end with a single law, revolution, or technological invention. It will end when societies realize that silence is not safety but surrender. It will end when people understand that speaking the truth may be risky, but abandoning truth is fatal. In the end, the cost of silence is far greater than the cost of speech. The moment we choose silence because it feels safer is the moment we begin losing not only our voice but also our humanity.

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## Briefs

## No new IMF terms, reforms align with agenda

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The statement also shed light on the process of IMF-government talks where Islamabad presents its planned policy reform initiatives. Where the IMF assesses that these initiatives contribute to the agreed program objectives, they are incorporated into the MEFP and a result, many of the structural benchmarks and actions included in the latest MEFP are derived from reforms already undertaken or initiated by the government "rather than being externally imposed or newly introduced conditions". The Ministry of Finance further pointed out details and clarification of the "new conditions" as; This reform has been part of the EFF program since the initial MEFP in May 2024. The current structural benchmark represents the second step, following the successful legislative amendment to the Civil Servants Act, 1973. "A task force, notified by the prime minister's office and chaired by the minister for power, has been mandated to recommend full liberalisation of the sugar market and propose a national policy in consultation with provinces. Given its alignment with the EFF objective of reducing government intervention in commodity markets, the IMF has included this initiative as a structural benchmark," it said. The ministry added that the development of a comprehensive roadmap for the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) was part of a broader domestic resource mobilisation reform agenda led directly by the prime minister.

## Binance, HTX NOCs 'not blanket approval'

FROM PAGE 01

lauding measures and counter-terrorism financing, and stressed that timely and informed decision-making within the financial system is essential. Bilal said Pakistan ranks among the world's top three crypto-adopting nations, with an estimated 30 to 40 million Pakistanis actively using digital assets, and pointed to the \$100 trillion global bond market shifting towards digital systems, which he said underscored the importance of regulating crypto assets. He said Pakistan aims to become a global model in digital assets regulation and said the country will strengthen its sovereignty through technology over the next decade. Two days ago, the finance ministry said Pakistan had inked a memorandum of understanding with Binance to explore the "tokenisation" of up to \$2 billion in the country's assets. It described the MoU as a framework for exploring collaboration on the tokenisation and blockchain-based distribution of Pakistan's real-world and sovereign assets.

## 2 dead, 8 critical in shooting...

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The shelter in place is still in order and I urge people to take that very seriously. Please do not come to the area," Deputy Police Chief Timothy O'Hara said. The gunman was last seen leaving the building, and no weapon had been recovered, authorities said. Brown sent an emergency alert at 4:22 pm (2122 GMT) reporting "an active shooter near Barus and Holley Engineering." "Lock doors, silence phones and stay hidden until further notice," it said. Law enforcement and first responders swarmed the scene, with local news station WPRI reporting clothing and blood on the sidewalk. The FBI was providing "all capabilities necessary," Director Kash Patel said on X. Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were also responding. Katie Sun told the Brown Daily Herald student newspaper she was studying in a nearby building when she heard gunfire. She ran to her dorm, leaving all her belongings behind.

## DNA



ISLAMABAD: The management and players of the Rising Stars Hockey Club celebrate the birthday of their colleague Wajahat Munir, after Sunday's training session. – DNA

## Sports, youth engagement vital for healthy society: Mashhood



LAHORE: Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan has said that sports, especially gymnastics, are vital for promoting physical fitness, discipline and self-confidence among the youth. He added that the government was fully committed to supporting initiatives that positively engage children and steer them towards education and healthy activities. Addressing the ceremony of the 13th Inter-School Gymnastics Championship 2025, here on Sunday, Rana Mashhood lauded the participation of leading educational institutions, including Pakistan International Public School (PIPS), Abdullah Schools, Abubakar School, and appreciated the efforts of the organisers, including Umair, Roheel and Nina, for successfully holding the event. He said taking care of children, guiding them towards education and involving them in healthy pursuits was not only a societal responsibility but also a vital obligation of the government, which was extending full support to such initiatives. The PMYP chairman said he attended the event to encourage and support positive youth-focused activities, stressing that Pakistan had faced repeated attempts to undermine

its progress. Referring to the recent punishment awarded to Faiz Hameed, Rana Mashhood described it as the beginning of a new chapter in Pakistan's history, saying that it reflected accountability and the strengthening of democratic norms. He recalled that in 2017 a democratic government was removed and then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif was disqualified in a false case, adding that recent developments signified the vindication of the nation and the supremacy of the democratic process. He said no institution could now be used for political engineering, nor could the democratic process be obstructed. He emphasised the need for strict accountability of those involved in the May 9 incidents, attacks on state foundations and foreign-funded activities, asserting that national security and stability would not be compromised.

Rana Mashhood said Pakistan's journey towards development had begun, citing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Turkmenistan where, he said, Pakistan received respect and achieved diplomatic successes. He expressed confidence that the fruits of national progress would reach grassroots levels, including children and youth, and said the government was working day and night towards this goal. He said that accounts spreading falsehoods and propaganda against Pakistan were being operated from India, Israel and other hostile countries, and said action against such elements had already begun. He maintained that it would no longer be tolerated that while Pakistan's armed forces were sacrificing lives to protect borders and ensure peace, a handful of foreign-backed operatives attempted to destabilise the country internally. He said the nation was united and determined that accountability of such accounts would be ensured, adding that recent decisions had made it clear that anti-Pakistan voices would have no space in the country. He said the federal and Punjab governments had launched wide-ranging initiatives in education, technical training, IT and youth support to positively engage young people and provide them with opportunities. He expressed optimism that within the coming months Pakistan's youth would emerge as leaders on the global stage. – APP

## Headstart F-7 School hosts successful Annual Sports Day

ISLAMABAD: The Headstart F-7 School organized its Annual Sports Day here at the Pakistan Sports Complex, bringing together hundreds of students from playgroup to Grade 2. The event showcased the talents of the young students in various activities, including parade, zumba, races, and national songs. The Sports Day aimed to provide a platform for children to exhibit their skills and promote

healthy activities. Parents and teachers alike praised the efforts of the school in organizing the event, which was a huge success. Speaking on the occasion, Shiza Sheikh, Principal of Headstart F-7 School, expressed her happiness at the turnout and the success of the event. "Sports Day has empowered children from across the Federal Capital. Investing in our children's education, nutrition, and sports is crucial

for their growth and development," she said. The event also featured the distribution of medals and certificates to the winners, with encouragement for those who did not secure a position to work harder and improve their performance. Teachers from the school, including Shamsa, Hania, and Ayesha, highlighted the school's commitment to promoting sports and education, pledging to organize more events in the future. – APP

## Pakistan raises terrorism issue...

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His Excellency Mr. Abbas Araghchi. Pakistan was represented at the forum by its Special Representative on Afghanistan, Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq. Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul, H.E. Obaid Ur Rehman Nizamani, also attended the proceedings, underscoring Islamabad's sustained diplomatic engagement with

Afghanistan. In his intervention, Special Representative Mohammad Sadiq delivered a firm and clear message on Pakistan's core security concerns. He stated that for any sustainable regional peace, Pakistan's legitimate concerns regarding terrorism emanating from Afghan soil must be resolutely and effectively addressed. He emphasized that terrorist groups, particularly TTP, continue

to use Afghan territory as a safe haven to launch attacks against Pakistan, posing a direct threat to its national security. Ambassador Sadiq reiterated that Pakistan remains committed to a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan. He articulated Pakistan's desire to work collaboratively with all regional partners to promote peace, development, and collective security in the region.

## England's Ashes hopes hang by a thread as 'Bazball' backfires

LONDON: England arrived in Australia with genuine hopes of a first Ashes series win "Down Under" since 2010/11 and seeking their first series triumph home or away against their oldest rivals in a decade. But after just six days of cricket, they are 2-0 down with three matches to play, with their "Bazball" style of ultra-attacking cricket under fire following crushing eight-wicket defeats in Perth and Brisbane. AFP Sport looks at what has gone wrong for England so far.

**Approach:** Coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes injected fresh energy into an England side that had won just one of 17 Tests when they joined forces in 2022, urging players to play fearless cricket. Yet Bazball has at times morphed from a guiding ethos into something nearing a dogma, with a self-defeating inflexibility at times. Early success has been replaced by more modest results – England have won 13 and lost 14 of their 29 matches in the World Test Championship (WTC) since June 2023. A bristling Stokes last month labelled former players critical of England's approach as "has-beens", drawing a sharp rebuke. "They are up their own backsides convinced that Test cricket has changed so much that only they know anything about the modern game," England multiple Ashes winner Geoffrey Boycott wrote in the Daily Telegraph.

**Strategy:** England managing director Rob Key has long believed in the need for sheer pace on typically hard Australian pitches. "I don't care how many wickets you take," he said last year. "I want to know how hard you are running in, how hard you are hitting the pitch and are you able to sustain pace at 85 to 88 miles per hour?" Veteran Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc has shone for the home side, taking 18 wickets in the series so far.

But the surfaces in the opening two Tests have also rewarded traditional English-style seam bowling, with Australia's Michael Neser, averaging just above 80 mph, taking 5-42 in the second innings at Brisbane.

**Preparation:** McCullum was ridiculed following defeat in the pink-ball clash in Brisbane after saying England had trained too much and were over-prepared. The tourists played only one pre-series warm-up fixture and wicketkeeper Jamie Smith, along with others, had never appeared in a pink-ball Test before the match in Brisbane. – Agencies

## Online Registration of Hockey Clubs to Begin for the First Time in Pakistan's History

In line with the directives of the Standing Committee of the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC), the Pakistan Hockey Federation has devised a comprehensive three-phase election plan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: For the first time in the history of Pakistan hockey, the registration of hockey clubs across the country is being launched through an online portal. The process will formally commence on December 15, a move being described by the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) as a major step towards promoting transparency, merit, and modern governance.

According to the PHF, the online portal will initially be opened for hockey clubs in Punjab from December 15 to December 20 for a period of five days. Subsequently, the registration process for hockey clubs from other provinces will take place from December 21 to December 30.

In line with the directives of the Standing Committee of the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC), the Pakistan Hockey Federation has devised a comprehensive three-phase election plan.

- The first phase involves the registration of clubs.
- The second phase, from January

5 to January 30, will cover scrutiny and district-level elections.

• In the third phase, elections will be held at the provincial level, followed by elections of the Pakistan Hockey Federation.

For the scrutiny of registered clubs, a committee will be constituted comprising representatives from the Pakistan Hockey Federation, provincial associations, and the Pakistan Sports Board, ensuring that all decisions are taken strictly on merit.

Moreover, the federation has decided to establish a two-member Election Commission. Sources indicate that members of this commission will be drawn from the Pakistan Army and the Supreme Court Bar.

It is also noteworthy that, for the first time in Pakistan's history, representatives of the International Hockey Federation (FIH) and the Asian Hockey Federation will participate in the Pakistan Hockey Federation elections as observers, overseeing the electoral process. Hockey clubs can complete their registration by clicking on the designated online portal link.

## PM pays tribute to security forces

FROM PAGE 01

He said that this year 700 terrorists were killed in Balochistan which was a big achievement against terrorism. The prime minister said, "We are fully determined in eradicating all forms of terrorism from the country."

## Forces kill 13 terrorists in KP areas

FROM PAGE 01

"During the conduct of [the] operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij's location, and after an intense fire exchange, seven khwarij were sent to hell." It added that the second IBO was conducted in the province's Bannu district, where security forces neutralised six more terrorists. "Sanitisation operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian sponsored kharij found in the area as a relentless counterterrorism campaign under [the] vision "Azam e Istehkam" (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by security forces and law enforcement agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out menace of foreign sponsored and supported terrorism from the country," the statement said.

## Rana Sanaullah accuses Bajwa...

FROM PAGE 01

Sources said the gossip being circulated in some quarters is baseless. According to them, the military accountability process that culminated in the conviction of the former spymaster was strictly evidence-based and confined to his individual actions, with no material linking the former army chief to the case. Instead, sources indicate that after the army concluded the accountability process against one of its own senior officers, expectations are growing that accountability could extend beyond the military domain. Judges, bureaucrats, politicians and even media persons who allegedly played roles in the past political engineering or overstepped constitutional and legal limits may come under scrutiny in the days to come.

## Deadly firing in Capital leaves...

FROM PAGE 01

Asma Bibi, wife of Aziz, aged 30 years, and Kausar, aged 35 years, lost their lives on the spot, while Saima Bibi, aged 30 years, sustained serious injuries. The official said that police teams rushed to the scene immediately after receiving information, secured the area and collected forensic evidence. The bodies of the deceased women and the injured victim were shifted to PIMS Hospital for medico-legal formalities and treatment. SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza also visited the crime scene and directed officers to utilize all available resources to trace and arrest the culprits at the earliest. He ordered the formation of special investigation teams and stressed that those involved would be brought to justice without delay.

## KP CM Sohail Afridi asks PTI...

FROM PAGE 01

Imran's family and CM Afridi were not allowed to meet the incarcerated party chief. He also condemned Imran being called a "security threat" to the country, saying, "Yes, Khan was a threat, but only to those who had owned business empires in this country." Speaking to the participants of the rally, PTI's provincial president and MNA Junaid Akbar said the workers of the party "could never be threatened with police cases or press conferences." He also said that the party and its workers were ready to protect CM Afridi's government.

## Syrian who killed Americans was part of security forces

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said the soldiers "were conducting a key leader engagement" in support of counter-terrorism operations when the attack occurred, while US envoy to Syria Tom Barrack said the ambush targeted "a joint US-Syrian government patrol"

DAMASCUS: Syria's interior ministry said on Sunday that the gunman who killed three Americans in the central Palmyra region the previous day was a member of the security forces who was to have been fired for extremism. Two US troops and a civilian interpreter died in what the Syrian government described as a "terrorist attack" on Saturday, while Washington said it had been carried out by an Islamic State group (IS) militant who was then killed. The Syrian authorities "had decided to fire him" from the security forces before the attack for holding "extremist Islamist ideas" and had planned to do so on Sunday, interior ministry spokesman Nouredine al-Baba told state television.

A Syrian security official told AFP on Sunday that "11 members of the general security forces were arrested and brought in for questioning after the attack".

The official who spoke on condition of anonymity said the gunman had belonged to the security forces "for more than 10 months and was posted to several cities before being transferred to Palmyra".

Palmyra, home to UNESCO-listed ancient ruins, was controlled by IS at the height of its territorial expansion in Syria.

The incident is the first of its kind reported since Islamist-led forces overthrew long-time Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad in December last year, and rekindled the country's ties with the United States.

US President Donald Trump vowed "very serious retaliation" following Saturday's attack. Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said the soldiers "were conducting a key leader engagement" in support of counter-terrorism operations when the attack occurred, while US envoy to Syria Tom Barrack said the ambush targeted "a joint US-Syrian government patrol".

Trump called the incident "an ISIS attack against the US, and Syria, in a very dangerous part of Syria, that is not fully controlled by them", using another term for the group. He said the three other US troops injured in the incident were "doing well".

The official SANA news agency said the attack also wounded two members of the

Syrian security forces. Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani said Damascus "strongly condemns the terrorist attack".

In an interview on state television on Saturday, Syrian Interior Ministry spokesman Anwar al-Baba said there had been "prior warnings from the internal security command to allied forces in the desert region". "The international coalition forces did not take the Syrian warnings of a possible IS infiltration into consideration," he said.

IS seized swathes of Syrian and Iraqi territory in 2014 during Syria's civil war, before being territorially defeated in the country five years later. Its fighters still maintain a presence, however, particularly in Syria's vast desert. – Agencies



## Briefs

## Morocco aims to boost legal cannabis farming

BAB BERRED: Since he started growing cannabis at 14, Mohamed Makhlof has lived in the shadows, losing sleep while bracing for a knock on his door from authorities that could mean prison or his entire harvest confiscated. But after decades of operating in secret, Makhlof finally has gained peace of mind as Morocco expands legal cultivation and works to integrate veteran growers like him into the formal economy. On his farmland deep in the Rif Mountains, stalks of a government-approved cannabis strain rise from the earth in dense clusters. He notices when police pass on a nearby road. But where the crop's aroma once meant danger, today there is no cause for concern. They know he sells to a local cooperative. "Legalization is freedom," Makhlof said. "If you want your work to be clean, you work with the companies and within the law." The 70-year-old Makhlof's story mirrors the experience of a small but growing number of farmers who started in Morocco's vast black market but now sell legally to cooperatives producing cannabis for medicinal and industrial use. New market begins to sprout Morocco is the world's biggest producer of cannabis and top supplier of the resin used to make hashish. For years, authorities have oscillated between looking the other way and cracking down, even as the economy directly or indirectly supports hundreds of thousands of people in the Rif Mountains, according to United Nations reports and government data.—APP

## US to host moot on stabilization force plans

WASHINGTON: The US Central Command will host a conference in Doha on Dec.16 with partner nations to plan the International Stabilization Force for Gaza, two US officials said. More than 25 countries are expected to send representatives to the conference, which will include sessions on the command structure and other issues related to the Gaza force, the officials said. International troops could be deployed in the Gaza Strip as early as next month to form the stabilization force, the officials said. They said many countries had expressed interest in contributing, and US officials are currently determining the size of the ISF, its composition, housing, training, and rules of engagement. Indonesia has said it is prepared to deploy up to 20,000 troops to take on health and construction-related tasks in Gaza. "There is a lot of quiet planning that's going on behind the scenes right now for phase two of the peace deal," said White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt.

## 5 suspected held for planning Christmas market attack in Germany

BERLIN: German authorities have arrested five men suspected of being terrorist militants planning an attack on a Christmas market in southern Bavaria, police and prosecutors said in a joint statement. There has been a series of vehicle ramming attacks in Germany since a militant rammed a hijacked truck into a Christmas market in central Berlin in 2016. Last December several people were killed by an attack in Magdeburg. Three Moroccan nationals aged 22, 28 and 30, an Egyptian national aged 56 and a 37-year-old Syrian were detained on Friday at the Suben border crossing between Germany and Austria, according to the joint statement late on Saturday. Investigators believed that the men intended to drive a vehicle into a crowded market in the Dyingolfing-Landau area with the aim of killing or injuring as many people as possible, the statement said, adding that authorities suspected a militant motive.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Models walk on ramp during a fashion show titled "Gandhara Theme Show" at local hotel.

## Anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies intensify across Europe

LONDON: In the past year, tens of thousands hostile to immigrants marched through London chanting "send them home!" A British lawmaker complained of seeing too many non-white faces on TV. And senior politicians advocated the deportation of longtime UK residents born abroad. The overt demonization of immigrants and those with immigrant roots is intensifying in the UK — and across Europe — as migration shoots up the political agenda and right-wing parties gain popularity. In several European countries, political parties that favor mass deportations and depict immigration as a threat to national identity come at or near the top of opinion polls: Reform UK, the Alliance for Germany and France's National Rally. President Donald Trump, who recently called Somali immigrants in the US "garbage" and whose national security strategy depicts European

countries as threatened by immigration, appears to be endorsing and emboldening Europe's coarse, anti-immigrant sentiments. Amid the rising tensions, Europe's mainstream parties are taking a harder line on migration and at times using divisive language about race. "What were once dismissed as being at the far extreme end of far-right politics has now become a central part of the political debate," said Kieran Connell, a lecturer in British history at Queen's University Belfast. Europe experiencing a growing sense of division. Immigration has risen dramatically over the past decade in some European countries, driven in part by millions of asylum-seekers who have come to Europe fleeing conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Ukraine. Asylum-seekers account for a small percentage of total immigration, however, and experts say antipathy toward diversity and

migration stems from a mix of factors. Economic stagnation in the years since the 2008 global financial crisis, the rise of charismatic nationalist politicians and the polarizing influence of social media all play a role, experts say. In Britain, there is "a frightening increase in the sense of national division and decline" and that tends to push people toward political extremes, said Bobby Duffy, director of the Policy Unit at King's College London. It took root after the financial crisis, was reinforced by Britain's debate about Brexit and deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic, Duffy said. Social media has exacerbated the mood, notably on X, whose algorithm promotes divisive content and whose owner, Elon Musk, approvingly retweets far-right posts. Across Europe, ethnonationalism has been promoted by right-wing parties such as Alliance for Germany, France's National Rally and the

Fidesz party of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Now it appears to have the stamp of approval from the Trump administration, whose new national security strategy depicts Europe as a collection of countries facing "economic decline" and "civilizational erasure" because of immigration and loss of national identities. The hostile language alarmed many European politicians, but also echoed what they hear from their countries' far-right parties. National Rally leader Jordan Bardella told the BBC he largely agreed with the Trump administration's concern that mass immigration was "shaking the balance of European countries." Policies once considered extreme are now firmly on the political agenda. Reform UK, the hard-right party that consistently leads opinion polls, says if it wins power it will strip immigrants of permanent-resident status even if they have lived in the UK for decades.

The center-right opposition Conservatives say they will deport British citizens with dual nationality who commit crimes. A Reform UK lawmaker complained in October that advertisements were "full of Black people, full of Asian people." Conservative justice spokesman Robert Jenrick remarked with concern that he "didn't see another white face" in an area of Birmingham, Britain's second-largest city. Neither politician had to resign. Many proponents of reduced immigration say they are concerned about integration and community cohesion, not race. But that's not how it feels to those on the receiving end of racial abuse. "There is no doubt it has worsened," said Dawn Butler, a Black British lawmaker who says the vitriol she receives on social media "is increasing drastically, and has escalated into death threats.—DNA

## Sri Lankan lawmakers to meet to fast-track cyclone aid

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's parliament will interrupt its recess to fast-track financial aid needed for rebuilding after Cyclone Ditwah, which killed nearly 650 people, officials said Sunday. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake had said last week that the island nation would need at least \$1.66 billion in 2026 — in addition to the \$166 million he said the government would spend this year — to rebuild and recover from what he described as the "most challenging natural disaster" to hit the country. Parliament Speaker Jagath Wickramaratne on Sunday issued a notice for an urgent meeting of the legislature, which had gone into recess after approving the 2026 budget earlier this month and was not scheduled to meet again until January 6. "I have summoned the parliament to meet on Thursday (18th)... having been requested so to do by the Hon. Prime Minister (Harini Amarasuriya)," the Speaker said in a gazette notification. Officials at the country's finance ministry told AFP that the meeting was being held to approve next year's expenditure for cyclone recovery. Official figures show that 643 people were killed, with another 184 still missing, following landslides and floods triggered by the cyclone. At least 2.3 million people — just over 10 percent of the country's population — were affected by the devastating calamity. Nearly 75,000 people remain housed in state-run camps. An official leading the recovery effort has estimated that overall damage could cost up to \$7 billion. The United Nations last week set up a \$35.3 million fund to provide food and temporary shelter to 658,000 of the worst-affected people.—APP

## Drone strike in southern Sudan kills 6 UN peacekeepers

PORT SUDAN: Six United Nations peacekeepers from Bangladesh were killed on Saturday in a drone strike on Sudan's southern Kordofan region, the UN mission said, with Dhaka sharply condemning the attack. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) said "six troops were killed and six injured," including four seriously, when a drone hit their camp in Kadugli, the capital of South Kordofan state. All the victims are from Bangladesh, it said. Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus said in a statement that he was "deeply saddened" by the attack, putting the toll at six dead and eight wounded. He asked the UN to ensure that his country's personnel were offered "any necessary emergency support." "The government of Bangladesh will stand by the families in this difficult moment," he added. Dhaka's foreign ministry said it "strongly condemned" the attack. A medical source had earlier told AFP that the strike on a United Nations facility in Kadugli killed at least six people, with witnesses saying they were UN employees. "Six people were killed in a bombing of the UN headquarters while they were inside the building," the medical source at the city's hospital said. Eyewitnesses said a drone had struck the UN facility. The army-aligned government based in Port Sudan issued a statement condemning the attack and accusing the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of being behind it. In a statement, the Sovereignty Council headed by army chief General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan called the attack a "dangerous escalation." Kadugli, where famine was declared in early November, has been besieged for a year and a half by the RSF. Following their late-October capture of El-Fasher — the army's last stronghold in Sudan's western Darfur region — the RSF have pushed eastward into the oil-rich Kordofan region, divided into three states. Kordofan is a vast agricultural region that lies between RSF-controlled Darfur in the west and army-held areas in the north, east and center. Its position is important for maintaining supply lines and moving troops. The RSF has been at war with the military since April 2023 and has deployed fighters, drones and allied militias to the fertile region. Analysts say the RSF seek to punch through the army's defenses around central Sudan, paving the way for recapturing Khartoum. Last week, strikes on a kindergarten and hospital in Kalogi in South Kordofan killed 114 people, including 63 children, according to the UN's World Health Organization. Sudan's war has so far killed tens of thousands of people, displaced millions and resulted in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Efforts to end the war have so far failed. Last month, US President Donald Trump said he would move to end the conflict following discussions in Washington with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, but the initiative has yet to materialize.—Agencies

## Saudi Vision fuels rapid rise of private credit market

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's private credit market is set to expand rapidly as the Kingdom seeks to bridge the funding gap created by the Vision 2030 transformation agenda, according to S&P Global Ratings. In a new report, the agency said the country's vast funding requirements and the accelerated growth of small and midsize enterprises are creating a significant opening for private capital financing. But it warned that structural challenges could weigh on the asset class's development. This comes as Saudi Arabia's public and private sector debt, including bank lending, bond and sukuk issuances, and private capital financing, grew at a compound annual rate of 12 percent from 2021 to 2024. Nonbank lending has also become an increasingly relevant component, with credit instruments distributed to a relatively narrow investor base. "Saudi Vision 2030's economic and social diversification targets require substantial amounts of financing. We believe that this offers private capital financing a significant growth opportunity," said S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Zeina Nasreddine. The agency noted that financing demand is set to remain elevated, with Saudi Arabia's funding needs remaining high in recent years and continuing to fuel strong lending growth. It added that slower deposit growth is prompting banks to turn increasingly to alternative funding channels. "Given the country's large financing needs, private capital financing, in collaboration with banks, can offer loans to the do-

mestic market. Over time, this would allow banks to mitigate exposure to single-name and sector concentration risks and free up capital," added Nasreddine. Despite being a relatively new and hard-to-measure asset class, private credit has grown rapidly, yet still accounted for only 2 percent of the Kingdom's total debt stock in 2024, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence. Even so, the market has expanded tenfold since 2020, reaching \$3.7 billion last year, the report stated. Sectors accessing this financing between 2020 and August 2025 range from established industries such as petrochemicals and airlines to fast-growing segments including digital payment services. Borrowers include government-related entities, large private conglomerates, and smaller businesses such as travel agencies and food retailers. The investor base is similarly diverse, comprising Asian investors, GREs, a major US bank, and Saudi investment funds committed to private debt. Saudi banks, amid weakening deposit growth, are also exploring alternative funding avenues. Private capital can work alongside lenders to support domestic credit expansion while helping banks diversify exposures and release capital. S&P expects micro, small, and midsize entities to be a key growth engine for private credit. The Vision 2030 program aims to increase the SME sector's contribution to the gross

domestic product to 35 percent by 2030, up from 21.9 percent in 2023. The agency estimates that SME leverage, measured by dividing MSME loans from banks and nonbanks by the sector's GDP contribution, rose from 22 percent in 2020 to 28 percent in 2023. "We expect lending to SMEs will increase to meet Vision 2030 targets," S&P added.

Despite the promising outlook, the agency highlighted that the private credit asset class is facing inherent challenges. "As an asset class, private credit offers less transparency and liquidity than publicly listed debt," it said. The valuation process adds another layer of complexity; while public debt is priced through secondary markets, private credit managers rely on mark-to-model valuations that can vary significantly from one manager to another, creating uncertainty about the true value of instruments. Furthermore, a slowdown in mergers and acquisitions activity, which began during the higher-for-longer interest rate environment, is weighing on private equity general partners seeking to return capital to investors from funds nearing the end of their lifecycle. "The regional market needs more M&A activity and public exits to demonstrate maturity and build investor confidence," S&P added. At this stage, however, the agency noted that broader systemic risks to Saudi Arabia from private credit "remain limited," given its still-small contribution to overall financing.—DNA

## Bangladesh says peacekeepers killed, injured in Sudan UN base attack

DHAKA: At least six Bangladeshi peacekeepers were killed and eight injured in an attack on a United Nations base in Abyei, Sudan, the Bangladesh Army said on Saturday. "The situation in the area is still unstable and clashes with terrorists are ongoing," it said in a statement, adding that the authorities were doing their best to provide medical treatment and rescue operations for those injured. Bangladesh is one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping missions and its troops have long been deployed in Abyei, a volatile region disputed between Sudan and South Sudan. "A drone attack was carried out by separatist armed groups on the Kadugali Logistics Base under the UN peacekeeping mission in Abyei, Sudan yesterday (Saturday) from approximately 3:40 p.m. to 3:50 p.m. local time," Bangladesh's Inter-Security Public Relations said in a statement on Sunday.—APP

## Russia downs 235 Ukrainian drones overnight

MOSCOW: Russia's defence ministry said on Sunday that air defence systems intercepted and destroyed 235 Ukrainian drones overnight. An oil depot caught fire in Uryupinsk in Volgograd region due to fallen drone debris, a regional governor said. At least ten Russian airports, including in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, imposed temporary flight restrictions during the night, according to the aviation regulator.—APP

## IMF unlocks \$240m in funding for Jordan

AMMAN: The International Monetary Fund's executive board has completed the fourth review of Jordan's Extended Fund Facility and the first review under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility, unlocking immediate access to about \$240 million to support the kingdom's economic program. The decision allows Jordan to draw about \$130 million under the EFF and about \$110 million under the RSF, bringing total disbursements under the IMF arrangement to about \$733 million. In a statement issued on Saturday, the IMF said Jordan's economy "remains resilient," supported by sound macroeconomic policies and strong international backing. Growth accelerated to 2.7 percent in the first half of 2025 and is expected to reach about 3 percent in the coming years, driven by major investment projects, deeper regional integration and continued structural reforms. Inflation remains anchored at about 2 percent, while the current account deficit is projected to narrow to below 5 percent of GDP over the medium term. The IMF also noted that Jordan's banking sector is stable and international reserves remain strong.—APP

## Oman trade surplus drops 42% to \$10b

JEDDAH: Oman's trade surplus fell 42 percent to more than 3.88 billion Omani rials (\$10 billion) by the end of September, down from over 6.74 billion rials in the same period of 2024, according to official data. Preliminary figures from the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed the decline was largely driven by a drop in oil and gas exports, the Oman News Agency reported. Oman's trade profile remains anchored in hydrocarbons, with mineral fuels, oils and related products consistently the largest export category, even as non-oil segments such as plastics, iron and steel contribute to diversification. The data highlights Oman's ongoing efforts to diversify its economy, with non-oil exports continuing to grow despite declines in the hydrocarbon sector. "This decrease is mainly attributed to the decline in Oman's oil and gas exports by 16.5 percent to reach 10.92 billion rials by the end of September 2025, compared to 13.07 billion rials during the same period in 2024," the ONA report stated. It added: "In contrast, non-oil merchandise exports to the Sultanate of Oman grew by 10.3 percent to reach a value of 5 billion rials by the end of September 2025.—APP



## Briefs

Prominent  
tribal  
leader  
killed

Police said the attackers opened fire on Torabi at the Goldona Ghundai location, killing him on the spot

PESHAWAR: A prominent tribal leader was killed in a targeted shooting in South Waziristan on Sunday, police informed. According to police, Torabi, a key tribal elder belonging to the Suleman Khel tribe and a resident of Zarmilan, was shot dead by unknown assailants. The incident occurred in Azam Warsak area of Tehsil Barmal while he was traveling from Azam Warsak to his native town Zarmilan. Police said the attackers opened fire on Torabi at the Goldona Ghundai location, killing him on the spot. Following the incident, law enforcement agencies cordoned off the crime scene and began collecting evidence. Law enforcers have launched a comprehensive investigation to determine the motive behind the killing and to apprehend those responsible. Police stated that all possible angles of the case are being examined. Local residents have expressed serious concern over the worsening law and order situation in Tehsil Barmal. According to police incidents of terrorism and targeted killings have significantly increased in the area over the past year, prompting residents to demand stricter security measures. — Agencies

Three boys  
martyred  
in KP's  
Bannu

DNA

BANNU/LOWER SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Three young boys were martyred and another injured after a quadcopter crashed in a residential area of Mamand Khel in Bannu on Saturday, residents said. Also, the Sheikh Landik police post in Bannu came under attack, where terrorists carried out assaults using quadcopters and sniper fire on Friday, according to police. They said terrorists dropped two quadcopter bombs, while sniper firing was also carried out from another direction. Both quadcopter bombs exploded after landing near the police post building. However, no loss of life was reported. On Saturday, however, locals said the quadcopter crashed in the Pattona Mamand Khel area of Bannu, killing Faisal, 16, Abrar, 20, and Muhammad, 12, and injuring nine-year-old Muhammad Aiman.

## Kenya envoy reaffirms strong ties with Pakistan

*Highlighting Kenya's progress over the past six decades, Ambassador Njiru said the country continues to enjoy political stability, democratic maturity and economic vitality under the leadership of President Dr William Samoei Ruto*

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The High Commission of the Republic of Kenya on Thursday commemorated the 62nd Anniversary of Kenya's Independence (Jamhuri Day) with a ceremonial event in Islamabad, where Kenya's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ambassador Lt-Gen (Rtd) Peter Mbogo Njiru, highlighted Kenya's democratic journey, economic transformation, and deep-rooted relations with Pakistan. Addressing the gathering, the High Commissioner welcomed guests and recalled that Kenya attained independence on December 12, 1963, describing Jamhuri Day as a moment of pride and reflection on the sacrifices made by Kenya's forefathers for freedom and nationhood. "This celebration reminds us of the sacrifices of those who laid the foundation of our republic and calls upon us to honor their aspirations for a peaceful, prosperous and united Kenya," he said. Biala Azha Kayani, State Minister for Finance was the chief guest while a large number of guests hailing from various walks of life attended the reception. The ambassador said the theme of this year's Jamhuri Day, "Tourism, Wildlife and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE)", reflects Kenya's strengths in natural heritage, cultural diversity, innovation, and its growing role as a global destination for tourism and international conferences. Highlighting Kenya's progress over the past six decades, Ambassador Njiru said



the country continues to enjoy political stability, democratic maturity and economic vitality under the leadership of President Dr William Samoei Ruto. He said Kenya remains committed to inclusive development, climate resilience, regional peace initiatives and shared prosperity. He noted that Kenya has transformed into a regional economic hub driven by agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, technology and services. Major infrastructure development has

strengthened Kenya's position as a gateway to East and Central Africa, while its rapidly expanding digital economy has earned it the title of Africa's "Silicon Savannah". The High Commissioner outlined several key sectors offering investment opportunities, including manufacturing, agriculture and agro-processing, information and communication technology, tourism, and the creative, blue and mining economies. He said Kenya's investment framework is open

and investor-friendly, allowing 100 percent foreign ownership and full repatriation of profits. He further highlighted incentives available under Kenya's Special Economic Zones and Export Processing Zones, as well as the Nairobi International Financial Centre, which is positioning Nairobi as a leading financial hub in Africa. Ambassador Njiru said global confidence in Kenya is reflected in the presence of over 300 multinational corporations headquartered in Nairobi, along with the United Nations' expanding footprint in the Kenyan capital. On global and regional affairs, the envoy said Kenya remains a strong advocate of Pan-Africanism, multilateralism and international peace, playing a leading role in peacekeeping and conflict resolution under the United Nations and African Union frameworks. He also underscored Kenya's leadership in climate action, noting that about 93 percent of the country's electricity is generated from renewable sources such as geothermal, wind and solar energy. Turning to bilateral relations, Ambassador Njiru described ties between Kenya and Pakistan as warm, longstanding and deeply valued. He appreciated Pakistan's support over the decades and said cooperation continues to grow across trade, investment, maritime security, education, health, digital innovation and skills development. Pakistan, he said, remains one of Kenya's key trading partners, particularly in tea and rice, while there is strong potential for expanded trade in horticulture, pharmaceuticals, textiles and light engineering.

2 passengers  
offloaded  
over fake  
visas

LAHORE: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) foiled an attempt to travel abroad through forged documents and offloaded two passengers at Allama Iqbal International Airport, here on Sunday. According to an FIA spokesperson, the action was carried out by FIA Immigration during routine checks. The passengers, identified as Minza Shehzadi and Hasnain Khalid, were travelling to Portugal on flight TK-745. The spokesperson said both passengers belonged to Gujranwala and were found carrying fake Portuguese study visas affixed to their passports. Preliminary investigation revealed that the forged visas were obtained from an agent identified as Iqbal. The passengers reportedly paid Rs 3.5 million each to acquire the fake study visas. Following their offloading, the passengers were handed over to the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle, Lahore, for further legal action, the spokesperson added. — APP

Apex court  
overturns  
DNA test  
order

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Overturning a lower court order for a DNA test to ascertain the parentage of a petitioner, the Supreme Court has ruled that the right to privacy — recognised as an entitlement to personal sanctuary — requires protecting individuals from undue intrusion into their private lives. "The unnecessary public challenge to the paternity of a person inherently results in societal embarrassment, humiliation, and severe psychological stigma," observed Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar while accepting an appeal filed by petitioner Khalid Hameed. On Nov 3, 2022, a special judge of the Anti-Corruption Court, Pakpattan, had ordered the respective circle officer to conduct DNA tests of the petitioner and one Mohammad Haneef, holding that the real dispute in an inheritance matter centred on the petitioner's paternity. The directive was challenged through a revision petition before the Lahore High Court, which rejected the plea on Dec 6, 2022. The controversy involved several respondents allegedly involved in forgery and corruption pertaining to a material alteration of the petitioner's parentage in educational records, purportedly to deprive him of his rightful inheritance. The Supreme Court said challenges to paternity must not be taken lightly, as compelling a DNA test without adequate grounds inherently casts serious aspersions on the character and moral integrity of the mother — a course the top court has previously declared impermissible. Such judicial directives, when lacking proper legal basis, amount to an unwarranted intrusion into the sanctity of family life and a woman's reputation. — APP

At least 12 killed, 29  
injured in Australia's  
Bondi Beach shooting

Witnesses said the shooting at the famed beach on a hot summer's evening lasted about 10 minutes

DNA

SYDNEY: At least 12 people were killed and almost 30 wounded when gunmen fired on a Jewish holiday event at Sydney's Bondi Beach on Sunday in what Australian police and officials described as a terrorist attack. One suspected gunman was killed and another was in a critical condition, New South Wales Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon told a press conference. At least 29 people injured, including two police officers, were taken to hospital, he said. Police were investigating whether a third gunman was involved in the shooting, and a bomb-disposal unit was working on several suspected improvised explosive devices, Lanyon said. The gunmen pictured firing shots at Bondi Beach in Sydney on December 14, 2025. — Screengrab via X The gunmen pictured firing shots at Bondi Beach in Sydney on December 14, 2025. — Screengrab via X Mike Burgess, a top Australian intelligence official, said one of the suspected attackers was known to authorities but had not been deemed an immediate threat. Sunday's shootings were the most serious of a string of antisemitic attacks on synagogues, buildings and cars in Australia since the beginning of Israel's war in Gaza in October 2023. Mass shootings are rare in Australia, one of the world's safest countries. Sunday's attack was the worst such incident in the country since 1996, when a gunman killed 35 people at a tourist site in the southern state of Tasmania. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese convened a meeting of the country's national security council and condemned the attack, saying the evil that was unleashed was "beyond comprehension". "This is a targeted attack on Jewish Australians on the first day of Hanukkah, which should be a day of joy, a celebration of faith," he said. "At this dark moment for our nation, our police and security agencies are working to determine anyone associated with this outrage." Witnesses said the shooting at the famed beach on a hot summer's evening lasted about 10 minutes, sending hundreds of people scattering along the sand and into nearby streets and parks. Police said around 1,000 people had attended the Hanukkah event alone. "I was just getting ready to go home, and, like, I was packing my bag, got my flip-flops, was ready to catch my bus, and then I started hearing the shots," said Bondi Junction resident Marcos Carvalho, 38. — Agencies

 Hamas says weapons  
are 'legitimate right'

"The Palestinian people are currently going through difficult times and suffering greatly... with the martyrdom of more than 70,000 people, the latest of whom was the mujahid commander Raed Saad and his companions"

DOHA: Hamas's Gaza chief Khalil al-Hayya said on Sunday that the militant group had a "legitimate right" to hold weapons and that any proposal for the next phases of the Gaza ceasefire must uphold that right. "Resistance and its weapons are a legitimate right guaranteed by international law and are linked to the establishment of a Palestinian state," Hayya said in a televised address on Hamas-run Al-Aqsa TV. "We are open to studying any proposals that preserve this right while guaranteeing the establishment of a Palestinian state." The US-sponsored ceasefire, in effect since October 10, halted the war that began after Hamas's deadly attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. But it remains fragile as Israel and Hamas accuse each other almost daily of violations. The agreement is composed of three phases. In the first phase of the deal, Palestinian militants committed to releasing the remaining 48 living and dead captives held in the territory. So

far they have released all of the hostages except for one body. Under the second phase Israeli troops would further withdraw from their positions in Gaza and be replaced by an international stabilisation force, while Hamas would lay down its weapons. Israel has repeatedly insisted Hamas "will be disarmed". The third phase includes the reconstruction of the vast areas of Gaza levelled by Israel's retaliatory military campaign. Hayya also confirmed the head of the group's weapons production was killed in an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip the day before. "The Palestinian people are currently going through difficult times and suffering greatly... with the martyrdom of more than 70,000 people, the latest of whom was the mujahid commander Raed Saad and his companions." Israel announced on Saturday that it had killed Saad, describing him as "one of the architects" of the October 2023 attack. — APP

Three 'extortionists' among  
nine suspects nabbed

The SSP said that the arrested suspects were wanted by the police in several cases, as they were "running an extortion network"

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: The Karachi Police arrested nine suspects, including three "extortionists," in a raid conducted on the Qadri House in Karachi's Nazimabad late on Saturday night. SSP Special Investigation Unit (SIU) Dr Imran Khan said that Jawad Qadri and Mullah Shahzeb were among the several arrested suspects. He, however, clarified that Pakistan Sunni Tehreek chief Sarwat Ijaz Qadri was not detained. SSP Khan said that 169 extortion-related incidents were reported over the year, out of which 65 were

confirmed extortion cases, while the remaining were linked to personal disputes. He categorically denied any involvement of Pakistan Sunni Tehreek leadership, saying its leaders had no role in the case. The SSP said that the arrested suspects were wanted by the police in several cases, as they were "running an extortion network." He said that the arrests were made on the information given by an already nabbed suspect named Rehan. SSP Imran Khan said that Rehan, who was involved in extortion and firing incidents in Jamshed Quarters, had been arrested earlier. Acting on his information, police conducted a raid at Qadri House and arrested several suspects, including Jawad Qadri alias Khawaja and Shahzeb Mullah. According to police official, the arrested suspects were in contact with the Samad Kathiawadi group. A large quantity of weapons, ammunition, mobile phones, and gold ornaments was recovered from their possession. The suspects are also alleged to have previous criminal records. Further investigations are underway.

Thailand confirms  
first civilian killed

Thai defence ministry spokesman Surasant Kongsiri said Cambodia shelled and bombed several border provinces overnight

BANTEAY MEANCHHEY: Thailand on Sunday announced its first civilian death in a week of fighting with Cambodia, as international efforts fail to stop violence that has forced hundreds of thousands from their homes. The latest killing comes a day after Bangkok denied US President Donald Trump's claim that a truce had been agreed between the Southeast Asian neighbours. The conflict, rooted in a colonial-era demarcation dispute along their 800-kilometre (500-mile) border, has displaced around 800,000 people, officials said. "I have been here for six days and I feel sad that the fighting continues," 63-year-old Sean Leap told AFP at an evacuation centre in Cambodia's border province of Banteay Meanchey. "I want it to stop," he said, adding he was worried about his home and livestock. At least 27 people have been killed, including 15 Thai soldiers and 11 Cambodian civilians, officials said Sunday. A Thai civilian killed in Sisaket province was the first non-military death recorded in the country since the latest round of fighting be-

gan on December 7, health ministry spokesman Ekachai Piensriwatchara confirmed to AFP. The Thai army said the 63-year-old man was killed by shrapnel after Cambodian forces fired rockets into a civilian area. Each side has blamed the other for instigating the clashes, claiming self-defence and trading accusations of attacks on civilians. Trump, who earlier backed a truce and follow-on agreement, said Friday the two countries had agreed to stop fighting. But Thai leaders later said no ceasefire deal was made, and both governments said Sunday that clashes were ongoing. Thai defence ministry spokesman Surasant Kongsiri said Cambodia shelled and bombed several border provinces overnight. The Thai military has imposed a curfew from 7:00 pm to 5:00 am (1200 to 2200 GMT) in parts of Sa Kaeo and Trat provinces, Cambodia, which is outgunned and outspent by Thailand's military, said Thai forces had shelled and launched air strikes on Cambodian territory near the border on Sunday. — APP

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