

Pak's global standing improved due to PM's policies: Yousaf

MANSEHRA: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Monday said that Pakistan's international stature has improved and the confidence of global financial institutions has been restored due to the positive policies of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Addressing Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) public representatives and workers in Balakot, he said that peace was essential for economic development, adding that the Pakistan Army was standing like a leaden wall against terrorism. He said Field Marshal Asim Munir was determined to pursue terrorists till the last one.

The federal minister said that approval of a new four-lane highway from Mansehra to Chilas and China would promote tourism and create employment opportunities, improving the economic conditions of the people. He added that electricity supply projects worth Rs500 million were underway in remote mountainous areas, including Tehsil Balakot.

Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said that the Prime Minister had also approved Rs150 million for the construction of roads in areas affected by recent floods, and that the tendering process was currently in progress.

Criticizing the provincial government, he said that it had been unjust to the public by not providing funds to local government representatives, adding that people would soon be rid of what he termed an inefficient provincial administration. PML-N District President Syed Junaid Qasim was also present on the occasion. Sardar Saeed Liaquat Khasana, Qazi Sadiq and other speakers addressed the gathering, while local elders briefed the federal minister on issues faced by their respective areas. **_APP**

SITE industrialists disappointed over mere 50bps cut

KARACHI: Ahmed Azeem Alvi, President of the SITE Association of Industry (SAI) has expressed disappointment over the State Bank of Pakistan's decision to reduce the policy rate by only 50 basis points, terming the move insufficient to provide any meaningful relief to the struggling industrial sector. In a statement, SAI President said that given the severity of the current economic challenges, such a marginal cut would do little to ease the pressure on businesses. He stressed that the government must adopt a clear and coherent strategy if it intends to keep domestic industries afloat. Mr Alvi said that local industries were already under immense strain, while imports had come to a standstill. At the same time, he added, persistently high interest rates had trapped both businesses and the public in a cycle of inflation and unemployment. "People are losing jobs every day. **_APP**

Murad launches anti-polio campaign to cover over 1m kids

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah inaugurated a week-long National Polio Eradication Campaign, December 15-21, under the December 2025 National Immunisation Days (NIDs), by administering polio drops to children at CMS School, UC Old Haji Camp, a government heritage school.

The campaign will run from December 15 to 21 across the province. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Provincial Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Secretary Health Rehan Baloch, NCOO Coordinator Shaharyar Memon, senior Health Department officials, and representatives

of national and international partner organisations supporting the polio eradication initiative. Addressing the gathering, the CM said Sindh has further strengthened its efforts to eliminate polio through robust surveillance systems, high vaccination coverage, and strong community engagement. He acknowledged that while poliovirus continues to be detected in certain high-risk locations, early detection and rapid response remain the cornerstone of the programme's success. Murad Shah said Sindh reported 23 polio cases in 2024 and nine cases in 2025, with the latest case detected in August 2025 in Badin district. During

2025, cases were limited to six districts: Badin, Larkana, Kambar, Thatta, Umerkot, and Hyderabad. Ongoing environmental surveillance, particularly sewage sampling in urban centres, continues to guide targeted vaccination and response efforts. The December 2025 NIDs will be one of the largest health mobilisations in Sindh this year. A total of 10.6 million children under five years of age will be administered two drops of the polio vaccine across 1,345 union councils in 30 districts. More than 80,000 frontline workers have been deployed for the campaign, supported by over 21,000 law enforcement personnel, including ap-

proximately 400 lady police constables, to ensure the safety and effectiveness of vaccination teams. The CM emphasised that the provincial government is prioritising strengthened micro-planning, comprehensive pre-campaign preparation, and enhanced training and support for frontline workers. He also highlighted the importance of close coordination between health authorities, district administrations, and partner organisations, along with the active engagement of schools, community leaders, parents, and religious scholars. Paying tribute to polio workers, Murad Shah said their dedication and commitment are vital to protecting every child

from the crippling disease. He urged parents to fully cooperate with vaccination teams and ensure that no child is missed during the campaign. The CM also underscored the important role of the media in disseminating accurate information, countering misinformation, and amplifying vaccination messages, noting that collective efforts are essential for achieving a polio-free Sindh and a polio-free Pakistan. Mr Shah said that polio can only be eliminated if every child under the age of five is repeatedly administered polio drops. Parents must ensure that their children receive these life-saving drops and fully cooperate with polio teams, he added. **_APP**

Business community rejects FBR property valuation hike

President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajraan Ajmal Baloch announced that the entire city would join the protest on December 22. He demanded the immediate removal of Federal Finance Minister Mohammad Aurangzeb and an end to corruption in the name of the Point of Sale (PoS) system and called for strict action against those involved

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The business community of the federal capital has categorically rejected the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) notification dated December 8, 2025, which revises the valuation of residential and commercial properties in Islamabad Capital Territory by up to 1,700 percent in certain cases. This unanimous stance was announced by President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Tahir Mehmood while addressing a largely attended press conference at the Chamber House on Monday evening. He warned that if the controversial notification is not withdrawn, the business community will stage a massive protest and hold a sit-in in front of the FBR on December 22, 2025.

The ICCI President sounded the alarm, stating that the oppressive measure would strangle trade and industry in the region, leading to severe unemployment, business closures, economic unrest, and the relocation of industries to other regions and countries. He said the abrupt increase has shattered investor confidence and dealt a serious blow to the ease of doing business. Calling for urgent intervention, Sardar Tahir Mehmood appealed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir to take notice of the gravity of the situation and step in to safeguard the country's broader economic interests. He termed the FBR's move a conspiracy against the Prime Minister's tireless efforts



to revive industry and create a business-friendly environment, regretting that certain elements appear determined to undermine these initiatives. Chairman ICCI Founder Group Sheikh Tariq Sadiq strongly endorsed the decision to protest and stage a sit-in. President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajraan Ajmal Baloch announced that the entire city would join the protest on December 22. He demanded the immediate removal of

Federal Finance Minister Mohammad Aurangzeb and an end to corruption in the name of the Point of Sale (PoS) system and called for strict action against those involved. Renowned business leader Ahsan Malik also addressed the press conference, expressing serious concerns over the negative impact of the valuation hike on economic activity. Earlier, a consultative session was held at ICCI, bringing together leaders from

trade, industry, real estate, construction allied sectors and citizens of the capital city. Speakers including Sardar Tahir Mehmood, Sheikh Tariq Sadiq, Chaudhry Abdur Rauf, Kashif Chaudhry, Ajmal Baloch, Israr Mashwani and others unanimously termed the notification unilateral, irrational and anti-business, demanding its immediate withdrawal. They warned that such abrupt measures without meaningful consultation would have far-reaching consequences

for investment, real estate activity and overall economic confidence, emphasizing that trust erosion at this critical juncture could further deepen the country's economic challenges. Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, former President Mian Akram Farid, Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi, Mian Shaikat Masood, executive committee members and a large number of business leaders were also present on the occasion.

Punjab CM launches tech-driven shrimp-farming

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has formally inaugurated technology-based shrimp farming, aquaculture, and an integrated value chain in the province, marking a major step towards the development of Punjab's blue economy.

The project comes after the successful completion of a pilot research initiative covering 100 acres of land, which demonstrated the viability of scientific and modern aquaculture techniques in the region.

Chairing a meeting here on Monday, the chief minister described the initiative as a significant milestone for the province, emphasizing that it will not only increase seafood production but also generate employment opportunities, promote entrepreneurship, and

enhance the income of local farmers. She outlined that the project includes the establishment of hatcheries, aqua malls, processing plants, cold storage facilities, and a modern transport chain to ensure efficient post-harvest management and value addition.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that by March 2026, shrimp estates covering 5,300 acres will be launched in Muzaffargarh and Sargodha, and a feasibility study for an additional 2,600 acres is underway to extend the project to more farmers in the province. She highlighted that the initiative has been developed using global research and advanced aquaculture technologies, with technical support and expertise from professionals in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Ecuador, Australia,

and Mexico.

The chief minister added that machinery has been installed on-site and teams are working round-the-clock to ensure smooth implementation. She stressed that the project represents a long-term vision for sustainable aquaculture in Punjab, combining innovation, research, and modern practices to make the province a hub of technological aquaculture and blue economy development.

The meeting was briefed that the project will also focus on skill development, training of local workforce, and creation of an integrated supply and marketing chain to ensure economic sustainability for farmers and stakeholders involved in the aquaculture sector. **—DNA**

Robotic Telesurgery Center of Excellence inaugurated

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Health Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho on Monday formally inaugurated a Robotic Telesurgery Center of Excellence and Training Institute at the Lyari General Hospital. The center is equipped with the Toumai Robotic Telesurgery System by MicroPort and being termed as a historic milestone in Pakistan's public healthcare sector, a communique said. Secretary Health Sindh Rehan Baloch, Principal Lyari General Hospital Dr Anjum Rehman, medical experts, faculty members, surgeons, and media representatives were present on the occasion.

A team of doctors successfully performed a live robotic telesurgery directly from Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, Kuwait, using the Toumai Robotic Telesurgery System (MicroPort) This achievement presented a practical example of global surgical expertise, advanced technology, and strong international connectivity. While talking to the media, Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Secretary Health Rehan Baloch, and medical experts said that advanced initiatives such as robotic telesurgery demonstrated the Sindh Government's strong commitment to introducing modern medical facilities in public hospitals, ensuring that even underprivileged populations had access to high-quality healthcare. They emphasized that certain negative external perceptions about Lyari no longer reflect reality. Today's Lyari was emerging as a center of education, medical research, treatment, and humanitarian service. There was no place for violence in Lyari but only treatment, knowledge, and compassion. They highlighted the key role of Principal and Chairperson Dr. Professor Anjum Rehman, who, as an institutional leader and active clinician, has made outstanding contributions in surgical expertise, medical education, and patient care. During the ceremony, the services of physicians such as Dr Sehar Fatima were also appreciated for their daily dedication to serving humanity. Talking to the media, Chief Executive Officer of Popular International Iqbal Bilo explained the benefits of robotic telesurgery, stating that it was not merely a technology but a revolutionary transformation in the public healthcare system. Through this system, expert surgeons can treat patients across borders, saving patients from long travel, high costs, and delays. He added that the Toumai Robotic Telesurgery System provides treatment with extreme precision, minimal incisions, and enhanced safety, while also serving as a strong training platform for local surgeons and medical staff. Director of Popular International Abdul Rehman stated that providing the Toumai Robotic System on a placement basis reflects their commitment to strengthening public sector healthcare. The Sindh Government's procurement of equipment and consumables made the project sustainable and long-term, while ensuring patient access to advanced treatment. He added that Lyari General Hospital was being promoted not only as a treatment facility but also as a center for training and medical education. Adnan Aleem, Regional Director of MicroPort, highlighted the future of telesurgery, stating, "Telesurgery is the future of global collaboration in healthcare. By eliminating geographical barriers, it delivers world-class surgical expertise directly to patients. The Toumai Robotic Tele-Surgery System has been developed with advanced safety mechanisms, stable connectivity, and high surgical precision for this very purpose. **—DNA**

Autumn-blooming daisy exhibition opens at Allama Iqbal Park

RAWALPINDI: A colourful three-day exhibition of autumn-blooming daisies organised by the Horticulture Agency (HA) Rawalpindi opened at Allama Iqbal Park on Monday, attracting families and visitors from across the city. The opening ceremony was attended by Member of the National Assembly Malik Abrar Ahmed, Commissioner Rawalpindi Engineer Amir Khattak, and HA Rawalpindi Managing Director Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, along with other officers. The guests inaugurated the exhibition and toured the various flower stalls set up at the venue. A large number of citizens from different walks of life participated in the ceremony. Stalls decorated by Combined

Military Hospital (CMH), Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP), HA Rawalpindi and other institutions enhanced the park's visual appeal, creating a vibrant atmosphere. Students of Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi also contributed by displaying floral models and creative designs. Various varieties of daisies were put on display, presenting striking seasonal scenes for visitors. Speaking on the occasion, Malik Abrar Ahmed praised the Horticulture Agency Rawalpindi for organising recreational activities for the public and said such exhibitions also conveyed a message of peace. He encouraged the citizens to visit the exhibition and enjoy the natural beauty on display. Ahmed Hassan Ranjha said the exhibition highlighted "daisies that bloom in the autumn season, conveying the message that colours and life flourish even during this time of year". He invited the residents of Rawalpindi to visit the exhibition and thanked participating institutions, including CMH and AFIP, as well as the university students, for contributing with flower stalls, models and socially themed designs. He said the aim of the exhibition was to showcase the beauty and distinctive status of the daisy flower. The exhibition will continue until December 17. **_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

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CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

NUML, Russian embassy advance strategic coop in education

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Russian Ambassador Albert Khorev visited the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) and called on Rector NUML, Maj Gen (R) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, HI (M). The meeting marked a significant step toward strengthening long-term and short-term collaboration in Russian language education, academic exchange, and cultural promotion. During the discussion, both sides explored an ambitious long-term vision to introduce the Russian language from early schooling up to Class XII. Under this initiative, qualified Russian teachers, supported by the Russian Federation, would teach in Pakistan to build strong linguistic foundations and deepen cultural understanding among students. In the short term, the focus remained on enhancing Russian language education for students of Classes XI and XII. This initiative aims to prepare Pakistani students for higher education opportunities in Russia, including scholarships, academic placements, and smooth admission pathways. The Rector emphasized NUML's strong commitment to promoting the Russian language and culture, noting that with its extensive student body and specialized expertise in foreign languages, NUML is fully equipped to expand Russian language teaching, provided that qualified Russian instructors are made available. He added that students could complete undergraduate studies in Pakistan and later pursue advanced degrees in Russia, ensuring a secure and well-guided academic transition. Following the meeting, both sides signed an Act of Acceptance of books and printed materials. This gesture reaffirmed the enduring partnership between the Russian Embassy and NUML, reflecting a shared commitment to cultural dialogue and academic cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Under the agreement, the Embassy formally transferred, and NUML accepted, a collection of books and printed resources.

Romanian embassy to host Christmas Carols concert

Islamabad: The Embassy of Romania has announced a special Christmas carols concert to celebrate the festive season, inviting guests and their spouses to an evening of music and celebration in the spirit of Christmas. The concert will feature renowned Romanian soprano Georgiana Costea-Glugă, accompanied by pianist Sheeza Maqsood, who will present a festive programme of traditional Christmas carols. The event will be held at St. Thomas Church, Islamabad, and will showcase a selection of cherished Christmas melodies from Romania and around the world. Guests will enjoy a rich and diverse repertoire, including popular Romanian carols such as “Mo Crăciun cu plete dalbe” and “O, ce veste minunată”, alongside internationally loved classics like “Silent Night”. The performance aims to create a warm and uplifting atmosphere, reflecting the true spirit of the holiday season and promoting cultural harmony. The Embassy has emphasized that the invitation is strictly personal and valid only for invited guests and their spouses. For security reasons, entry will be granted exclusively to those who have received an official invitation and have confirmed their attendance in advance. Guests are required to RSVP by December 15. The Embassy of Romania expressed its pleasure in hosting this special cultural event and looks forward to welcoming guests to an evening of music, celebration, and festive joy. _APP

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ard at which drivers and band personnel were trained at the college reflected the professionalism of the commandant, and thanked the IG Punjab for providing excellent facilities across all institutions. Commandant Police College Sihala, Ashfaq Ahmed Khan, said the training had been conducted on modern lines, emphasising stress and anger management as well as VIP security procedures. He added that professional training formed the foundation of effective operational performance. He said the Police College Sihala, established in 1959, was Pakistan's largest police training institution. He added that over 100,000 officers and staff from various institutions had received training at the college so far. The training focused on basic principles, discipline, and professional skills. The ceremony was also attended by domestic and international guests.—APP

FCCP to hear suo motu case on Arshad today

ISLAMABAD The Federal Constitutional Court will hear the suo motu case concerning journalist Arshad Sharif on December 17 (Tuesday). The court has already sought legal assistance on the question of its jurisdiction to proceed with the suo motu case and has also asked for a progress report on the investigation conducted so far. During earlier proceedings, the court had directed counsel to assist on whether, after the 27th Constitutional Amendment, the present court has the authority to hear and continue suo motu proceedings. A two-member bench comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Rozi Khan will hear the case. At the previous hearing, Justice Aamer Farooq asked what progress had been made in the investigation so far. The court also sought clarification on what legal steps could be taken to bring those responsible to justice. The bench raised the key constitutional question of whether, after the 27th Amendment, the Constitutional Court can exercise suo motu jurisdiction. The court directed lawyers from both sides to assist on this legal point. The court observed that along with regulating judicial proceedings, the question of jurisdiction must also be examined, adding that a case cannot proceed in the Constitutional Court without proper adjudication. One of the lawyers submitted that a court decision already exists and that the Constitutional Court can continue suo motu proceedings. The hearing had earlier been adjourned until December 17. _APP

Prof Aftab honoured on retirement at IMCB

ISLAMABAD:A retirement reference and farewell ceremony was held at Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB) F-10/4 in honour of Professor Aftab Hayat on the eve of his retirement on Monday, marking the conclusion of a distinguished career spanning more than three and a half decades in the Federal Education system. Professor Aftab Hayat was inducted as a lecturer on November 20, 1990, and rendered devoted service at several Federal Government colleges, including Islamabad Model Postgraduate College H-8, IMCB Nilore, IMCB H-9, and, most recently, IMCB F-10/4. He retired on December 15 after completing over 35 years of dedicated academic and administrative service. Dr Fida-ul-Mustafa took the stage and paid tribute to the retiring professor, recalling his academic contributions and principled approach to teaching. Several colleagues and former associates also spoke on the occasion, shedding light on Professor Aftab Hayat's scholarly excellence, discipline, and supportive role in nurturing students and junior faculty members. The Principal of IMCB F-10/4, Professor Rashid Saleem, expressed heartfelt sentiments on behalf of the college faculty. He extended best wishes for a healthy and fulfilling post-retirement life, noting that his contributions would be remembered with respect and gratitude.

ISSI holds bilateral think tank dialogue with SIIS

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted Bilateral Dialogue with China's premier think-tank, the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS). The thematic focus of the Dialogue was “Strengthening Think Tank and Academic Exchanges Between China and Pakistan and Deepening the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.” The Dialogue was attended by a high-level Chinese delegation comprising Prof. Chen Dongxiao, President, SIIS; Prof. Liu Zongyi, Senior Research Fellow and Director, Centre for South Asia Studies, SIIS; Dr. Tan Chenyi; and Dr. Zhang Xiaoyin, Research Fellows at SIIS, along with Mr. Shi Yuanqiang, Deputy Head of Mission, Chinese Embassy in Islamabad, while the speakers from Pakistani side included Ambassador Masood Khalid, Ambassador Zamir Akram, and Ambassador Asif Durrani, reflecting the depth and diversity of Pakistan's scholarly and policy engagement in advancing China-Pakistan cooperation. Mr. Ishtiaq Akil, DG(China) at the Foreign Office, also joined. The meeting focused on deliberations over recent developments in China-Pakistan relations, the evolving U.S. global engagement, regional dynamics, and developments vis-a-vis Afghanistan. In the opening remarks, Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the enduring strength of the all-weather Pakistan-China strategic cooperative partnership, describing it as a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy and a stabilizing force for regional peace and shared prosperity. He underscored the deep strategic convergence between the two countries, particularly through CPEC, the Belt and Road Initiative, and support for China's Global Development, Security, Civilisation, and Governance Initiatives. He emphasized that Pakistan's close partnership with China complements its broader foreign policy of constructive engagement, inclusive regionalism, and support for a fair, equitable and cooperative multipolar world order. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to peaceful coexistence, dialogue, and regional stability, while safeguarding its sovereignty and core national interests. He expressed confidence that enhanced think-tank collaboration between ISSI and SIIS would generate valuable insights to further strengthen Pakistan-China relations as both countries approach the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties. Prof. Chen Dongxiao in his remarks said that the Pakistan-China strategic partnership has become even more vital amid profound global change and growing challenges to international order. He reaffirmed China's strong interest in peace, stability, and development in South Asia, describing Pakistan as a trusted strategic partner.—DNA

IRSA releases 76,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 76,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 32,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1488.59 feet which was 86.59 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 20,300 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1206.00 feet, which was 156.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 3,300 cusecs and 33,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 26,900, 26,500, 33,300, and 5,600 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 6,700 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and zero cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Ayaz lauds security forces for successful operations

ISLAMABAD:Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has paid rich tribute to the security forces for their successful operations against Indian proxy elements of Fitna al-Khawarij in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a statement, the Speaker lauded the Pakistan army for eliminating 13 terrorists in Mohmand and Bannu districts, terming the operations a clear manifestation of the forces' professional competence, courage and unwavering resolve. He said the security forces, through timely and effective actions, thwarted the enemy's nefarious designs and ensured the protection of lives and property of the people. The Speaker emphasized that the successful counter-terrorism operations reflected the high level of preparedness and professionalism of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies. Ayaz Sadiq acknowledged the immense and unforgettable sacrifices rendered by the Pakistan army and law enforcement agencies in the war against terrorism, saying that these sacrifices would always be remembered by the nation. He reiterated that operations against terrorists would continue until the complete eradication of terrorism from the country. The Speaker further affirmed that the entire nation stood shoulder to shoulder with its armed forces in the fight against terrorism. “The bravery and dedication of our security forces are a source of pride for the whole nation,” he added.—APP

531 constable drivers, 50 band personnel pass out

RAWALPINDI: The Police College Sihala on Monday held a passing-out parade for constable drivers and band personnel, with Additional Inspector General (Training) Punjab, Mahboob Aslam Lillah, attending as the chief guest. A total of 531 constable drivers and 50 band personnel completed their training. Police contingents presented a ceremonial salute to the chief guest, while training officers of the band demonstrated their skills through musical performances. Officers who achieved top positions in the course were awarded shields and prizes by the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, Additional IG Mahboob Aslam Lillah congratulated the successful officers and commended the administration of Police College Sihala for their practical role in completing the course. He said that in the modern era, police performance “depends on timely response and safe mobility”. He praised Inspector General Punjab, Dr Usman Anwar, for personally ensuring the efficiency of police stations and training institutions. He added that the high standards at which drivers and band personnel were trained at the college reflected the professionalism of the commandant, and thanked the IG Punjab for providing excellent facilities across all institutions. Commandant Police College Sihala, Ashfaq Ahmed Khan, said the training had been conducted on modern lines, emphasising stress and anger management as well as VIP security procedures. He added that professional training formed the foundation of effective operational performance. He said the Police College Sihala, established in 1959, was Pakistan's largest police training institution. He added that over 100,000 officers and staff from various institutions had received training at the college so far. The training focused on basic principles, discipline, and professional skills. The ceremony was also attended by domestic and international guests.—APP

Motorbikes, 3-wheelers sale increases 31%: PAMA

ISLAMABAD: The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country has witnessed an increase of 31.88 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year. During the months under review, as many as 762,778 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against the sale of 578,364 units in July-November (2024-25), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). The sale of Honda motorcycles surged by 32.97 per cent from 486,758 units to 647,271 units, whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles also rose by 47.39 per cent from 9,692 units to 14,286 units during the months under review. The sales of United Auto motorcycles witnessed an increase of 29.99 per cent from 56,379 units to 73,291 units, while the sales of Road Prince motorbikes also surged to 11,641 units from 8,434 units. The sale of Yamaha motorbikes came down to 1,223 units from 2,141 units, witnessing a decrease of 42.87 per cent. Meanwhile, the sale of United Auto three-wheelers increased from 322 units to 643 units, while the sale of Qingqi three-wheelers also increased by 4.04 percent from 4,178 units to 4,347 units. The sale of Sazgar three-wheelers decreased by 3.80 per cent from 9,812 units to 9,439 units, whereas the sale of Road Prince also decreased to 611 units from 645 units, the data revealed.—APP

AIOU reviews research synopses

ISLAMABAD: The 75th meeting of the Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASR) was held at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) during which 12 PhD and 87 MPhil research scholars from the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities & the Faculty of Sciences defended their research synopses. During the meeting, in order to further enhance research quality, the research synopses of some scholars were returned with instructions for revision. The meeting was chaired by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr Nasir Mahmood while the agenda was presented by the Director BASR, Prof. Dr Irshad Ahmad Arshad. External experts participated in the meeting, including Prof. Dr Aneela Kamal along with Professors

from the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), International Islamic University, Fatima Jinnah Women University, University of the Punjab and other renowned universities. The experts conducted a detailed review of the presented research synopses and offered valuable opinions and suggestions to make them more effective and of higher academic standard. During the defense of the research synopses, the Vice Chancellor asked various questions to assess the research understanding and competence of the scholars. The Vice Chancellor further directed that the Doctoral Synopsis Committee (DSC) must ensure thorough and meticulous scrutiny of the quality, comprehensiveness, and academic

aspects of research synopses before presenting them to BASR for approval. Additionally, the Vice Chancellor instructed research scholars that after obtaining approval from the DSC, they should not make any unauthorized changes to their research proposals, so as to maintain continuity, transparency, and quality in the research process. On this occasion, a large number of deans from various faculties, senior faculty members, and subject experts were present and engaged in detailed and purposeful discussions on research topics. At the conclusion of the meeting, it was reaffirmed that Allama Iqbal Open University remains fully committed to its vision of promoting research, innovation, and academic excellence.—APP

Briefs

Kyrgyz President's Pakistan visit to boost economic ties

ISLAMABAD: Honorary Consul Kyrgyzstan Meher Kashif Younis on Monday said the results-oriented and highly successful state visit of Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov to Pakistan is set to open a new chapter of economic cooperation between the two brotherly Muslim countries. He said the visit had laid a strong foundation for scaling up bilateral trade from the existing \$15 million to nearly \$200 million within the next two years, reflecting a renewed commitment to deepen regional connectivity, commercial partnerships and strategic collaboration, said a news release. He said both countries have agreed to accelerate progress on multiple fronts, including energy cooperation, education, textile and pharmaceutical trade, industrial linkages, agriculture, and digital transformation. President Japarov's engagements with Pakistan's top leadership, he added, were marked by mutual trust and a shared vision for regional prosperity, particularly through enhanced transport corridors to facilitate businessmen on both sides. Meher Kashif said Kyrgyzstan's strategic location in Central Asia offered Pakistan a gateway to untapped markets, while Pakistan provided a significant export base for Kyrgyz industries.—APP

Efforts afoot on private sector, export-led growth to sustainable uplift : Bilal

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani on Monday said the government was pivoting decisively towards private sector-led, export-driven growth to sustain the economic stability achieved since assuming office after the 2024 general elections. Addressing a news conference here, the minister said the current policy direction was firmly anchored in macroeconomic stabilisation secured under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, which also provided the framework for last year's federal budget. "Stabilisation was the first imperative. Now, the Prime Minister is focused on translating that stability into durable, private sector-led economic growth," he said, outlining the government's post-stabilisation reform priorities. Bilal Azhar said the economic indicators reflected tangible improvement. Inflation during fiscal year 2025 had declined to low single digits, foreign exchange reserves had increased significantly, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) collections had recorded a 26 percent growth, and the tax-to-GDP ratio had risen by 1.5 percentage points, from 8.8 percent to 10.3 percent.—APP

President affirms Pakistan's resolve against terrorism

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan's commitment to defeating terrorism was absolute and reiterated that there could be no soft corner for terrorists or those who supported, financed, sheltered or justified them. "There can be no negotiations with those who raise arms against the state or target our children," the president said in a message on the 11th anniversary of the APS Peshawar attack. He said the memory of the APS martyrs strengthened their resolve. Pakistan would never allow the enemies of peace to succeed. Today, he said, they remembered the innocent children and staff of the Army Public School whose lives were taken in the brutal terrorist attack on 16 December 2014, adding their sacrifice remained a solemn reminder of the heavy price the nation had paid in the fight against terrorism. "We stand with the families who continue to bear this pain with courage. The nation will always honour the resilience of the APS families who transformed their grief into strength for Pakistan," he stressed. The president said that they strongly condemned the Indian sponsored terrorism in Pakistan. "The evidence of its involvement in efforts to destabilise our country is well documented.—APP

Pakistan prioritizes trade, investment over aid for growth

He emphasized that foreign direct investment into productive sectors will support higher GDP growth, generate employment opportunities, and deliver shared economic benefits for Pakistan and its partners. He concluded by stressing that the government is fully mobilized to translate this vision into reality

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Pakistan is no longer seeking aid-based support and is firmly transitioning towards trade- and investment-led engagement to ensure long-term economic sustainability and mutually beneficial partnerships, particularly with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. In an interview with CNN Business Arabia, the Finance Minister underscored that this strategic shift, clearly articulated by the Prime Minister, reflects Pakistan's renewed economic confidence and reform momentum. The Finance Minister highlighted that over the past 18 months, Pakistan has remained on a comprehensive macroeconomic stabilization program, which has delivered tangible and measurable results. Inflation, which had peaked at an unprecedented 38 percent, has now declined to single-digit levels. On the fiscal front, Pakistan has achieved primary surpluses, while the current account deficit remains well within targeted limits. He further noted that the exchange rate has stabilized and foreign exchange reserves have improved to approximately 2.5 months of

import cover, reflecting strengthening external buffers. Senator Aurangzeb pointed to two major external validations of Pakistan's improving economic outlook. Firstly, all three international credit rating agencies have aligned their assessments this year by upgrading Pakistan's ratings and outlook. Secondly, Pakistan has successfully completed the second review under the IMF Extended Fund Facility, with the IMF Executive Board granting its approval earlier this week. These developments, he said, demonstrate growing international confidence in Pakistan's economic management and reform trajectory. The Minister emphasized that macroeconomic stabilization has been achieved through a coordinated approach combining disciplined monetary and fiscal policies with an ambitious structural reform agenda. Reforms are being implemented across key areas including taxation, energy, state-owned enterprises, public financial management, and privatization, aimed at consolidating stability and laying the foundation for sustainable growth. On taxation, Senator Aurangzeb noted significant progress in improving Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio, which stood at 8.8 percent at the start of the reform program. During the last fiscal year, it in-

creased to 10.3 percent, with a clear path towards 11 percent. He explained that the government's objective is to reach a level of tax collection that ensures fiscal sustainability over the medium to long term. This is being pursued through widening the tax base by bringing previously undertaxed but economically significant sectors such as real estate, agriculture, and wholesale and retail trade into the formal net, alongside deepening compliance by reducing leakages through production monitoring systems and AI-enabled technologies. Simultaneously, the tax administration is being transformed through reforms in people, processes, and technology. In the energy sector, the Finance Minister highlighted efforts to improve governance in distribution companies, involve private sector expertise, advance privatization, and reduce circular debt, which has long constrained the power sector. He stressed that rationalizing the tariff regime is essential to making energy more competitive for industry, thereby enabling industrial revival and economic growth. Senator Aurangzeb acknowledged the longstanding support of GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, noting their critical role in supporting Pakistan through financing, funding, and coopera-

tion at international financial institutions such as the IMF. He said this relationship is now evolving towards a new phase centered on trade expansion and investment flows. Remittances continue to play a vital role in supporting the current account, with inflows reaching approximately USD 38 billion last year and projected to rise to USD 41-42 billion this year, over half of which originate from GCC countries. Looking ahead, the Finance Minister stated that Pakistan is actively engaging with GCC partners to attract investment in priority sectors including energy, oil and gas, minerals and mining, artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. He also expressed optimism regarding progress on a Free Trade Agreement with the GCC, noting that discussions are at an advanced stage. Reiterating the government's strategic direction, Senator Aurangzeb said that Pakistan's future lies in fostering trade and investment partnerships rather than reliance on aid. He emphasized that foreign direct investment into productive sectors will support higher GDP growth, generate employment opportunities, and deliver shared economic benefits for Pakistan and its partners. He concluded by stressing that the government is fully mobilized to translate this vision into reality.

National Committee reviews Iqbal's 150th plan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday chaired a meeting of the National Committee constituted to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar also attended the meeting, which held detailed deliberations on the proposed events to commemorate Allama Iqbal's 150th birth anniversary, along with preparations for the 150th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 2026, a news release said. Addressing the meeting, Ahsan Iqbal announced that the year 2026 would be declared the "Year of Quaid-e-Azam," adding that Quaid-e-Azam's 150th birth anniversary would be celebrated at the national level in a befitting and dignified manner. He said a sub-committee was being constituted to finalise the programme of events, which would submit its recommendations within five days. The minister emphasised the need for a coordinated and well-structured strategy to ensure that the commemorative activities were meaningful, impactful and memorable. Ahsan Iqbal said Quaid-e-Azam's vision continued to provide comprehensive guidance for Pakistan, and that his principles of Unity, Faith and Discipline would be highlighted in an integrated manner throughout the celebrations. He also announced that a high-quality drama series would be produced on the life of Quaid-e-Azam, focusing on his political struggle, leadership during the independence movement and his historic role in the creation of Pakistan. The planning minister said that Quaid-e-Azam's ideas remained a guiding light for contemporary Pakistan, adding that the Uraan Pakistan vision was firmly rooted in the founder's ideals and aspirations for the country.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Labourers are busy in construction work of newly food street at Blue area, in the Federal Capital.

NCCIA nabs 8 in Islamabad financial fraud case

ISLAMABAD: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) Islamabad has arrested an eight-member organised gang involved in large-scale financial fraud during a raid conducted in the Khanna Pul area of the federal capital. An official told APP on Monday that the accused used to pose as relatives or close friends living abroad—particularly in the United Kingdom—and deceived citizens by fabricating medical emergency scenarios to extract large sums of money. During the investigation, NCCIA uncovered that one complainant was defrauded of Rs1.5 million through fake identities, with the amount transferred into the bank account of the prime suspect. Documentary and digital evidence confirming the financial transactions was recovered during the probe. The arrested suspects have been identified as Muhammad Salman, Mohsin Jameel, Nazakat Ali, Mehtab Ali, Muhammad Shah Nawaz, Nasir Ali, Abid Hussain and Fahad Jabbar. A case has been registered under FIR No. 335/25 and Inquiry No. 2512/25, with charges framed under relevant provisions of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 and the Pakistan Penal Code. Officials said the operation was carried out on December 12, 2025, when an NCCIA Islamabad team conducted a targeted raid in the Khanna Pul area. The operation was led by Investigation Officer Sub-Inspector Shehroz Riaz, with team members Babar Ali, Fahad Altaf, Waseem Shehzad and Kausar Niazi taking part in the action. NCCIA authorities stated that further investigation is underway to trace additional facilitators, recover defrauded amounts and identify other potential victims of the gang. They urged citizens to remain vigilant and immediately report suspicious calls, messages or online transactions to the relevant authorities for timely action. The agency reaffirmed its commitment to cracking down on cybercrime and protecting citizens from digital fraud across the country.—APP

NEOC coordinator calls for parental cooperation

ISLAMABAD: National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) Coordinator, Muhammad Anwar ul Haq on Monday called upon parents to play their vital role in the seven-day national polio vaccination drive by ensuring that every child receives polio drops and by extending full cooperation to polio teams working across the country. While exclusively speaking with a local news channel, the coordinator stated that its country's final nationwide polio vaccination campaign of 2025 will be conducted from December 15 to 21, as announced by the National Emergency Operations Center (EOC). During this crucial drive, over 45 million children under the age of five across the country will be administered polio drops to protect them from the crippling disease, he added. He stressed that Pakistan has reported 30 polio cases this year, a figure that serves as a serious reminder that the virus remains a real threat. Emphasizing that complacency can reverse hard-earned gains,

he underlined the urgent need for collective responsibility to ensure that no child is missed during the campaign. Calling for strong public cooperation, the coordinator urged parents to welcome polio workers at their doorsteps and ensure that children under five receive two drops for complete protection. He expressed confidence that with unified efforts and community support, Pakistan can achieve far better results in 2026 and move decisively toward the complete eradication of polio from the country. Responding to a query, he strongly condemned the growing number of refusal cases in Karachi and parts of South Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, terming them a serious obstacle to Pakistan's polio eradication efforts. He warned that refusals not only endanger unvaccinated children but also put entire communities at risk, stressing that such resistance undermines years of hard work by frontline health workers and threatens the goal of achieving improved results in 2026.—APP

Has technology made life easier or exhausting?

HUSNA MUNIR

In a world where everything is just a tap away, convenience has never been so accessible. From remote work and on-line shopping to video calls and 24/7 news updates, the digital revolution has redefined how we live. But with every notification ping and screen refresh, a new question emerges: Is technology making our lives better, or is it silently exhausting us? The term "Digital Fatigue" is becoming increasingly common —

and real. It's the mental and physical exhaustion caused by prolonged exposure to digital devices. Long Zoom meetings, endless scrolling, and constant notifications keep our minds in a loop of engagement, leaving little room to disconnect and breathe. This constant connectivity blurs the lines between personal and professional life. Work-from-home culture, while flexible, often results in longer hours and fewer breaks. Social media, originally a tool for connection, now breeds comparison, anxiety, and the fear of missing

out. Our brains are overstimulated, but ironically, under-rested. Moreover, digital fatigue is not just psychological. Eye strain, headaches, poor posture, and sleep disorders are all byproducts of excessive screen time. Even our conversations have shifted — quick replies and emoji reactions have replaced real, thoughtful communication. But it's not all gloom. The same digital tools also bring immense value — access to education, global collaboration, instant entertainment, and informa-

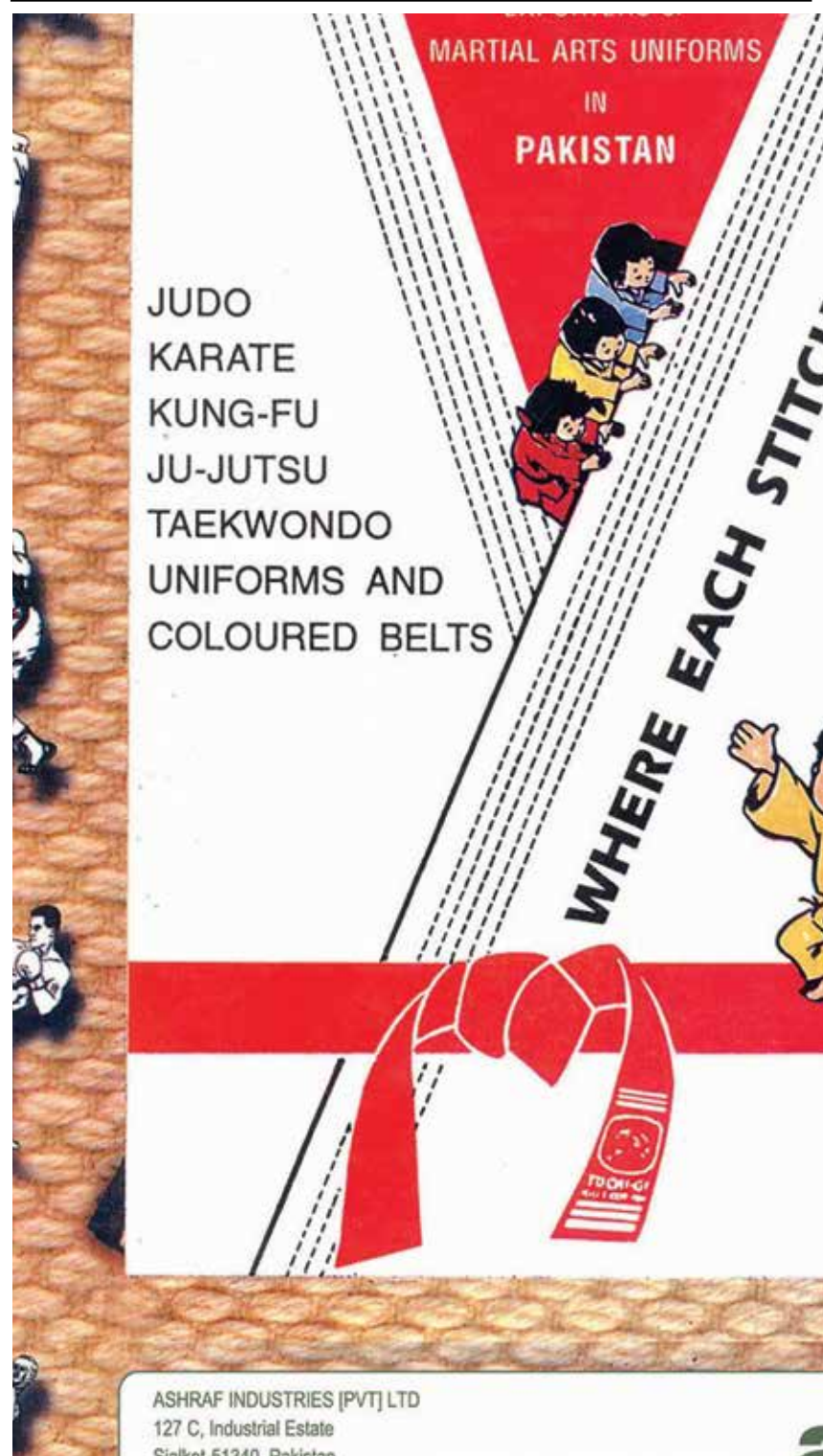
tion. The challenge is not the technology itself, but how we manage it. Digital balance is the need of the hour. Scheduling screen-free time, setting app limits, taking real breaks, and embracing offline hobbies can go a long way. Companies too must realize that productivity doesn't mean being online all the time. In the end, technology should serve us — not the other way around. The goal is to stay connected, without being consumed. —The writer is the Student of law, Punjab University Lahore

Daanish schools project faces funding halt

ISLAMABAD: Under the Daanish Schools project announced by Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Shehbaz Sharif, schools are being established in various parts of the country to promote quality education. While a number of Daanish Schools have become operational under this national education initiative, several others are still at different stages of construction. According to sources, construction work has been severely affected due to the non-availability of financial resources, reducing the likelihood of completing school buildings within the stipulated timeframe. Educational circles state that the core objective of the Daanish Schools project is to provide high-quality, modern, and uniform educational facilities to children from underprivileged and low-income backgrounds. However, the suspension of funds has placed this important education initiative under serious strain. Education experts and public representatives have urged the authorities to release the allocated funds for the Daanish Schools project without further delay, so that ongoing construction can be completed and the government's commitments toward the promotion of education can be translated into practical outcomes.—DNA

President Zardari felicitates Kazakh leadership

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari extended his warm felicitations to the leadership and people of Kazakhstan as they celebrated their 34th Independence Day on December 16. The president conveyed his sincere wishes to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and to the people of Kazakhstan for the continued prosperity and stability. Pakistan remained committed to deepening its partnership with Kazakhstan in pursuit of regional peace and development, he added. "This occasion marks the adoption of the Law on Independence and State Sovereignty in 1991—a defining moment that set Kazakhstan on its path toward becoming a modern and forward-looking nation," President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying. He said Kazakhstan's journey since independence reflected the resilience and steady progress of its people. This date commemorated Kazakhstan's declaration as a sovereign democratic state. It also honoured the 1986 Zheltoksan protests in Almaty, where Kazakh youth demonstrated against Soviet policies, symbolizing the people's resolve for freedom. "Pakistan and Kazakhstan share close and friendly ties, underpinned by common values and mutual respect. We deeply appreciate Kazakhstan's steadfast support in international forums, including the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Our cooperation continues to strengthen, particularly in trade, energy and regional connectivity, with promising opportunities emerging through CPEC," he added.—APP



When silence becomes safe

MUHAMMAD ASIF

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,

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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 pretexts, 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.

From Gaza to Bondi Beach: How Israel's War Fuels Global Rage

Qamar Bashir



The attack was immediately and rightly condemned by Australia and the world. There can be no ambiguity: the killing of civilians anywhere is criminal, immoral, and indefensible. No grievance, no ideology, no historical wound justifies such an act. The Jewish community in Australia, like Jewish communities everywhere, deserves safety, dignity, and protection. Yet condemnation alone does not prevent recurrence. If the world wishes to stop such horrors from repeating, it must confront a harder

ON December 14, 2025, Australia was jolted out of its sense of safety. At Bondi Beach in Sydney, a space synonymous with openness, community, and peaceful coexistence, gunmen opened fire on members of the Jewish community gathered to celebrate Hanukkah. Eleven people were killed and many more injured. Families, children, and elders—people with no role in war, policy, or geopolitics—were turned into victims of terror. The attack was immediately and rightly condemned by Australia and the world. There can be no ambiguity: the killing of civilians anywhere is criminal, immoral, and indefensible. No grievance, no ideology, no historical wound justifies such an act. The Jewish community in Australia, like Jewish communities everywhere, deserves safety, dignity, and protection. Yet condemnation alone does not prevent recurrence. If the world wishes to stop such horrors from repeating, it must confront a harder truth: violence does not arise in isolation. It is shaped, amplified, and redirected by global political behavior—especially when power is exercised without accountability. The Bondi Beach massacre occurred in a world already saturated with unresolved wars, mass civilian suffering, and a growing perception that international law is applied selectively. This perception—whether ignored or dismissed by those in power—has consequences. When pain is denied in one place, it does not disappear. It travels. It mutates. And it eventually erupts where the innocent live. The Hamas attack of October 7, 2023, which killed Israeli civilians and took hostages, was universally condemned. That condemnation was justified. What followed, however, shattered moral balance. Israel's military response in Gaza resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, the destruction of homes, hospitals, schools, and the deliberate deprivation of food, water, and medical aid. International legal institutions and humanitarian organizations warned that collective punishment and starvation had become tools of war. This matters not to excuse terrorism or antisemitism—both are crimes—but to understand how unchecked state violence creates global insecurity. When a state presents itself as above scrutiny, when it dismisses civilian deaths as necessary or inevitable, it sends a message to the world that human life is conditional. That message does not stay confined to Gaza. It seeps into streets, minds, and communities across continents. The Jewish community worldwide has increasingly been placed in an impossible position. Jews in Australia, Europe, or North America do not command armies, blockade borders, or authorize bom-

bardments. Yet they increasingly find themselves vulnerable to backlash generated by actions taken by a government thousands of miles away. This conflation is unjust, dangerous, and morally wrong—but it is fueled by the refusal of powerful leaders to acknowledge the global consequences of their conduct. This refusal was starkly illustrated in the aftermath of the Bondi Beach killings. Instead of engaging in self-reflection or acknowledging how Israel's actions in Gaza have heightened global tensions and endangered Jewish communities abroad, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly criticized the Australian government, accusing it of failing to provide adequate security to the Jewish community. In doing so, Netanyahu acted not as a statesman grappling with consequences, but as if he were a ruler passing judgment on sovereign nations—assigning blame outward while absolving himself entirely. There was no acknowledgment that the relentless violence in Gaza, the images of starving children, and the dismissal of international law have contributed to an environment in which rage is exported globally. There was no recognition that leadership carries responsibility not only for battlefield outcomes, but for the safety of one's people everywhere.

By placing the burden solely on Australia's security apparatus, Netanyahu effectively treated the Bondi Beach massacre as an isolated policing failure—rather than as a symptom of a wider moral and political breakdown. This posture is not only arrogant; it is dangerous. It ignores the simple reality that actions taken in the Middle East now reverberate instantly across the world. A similar warning emerged just one day earlier, on December 13, 2025, in Palmyra, Syria. A lone suspected Islamic State gunman attacked a convoy of U.S. and Syrian partner forces during a key leader engagement. The assault killed two U.S. Army soldiers and a civilian interpreter, and wounded three others. Partner forces killed the attacker at the scene. President Donald Trump vowed serious retaliation. That attack, like Bondi Beach, underscored the same truth: wars fought far from home do not remain distant. They return—sometimes as direct attacks, sometimes as unpredictable consequences. Soldiers, interpreters, and civilians pay the price for conflicts whose political roots remain unresolved. This reality struck even closer to home in Washington, D.C., where a lone Afghan gunman killed one U.S. soldier and critically wounded another. His act was criminal and indefensible. But it was also a reminder that decades of war leave behind trauma and grievance that do not end with troop withdrawals. When conflicts are managed through force rather than resolution, the

aftershocks linger in human lives.

Today, the same pattern threatens to repeat itself in the Western Hemisphere. Tensions between the United States and Venezuela, and increasingly involving Colombia, are escalating. Once again, familiar language is resurfacing—delegitimization, sanctions, pressure, and whispers of regime change. The narrative being constructed against Venezuela echoes the one once built against Iraq: moral urgency, existential threat, inevitability of action. We know how that story ended. Iraq was destabilized. Libya collapsed. Syria fractured. The Middle East was turned upside down. Millions were displaced. Extremism flourished. And the consequences spilled into Europe, North America, and beyond. Venezuela may be weaker than the United States militarily, but modern conflict teaches a clear lesson: retaliation does not strike power centers; it strikes soft targets. It does not reach presidents; it reaches soldiers, worshippers, commuters, and children. Innocent Americans—both civilians and service members—become exposed to the revenge of those whose loved ones were killed far away. This is not justification. It is historical reality. Violence creates memory. Memory creates resentment. Resentment seeks release—often against those least responsible. The tragedies at Bondi Beach, in Palmyra, in Washington, and the looming risks in Venezuela and Colombia all point to the same conclusion: when leaders refuse accountability, insecurity becomes global. No border, no ocean, no alliance can contain the consequences.

The only alternative is restraint, diplomacy, and genuine multilateral engagement. Institutions like the United Nations exist to prevent this chain reaction—to replace unilateral force with collective responsibility. They are imperfect, but bypassing them guarantees repetition of failure.

If humanity continues to normalize collective punishment, regime-change wars, and selective morality, the violence will keep returning—again and again—against people who never chose these conflicts. Peace is not a moral luxury. It is a strategic necessity.

Only by choosing introspection over arrogance, law over impunity, and dialogue over domination can the world hope to prevent the next Bondi Beach—and the next innocent life lost to a war they never owned.

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Crime, Elections and the Erosion of Indian Democratic Norms

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The nexus between crime and politics in India is neither speculative nor incidental; it is systemic and long acknowledged. From localized strongmen to sophisticated syndicates with transnational reach, criminal networks have entrenched themselves deeply within the political process

SUCCESS in the real world is never born of illusion. It is first bestowed by the grace of Almighty Allah and then shaped by human effort, competence, and the circumstances of history. Nations that rise do so by confronting their realities, correcting their flaws, and building institutions worthy of trust. Yet, there is a curious pattern that has repeatedly surfaced whenever India faces defeat at the hands of Pakistan, whether in war, diplomacy, or other arenas of national comparison. Instead of engaging with facts and introspection, it often seeks refuge in cinematic fantasies, using films and popular culture to manufacture narratives aimed at denigrating Pakistan. This time, their target through films is the Lyari constituency of Karachi. Propaganda, however, loses its potency when confronted with documented truth. A serious examination of India's own internal challenges, particularly the use of crime-related resources in its electoral politics, tells a far more sobering story—one supported not by rhetoric, but by India's own official reports, courts, and watchdog institutions.

The nexus between crime and politics in India is neither speculative nor incidental; it is systemic and long acknowledged. From localized strongmen to sophisticated syndicates with transnational reach, criminal networks have entrenched themselves deeply within the political process. Their involvement ranges from financing election campaigns to enforcing electoral outcomes and securing post-election rewards. The most authoritative exposure of this phenomenon came through the Vohra Committee Report of 1993, an official document commissioned by the Government of India. Drawing upon intelligence from the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Intelligence Bureau, RAW, and revenue enforcement agencies, the report warned of a “close nexus” between criminal gangs, politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen. It documented how organized crime syndicates, sustained by immense financial and muscle power derived from smuggling, narcotics, real estate, and black money, were operating with near impunity due to political patronage, institutional weaknesses, corruption, and poor inter-agency coordination. The report went further, cautioning that these syndicates were

evolving into parallel power structures and recommended the creation of a highly secret, centralized nodal mechanism under the Ministry of Home Affairs to dismantle this dangerous convergence. Historically, criminal elements played a direct role in elections through intimidation, booth capturing, and violence. While the introduction of Electronic Voting Machines and the deployment of central police forces have reduced overt coercion, subtler forms of pressure persist. Threats before polling day, manipulation of local influence, and control through fear or patronage continue to shape electoral outcomes. In many regions, particularly in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the phenomenon of the “Bahubali” politician—an individual who commands votes through muscle, money, caste allegiance, or coercion—remains deeply entrenched. Elections in India are enormously expensive, and this financial burden fuels the reliance on illicit capital. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADRs), the most credible civil society organization tracking electoral integrity, has consistently reported that a significant portion of election expenditure is unaccounted black money. Criminal networks are a major source of this funding, which is used for rallies, inducements, and direct cash distribution to voters. In Punjab and the north-western belt, reports by the Punjab State Narcotics Control Bureau and assessments by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime have highlighted the use of drug trafficking money to fund elections. Allegations of collusion between politicians and narcotics cartels, seeking policy protection and immunity from crackdowns, have been repeatedly raised in official and media investigations. The investment of the underworld in politics is not charitable; it is transactional. Once a candidate wins, repayment comes in the form of lucrative public contracts, protection from law enforcement, manipulation of investigations, and the strategic transfer of officials. This quid pro quo lies at the heart of the criminalization of politics. ADR's empirical findings are stark. Its 2024 analysis of sitting Lok Sabha members revealed that 19 percent had declared serious criminal cases, including charges of murder, attempt to murder, rape, and crimes against women. Earlier, its 2022 study of state assemblies showed that in some states, such as Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, over

30 percent of legislators faced serious criminal charges. India's own institutions have repeatedly sounded the alarm. The Election Commission of India has, through multiple communications to the Law Ministry—widely reported in leading newspapers such as The Hindu—sought enhanced powers to curb criminalization, including the authority to bar candidates accused of serious offences and to audit political party finances. The judiciary, too, has intervened. In Public Interest Foundation versus Union of India (2014), the Supreme Court directed that trials against sitting MPs and MLAs be conducted on a day-to-day basis and concluded within a year. In 2020, the Court again expressed deep anguish over Parliament's failure to legislate against this menace. Specific regional cases further illuminate the depth of the problem. In Mumbai, figures associated with the underworld, such as Arun Gawli, entered electoral politics, a linkage examined by the Justice S.N. Variava Commission. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, land and drug mafias have repeatedly surfaced in election reports. In the North-East, insurgent groups and smugglers have influenced polls through funding and intimidation, while in Punjab, The Special Task Force (STF) and Narcotics Control Bureau reports have documented the arrest of political workers linked to the drug trade during election periods.

This nexus persists due to weak party accountability, voter dependency in areas with fragile state institutions, a slow judicial process that allows accused individuals to contest elections for years, and opaque campaign finance mechanisms. While measures by the Election Commission, Supreme Court mandates on disclosure, and the use of the Right to Information Act have increased transparency, they have not dismantled the core structure of money, muscle, and patronage.

These are not allegations made by adversaries, nor narratives crafted in studios. They are findings recorded in India's own official reports, courts, and democratic institutions. Nations are judged not by the stories they tell about others, but by the truths they confront within themselves. Reality, unlike fiction, does not bend to propaganda, and history ultimately records facts, not fantasies.

Briefs

Pak shifts focus from aid to trade

FROM PAGE 01

achieved through a coordinated approach combining disciplined monetary and fiscal policies with an ambitious structural reform agenda. Reforms are being implemented across key areas including taxation, energy, state-owned enterprises, public financial management, and privatization, aimed at consolidating stability and laying the foundation for sustainable growth. On taxation, Senator Aurangzeb noted significant progress in improving Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio, which stood at 8.8 percent at the start of the reform program. During the last fiscal year, it increased to 10.3 percent, with a clear path towards 11 percent. He explained that the government's objective is to reach a level of tax collection that ensures fiscal sustainability over the medium to long term. This is being pursued through widening the tax base by bringing previously undertaxed but economically significant sectors such as real estate, agriculture, and wholesale and retail trade into the formal net, alongside deepening compliance by reducing leakages through production monitoring systems and AI-enabled technologies. Simultaneously, the tax administration is being transformed through reforms in people, processes, and technology.

Gunmen in Beach shooting...

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According to reports, Sajid Akram arrived in Australia in 1998 on a student visa, which was later converted into a partner visa in 2001 and subsequently into resident return visas. He held a valid firearms licence for recreational hunting and was an active member of a gun club. Naveed Akram, an Australian-born citizen, first came to the attention of authorities in October 2019. However, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said at the time an assessment concluded there was "no indication of any ongoing threat or risk of him engaging in violence." The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported that Naveed Akram had been examined over alleged close ties to a Sydney-based Islamic State-linked terrorism cell. ABC further reported that counter-terrorism police believe both gunmen had pledged allegiance to the IS terrorist group, a claim now forming a central part of the investigation.

PM directs to expedite privatiz...

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companies IESCO, FESCO and GEPCO and in this regard Expression of Interest (EoIs) will be published soon. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif instructed to complete the relevant development projects on priority to further improve the power distribution system of the country. To align the electricity system with modern requirements, the prime minister directed to initiate work on a Battery Energy Storage System through public-private partnerships and involvement of the private sector.

SBP slashes policy rate by 50 bps

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reduction in interest rates to help them stay competitive globally. The committee attributed the developments to its decision to ensure policy rate remained "adequately positive to stabilise inflation within the target range of 5-7% over the medium term and contribute towards sustainable economic growth". However, the MPC emphasised the need for continuing the coordinated and prudent monetary and fiscal policies, and undertaking structural reforms, to put the economy on a durable and higher growth trajectory.

Off-field differences add to Pakistan hockey's on-field misery

Sources within the federation revealed that Tahir Zaman was unhappy with the PHF's decision to appoint Anjum Saeed as the team manager. The relationship between the head coach and the manager reportedly remained strained throughout the tour, with frequent disagreements particularly over team selection and operational matters

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's poor performance in the FIH Pro League matches played in Argentina has once again exposed the deep-rooted problems plaguing the country's hockey system. While the team failed to register a single victory, the outcome was largely expected given Pakistan's low world ranking and limited exposure at the highest level of international hockey. Ranked 14th in the world, Pakistan entered the Pro League not through direct qualification but after New Zealand declined participation. Against elite, well-prepared teams, Pakistan's task was always going to be difficult. However, beyond technical gaps and lack of depth, internal issues within the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) further compounded the team's struggles and negatively affected player morale. One of the major controversies during the tour was the premature return of head coach Tahir Zaman to Pakistan midway through the competition. His departure triggered unnecessary speculation and confusion within hockey circles. Officially, Tahir Zaman cited his daughter's wedding, scheduled for December 20 and planned well in advance, as the reason for his return. However, insiders suggest that the situation was far more complex. Sources within the federation revealed that Tahir Zaman was unhappy with the PHF's decision to appoint Anjum Saeed as the team manager. The relationship between the head coach and the manager reportedly remained strained throughout the tour, with frequent disagreements particularly over team selection and operational matters. These repeated clashes eventually culminated in Tahir Zaman's decision to leave the team, further destabilizing an already fragile setup. Such internal grouping and lack of unity at the top have long been cited as key reasons behind Pakistan



hockey's consistent decline. Players, already under pressure due to tough opposition and limited resources, were further demoralized by off-field disputes. In modern international hockey, where preparation, planning, and cohesion are critical, such instability inevitably reflects in on-field performances. From a purely technical standpoint, Pakistan struggled across departments during the Argentina fixtures, but the most alarming

weakness was in goalkeeping. The goalkeeping unit was badly exposed, with no keeper demonstrating consistency or composure at a world-class level. In contemporary hockey, goalkeepers are the backbone of a team, often deciding matches through crucial saves. Weak goalkeeping not only results in goals conceded but also undermines the confidence of defenders and midfielders, affecting the overall team structure. Pakistan now faces an urgent need to identify, groom, and invest in quality goalkeepers capable of competing at the international level. Without addressing this critical position, progress will remain limited regardless of improvements elsewhere. Despite the dismal results, it would be unfair to label the players as incapable. The current squad is largely underdone compared to other Pro League teams, lacking regular high-intensity international exposure. Playing against the world's best, even in defeat, provides invaluable experience something Pakistan hockey has been deprived of for years. While Pakistan may continue to struggle in the remaining Pro League matches and may not secure victories, participation itself holds long-term value. Exposure to top-level competition can help players develop confidence, tactical awareness, and mental toughness. Such experiences, if supported by stability and proper planning, can eventually translate into improved performances. However, exposure alone is not enough. Without resolving administrative conflicts, ensuring professional management, and establishing a unified vision, Pakistan hockey will continue to underperform. The Pro League campaign should serve as a wake-up call for the PHF: structural reform, merit-based decisions, and harmony between officials and coaches are as important as talent development. Pakistan hockey's revival will not come overnight. But acknowledging internal failures, investing in key positions like goalkeeping, and creating a stable, professional environment are essential first steps toward reclaiming lost glory.

Rodrygo's winner lifts Real Madrid past Alaves to end losing streak

Rodrygo Nets Late Winner as Real Madrid Beat Alaves 2-1, End Slump, Stay Within Four Points of LaLiga Leaders Barcelona After Mbappe's Stunning Opener in Tough Away Clash

VITORIA-GASTEIZ: Rodrygo secured Real Madrid a crucial 2-1 victory over Deportivo Alaves on Sunday in LaLiga, ending a dismal run of form and keeping them within four points of leaders Barcelona. Real, under pressure after two straight losses in all competitions, broke the deadlock through Kylian Mbappe's stunning first-half strike. However, a

resilient Alaves levelled in the 68th minute through Carlos Vicente. The visitors restored their lead eight minutes later, courtesy of a counter-attack led by Vinicius Jr, whose assist was converted by Rodrygo. The victory keeps Real second in the standings on 39 points, four adrift of Barcelona, while Alaves are 12th on 18 points. The narrow

triumph in the Basque Country provided manager Xabi Alonso with much-needed breathing space after a run of two wins from their previous eight matches across all competitions. Sunday's victory demonstrated Real's resilience and ongoing weaknesses. Despite taking a 24th-minute lead through Mbappe's spectacular strike, they found themselves out-

played by an Alaves side roared on by a sold-out Mendizorrotza stadium. Mbappe had opened the scoring in trademark fashion after Jude Bellingham threaded a long pass to the French forward, who ran down the left channel before cutting inside and unleashing a bullet strike into the top corner from the edge of the box. Despite Real's early lead, Alaves grew dominant as the first half progressed. The hosts pressured Real's makeshift defense, which featured 19-year-old academy graduate Victor Valdenpenas in his senior debut at left back. Alaves' pressure was eventually rewarded in the 68th minute when substitute Vicente, introduced moments earlier, latched onto Antonio Blanco's long ball and surged past Real's high defensive line to finish into the top corner. Initially flagged offside, Vicente's goal was awarded after a VAR review confirmed the forward had timed his run perfectly. – Agencies



PCB Chairman announces HBL PSL 11 window

The HBL PSL continues to attract strong int'l interest, reflecting the league's growing commercial strength, expanding global footprint and long-term growth potential

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of PCB Syed Mohsin Naqvi has announced the official window for the 11th edition of the HBL Pakistan Super League (HBL PSL). The HBL PSL 11 is scheduled to take place from March 26 to May 3, 2026, said a press release. The confirmation of the HBL PSL 11 window marks a significant milestone as preparations intensify for the league's next phase of expansion. The Pakistan Cricket Board will also host the New Teams Auction on 8 January, 2026 at the Islamabad Convention Centre, where the rights for two new HBL PSL franchises will be offered. The auction will be broadcasted, providing transparency and global visibility to prospective investors and cricket fans worldwide. The HBL PSL continues to attract strong international interest, reflecting the league's growing commercial strength, expanding global footprint and long-term growth potential. Recent engagements with global stakeholders have underlined confidence in the league's business model and its positioning among the world's leading T20 competitions. Recognised for its high-quality cricket, competitive balance and role in developing elite international talent, the HBL PSL has firmly established itself as a premier global T20 league. – APP

ADB-Funded Initiative to enhance power reliability

LAHORE: The National Grid Company of Pakistan (NGC) today commissioned the 500kV Lahore North Grid Station, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's energy sector development. With an investment of Rs. 20.7 billion, financed by Asian Development Bank under Multi Tranche Financing Facility, this strategic initiative represents one of the most substantial additions to Punjab's power transmission infrastructure in recent years. The newly operational grid station is equipped with transformation capacity of 3,000 MVA at 500/220kV level and 750 MVA at the 220/132kV level. It includes 113 km of 500kV and 45 km of 220kV transmission lines, connecting critical grid stations and creating an integrated network. The commissioning of Lahore North Grid Station will directly address the electricity requirements of diverse consumer segments across the region, benefiting agricultural, commercial, industrial and domestic consumers. The grid station delivers multiple strategic advantages to Pakistan's power sector by facilitating efficient power evacuation from major generation sources including coal-fired power plants under the CPEC project, ensuring optimal utilization of ±660kV Lahore-Matiari (HVDC) Transmission Line. It will also reduce the burden on existing substations in Lahore, Gujranwala and surrounding areas. The voltage profile improve-

ments will translate into more efficient power delivery and reduced losses, benefiting end consumers through improved service quality. Managing Director NGC, Engr. Altaf Hussain Malik expressed his appreciation to the NGC teams upon completion of the project. He commended the collective efforts, professionalism and dedication of all officers, engineers and staff involved in the successful execution of this project. The project has been executed under the guidance of Engr. Rashid A. Bhutto, Deputy Managing Director (Asset Development & Management) and Engr. Shahid Nazir, General Manager (Project Delivery) North. The project team included Engr. Asghar Mujtaba Khan, Chief Engineer (Project Delivery) North, Engr. Muhammad Usman Warraich, Project Director (Project Delivery), Engr. Umar Dewan, Executive Engineer (Project Delivery) and Engr. Farooq Jehangir, Project Manager (PIU) Lahore North. This strategic achievement underscores NGC's vision of building a resilient, efficient and future-ready power transmission network capable of supporting Pakistan's economic aspirations. By strengthening the transmission backbone serving one of the country's most economically vibrant regions, Lahore North Grid Station represents a cornerstone in ensuring energy security and supporting sustainable development. – DNA

Witnesses tell of courage, panic in wake of Bondi Beach shootings

Confronting tales of heroism and terror trickled out in the hours following Australia's deadliest mass shooting in almost 30 years

SYDNEY: A brave few dashed towards Australia's Bondi Beach as a mass shooting unfolded on Sunday night, wading through fleeing crowds to rescue children, treat the injured and confront the gunmen. A father-and-son duo opened fire as crowds thronged Australia's famous surf beach for a yearly Jewish celebration on a balmy summer evening, killing 15 people and wounding dozens more. Confronting tales of heroism and terror trickled out in the hours following Australia's deadliest mass shooting in almost 30 years. A team of off-duty lifeguards sprinted across the sand to drag children to safety. "The team ran out under fire

to try and clear children from the playground while the gunmen were firing," said Steven Pearce from Surf Life Saving New South Wales. "They were able to get the children inside." He told AFP. "The other lifesavers went out and started trying to do CPR on the shot victims, and tried to drag as many inside as they could." Bleeding victims were carried across the beach atop surfboards turned into makeshift stretchers. A pregnant woman went into labour after taking refuge in the surf club's headquarters, Pearce said, and was later rushed to hospital. "We have used every bandage in the surf clubs," said Pearce. "Teams just ran out of

everything." Fruit seller Ahmed Al Ahmed, 43, was lauded as the man who disarmed one of the attackers. Footage showed a t-shirt clad man – later identified as Ahmed by local media – sneaking up on one of the gunmen. He briefly tussles with the shooter before knocking him to the ground and wrestling away the weapon. "It's been a very, very brave person, actually, who went and attacked frontally one of the shooters, and saved a lot of lives," US President Donald Trump said of Ahmed. Churches, bars and restaurants threw open their doors to shelter the panicked crowds sprinting away from the beach. Frenchman Alban Baton, 23, hid for sever-

al hours with other customers in the cool room of a Bondi Beach grocery store. "It was very fast," he told AFP. "One girl said: 'There is one guy with a gun'. And from this moment, everybody ran, and it was like survival instinct, so we all run in the cool room," he said. "Minute after minutes, we were starting to realise what was happening." Mass shootings have been rare in Australia since a lone gunman killed 35 people in the tourist town of Port Arthur in 1996. The so-called Port Arthur massacre led to sweeping reforms that would come to be lauded around the world as a gold standard for gun safety. – Agencies

Forces kill 7 terrorists, soldier martyred

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However, during fire exchange, brave son of soil Naik Yasir Khan (age: 34 years, resident of District Mardan) having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from Indian sponsored killed khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Indian-sponsored kharji found in the area, as the relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azm-e-Istehkam" (as approved by the Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

Pakistan condemns attack...

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Abyei (UNISFA), and injuries to several others. "Pakistan expresses its deepest condolences to the Government and people of Bangladesh on the loss of these precious lives, and stands in solidarity with the bereaved families in this tragic hour," Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said in a statement. He said that the UN peacekeepers remained at the forefront of international efforts to prevent conflict, protect civilians, and support peace under the UN flag. "We pay homage to the ultimate sacrifice made by these Blue Helmets in the line of duty for peace and stability in the region. Pakistan calls for a swift investigation to identify the perpetrators of this cowardly attack and to hold those responsible accountable," he added. The spokesperson reiterated that Pakistan would continue to work closely with members of the UN Security Council and the international community to ensure the safety and security of all UN peacekeepers.

'PTI hired foreign firms to...

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are being operated from foreign countries," said the minister while addressing the media in Islamabad. Chaudhry also showed a video, saying all evidence in the video was taken from "documents provided by X" (formerly Twitter). Briefing on the entire mechanism of the operation, he said, "The companies were hired through auction and paid via foreign funding [by PTI]. These companies then create social media accounts, which are mostly operated outside Pakistan in countries that are considered our enemies. The account users [handlers who operate the accounts] are neither PTI members nor people from Pakistan."

Briefs

Neighbors of alleged Bondi gunmen shocked by deadly rampage

SYDNEY: Like many people in Sydney, Glenn Nelson spent his Sunday evening watching television coverage of a deadly shooting on the city's iconic Bondi Beach. But stepping onto his front porch, flanked by neatly trimmed box hedges, he saw armed police cordoning off the street before raiding the house opposite — home of the two suspects who are alleged to have killed 15 people in Australia's worst mass shooting in decades. "I thought, 'Okay, I'll catch the rest in the morning,' the next thing, the drama is out the front door," he said in an interview on Monday, shortly after mowing his lawn. Nelson and other neighbors said the family living across the street kept to themselves, but seemed like any other in the suburb of Bonnyrigg, a working-class, well-kept enclave with an ethnically diverse population around 36 km (22 miles) by road from Sydney's central business district. Local media named the two suspected gunmen as father and son Sajid and Naveed Akram.—APP

France demands EU-Mercosur trade pact signing be put off

PARIS, France: France on Sunday urged the European Union to postpone the deadlines set for signing a free trade agreement with South American bloc Mercosur, rejecting the deal in its current form. In a statement from Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu's office, Paris said the conditions were not in place for EU member states to vote on the agreement. "France asks that the deadlines be pushed back to continue work on getting the legitimate measures of protection for our European agriculture," said the statement. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is due in Brazil on Monday for talks to finalize the landmark pact with the Mercosur bloc, which includes Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. But Brussels first has to get the approval of the EU member states over the coming week. "Given a Mercosur summit is announced for December 20 (Saturday), it is clear in this context that the conditions have not been met for any vote (by states) on authorizing the signing of the agreement," said the statement from Paris. Earlier Sunday, in an interview published in the German financial daily Handelsblatt, France's Finance Minister Roland Lescure made France's objections clear. "As it stands, the treaty is simply not acceptable," he said.—APP

9 African migrants died in freezing temperatures

CASABLANCA, Morocco: Exposure to freezing temperatures near Morocco's border with Algeria killed nine African migrants, a tragedy that rights groups in the North African country called deeply concerning and a violation of the right to freedom of movement. The bodies of seven men and two women were found in Ras Asfour, a remote mountainous Moroccan area known for its plunging temperatures in winter, the Moroccan Association of Human Rights said Saturday in a statement. "They died from extreme cold, which their exhausted bodies could not withstand," it said. One of the migrants was from Guinea, the group said. The rest were from various countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa, though specific information about their identities remains unknown. Morocco's Interior Ministry did not immediately respond to questions about the individuals who died. Every year, thousands of migrants seeking better living conditions attempt to crossing illegal from North Africa to Europe, including from Morocco to Spain. Some aim for Ceuta and Melilla — two tiny Spanish enclaves in North Africa — by scaling border fences or swimming. Others attempt to reach Spain's Canary Islands, taking a longer route through the Atlantic Ocean.—APP

Pak, ADB partnership to boost private sector growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a comprehensive meeting today with a high-level delegation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) led by Ms. Emma Fan, Country Director, ADB, and Ms. Leah Gutierrez, Director General for Central and West Asia Department, along with senior officials from the local ADB team. The meeting was held at the Finance Division and focused on strengthening strategic cooperation, enhancing development impact, and accelerating reform implementation in Pakistan. Welcoming the ADB delegation, the Finance Minister expressed deep appreciation for ADB's longstanding and timely support to Pakistan, particularly in the areas of budgetary assistance, climate resilience, social sector development, and structural reforms. He underscored the importance of moving towards an impact-led and KPI-driven development partnership, emphasizing that development outcomes, rather than approvals alone, must remain the central measure of success. The Finance Minister highlighted the Government's resolve to improve project readiness and implementation, noting that delays in execution had historically diluted development impact, especially in social sectors and climate-related initiatives. The meeting reviewed Pakistan's macroeconomic stabilization efforts and



reform trajectory under the IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The Finance Minister noted that recent external validations, including improved credit ratings, successful IMF reviews, and the approval of the Climate Resilience Facility, reflected confidence in Pakistan's reform agenda. He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to structural reforms, including taxation, energy sector reforms, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), privatization, and public financial management. Senator Aurangzeb briefed the delegation on recent progress, including

the privatization of a small bank, renewed interest in strategic transactions, and ongoing work on energy sector restructuring and distribution companies. He emphasized that successful and visible transactions were critical to building momentum and credibility in the privatization process. The Finance Minister also highlighted encouraging trends in exports and services, particularly IT services, growth in remittances, and a manageable current account deficit, while stressing the importance of sustaining growth in a balanced and

sustainable manner. He reiterated the Government's commitment to trade liberalization and competitiveness, despite short-term resistance from protected sectors. Speaking on behalf of ADB, Ms. Emma Fan thanked the Finance Minister and his team for their strong collaboration and facilitation, including the successful visit of the ADB President to Pakistan. She reaffirmed ADB's focus on development results, noting that faster project readiness and streamlined processes were essential for timely disbursements and tangible outcomes. She

emphasized ADB's willingness to support reforms aimed at improving implementation efficiency and strengthening institutional capacity. ADB representatives expressed appreciation for Pakistan's reform progress under the IMF program and confirmed ADB's readiness to provide further budget support aligned with the EFF. They outlined future areas of engagement, including insurance sector reforms, public-private partnerships, pension reforms, and continued support for climate resilience and social sector development.

EU-Mercosur trade deal faces bumpy ride to finish line

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: Brussels is headed for a showdown this week over the European Union's free-trade deal with South American bloc Mercosur, after France launched a last-ditch effort to derail the signing of the landmark accord. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen is due in Brazil on Saturday to sign the agreement, which, 20 years in the making, would create the world's biggest free-trade area. First though she needs to get approval from the EU's member states — despite frontal opposition from key power France which warned Sunday the conditions were not in place for a vote. President Emmanuel Macron's office said he had reached out to von der Leyen to personally request a delay. But the commission, which steers trade policy for the EU, reiterated Monday it still expects the deal to be signed by the end of the year. "Signing the deal now is a matter of crucial importance — economically, diplomatically and geopolitically," said a spokesman for the EU's executive. Wrangling is set to go down to the wire, with up to 10,000 farmers planning to descend on the Belgian capital to vent their anger at the deal during a leaders' summit Thursday and Friday. The deal will allow the EU to export more vehicles, machinery, wines and spirits to Latin America, while facilitating the entry of South American beef, sugar, rice, honey and soybeans into Europe. Fearing negative fallout for its agricultural sector — a concern shared by farmers in Poland and elsewhere — France has been clamouring for robust safeguard clauses, tighter import controls and more stringent standards for Mercosur producers. Paris faces an uphill battle to block the treaty, which only needs support from a weighted majority of EU countries to pass. Powerhouse Germany, Spain and the Nordic countries are strong backers of the pact, eager to boost exports as Europe grapples with Chinese competition and US tariffs. A source in the European Commission said the time to close the deal was "now or never". But disagreements in a key week when the 27-nation bloc also has to decide on the divisive issue of using frozen Russian assets to aid Ukraine are leaving some uneasy. "If there is no compromise this week, we risk a serious European crisis. It will be a major failure for the commission, for Germany and for Spain," said one European diplomat. A time for the member state vote is still to be determined. Complicating matters, the European Parliament is to vote Tuesday on "safeguard" measures aimed at reassuring farmers — and placating France. EU states have already approved the safeguard clause in question, but lawmakers may decide to strengthen it further. In another gesture aimed at Paris, the commission last week announced tighter checks on farm imports to ensure they meet EU standards, and pledged to update rules on pesticide residues to prevent banned substances entering via imports. Von der Leyen intends to join the leaders of Mercosur members Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay in Foz do Iguaçu, home of the famed Iguacu waterfalls, for the signing. Even if she seals the deal in time to fly there, the battle will not be over.—DNA

Iraq election result ratified by Supreme Federal Court

BAGHDAD: The result of last month's parliamentary elections in Iraq was ratified by the Supreme Federal Court on Sunday, confirming that the party of caretaker Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani won the largest number of seats — but not enough to assure him a second term. The court confirmed that the voting process met all constitutional and legal requirements and contained no irregularities that would affect its validity. The Independent High Electoral Commission submitted the final results of the legislative elections to the Supreme Federal Court on Monday for official certification after resolving 853 complaints submitted regarding the election results. Al-Sudani's Reconstruction and Development Coalition won 46 seats in the 329-seat parliament. However, in past elections in Iraq, the bloc that won the most seats has often been unable to impose its preferred candidate. The coalition led by former Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki won 29 seats, the Sadigoun Bloc, which is led by the leader of the Asaib Ahl Al-Haq militia, Qais Al-Khazali, won 28 seats, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by Masoud Barzani, one of the two main Kurdish parties in the country, won 27 seats. The Taqaddum (Progress) party of ousted former Parliament Speaker Mohammed Al-Halbousi also won 27 seats, setting the stage for a contest over the speaker's role. Overall, Shiite alliances and lists secured 187 seats, Sunni groups 77 seats, Kurdish groups 56 seats, and nine seats reserved for minority groups. Al-Sudani came to power in 2022 with the backing of the Coordination Framework, a coalition of Iran-backed Shiite parties, but it is unclear whether the alliance will support him again.—APP

Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan: Central Asian formula for global peace

ASHGABAT: The participation and address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, at the international forum dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality and the International Day of Neutrality, held in Ashgabat, clearly demonstrated the depth of the strategic partnership between the two brotherly states, as well as their shared views on strengthening peace and stability in regional and global politics. The participation of several heads of state in the forum confirmed the event's high international significance. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev sincerely congratulated Turkmenistan on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of permanent neutrality, noting that this landmark date demonstrates Turkmenistan's unwavering commitment to the development of peaceful, trust-based, friendly, and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries. The Head of State emphasized that the policy of neutrality, which has become an integral part of the modern identity of the Turkmen people, is rooted in their deep historical traditions and noble qualities, such as generosity, tolerance, and good neighborliness. In this regard, Uzbekistan fully supported Turkmenistan's initiative to establish a University of Peace and Neutrality in cooperation with the United Nations. The speech emphasized that openness to the world, mutual respect, and a commitment to dialogue are fundamental values for the New Uzbekistan. The Samarkand Initiative, put forward as an expression of solidarity for common security and prosperity, became a manifestation of political will to engage in dialogue with all parties striving for peace, harmony, and sustainable development. During Uzbekistan's upcoming chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement, our country sets the following key objectives as its priorities: promoting a global movement for a culture of peace and nonviolence, strengthening trust among states through political dialogue, and fostering an atmosphere of tolerance, harmony, and solidarity worldwide. It is also planned to designate 2027 the Year of Preventive Diplomacy to support efforts to resolve conflicts in the interests of future generations, within the framework of which an appropriate program of activities will be adopted. It was noted that the principles of mutual trust, respect, and solidarity also underpin the policy aimed at transforming Central Asia into a space of peace, cooperation, and good neighborliness. The seventh Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of the region, held in Tashkent last month, once again demonstrated our readiness to strengthen unity, undertake joint actions to ensure peace and stability, and expand multilateral economic cooperation. In this context, it was emphasized that Turkmenistan's constructive, peace-oriented policy is a key factor in ensuring stability and development in Central Asia. The Head of State underscored the importance of developing humanitarian cooperation based on mutual respect, trust, and solidarity, and also proposed holding a joint international humanitarian forum, "Dialogue of Cultures", in Tashkent next year and launching the regional program "Youth for Peace and Trust".—DNA

Why US-Syrian coordination is more important than ever

LONDON: A deadly terrorist attack that targeted a joint patrol of Syrian security forces and US troops near the ancient city of Palmyra has drawn strong condemnation across the Arab world, while also highlighting the importance and potential of emerging cooperation between Damascus and Washington Saturday's attack in Palmyra, in Syria's central Homs countryside, struck a joint Syrian-US patrol during a field tour of the area. The city, home to UNESCO-listed ruins, was occupied by Daesh during two periods between 2015 and 2017, marked by systematic cultural destruction, public executions and severe repression of civilians. According to official accounts, the assailant opened fire on the patrol, killing two US soldiers and a civilian interpreter, and wounding three US troops and two Syrian security personnel. US Central Command said the attacker was an alleged Daesh militant who was subsequently killed. In a post on the social-media platform X, Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad Al-Shaibani condemned the attack, calling it a "terrorist" assault on a joint counterterrorism patrol. He extended condolences to the families of the victims and to the US government and people, and wished the injured a swift recovery. On Sunday, Syria's Interior Ministry said the attacker was a member of the security forces who had been identified for dismissal over extremist views. Nouredine Al-Baba, a ministry spokesperson, said the individual had served for more than 10 months, had been posted to several

cities, and was due to be fired for holding "extremist Islamist ideas." US President Donald Trump, meanwhile, warned of "very serious retaliation," describing the incident as a Daesh attack in a part of Syria "not fully controlled" by Damascus. He added that Syria's interim president, Ahmad Al-Sharaa, was "extremely angry and disturbed" by the assault. For Ghassan Ibrahim, a Syria expert and founder of the Global Arab Network, the attack exposes long-standing structural problems rather than a sudden failure. "These problems are not new; what is happening now is that we are uncovering them," he told Arab News. He said extremism and the resurgence of Daesh were rooted in the legacy of the deposed regime of Bashar Assad, compounded by years of international disengagement and mismanagement of the Syrian conflict. "Daesh, extremism and similar threats are the direct result of that failure," he said, adding that the current moment should be used to confront, rather than evade, these realities. This picture taken on May 9, 2022 shows a view of the ruins of Syria's Roman-era ancient city of Palmyra after it was destroyed by Daesh militants in 2015. On December 13, 2025, a joint Syrian-US patrol was making a field tour of the area when an extremist member of the Syrian armed forces fired at them. (AFP) Ibrahim argued that the Palmyra incident must be understood in the context of a rapidly rebuilt security apparatus. The Syrian government, he said, has been working under in-

terence pressure to reconstruct its army and internal security forces after years of war. "What happened was largely a consequence of the urgency of that rebuilding process," he said. Crucially, he added, the incident could ultimately strengthen cooperation with Washington. Syrian officials, through ongoing contacts with US counterparts, understand that despite the tragedy, the attack could serve as a catalyst for deeper coordination. "The Americans understand this does not point to a systemic security gap," Ibrahim said. "Incidents like this can occur in any army, especially one that is barely a year old." Both Ibrahim and Ibrahim Hamidi, editor-in-chief of the Arabic magazine Al-Majalla, stressed that the Palmyra attack underscores the inseparable link between security and development. Central Syria, particularly the vast and sparsely populated areas around Palmyra stretching toward the Euphrates, remains vulnerable to Daesh remnants, Ibrahim said. Many militants, he noted, escaped from prisons or camps once controlled by Kurdish-led forces in the northeast, sometimes through bribery, and now operate with relative freedom. "Eliminating Daesh is essential for sustainable development," Ibrahim said. "Without security, development cannot be sustained." He added that this dual imperative explains Syria's decision to join the international coalition against Daesh — a strategy aimed at restoring stability while laying the groundwork for long-term recovery.—APP

Seven killed in drone strike on Sudan hospital

PORT SUDAN: A drone strike Sunday on an army hospital in the besieged southern Sudan city of Dilling left "seven civilians dead and 12 injured," a health worker at the facility told AFP. The victims included patients and their companions, the medic said on condition of anonymity, explaining that the army hospital "serves the residents of the city and its surroundings, in addition to military personnel." Dilling, in the flashpoint state of South Kordofan, is controlled by the Sudanese army but has been under siege by rival paramilitary forces. Since April 2023, the army has been at war with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), who control swathes of the greater Kordofan region along with their allies, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) faction led by Abdelaziz Al-Hilu. Sunday's strike comes a day after a drone strike on a United Nations peacekeeping base killed six Bangladeshi troops in the similarly besieged South Kordofan state capital of Kadugli, some 120 kilometers (75 miles) south of Dilling. According to the UN, civilians in Dilling are suffering famine conditions, but a lack of access to data has prevented an official declaration. Across the country, the war has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced 12 million and created the world's largest hunger and displacement crises.—APP

Bangladesh arrests journalist for 'anti-state activities'

DHAKA: Bangladesh police on Monday said they had arrested a veteran journalist for alleged "anti-state activities," accused of promoting the banned party of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina. The arrest, which comes ahead of key elections in February, the first vote since the student-led uprising last year that overthrew the autocratic government of Hasina and her Awami League, sparked concerns from a key rights group. Anis Alamgir was arrested under the Anti-Terrorism Act along with three others, accused of spreading propaganda in talk shows and social media posts, and conspiring to rehabilitate the Awami League. The interim government banned Hasina's Awami League in May under amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act — a move Human Rights Watch condemned as "draconian." "Anis Alamgir has been arrested on accusations of conspiring against the state," said Kazi Mohammad Rafiq, officer-in-charge of Uttara West police station in the capital Dhaka. Three others were named in police documents alongside Alamgir, including actress Meher Afroz Shaon. Rights organization Ain o Salish Kendra condemned the arrest. "Using a law, originally enacted to prevent terrorist activities, against freedom of expression and journalism is against the fundamental principles of a democratic state," it said in a statement.—APP

Days of Uzbek Culture open

BAKU, Dec 15 (AZ RTAC/APP) : The opening ceremony of the Days of Uzbek Culture, organized by Azerbaijan's Ministry of Culture, was held at the Heydar Aliyev Center. The event featured a concert program with artists from both countries. Guests first viewed a photo exhibition dedicated to Uzbekistan's cultural heritage, history, and modern development. Deputy Minister of Culture of Azerbaijan Farid Jafarov described the event as a vivid manifestation of mutual respect and love between the two fraternal peoples. He emphasized its significance for the entire Turkic world, noting the long-standing admiration for each other's cultures and the tradition of reciprocal culture days as a commitment to preserving shared spiritual heritage. Jafarov highlighted the deep historical, cultural, and spiritual ties uniting Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan as integral parts of the unique Turkic world, strengthened by common roots, language family, rich heritage, and religious values.—APP

Briefs

Man falsely
linked to
Bondi Beach
shooting

NEWS DESK

SYDNEY: Indian and Afghan media outlets and social media accounts have been accused of running a coordinated propaganda campaign following the Sydney shooting, falsely alleging links between the attackers and Pakistan by circulating fake images and unverified claims. The allegations, which relied on fabricated videos and misleading data, have not been supported by any credible international source.

At least 15 people were killed and 42 others injured when Sajid Akram and his son Naveed opened fire at a Hanukkah event at Bondi Beach on Sunday evening, according to Australian police. Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke confirmed that Sajid Akram arrived in Australia on a student visa in 1998, which was converted to a partner visa in 2001, and that he had since held a resident return visa. "Sajid's son, Naveed Akram, is an Australian citizen born in 2001," he added. Amid the spread of false information, Sheikh Naveed, who is currently residing in Sydney, released a video statement after his photographs were wrongly linked to the attack on social media. He categorically denied any connection to the incident. In the video, Naveed said he has been living in Sydney since 2018, completed his higher education in Australia, and currently runs a rental business. He condemned the Bondi Beach shooting and expressed sympathy for the victims' families.

Last
nationwide
polio campaign
of 2025 begins

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The last nationwide polio campaign of 2025 began on Monday, with the aim of vaccinating 45.5 million children across the country, state-run Radio Pakistan reported. The weeklong polio drive is set to run until December 21. Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world, alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic. So far, the country has recorded 30 polio cases, with the highest number of cases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at 19. According to the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC), more than 400,000 frontline polio workers will take part in the campaign. More than 23m children will be immunised in Punjab, over 16m in Sindh, more than 7.2m in KP and over 2.6m in Balochistan. In Islamabad, the campaign aims to vaccinate over 400,000 children. In Sindh, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah inaugurated the polio campaign in Karachi by administering polio drops to children. "Over 10.6m children will be vaccinated across 30 districts and 1,345 union councils, with 80,000+ frontline workers & 21,000 cops deployed," the Sindh CM House said on X.

FIA foils
escape bid of
rape suspect

ISLAMABAD: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Immigration officials arrested a man wanted in kidnapping and rape cases while he was attempting to flee the country from Islamabad International Airport. An official told APP on Monday that the accused, identified as Ajmal Mahmood, was intercepted by FIA Immigration during clearance for an international flight. He said the suspect was trying to escape abroad through an international airline when immigration staff, acting on the stop list, took him into custody. The official said Ajmal Mahmood was wanted by Islamabad Police in cases involving kidnapping and rape, registered at Shehzad Town Police Station, and his name had already been placed on the stop list due to the seriousness of charges. — APP

Justice Jahangiri objects to
IHC CJ's inclusion in bench*"You [Justice Dogar] have also stopped me from judicial work, which has never happened before..," says judge*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court's (IHC) Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri on Monday raised objection to IHC Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar's inclusion in the bench hearing a case concerning his degree. "You [Justice Dogar] are also a judge, I am also a judge, I filed a petition against you. This is a conflict of interest [and] you cannot sit in a case against me," Justice Jahangiri said during the hearing while addressing IHC CJ Dogar. The judge's remarks came during a hearing of a petition, filed by Advocate Mian Dawood, seeking the verification of Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri's degree. The case centres on a controversy regarding Justice Jahangiri's LLB degree, which was cancelled by the University of Karachi. According to the university's notification dated September 25, the university syndicate, in its meeting on August 31, 2024, approved "Resolution No 6" in compliance with the competent authority's decision, upholding the recommendation of the Unfair Means Committee (UFM).



Expressing distrust in the IHC CJ Dogar's bench, Justice Jahangiri today said that the case should be given to another bench. Justice Jahangiri also stressed on the validity of his degree, saying that he swears by its authenticity. "The university did not say that the degree is

fake and they did not issue it," he remarked. Noting that he received the court's notice on Thursday and that too sans the petition's copy, the judge highlighted that the case was 34 years old and requested some time so that he can acquire the petition's copy.

"A 'quo warranto' (by what authority/warrant) writ is never heard by a division bench [but instead] is heard by a single bench," Justice Jahangiri remarked.

"You [Justice Dogar] have also stopped me from judicial work, which has never happened before in the judiciary's history. Even a peon is not stopped from work in this way "Even in a murder case, an individual is charged after seven days [but] you have only given three days' notice," Justice Jahangiri said, adding: "Don't do this in a quo warranto writ [case]".

In response to Justice Jegangiri's request for some time, the IHC summoned the UoK's registrar with record, and issued directives for the petition and relevant documents to be provided to the judge.

"I have to review the petition and appoint a lawyer [and] three days' notice is too little [for it]," lamented Justice Jahangiri. Meanwhile, the petitioner Mian Dawood requested the court for daily hearings, saying that a considerable time had already elapsed in the said case. "You [Justice Jahangiri] will get justice just like anyone else gets it," noted IHC CJ Justice Dogar. The court then adjourned the hearing till Thursday (December 18).

Ambassador of Qatar calls on
Defence Minister Khawaja Asif

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Qatar Ali Mubarak Ali Essa Al Khater called on Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif here on Monday. The Minister for Defence welcomed the dignitary and conveyed that Pakistan attached great value to its relations with Qatar, said a press release. "Qatar is an important country for us and has a key role to play in the region. Our

relations with Qatar are very smooth governed by mutual respect and cooperation," Khawaja said. The Minister said that both sides need to work closely to further extend their cooperation beyond the economic domain to defence, military exercises and training of personals and joint ventures. "Our military institutions are open for Qatari Armed Forces to avail maximum training facilities." The visiting dignitary acknowledged the existing scope and scale of cooperation in the field of defence between the two countries.

Minister highlights
fragmentation
of global order

RIYADH: Federal Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik has warned of a fragmenting global order and the erosion of multilateralism, calling for universal application of justice and rights, as he addressed world leaders at the 11th UNAOC Global Forum in Riyadh. The forum, held under the theme "UNAOC: Two Decades of Dialogue for Humanity", marked the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (INAOC) and brought together global leaders, policymakers, and civil society representatives. In his address, Musadik Malik reflected on the evolving global order, noting that while the world once envisioned itself as a single global village, contemporary realities point toward increasing fragmentation. He highlighted the weakening of multilateralism, the rise of conflict and war-torn regions, growing trade and tariff disputes, and declining global funding for environmental and

development priorities. He cautioned that bilateralism is increasingly giving way to unilateral actions, with serious consequences for global peace and justice. The federal minister emphasised that principles of justice and rights must be applied universally. "I am firmly committed to women's rights, minority rights, environmental rights, and children's rights" calling them fundamental and non-negotiable.

In this context, Malik raised critical questions about the selective application of these principles, drawing attention to the dire situation in Palestine and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He stressed that the rights of Palestinians and Kashmiris must be recognised and protected in line with international norms. Malik also underscored the importance of water rights, highlighting the responsibilities of upper riparian states toward lower riparian countries. He emphasised that equitable and just sharing of water resources is essential for regional stability, sustainable development, and human security. Concluding his remarks, Malik noted that the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations serves as a timely reminder of the need to recommit to dialogue, peace, harmony, and mutual respect. — Agencies

For all I know, she could be dead,
says son of Myanmar's Suu Kyi*Former leader Aung San Suu Kyi has
been in detention since 2021 coup*

NEWS DESK

YANGOON: With her health failing and an information vacuum around Myanmar's detained former leader Aung San Suu Kyi, her son worries that he may not even know if she passed away. Kim Aris told Reuters he has not heard from his 80-year-old mother in years, and has received only sporadic, secondhand details about her

heart, bone and gum problems since a 2021 military coup that deposed her government. And while he rejects attempts by Myanmar's junta to hold elections later this month, dismissed by many foreign governments as a sham aimed at legitimising military rule, he says it could provide an opening to ease his mother's plight.

"She's got ongoing health issues. Nobody has seen her in over two years. She hasn't been allowed contact with her legal team, never mind her family," he said in an interview in Tokyo. "For all I know, she could be dead already."

"I imagine (Myanmar junta leader) Min Aung Hlaing has his own agenda when it comes to my mother. If he does want to use her to try and appease the general population before or after the elections by either releasing her or moving her to house arrest, then at least that would be something," he added. A Myanmar junta spokesman did not respond to calls seeking comment.

Myanmar's military has a history of releasing prisoners to mark holidays or important events.

Nobel Peace Laureate Suu Kyi was freed in 2010 days after an election, ending a previous long period of detention largely spent at her colonial-style family home on Yangon's Inya Lake. She went on to become Myanmar's de-facto leader after elections in 2015, the first openly contested vote in a quarter century, though her international image was later tarnished by accusations of genocide committed against her country's Muslim Rohingya minority.

US 'strongly
condemns'
deadly attack
on Jewish
festival in
Sydney

WASHINGTON: The United States "strongly condemns the terrorist attack" that left over a dozen people dead at a Hanukkah event in Sydney, Australia, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday.

"Antisemitism has no place in this world. Our prayers are for the victims of this horrific attack, the Jewish community, and the people of Australia," Rubio said in a post on X. The State Department later said the Rubio held a call with Australian counterpart Penny Wong "to discuss the antisemitic terrorist attack at Sydney's Bondi Beach."

"We stand in solidarity with the Jewish community and with the Australian people as we pray for the victims and their families," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said in a readout of the call. US President Donald Trump also briefly mentioned the shooting during remarks at a White House Christmas event, calling it a "terrible attack... an antisemitic attack, obviously." — APP

President
Zardari
extends
greetings
to Bahrain

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan, extended his warm congratulations to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the government and the brotherly people of the Kingdom of Bahrain on their National Day, being celebrated on December 16.

"Pakistan takes pride in its strong and steady ties with Bahrain. Our relationship is rooted in mutual respect, shared cultural links and a sense of brotherhood built over many decades. We value our cooperation across various fields and our close coordination at regional and international forums," President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying. The president further said that Pakistan remained committed to strengthening these ties through regular engagement and deeper people to people contact.



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