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Briefs

Air India 777 aircraft turns back

DNA

BENGALURU: An Air India Boeing 777 aircraft had to turn back after a drop in oil pressure forced the pilots to turn off one of the jet's engines, India's aviation regulator said on Monday. The aircraft, which was headed to India's financial capital of Mumbai, landed safely back in Delhi and the incident will be investigated, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a statement. Modern aircraft are designed to safely fly and land on a single engine, if required. Air India has been under intense scrutiny this year after the June 12 crash of a Boeing Dreamliner killed 260 people. The DGCA has flagged multiple safety lapses at the airline, which was previously owned by the government till 2022. An Air India investigation into why one of its planes conducted commercial flights without an airworthiness permit found "systemic failures", with the airline admitting it needed to do better on compliance, Reuters reported earlier this month. On Monday, pilots observed a low engine oil pressure on the B777-300ER aircraft's right-hand engine during flaps retraction after take-off.

PCB to move ICC against India

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Monday announced that they would approach the International Cricket Council (ICC) over the "provocation" by Indian players against Pakistan during the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2025 final. The Green Shirts crushed their arch-rivals, securing a resounding 191-run victory, in the blockbuster final at the ICC Academy on Sunday. Speaking at the reception hosted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in honour of the Asian Under-19 champion team, PCB Chairman Naqvi said: "Indian players kept provoking Pakistani players in the U19 Asia Cup final." "Pakistan will inform the ICC about the incident," he said, adding that politics and sports should be kept separate. Cricketing relations between the two neighbouring countries have remained tense due to geopolitical tensions.

Bangladesh rubbishes Indian govt propaganda

DNA

DHAKA: Bangladesh has rejected India's dismissal of a protest outside its high commission in New Delhi as "misleading propaganda", saying the incident was "highly regrettable". According to Bangladeshi media, around 20 to 25 protesters gathered in front of the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi. According to mission officials, the protesters raised anti-Bangladesh slogans and issued threats against the Bangladesh high commissioner, Prothom Alo reported. In response, the Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal issued a statement saying India had taken note of "misleading propaganda in sections of the Bangladesh media on the incident".

Iran says

No parleys on missile programme

"Iran's missile programme was developed to defend Iran's territory," says foreign ministry

NEWS DESK / DNA

TEHRAN: Iran insisted on Monday that its missile programme was defensive in nature and designed to dissuade attack, while adding that the existence of its arsenal was not up for debate. Israel had presented Iran's ballistic missiles, along with its nuclear programme, as the two main threats it sought to neutralise during the 12-day war the foes fought in June. "Iran's missile programme was developed to defend Iran's territory, not for negotiation," foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said at a weekly press conference. "Therefore, Iran's defence capabilities, designed to deter aggressors from any thought of attacking Iran, are not a matter that could be talked about." Iran's ballistic capabilities put Israel within striking distance, and after Israel's unprecedented attacks that sparked the war in June, Tehran responded with waves of missiles and drones launched at Israeli cities. According to US broadcaster NBC, Israel

is growing increasingly concerned that Iran is seeking to rebuild and expand its missile production following the war, and may seek to attack it again to curtail those efforts. During a planned visit to the US later this month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "is expected to present US President Donald Trump with options for the US to join or assist in any new military operations", NBC reported, citing an unnamed source with direct knowledge of the plans and former US officials briefed on them. Over the course of the recent war, Israel struck military sites, nuclear facilities and residential areas, killing more than 1,000 people. Israel reported more than 50 Iranian missile strikes inside its territory that killed 28 people. The US briefly joined its ally in striking Iran's nuclear facilities before declaring a ceasefire. Iran once procured much of its weaponry from the United States, but following the break in diplomatic relations after its 1979 Islamic revolution, it had to develop its own domestic arms industry.

Three contenders in the run

All set for PIA privatization today

The federal cabinet will approve the transaction within days, followed by the signing of the documents which the Privatisation Commission has received from the bidders

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Privatisation Commission is all set to privatise Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Ltd (PIAC) on December 23 (Tuesday), as only three bidders remain in the race after the exit of Fauji Fertiliser Company Ltd. According to the programme circulated by the Privatisation Commission bids will be submitted between 10:45am and 11:15am, while bids will be opened at 3:30pm, a process that will be shown live on tele-



vision networks, as decided by the government. The three bidders are: a consortium comprising Lucky Cement Limited, Hub Power Holdings Limited, Kohat Cement Company Limited, and Metro Ventures (Private) Limited; a consortium comprising Arif Habib Corporation Limited, Fatima

Fertiliser Company Limited, City Schools (Private) Limited, and Lake City Holdings (Private) Limited; and Air Blue (Private) Ltd. Chairman of the Privatisation Commission and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatisation, Muhammad Ali, said during a YouTube interview that Fauji Fertiliser Company Ltd had decided to quit the bidding process for PIA. Mr Ali explained that on Tuesday, after submission, the sealed bids will be placed in a transparent box, following which the board of the Privatisation

Commission will meet and fix the reference price. Thereafter, the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP) will meet and approve the reference price, which will be announced during the opening of the bids. He further explained that if bids are higher than the reference price, there would be an open auction.

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Govt focused to improve electricity system: PM

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said the government is fully focused on improving the electricity transmission system. Chairing a meeting of a Working Group on Power Sector in Islamabad today, he said efforts are being made to ensure that industries receive electricity at regionally competitive rates. The Prime Minister appreciated the efforts and hard work of the Energy Committee, formed under the leadership of Shehzad Saleem, for consultations with the private sector. During the meeting, recommendations regarding reforms in the energy sector for economic development were presented. The Prime Minister directed the Power Division to present recommendations, in consultation with stakeholders, to bring electricity wheeling charges to an appropriate level. He highlighted that a National Program for Economic Development will be formulated, once the recommendations of various sectoral working groups are finalized. In addition, the meeting discussed proposals related to tariff structures, challenges in electricity transmission, appropriate pricing, and other energy-related matters.

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Two get death sentence in blasphemy case

NEWS DESK

SAHIWAL: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) sentenced two blasphemy convicts to death on Monday, and also sentenced them to 22 years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed fines of Rs 550,000. The case was filed on the complaint of a local on November 15, 2025, and was registered at Kameer Police Station under FIR No. 710/24 in Sahiwal district. The FIR stated that the "alleged incident of blasphemy occurred on July 17, 2024, but was registered four months later, supported by testimonies from two local witnesses". The court found the two individuals guilty of violating Sections 295-A and 295-C, Sections 7/9 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997, and Section 11 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 of the Pakistan Penal Code. In his detailed verdict, the judge ruled that the convicts were separately sentenced to death and

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RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has conferred the Kingdom's highest national honour, the King Abdulaziz Medal Excellent Class, upon Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir. – DNA

Pak-KSA ties reinforced

Saudi Arabia confers Kingdom's highest honour on COAS

The medal was conferred on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir by Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Saudi Arabia has conferred the Kingdom's highest national honour, the King Abdulaziz Medal Excellent Class, upon Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in recognition of his central role in advancing defence cooperation, strategic coordination, and institutional linkages between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The medal was conferred on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir by Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, during his official visit to the Kingdom, according to a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). The conferment of the

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan emerges as key players in Trump policy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has emerged as a key pillar in President Donald Trump's evolving foreign policy vision for South Asia. This is highlighted in an article carried by Washington Times, which underscores the dramatic shift in the US-Pakistan relations in 2025. According to the article, Pakistan has, to the US administration, earned its way to a place of importance of regional and in

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LHC CJ suspends operation of Punjab land protection ordinance

Expressing her disapproval of the law, she remarked: "Someone should inform the government that if this law remains in force, even Jati Umra (the Sharif family residence) could be vacated within half an hour"

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Aalia Neelum issued an interim order on Monday to suspend the operation of the newly enacted Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property Ordinance, 2025, which empowers deputy commissioner-led committees to decide property disputes. Justice Neelum issued the ruling during a hearing of petitions by Abida Parveen and others that challenged decisions pertaining to property disputes taken under the ordinance. Through her interim order, she also suspended decisions taken under the new legislation to take away the possession of properties. Expressing her disapproval of the law, she remarked: "Someone should inform the government that if this law remains in force, even Jati Umra (the Sharif family residence) could be vacated within half an hour. "It appears that some people want to hold all powers." Questioning the purpose of the law, CJ Neelum asked how could a revenue officer hand over the possession of a property in a matter pending before a civil court. The judge observed that the new law had dismantled the civil setup, civil rights and judicial supremacy. "If it is up to the authorities, they would even suspend the Constitution," she added. Justice Neelum further pointed

out that in case of a deputy commissioner handing over the possession of an individual's house to someone else under the new law, the affected person did not have the right to appeal. "The new law does not allow the high court to grant a stay in such matters," she noted. The Punjab chief secretary and other government officials were present at the hearing today, but the Punjab advocate general did not appear before the court. The court was told that the principal law officer was ill. On this explanation, Justice Neelum remarked that she, too, was ill and had been advised bed rest, but was in the court presiding over proceedings. The CJ then said that a full bench would be constituted to further proceed on the matter adjourned the hearing. Separately, a Punjab law officer explained to Dawn that the Punjab government could challenge the LHC's interim order before the Supreme Court under its appellate jurisdiction. The officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the provincial government could approach the Federal Constitutional Court as well, since that case involved a question of law. "The government may also request the proposed full bench to review the stay order. However, its chances of obtaining relief through that route are relatively slim," he added. The ordinance in question was approved by Punjab Chief Minister

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CDA fetches Rs 13.52b on first day of plots' auction

Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that the revenue generated from the public auction of residential and commercial plots will be spent on the construction, development, and beautification of the Federal Capital, Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the first day of the auction of residential and commercial plots in the Federal Capital Islamabad, organized by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), plots worth total of 13.52 billion rupees were sold. In line with the direction of Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the auction process is being supervised by Member Finance, Tahir Naem, and the Auction Committee formed under his chairmanship. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that the strong participation of investors in the public auction is a reflection of complete confidence and trust in CDA's policies. He said that gaining the trust of Islamabad's investors is among our top priorities. According to details, on the first day of the public auction, Blue Area Plot No. 15 located in (F-8/G-8) was auctioned for 3.52

billion rupees. Similarly, Blue Area Plot No. 17 located in (F-8/G-8) was auctioned for 9.15 billion rupees. Meanwhile, Plot No. 37 C of the Orchards Scheme, Murree Road, was auctioned for 42 crores 20 lakh rupees, and Plot No. 37 D of the same Orchards Scheme, Murree Road, was auctioned for 42 crores rupees. Thus, a total of four plots were auctioned on the first day for 13.52 billion rupees. The three-day auction of residential and commercial plots will continue at the Jinnah Convention Centre until 24th December. Plots from various categories of residential and commercial plots are being offered for investment in the auction. Plots for various centers, E-11 Northern Strip, Agro Farms, and petrol pumps will also be auctioned. Similarly, constructed shops in Blue Area are also included in the three-day residential and commercial plot auction, while residential plots from various sectors will also be put up for public auction

Under CDA's investor-friendly initiatives, various concessions and facilities have been provided to investors for active participation in the public auction, including an additional 5% discount for payments in US Dollars for commercial plots. A 5% discount will also be given for lump-sum payment within 30 days of the approval of the bid for commercial plots. Similarly, the facility for building plan approval will be provided after the initial 25% payment is made. Possession of the plot can be obtained upon 75% payment. The received bids will be presented before the CDA Board after thorough scrutiny, which is the authorized forum for approving or rejecting bids. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that the revenue generated from the public auction of residential and commercial plots will be spent on the construction, development, and beautification of the Federal Capital, Islamabad.

Kundi urges youth to acquire modern skills

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday said that the province is currently facing economic challenges which can be effectively addressed through education and skills based on modern technology. He emphasized that equipping youth with contemporary knowledge and practical skills is the key to economic development and competing with global challenges. The Governor expressed these views while addressing the annual convocation of CECOS University Peshawar as the chief guest. The ceremony was attended by President CECOS University Engineer Muhammad Tanveer Javed, Vice Chancellor Dr. Mohsin Khan, faculty members, graduating students and their parents. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi distributed degrees among 365 graduates and awarded gold medals to 16 students for their outstanding academic performance. Vice Chancellor Dr. Muhammad Mohsin Khan welcomed the Governor and other guests and briefed them on the university's academic achievements and progress. Congratulating the graduating students, their parents and faculty, the Governor said that education is not merely a means of personal success but a national responsibility. He urged the graduates to utilize their acquired knowledge and skills for the service of their families, society and the province. The Governor also expressed satisfaction over the significant participation of female students in the convocation, terming it a highly encouraging sign for social development. He said that CECOS University is playing an important role in providing modern, technology-driven education in line with contemporary needs and has established a distinct identity in the private education sector through its commitment to quality education.—APP

Efforts afoot for corruption free environmental governance

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, in a landmark reform aimed at eradicating corruption and strengthening transparency, has approved sweeping amendments to the century-old Forest Act, replacing outdated colonial-era procedures with a fully digitised system for forestry and environmental governance. Under the Chief Minister's reform agenda, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has become Punjab's first government department to completely eliminate paperwork, shifting to a modern, technology-driven framework. All regulatory and administrative processes will now be conducted through the digital system E-FOAS. According to an official notification, the is-

suance of import licences, laboratory certifications, protection orders and official recommendations will be carried out exclusively through the E-FOAS platform. Any order, approval or administrative decision issued outside the system will be considered invalid, and strict disciplinary action will be taken against the responsible officers and staff. Each document generated through E-FOAS will carry a unique reference number and QR code, allowing instant verification within seconds. The system will also maintain a complete digital record of all decisions, including justifications, recommendations and approvals, ensuring full accountability and traceability at every stage. EPA Director General Dr Imran Hamid Sheikh has

formally issued implementation orders, making it mandatory for all environment-related departments to refrain from issuing any directive or approval without using the E-FOAS system. The notification further confirms that import licences will now be issued entirely through the digital platform. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif commended the EPA team for eliminating human intervention, forgery and illegal permits. "We are ensuring environmental protection alongside the complete eradication of corruption," she said, describing the reform as a decisive step towards transparent, efficient and accountable governance in Punjab's forestry and environmental sectors.—DNA

KP govt fully committed to promoting coop with China

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information, Shafi Jan, said that the provincial government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, is fully committed to promoting cooperation with China at all levels. Whether it is infrastructure, education, technology, or industrial development, the government is striving to utilize China's experience and resources for the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He expressed these views during his visit to China Window, the Chinese cultural center established in Peshawar, while addressing a ceremony held for the distribution of certificates among students who completed a digital media course. Shafi Jan stated that examples of Pak-China friendship are cited across the world and the main reason behind this strong bond is that both countries have always stood by each other in difficult times. China has consistently taken positive steps to improve Pakistan's economic and financial conditions, he observed. Special Assistant emphasized the need to accelerate work on CPEC projects so that economic activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can be further promoted. He added that the provincial government's development policies and good governance initiatives, particularly under the leadership of Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, are ensuring better public facilities, employment opportunities, and the provision of modern education. He expressed confidence that only through education and skill development of the youth can Khyber Pakhtunkhwa be placed on the path of sustainable progress. Appreciating the performance of China Window, Shafi Jan said that the institution has rendered valuable services in promoting Pak-China friendship and strengthening cultural ties. He noted that the center is not only introducing China's culture, history, and modern development but is also playing a highly significant role in fostering Pak-China relations. Congratulating the students who completed digital media course, he said that in the present era the importance of digital media has increased manifold. This achievement reflects the hard work and skills of the youth and is also a matter of pride for the government to provide young people with opportunities to advance in the fields of modern technology, media, and information. He added that digital media skills can help the youth build their identity not only at the national but also at the international level. Earlier, the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Information, Shafi Jan, distributed certificates among students on behalf of the National Commission for Vocational and Technical Training (NAVTTTC).—DNA



KARACHI: Governor of Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori meeting with Denmark's Ambassador Ms. Maja Mortensen at the Governor House.

Snowfall at Babusar Pass take tourists over-the-moon in Kaghan

BABUSAR TOP: The moderate rain and snowfall at breathtaking Babusar Pass in Upper Kaghan turned the weather extremely cold amid thrill and excitement by tourists. The tourists with families arrived from plains districts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were over the moon during snowfall at the famous Babusar Top, known for its mesmerizing natural beauty and mountain splendor. Malaika Bibi, a seventh-grade student at Peshawar, was overwhelmed by the moderate snowfall and grandeur of Pakistan's mesmerizing beauty as he travelled to the famous Babusar pass. Accompanied by her parents, Malaika's dream of visiting Babusar top connecting Upper Kaghan Manshera with Chilas Gilgit Balistan over an altitude of 13,691 feet above the sea level with national flag hoisting high came true after witnessing snowfall, serene lakes and lush green valleys on its routes starting from Naran-Kaghan and Babusar Top, making her joy memorable. "I have waited eagerly for this snowfall as my father, a government servant, has promised me for this memorable trip for which a big thank you to my sweet papa for fulfilling my childhood dream today.

Punjab govt consults on madaris registration

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Health and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, Khawaja Salman Rafique, on Monday met a delegation of Ahle-Hadith scholars at the Punjab Home Department to discuss the registration of madaris in the province. Secretary Home Department Dr Ahmed Javed Qazi was also present during the meeting. During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on the process of madaris registration. Speaking on the occasion, Khawaja Salman Rafique said the Punjab government was taking effective steps to make the madaris registration process easy and facilitative. He said that madaris were providing students with modern religious as well as contemporary education, adding that consultations with scholars of different schools of thought on the issue of registration were continuing.—APP

Afridi for boosting KP govt, PR cooperation

PESHAWAR: An important meeting on railway development was held on Monday under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi, during which it was agreed to strengthen cooperation between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and Pakistan Railways. The meeting decided to construct a new 192-kilometer railway track from Kohat to Kharlachi at an estimated cost of USD 642 million, with a proposed completion period of two years. The Chief Minister termed the project an urgent requirement, stating that the Kohat-Kharlachi

train service would significantly improve travel facilities and boost commercial activities in the region. Participants also discussed plans to operate modern trains on various railway tracks across the province, while directives were issued to initiate train services in other major cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Officials were instructed to prepare comprehensive plans with clear timelines for all railway-related projects. The meeting further considered launching a safari train service on the 32-kilometer Jamrud to Landi Kotal railway track

Discussions were also held on the restoration, cleanliness, and renovation of historic railway stations, along with the development of green belts along railway tracks. Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to extending full cooperation to Pakistan Railways in the larger public interest. The meeting was attended by Advisor to Finance Muzammil Aslam, the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Secretary of Pakistan Railways, and other concerned officials.—APP

CM reviews Rs1,018b uplift strategy for current fiscal year

KARACHI: The Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, on Monday presided over a high-level joint meeting of the Planning & Development and Finance departments to review the provincial development strategy and investment plans for the current fiscal year.

The meeting, held at CM House, outlined a comprehensive vision for a resilient and inclusive Sindh, backed by a total development outlay of Rs 1,018 billion. The meeting was attended by Minister P&D Jam Khan Shoro, Minister Works Haji Ali Hassan Zardari, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, Secretary Finance Fayaz Jatoti and Secretary Works Nawaz So-hoo and others.

Sharing his vision, the chief minister said that the 'Devel-

opment Strategy 2025-26' focuses on creating climate-resilient infrastructure for buildings, roads and housing. He directed the Planning & Development Department to prioritise schemes that enhance climate resilience and ensure that all new projects are designed to withstand extreme weather events. He further instructed the departments concerned to integrate disaster-risk considerations into project planning and approvals. "The main thrust of our development strategy is climate-resilient infrastructure, rapid flood recovery, and inclusive growth. I want every rupee of development spending to contribute to reducing poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," he said.

The CM said flood recovery would include rehabilitating damaged education and health facilities, while improved connectivity would link major cities and support mass transit systems in urban centres. He emphasised that poverty reduction and inclusive development must remain cross-cutting priorities across all departments. Murad Shah said his government has earmarked significant funds across key sectors under the Rs 520 billion Provincial Annual Development Programme (ADP) 2025-26. The meeting was informed that a massive Rs 582 billion plan has been prepared for road infrastructure, including the construction and rehabilitation of 970 km of roads under flood recovery and other major projects such as the Sindh Coastal Highway.—APP

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Serena Hotel hosts Hi-Tea for kids of charity schools

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In the true spirit of this Festive Season, Islamabad Serena Hotel demonstrated its commitment to community's well being by hosting a Hi-tea for children from the three charity schools i.e., Holy Help School, Master Ayub School, and Mashal School. The initiative aimed to spread joy, inclusivity, and the magic of the season among young hearts. The children got an opportunity to visit the Festive wonderland, be a part of the season's festivities. They were served a delightful hi-tea filled with delectable treats. Santa Claus made a surprise entry with the gifts for the children, which made the evening magical and unforgettable for them. The management of Islamabad Serena Hotel places strong emphasis on making a positive impact on the local community through meaningful and sustained efforts to promote and support education for children. This heartwarming event stands as a testament to Islamabad Serena Hotel's dedication to fostering a culture of compassion, inclusivity, and social responsibility. Through such initiatives, the hotel continues to strengthen its bond with the community while creating joyous experiences that leave a lasting impression.



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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RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43


CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3




Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343



Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ICCI keen to work with BBOIT to promote trade

President ICCI, Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that Islamabad’s business community had strong interest in investing in Balochistan’s resource-rich sectors and underscored the need for joint business forums, investment roadshows and delegation exchanges to enhance mutual engagement

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer, Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBOIT), Qaim Lashari, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Monday and held a meeting with its leadership to explore potential collaboration opportunities between BBOIT and ICCI aimed at promoting investment, trade and joint ventures. Both sides agreed to jointly organize a mega event at the earliest possible time at ICCI auditorium to showcase the investment and export potential of Balochistan. Qaim Lashari highlighted the vast investment potential of Balochistan in key sectors including minerals, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, energy and tourism. He stressed the importance of strengthening coordination between the business communities of Balochistan and Islamabad to unlock these opportunities and convert them into concrete economic outcomes. The CEO BBOIT emphasized that closer institutional collaboration between BBOIT and ICCI could play a vital role in identifying viable areas for joint ventures, facilitating B2B linkages and encouraging private sector participation in Balochistan’s development initiatives. He invited ICCI members to explore investment opportunities in the province’s Special Economic Zones and priority sectors, assuring full facilitation and policy support to investors. President ICCI, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, warmly welcomed the CEO BBOIT and said that ICCI was keen to work closely with BBOIT to

promote inter-provincial trade and investment. He stated that Islamabad’s business community had strong interest in investing in Balochistan’s resource-rich sectors and underscored the need for joint business forums, investment roadshows and delegation exchanges to enhance mutual engagement. Additionally, President ICCI said that the Chamber would fully support initiatives aimed at connecting investors with credible projects in Balochistan. He noted that closer collaboration between chambers would help bridge information gaps,

promote joint ventures and enable the business community to benefit from emerging opportunities, particularly under CPEC and provincial development frameworks. Senior Vice President ICCI said that enhanced cooperation between ICCI and BBOIT would help create new business opportunities, strengthen private sector confidence and contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth. He emphasized the importance of regular interaction and effective information sharing between the two institutions. He also observed that joint efforts by ICCI

and BBOIT could significantly improve awareness about investment incentives and ease of doing business in Balochistan. He expressed optimism that the meeting would pave the way for long-term institutional partnership and mutually beneficial projects. BBOIT delegation included Liaison Officer Aamir Kashan, Ms Asma Riaz and Ms. Zunaira Sarfraz. Those present from ICCI side included Executive member Zulqurnain Abbasi, Waseem Chaudhry, Ishaq Sial and ICCI member Israr-ul-Haq Mashwani.

SC grants bail to accused in hate material case

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday granted bail to Syed Muhammad, nominated in a case pertaining to the dissemination of hate material. A two-member bench headed by Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan heard the matter. During the hearing, Justice Afghan observed that only one book had been recovered from the accused and questioned whether there was any concrete evidence on record regarding its distribution. The state counsel raised an objection, arguing that a petition against the decision of a two-member bench of the high court was not maintainable before the Supreme Court. However, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan remarked

that under the newly notified rules, the apex court was competent to hear such cases. The prosecutor submitted that the accused was involved in the distribution of a book attributed to Osama bin Laden titled From the Desert to the Sea, and that hate material had also been recovered from the accused’s mobile phone. It was further stated that the accused hailed from Waziristan. Justice Afghan observed that if evidence existed, it should be proved during the trial and appropriate punishment awarded. When defence counsel attempted to refer to off-the-record facts, the court clarified that it could not consider material not forming part of the record. The defence maintained that the ac-

cused worked as a laborer in Sahiwal and was arrested by CTD Lahore in February 2025 while returning home after collecting wages. It was submitted that after 27 days, a recovery of Rs109,000 was shown against an alleged amount of Rs500,000. The prosecutor informed the court that the case involved four witnesses and that charges had already been framed. The defence argued that the maximum punishment prescribed under the law was five years. After hearing the arguments, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan directed that evidence be produced during the trial and subsequently granted bail to the accused.—APP

Rawalpindi embrace first winter rain, blessing for many

RAWALPINDI: The first winter rain on Sunday has ended the effects of prolonged dry cold weather in Rawalpindi, providing residents with a pleasant atmosphere on one side, and pleasure for the farmers on the other. Due to cloudy conditions, thunderclouds remained over the city, and light to moderate rainfall was recorded which cleared the air and making the weather enjoyable. According to the Meteorological Department, light rain occurred at various locations in Rawalpindi, bringing a considered change in the dry atmosphere. During the rain, intermittent drizzling continued day and night in some areas, reducing the intensity of the weather and bringing relief from the growing anxieties caused by the cold and winter-borne seasonal health issues. Residents expressed happiness and relief after the rain. Shahbaz Hussain while talking to APP said that the rain has cleared the atmosphere as for the past several weeks, the dry cold has caused difficulties in breathing, but now he feels great comfort “After the rain, we bought hot chicken soup, and went for a walk in the

garden with the family. Seeing the rush in the markets made us happy”, said Aysa Bano a resident of Lalazar. Young Nauman Khan said that the rain has truly made the weather pleasant as people spent hours outside in the food streets. After the rain, there was a significant increase in the buying and selling of yakhni, soup, and dry fruits in various markets of the city. Similarly, in the market, a rush of citizens was observed, where demand for warm clothing, sweaters, jackets, blankets. Shopkeepers said that the rain compelled people to come out and buy warm items, improving business. Health experts from the Health Department report that after the rain, there has been a decrease in colds, flu, and respiratory diseases because the rain reduced dust in the air, purifying it and providing relief to breathing patients. “Rain was much needed as dry weather has caused flu and cold fever to many”, said Dr. Waqar, spokesman Rawalpindi Health Authority. He also highlighted the importance of fresh atmosphere and pollutants

free air for the patients facing bronchitis, asthmatic issues and related disease. Agricultural experts have also termed this rain beneficial for crops, especially providing moisture to wheat and other Rabi crops, brightening prospects for improved yields. Following the rain, teams from the Rawalpindi Metropolitan Corporation and Waste Management Company have become active. Special measures are being taken for water drainage in low-lying areas, cleaning of roads and drains, and timely disposal of garbage to ensure citizens face no difficulties after the rain. The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) administration has also appealed to citizens to cooperate in the discharge of rainwater. The first winter rain in Rawalpindi has blessed the city with pleasant weather, brought relief to residents, and enlivened the markets. Improvements are expected in health, crops, and cleanliness arrangements, while citizens are seen enjoying their time in the cheerful post-rain atmosphere. —APP

SECP notifies key amendments to regulations

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Monday notified amendments to the Companies (Further Issue of Shares) Regulations, 2020 (the “Regulations”) pertaining to the issuance of shares with different rights and privileges by listed companies. The amendments aim to safeguard the interests of minority shareholders and ensure robust corporate governance practices, transparency, and effective price discovery, a news release said. “Major amendments include that ordinary shares carrying voting rights shall be entitled to receive the same percentage or ratio of dividend per share; the aggregate voting power of all ordinary shares, under the principle of ‘one share, one vote,’ shall not be less than 75% of the total voting power of all shares issued by a company; shares with varied voting rights shall carry a maximum of 5 voting rights per share; and ordinary shares with varied rights shall be issued as listed securities,” it added. The amendments ensure the alignment of economic benefits, preserve the fundamental significance of ordinary shares, minimize potential conflicts of interest, safeguard against undue concentration of control, and promote equitable governance. These amendments, the SECP said, have been notified following an extensive consultation process with key stakeholders, including the PSX, CDC, NCCPL, listed companies, consultants, professional associations, and law firms. The feedback received was carefully reviewed and analyzed to identify key insights, and based on this input, the SECP has finalized and notified the amendments to the Regulations.—APP

Stakeholders need to be convinced regarding mediation culture: IHC

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC)’s Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani on Monday expressed concern over inactivity of the mediation center in federal capital and remarked that it will take time to convince the stakeholders that the issues could also be resolved through mediation. During hearing of a case, he remarked that the culture of mediation is in all over the world, but it will take time for us to adopt it. The mediation center that was set up in Islamabad has been closed, he noted and said that for this, first the lawyers, then the judges and then the public have to be convinced. He said that all stakeholders have to be satisfied that cases can also be resolved through mediation.—APP

Traditional medicine sustainable solution to global health challenges

ISLAMABAD: At a time when rising healthcare costs, drug insecurity and unequal access to treatment are straining health systems worldwide, Coordinator General (CG) of OIC-COM-STECH Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary has called for greater integration of evidence-based traditional medicine into modern healthcare to address the growing global disease burden. Delivering a keynote lecture titled “Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine: Therapeutic Options to Overcome the Global Disease Burden” at the 13th World Integrative Medicine Congress (WIMCO 2025) in Changchun, China, Prof. Dr. Choudhary highlighted the increasing global relevance of traditional, complementary and integrative medicine (TCIM) as a viable, sustainable and inclusive healthcare approach. He said the current drug discovery and development paradigm is becoming unsustainable and non-inclusive, particularly for developing countries facing challenges of affordability, access and dependence on imported medicines. He emphasized that traditional and complementary medicines continue to serve as the primary source of healthcare for a large segment of the world’s population, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Addressing the question of whether traditional medicine can bridge existing healthcare gaps, Prof. Dr. Choudhary noted that evidence-based TCIM has the potential to function as first-line treatment for many diseases, play a key role in prevention, and support overall well-being. He added that traditional medicines are inherently sustainable, offer immense structural diversity derived from natural sources, and are particularly effective in managing chronic diseases. Highlighting global policy directions, he referred to the World Health Organization’s recommendations urging member states to integrate TCIM into mainstream healthcare systems. Such integration, he stressed, could significantly reduce healthcare inequities and enhance national and global health resilience. The Coordinator General also shared insights into Pakistan-China cooperation in traditional medicine, citing initiatives undertaken by OIC-COMSTECH in collaboration with leading Chinese universities and institutions. He termed the Sino-Pakistan Cooperation Centre on Traditional Medicine, established at the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi, a successful model of South-South scientific cooperation.—DNA

IHC orders action against policemen on woman, minor girls’ illegal arrest

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday issued directions for immediate departmental action against police personnel involved in illegal arrest of woman and minor daughters from Lahore, and sought a report from Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad. The court also imposed fine worth Rs100,000 each on case investigation officer and other policemen involved in illegal arrests while quashing the case against citizen Waqas Ahmed and Sohail Aleem registered by Tarnol Police Station. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani delivered a reserved verdict in a case regarding the arrest of woman along with minor daughters from Lahore by the Islamabad Police in a money transition dispute between former CEO PIA Musharraf Rasool and citizens Waqas Ahmed and Sohail Aleem. The police personnel are alleged for conducting raids without the warrants and arresting Waqas Ahmed’s wife and his minor daughters from Bahawalpur and Lahore. The court said that the detailed written verdict will be issued later on. The court orders IGP Islamabad to take immediate departmental action against the involved police personnel and submit a report. It may be mentioned here that a case against Waqas Ahmed and his wife in Tarnol police station Number 658/25 was register.—APP

Ayaz lauds security forces for eliminating nine terrorists

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly (NA) Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Sunday lauded the security forces for eliminating nine “Fitna-e-Al-Hindustan” terrorists in successful operations carried out in Dera Ismail Khan and Bannu districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a statement, the Speaker paid tribute to the personnel involved, commending their courage and dedication in safeguarding the nation. He highlighted the professionalism, swift response, and advanced military capability of the forces, noting that they had once again demonstrated their readiness to make every sacrifice for the defence of the country and the preservation of peace and order. Sadiq affirmed that the entire nation stands united with the security forces in the fight against terrorism, vowing that the hostile designs of enemy elements would be defeated at all costs. He stressed that there would be no leniency for those who disrupt Pakistan’s peace or support such activities, adding that indiscriminate action against such elements would continue. Expressing confidence in the resolve of both the forces and the people, the Speaker said operations against terrorists and their facilitators would persist until sustainable peace is established across the country.—APP

Briefs

Police, HIU crack blind murder case within hours, killers in handcuffs

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, in coordination with the Homicide Investigation Unit (HIU) of Sawan Zone, have solved a blind murder case within hours and arrested the killers following the abduction and murder of a private security guard. An official told on Monday that police teams used modern technology and human intelligence to trace and arrest the suspects involved in the killing of Sarfraz, who was abducted and later murdered. DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq said that the prime accused, Juma Khan, in collusion with his associate Waqar, killed the victim due to personal enmity. After committing the murder, the suspects concealed the body by dumping it inside a concrete pipe in a drain to mislead investigators. The DIG said that Sarfraz was employed as a private security guard and his disappearance had raised serious concern, prompting immediate action by police. He added that under the supervision of SP Sawan Zone Khuram Ashraf, special police teams comprising SHO Humak and experienced investigation officers were constituted, which worked round-the-clock to trace the suspects. During the operation, police also recovered the murder weapon from the possession of the arrested accused. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq said that all legal requirements would be fulfilled to ensure exemplary punishment for the culprits. He praised the swift and professional response of ICT Police and the HIU, reaffirming that Islamabad Police would not allow criminals to escape justice and would continue decisive action against serious crimes.—APP

SDPO joins Christmas cake-cutting ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Kohsar, Nausherwan Ahsan Minhas, participated in a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony held at Kohsar Police Station, reflecting Islamabad Police's commitment to interfaith harmony and the protection of minority rights. An official told APP on Monday that police officers and members of the Christian community attended the ceremony, which was organised to share goodwill and strengthen mutual respect. On the occasion, SDPO Kohsar extended Christmas greetings to the Christian community and reaffirmed that Islamabad Police stand united with citizens of all faiths. He said that ensuring the safety, dignity and equal rights of minorities is a top priority of Islamabad Police, adding that such initiatives help promote harmony and peaceful coexistence in the federal capital. The participants appreciated the gesture and expressed hope that these engagements would further strengthen trust between the police and minority communities.—APP

China's manufacturing strength boosts Pak's furniture sector

ISLAMABAD: China's manufacturing ecosystem continues to play a pivotal role in shaping global consumer markets, offering advanced production capabilities, scale, and innovation that businesses worldwide are increasingly leveraging to meet local demand. Senior executives from Pakistan's home retail sector say their recent engagements across China have reinforced the importance of innovation-led sourcing and stronger cross-border supply chain collaboration. Shiza Danish, Chief Operating Officer of Habitt, one of Pakistan's leading home retail brands, recently concluded an extensive sourcing and market assessment visit across China, aimed at identifying advanced machinery, innovative designs, and high-quality production solutions to strengthen product offerings for customers in Pakistan. Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. During the visit, Danish and her team explored major manufacturing clusters, furniture markets, and supplier facilities, engaging closely with world-class manufacturers and technology providers. The trip involved detailed evaluations of modern production lines, automation systems, and quality control mechanisms that define China's leadership in industrial efficiency. "China continues to set the pace in innovation, efficiency, and scale," Danish said, adding that firsthand exposure to smart manufacturing processes and advanced machinery reinforced her commitment to sourcing solutions that ensure consistent

quality and long-term reliability. According to the report, the visit also highlighted growing opportunities for deeper cooperation between China and Pakistan in the furniture and home solutions sector. With Pakistan's expanding urban population and rising demand for modern, affordable, and durable furniture, industry experts say Chinese manufacturers are well positioned to serve as strategic partners for Pakistani retailers and producers. Analysts note that cooperation can extend beyond traditional imports to include joint ventures, technology transfer, local assembly units, and skills development. By leveraging China's advanced manufacturing capabilities and Pakistan's growing consumer base and retail networks, both countries can develop a more integrated furniture value chain. A key focus of the visit was Foshan, located about an hour from Guangzhou and widely recognised as the world's largest furniture market. The city functions as a complete furniture ecosystem, offering extensive design options, customisation capabilities, and large-scale export solutions. Afaq Hussain Rizvi, Head of Supply Chain at Habitt, said that visiting Foshan reshaped his understanding of global sourcing and supply chain dynamics. "Walking through the world's largest furniture market felt like stepping into an endless universe of design, materials, and ideas. Even after a full day of walking, you've barely covered five percent of it," he said.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb along with senior officials of the Ministry of Finance, joined Christian staff of the Finance Division in a Christmas celebration, reaffirming the Government of Pakistan's commitment to religious harmony and inclusivity.—DNA

Climate ministry approves trophy hunting quotas

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) has approved the allocation of trophy hunting quotas for the 2025–26 season, citing verified population surveys and scientific assessments as the basis for the decision. The quotas were allocated through the CITES Management Authority of Pakistan following a review of population data submitted by provincial wildlife departments, ministry spokesperson told APP on Monday. It described the move as part of efforts to strengthen transparent and evidence-based wildlife governance in the country. Pakistan, a signatory to the Convention on Biological

Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), remains committed to fulfilling its international conservation obligations through sustainable-use practices, the spokesperson said. The approved quotas cover several species, including the markhor, Himalayan ibex, Sindh ibex, Blandford's urial, Punjab urial, blue sheep and Khenkhen gazelle. The ministry said the allocations were consistent with internationally recognised principles of sustainable use and were based on scientific evidence rather than administrative precedent. The statement noted that under the leadership of Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Masood Malik, the quota allocation process has been streamlined to improve transparency, accountability and reliance on credible data. The ministry also acknowledged the need for further improvements in wildlife population surveys and said efforts were underway to standardise survey methodologies across provinces to generate more reliable and comparable data. "These measures are intended to ensure sound conservation outcomes that support both wildlife populations and the livelihoods of local communities living along-

side these species," the statement said, adding that community-based conservation remains a key component of Pakistan's wildlife management framework. Officials maintained that regulated trophy hunting, when based on robust science and community participation, can contribute to conservation financing and incentivise local communities to protect wildlife habitats. The latest allocation, the ministry said, reflects Pakistan's broader commitment to sustainable wildlife use, international conservation compliance and conservation models that balance ecological protection with socio-economic benefits.

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Digital entrepreneurship training center launched

ISLAMABAD: The Gansu Finance and Trade Vocational College-Overseas Training Base and the SME Entrepreneurship and Management Pakistan Training Center were officially inaugurated here at Government Advance Technical Training Centre (GATTC). It marking a step forward in vocational education cooperation between China and Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Monday. Located in the capital city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the centre aims to promote school-business collaboration and integration of industry with education. It will enable young Pakistani students to acquire cutting-edge skills in small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) entrepreneurship and management, with a special emphasis on digital competencies, without leaving their home region. Approximately 50 representatives from partner institutions, government officials and student delegates attended the inauguration ceremony. They highlighted the importance of the project in fostering practical skills that are directly aligned with market demands and contemporary economic needs. The training facility is equipped to deliver a curriculum and practical modules jointly developed by Chinese and Pakistani experts. The program focuses on modern business management, start-up operations, e-commerce and other frontier areas that are essential for SME success, especially in the digital economy. It will also serve as a hub for resource sharing, teacher exchanges and specialized student training programs. This inauguration fulfills the commitments made in a quadrilateral cooperation agreement signed in July this year. The signatories were Gansu Finance and Trade Vocational College, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (KP TEVTA), the GATTC, Peshawar and Mera PC Pvt Limited.—DNA

Dumpukht by Pearl Continental wins top honouored

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PC Hospitality is delighted to announce that its distinguished restaurant concept, "Dumpukht by Pearl Continental," has been honored with the Best Mughlai Cuisine Restaurant Brand Award at the prestigious Annual Culinary Awards. The recognition celebrates the brand's enduring commitment to authentic flavors, traditional cooking techniques, and its rich, heritage-driven culinary identity. Mr. Bastien Blanc, CEO of PC Hospitality, added his remarks on the achievement: "We are welcoming the recognition of Dumpukht by Pearl Continental, which validates our commitment to bringing diverse and exceptional culinary experiences through our restaurant division, The Connoisseur Collection. With close to 60 restaurants in operation and a

pipeline leading to over 80 by the end of 2026, we look forward to developing many locations over the coming years, starting with this award-winning brand." Dumpukht, which is part of the Connoisseur Collection by Pearl Continental, has been consistently delighting guests with amazing flavors for over 30 years, operating at two key locations in Lahore: Pearl Continental Hotel Lahore and DHA Raya. Building on this continuous success and recent award, PC Hospitality is entering a new phase of growth through an asset light model. The group has entered a master franchise agreement with Global Business Bridge to support a long-term expansion strategy, with planned development across Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. This partnership aims to strengthen the brand's presence both locally and internationally, bringing the celebrated Mughlai cuisine to new markets.

Prime accused in Kohistan corruption scam seeks plea bargain

ISLAMABAD: The prime accused in the Kohistan financial scandal, Qaiser Iqbal, has submitted an application to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) seeking a plea bargain worth Rs14 billion. According to NAB, Qaiser Iqbal was serving as a head clerk in the Communication and Works (C&W) Department. Investigations revealed that assets worth Rs10 billion, including luxury vehicles, bungalows, plazas, gold, and other properties, were registered in the names of the accused and his wife. It was disclosed during interrogation that assets worth Rs4 billion were allegedly purchased under the name of a dumper driver to conceal ownership. NAB officials confirmed that the accused has formally applied for a Rs14 billion plea bargain with the accountability watchdog. It is pertinent to note that earlier, NAB arrested eight key suspects in the Rs40 billion Kohistan mega corruption scandal, including two government officials, two bankers, and four contractors. This case is considered one of the largest corruption scandals in the country's history.—DNA

IFA destroys 10,000 ltrs of fake milk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) on Monday destroyed 10,000 litres of prepared fake milk and seized 1,065 kilograms of adulterated material during an operation near Bahria Enclave, as part of ongoing action against food adulteration in the federal capital. Talking to APP, Deputy Director Food Authority Dr Tahira Siddique, said the operation was based on information about the production of fake milk in a residential area. She stated that the suspects were preparing a white liquid resembling milk and supplying it to markets in the city. According to her, the team conducted the operation near Bahria Enclave where a unit was operating inside a populated area. Officials said the suspects had set up a hidden facility to avoid detection and were producing fake milk that closely resembled real milk. Dr Tahira Siddique said that the production process involved mixing skimmed milk powder, vegetable ghee, chemicals, and water to prepare a thick liquid. This mixture was then loaded into a tanker, filled with ice, and sold as milk. She said such practices posed a serious risk to public health, particularly for children, patients, and the elderly who consume milk daily.—APP

POL imports decrease by 1.63pc to \$6.416b

ISLAMABAD: The imports of the overall petroleum group decreased by 1.63 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-November (2025-26) were recorded at \$ 6,416.181 million against the imports of \$ 6,522.619 million during the same period of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products increased by 3.97 percent, from \$ 2,387.854 million last year to \$ 2,482.592 during current year whereas the import of petroleum crude went up by 13.38 percent from \$2,164.142 million to \$2,453.758 million. On the other hand, the imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) decreased by 29.87 percent from \$1,542.913 million last year to \$ 1,082.058 million while the import of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) came down by 6.99 per cent in the first five months and stood at \$ 397.688 million as compared to \$ 427.556 million during the corresponding month of last year. The imports of all other petroleum products decreased by 44.69 percent, from \$0.154 million to \$0.085 million.—APP

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The Two-Nation Theory: A Reality Beyond Borders

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

INDIA'S state-sponsored interference in Bangladesh is rooted not merely in contemporary politics but in a long and carefully constructed historical design aimed at weakening Pakistan and reshaping the political destiny of the Muslim-majority eastern wing of the Sub Continent. The assassination of student leader Usman Hadi has brought this design into sharp and tragic focus. Hadi, a young and outspoken voice against foreign interference and ideological coercion, was gunned down in broad daylight after receiving repeated threats. According to local accounts, he had been under surveillance for weeks, warned to abandon his political activism, and ultimately silenced in a targeted attack that bore the hallmarks of professional execution rather than spontaneous violence. His killing sent shockwaves through Bangladeshi campuses and revived fears that dissenting voices are being eliminated to preserve a carefully managed political order. To understand the significance of this crime, one must return to the origins of the Pakistan Movement. Bengal was not a peripheral participant; it was one of its intellectual and political centers. From A.K. Fazlul Huq's historic presentation of the Lahore Resolution in 1940 to the overwhelming electoral mandate given by Bengali Muslims to the Muslim League in 1946, the demand for Pakistan was as much an eastern aspiration as a western one. The Two-Nation Theory was not imposed by geography; it was embraced as a civilizational truth that Muslims, irrespective of language or region, formed a distinct political community entitled to self-rule.

India never reconciled itself to this reality. From Pakistan's inception, New Delhi pursued a policy aimed at containment and eventual dismemberment. The events culminating in 1971 did not arise in isolation. Indian intelligence networks cultivated separatist elements, provided training and arms, and orchestrated an international propaganda campaign portraying Pakistan as inherently oppressive. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship in August 1971 provided diplomatic cover for open military intervention, transforming internal unrest into a full-scale regional war and leading to the secession of East Pakistan. This intervention was later acknowledged by Indian leaders themselves, stripping away the veneer of humanitarianism often used to justify it. The political movement led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, though rooted in genuine grievances, was steadily aligned with Indian strategic objectives. In subsequent



decades, this alignment hardened into a durable political axis. Under Sheikh Hasina Wajid's leadership, Bangladesh's governing structure developed an unusually close and deferential relationship with New Delhi. Both Hasina Wajid and Indian leaders, including Narendra Modi, have publicly referenced their coordinated roles surrounding 1971, implicitly admitting that the separation of East Pakistan was facilitated through a shared political and military design aimed squarely at Pakistan. This alliance has had lasting consequences. Bangladesh's sovereignty has often appeared conditional, shaped by agreements on transit, water sharing, and security cooperation that overwhelmingly favor India. Political dissent within Bangladesh, particularly voices critical of Indian influence or sympathetic to renewed ties with Pakistan, has frequently been marginalized. It is within this climate that the assassination of Usman Hadi must be understood. Hadi was not merely a student activist; he symbolized a growing segment of Bangladeshi youth demanding historical honesty, political independence, and resistance to Hindutva-driven regional dominance. His murder, following a pattern of alleged target killings, has been widely interpreted as a warning to others who challenge this imposed narrative. Yet history has an inconvenient habit of resurfacing. The claim that 1971 buried the Two-Nation Theory does not withstand serious scrutiny. Pakistan and Bangladesh, despite political estrangement, continue to share religious bonds, cultural affinities, and a collective memory of resistance to Hindu majoritarian supremacy. Their separation was not a philosophical defeat but a rupture engineered through external manipulation. The enduring resonance of Muslim identity in Bangladesh today stands as living evidence that the foundational idea was never extinguished.

This reality explains India's persistent anxiety. A Bangladesh that reclaims its historical narrative, asserts an independent foreign policy, and rebuilds relations with Pakistan undermines the carefully cultivated image of Indian benevolence. When Bangladesh questions interference or seeks balance, it is swiftly labeled unstable. Such labeling serves as pretext for further pressure, rather than genuine concern for democratic health. Pakistan and Bangladesh are brothers born of the same struggle. Brotherhood is not annulled by borders, nor erased by the passage of time. Today, as India continues to rely on political engineering, media influence, and covert methods to keep its neighbors within a narrow strategic orbit, the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh increasingly recognize the value of solidarity. The natural affection between them is perceived as a threat precisely because it weakens divisive designs. The blood of Usman Hadi has added a solemn chapter to this shared history. His assassination has not silenced debate; it has amplified it. It has reminded many in Bangladesh that sovereignty demands courage and that history demands truth. The Two-Nation Theory has survived war, propaganda, and political manipulation. With mutual respect and a shared resolve to resist Hindutva interference, Pakistan and Bangladesh can challenge narratives built on coercion and control, reaffirming that their destinies were never meant to be dictated by external conspiracies but shaped by the will and sacrifice of their people.

Russia's Expanding Shadow at Sea

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Europe has faced Moscow's offshore activities in more ways that are direct. From cyberattacks targeting government institutions to covert financing of political parties, Russia has sought to create cracks within the European Union and NATO. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was the most blatant form of aggression, but it also served as a catalyst for European unity. Still, Moscow has not abandoned its efforts to weaken cohesion among European states. Energy dependence remains another lever

FOR more than a decade, Russia has expanded its influence across regions far from its immediate borders. Much of this activity has unfolded quietly, through political patronage, private military networks, cyber operations and support for friendly regimes or factions in conflict zones. Although these undertakings rarely make headline news in the countries not directly affected, their consequences have rippled across continents, shaping security calculations from Africa to Europe and the Middle East. The phrase "offshore menace," when applied to Moscow, captures an important reality: Russia today projects leverage not by formal territorial expansion but by cultivating pockets of influence abroad where state authority is weak, institutions are fragile, or political elites are seeking external support to secure their own rule. These settings offer openings for Russian operatives, intelligence networks and commercial enterprises that serve larger geopolitical interests. The result is a form of intervention that remains deniable yet effective, visible yet difficult to counter.

Unlike major Western powers that often frame their international involvement in terms of development or institution-building, Russia's overseas engagements tend to follow a different logic. Moscow is not primarily concerned with improving governance or strengthening economies; instead, its focus often lies in ensuring that governments dependent on its favor remain loyal, or that rival powers find themselves constrained, distracted, or pushed out of strategic regions. This pattern is highly visible in parts of Africa. Countries such as Mali, the Central African Republic and Sudan have experienced deep political turbulence in recent years. In each case, local leaders military or civilian turned to Russia for military assistance, arms and political backing. Russia, in return, received mining concessions, intelligence access and a foothold in regions where Western influence had been waning. The private military structure once known as Wagner and now reorganized under new leadership plays a central role in this expansion. While often described as a mercenary outfit, its tasks go well beyond battlefield engagement. Its operatives have been involved in guarding mines, training security forces and advising political leaders functions that blur the line between economic contract and geopolitical mission. The collapse of Wagner's leadership after the mutiny in 2023 did not diminish these networks; they were swiftly absorbed under tighter Kremlin control, preserving Russia's reach across the African continent. Russia's offshore presence is not confined to soldiers, mining specialists, or political advisors. A significant dimension lies at sea, where Moscow has adapted to international sanctions by assembling a vast network of aging tankers nicknamed the "shadow fleet." These vessels, many operating under obscure flags and ownership structures, transport sanc-

tioned oil across global waters while obscuring their movements. This maritime web allows Russia to sell oil at prices that fund its war effort in Ukraine while undermining Western sanctions meant to limit such revenue. Several countries come out of economic necessity, others out of political calculation have welcomed discounted Russian crude. The opaque routing, tactics such as ship-to-ship transfers and the use of non-transparent insurance schemes have raised concerns about environmental hazards as well as the erosion of international maritime norms. Beyond hydrocarbons, Russia has explored new maritime corridors to bypass naval chokepoints and Western monitoring. The opening of Arctic sea routes due to melting ice offers Moscow long-term ambitions. Although these corridors remain risky and seasonal, Russia's investment in ice-breakers and Arctic ports demonstrates a strategic intention to shape future global trade routes and secure military access across the northern flank.

Where Russian troops or contractors are not present, Moscow often deploys a different kind of force: information manipulation. State-run media networks, social media campaigns and covert online operations have been used to influence elections, deepen social fractures and amplify anti-Western sentiment in various regions. In Africa, for example, pro-Russian narratives frequently portray Moscow as a champion of sovereignty and stability, contrasting its image with that of Europe and the United States. These narratives resonate in countries where colonial histories remain central to political discourse. Russian operatives have refined their messaging to fit local grievances, turning online platforms into battlegrounds for hearts and minds. However, the reach is not limited to developing countries. In Europe and North America, Russian troll farms and affiliated groups have at times attempted to influence debates on immigration, public health and national security. The aim is not necessarily to persuade but to disrupt to weaken trust in institutions, encourage political fragmentation and sow confusion. The effectiveness of such tactics varies, but their persistence reveals a broader pattern: Moscow views information disorder as a cost-effective tool to challenge adversaries far from its borders.

In some of the regions where Russia has made gains, its support has helped local rulers consolidate their authority. Mali's military rulers, for instance, have relied heavily on Russian backing to strengthen their position after severing ties with French forces. In the Central African Republic, Russia has provided security services and political advising to an extent that has given it considerable sway over government decisions. Such relationships benefit Moscow in several ways. They allow Russia to present itself as an alternative partner to Western democracies, one that does not lecture about human rights

or governance. They also secure access to natural resources particularly gold, diamonds and rare minerals that help finance Russia's global ambitions. Moreover, they guarantee political loyalty in international forums such as the United Nations, where even a few supportive votes can serve Russia's larger diplomatic goals. The downside is that these relationships often deepen authoritarian tendencies, fuel internal conflicts and weaken the prospects for long-term stability. Yet for Moscow, instability in distant regions is not necessarily a liability. Disorder provides openings for influence and Russia has learned to operate effectively in environments where conventional diplomacy struggles to take hold.

While much attention has focused on Africa, Russia has been quietly reasserting its presence in Central Asia as well. The region's states have attempted to diversify their foreign relations, particularly after the invasion of Ukraine raised alarm about Moscow's intentions. China's rising economic influence and Turkey's increased diplomatic engagement have also offered these states alternatives. Nevertheless, Russia remains a pivotal actor in the region, particularly in security matters. Its military bases, intelligence networks and labor-market connections continue to tie Central Asian countries to Moscow. Even where governments seek greater autonomy, they remain cautious not to antagonize Russia, whose political influence still permeates the region's elite circles.

Europe has faced Moscow's offshore activities in more ways that are direct. From cyberattacks targeting government institutions to covert financing of political parties, Russia has sought to create cracks within the European Union and NATO. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was the most blatant form of aggression, but it also served as a catalyst for European unity. Still, Moscow has not abandoned its efforts to weaken cohesion among European states. Energy dependence remains another lever. Although Europe has significantly reduced its reliance on Russian gas, Moscow continues to explore ways to exploit vulnerabilities. The sabotage of undersea pipelines in the Baltic Sea a case still under investigation—illustrates how critical infrastructure has become entangled in geopolitical confrontation.

What makes Moscow's offshore maneuvers particularly challenging is their fluidity. Russia seldom commits to a single method. It blends military presence with commercial ventures, mixes diplomacy with covert action and combines political patronage with information warfare. This adaptability enables Russia to shift strategies when confronted and to exploit openings wherever they appear. Unlike traditional great power rivalry defined by territorial control or formal alliances, Russia's modern approach is dispersed and opportunistic. It thrives in ambiguity, making it difficult for rivals to respond without escalating tensions or overextending themselves.

Oil: Wealth, Curse—and the Price of Defiance

Qamar Bashir



That chain is where American and British power has historically lived. In the Gulf monarchies, the relationship evolved into a bargain: security and survival in exchange for strategic alignment. The U.S. became the guarantor of maritime routes and regime stability, and in return the Gulf became the world's most important energy reservoir within an American-led order. The United States itself is also a giant producer...

FOR nations blessed with oil, the central question is never geological. It is political. Oil can finance schools, hospitals, roads, dignity, and independence—or it can finance coups, client rulers, sanctions, wars, and broken states. The difference is not the size of the reserves under the sand. The difference is whether the owners of that oil are allowed to own it in practice. Before 1953, Iran's petroleum was not simply an export commodity. It was an imperial system. Britain's Anglo-Iranian Oil Company dominated production and refining, and Iran's share of value was widely viewed inside Iran as humiliating—wealth extracted from Iranian soil, feeding foreign prosperity while ordinary Iranians remained poor. In 1951, Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh took the step that shook the entire post-war order: he pushed legislation to nationalize Iran's oil industry.

That single principle—"Iranian oil is for Iranian people"—was treated in London and Washington not as a commercial dispute but as a strategic revolt. In August 1953, Mosaddegh was removed in a coup funded by the United States and the United Kingdom, and the Shah's rule was restored. From the Iranian public's perspective, this was not merely regime change; it was a message to every oil-producing nation: ownership is tolerated only until it threatens the architecture of Western control. This is how the "oil curse" is manufactured. The curse is not oil itself. The curse is what happens when a nation tries to convert oil into sovereignty.

Look at the sheer scale of what is at stake. Venezuela sits on roughly 303 billion barrels of proven reserves; Saudi Arabia about 267 billion; Iran about 208.6 billion; Iraq about 145 billion; Kuwait about 101.5 billion; Libya about 48.4 billion; and even gas-rich Qatar holds about 25.2 billion barrels of proven crude reserves. In today's prices, this is not "resource wealth." It is civilizational leverage—trillions upon trillions of dollars in potential value across generations. So the key fight is not only over barrels in the ground, but over the entire chain that converts those barrels into money: drilling technology, service contracts, shipping insurance, tankers, refining capacity, trading houses, dollar clearing, and finally the security umbrella that protects friendly producers and suffocates defiant ones.

That chain is where American and British power has historically lived. In the Gulf monarchies, the relationship evolved into a bargain: security and survival in exchange for strategic alignment. The U.S. became the guarantor of maritime routes and regime stability, and in return the

Gulf became the world's most important energy reservoir within an American-led order. The United States itself is also a giant producer—about 21.91 million barrels per day in 2023, the largest share of world production—so "control" is not only about imports; it's also about shaping global pricing, shipping lanes, sanctions enforcement, and who can sell to whom. But when a producer refuses alignment, the logic flips: oil stops being "their national asset" and becomes "the world's problem"—a justification for pressure. Iran is the classic case. After the Shah was imposed back into power with Western backing, Iran became a central pillar of Western strategy—until popular resistance exploded into the 1979 revolution. The hostage crisis was a symptom, not the root: the deeper driver was the belief among millions of Iranians that their wealth had been managed for outsiders and for a domestic elite seen as subordinate to foreign interests. The revolution survived because it was not merely a government; it became a public identity—built on defiance and sacrifice. That is why decades of pressure did not dissolve it.

Then came the region's great furnace: the Iran-Iraq war. Saddam Hussein was treated as a counterweight to revolutionary Iran; the result was catastrophic human loss and the militarization of the entire Middle East. Even when that era ended, the template remained: defy the Western order and you face isolation, sanctions, and, if the moment suits, destruction. Iraq's later destruction was sold to the public with dramatic claims. But the deeper strategic obsession was always the same: who commands the oil state, and whose system the oil state finances. And now, in December 2025, the pattern is unfolding—loudly—in Venezuela. Reuters reports that on December 20, 2025, the United States intercepted an oil tanker near Venezuela. The vessel was reportedly carrying 1.8 million barrels of Venezuelan crude bound for China. Reuters also reports that U.S. authorities are pursuing additional vessels, describing an expanding crackdown and blockade concept aimed at sanctioned flows. This is not symbolic enforcement. It attacks the bloodstream of the Venezuelan economy, which relies heavily on oil revenue. Reuters notes exports falling sharply (from over 1 million bpd in September to an estimated 702,000 bpd in December), implying severe fiscal strangulation. And notice the exception that exposes the logic: even as "dark fleet" shipping is disrupted, Chevron continues operating under a U.S. license structure. The Wall Street Journal describes Venezuelan shipping largely stalling "except Chevron," underscoring

how sanctions enforcement can separate "illegal oil" from "licensed oil"—meaning the barrel is acceptable when it flows through approved channels. Reuters similarly describes Chevron's continued role under restricted authorization. This is the modern oil empire: not necessarily ownership of the wells, but command over the rules of extraction, trade, and cashflow.

Across the region, Western majors remain embedded where states permit them—often through partnerships, service contracts, or joint ventures. Iraq, for instance, is again signing major deals with U.S. and European firms; Reuters reports ExxonMobil's return via an agreement tied to the giant Majnoon field. Libya's National Oil Corporation is engaging BP and Shell to study major fields, a sign of how foreign expertise re-enters when political conditions allow. Qatar's North Field expansion, the backbone of future global gas supply, includes partnerships with ExxonMobil and other Western companies. Even in the Saudi-Kuwait "Neutral Zone," Chevron's legacy role appears in joint operations alongside state entities.

So when the West "benefits," it is not always by directly stealing national revenue in one crude transaction. It benefits by sitting at multiple toll booths: technology and services, project equity stakes, shipping and trading, refining margins, finance and insurance, and—most importantly—strategic power: the ability to punish a seller, freeze a buyer, choke a port, or seize a ship.

That is why oil becomes a curse precisely at the moment a nation tries to treat it as democratic wealth. The moment leaders say, "this belongs to our people," the system asks: will you still obey? If yes, you are protected. If not, your "resource blessing" is recast as a reason you must be disciplined. This is the real warning to oil nations—whether in the Gulf, in Africa, or in Latin America. Oil is wealth only if you are allowed to keep it wealth. If you attempt to convert it into independence against the priorities of great powers, oil becomes the trigger for destabilization, sanctions, and war. And that is why the same barrel can build prosperity in one country and produce ruin in another. The difference is not the oil. The difference is who is permitted to command the oil.

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

Briefs

LHC CJ
suspends
operation
of Punjab...

FROM PAGE 01
Maryam Nawaz on October 31 and mandates the resolution of land disputes within 90 days. It has been challenged before the LHC, and during a previous hearing on the matter, Justice Neelum had questioned the involvement of a newly-created force under the Punjab Enforcement Regulatory Authority (Pera) in such matters. She had also commented that "patwaris (revenue officials) and ACs (assistant commissioners) seem to have developed a desire to become judges", and questioned the jurisdiction of a patwari to take cognisance of a matter already pending before the Supreme Court.

All set for
PIA privatization today

FROM PAGE 01
However, if the bids are less than the reference price, priority will be given to the highest bidder. About the next step, the adviser said that the federal cabinet will approve the transaction within days, followed by the signing of the documents which the Privatisation Commission has received from the bidders. After the signing of the documents, the commission will have 90 days to fulfill some procedures, including the transfer of properties, liabilities and leased aircraft. As per the transaction structure, the bidding will be on the basis of a 75 per cent stake in PIA. Out of the 75pc bidding amount, 92.5pc will go to PIA instead of the national exchequer, while only 7.5pc will go to the national exchequer.

Saudi
Arabia
confers
Kingdom's...

FROM PAGE 01
King Abdulaziz Medal of Excellent Class underscores the depth of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations and the shared determination of both nations to further strengthen strategic cooperation in pursuit of regional and global peace. It also reflects his contributions toward regional peace and stability, including sustained collaboration in counter-terrorism and security. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF called on Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during his official visit to the Kingdom. During the meeting, both sides held discussions on matters of mutual interest, including regional security dynamics, defence and military cooperation, strategic collaboration, and evolving geopolitical challenges, it further said. The interaction reaffirmed the deep-rooted, historic, and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi leadership conveyed its appreciation for Field Marshal Asim Munir's professionalism and strategic outlook, noting his commitment to strengthening the longstanding, brotherly ties between the two countries. Field Marshal Asim Munir expressed gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the Saudi leadership for the honour, describing it as a reflection of the enduring bonds between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the security, stability, and prosperity of the Kingdom.

Govt
focused to
improve
electricity
system: PM

FROM PAGE 01
Recommendations were also made to enhance the reliability of the electricity transmission and voltage system.

Mashhood declares Pak Youth as the nation's future at MOIC Summit 2025

Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan stressed that prioritizing youth is critical for sustainable economic and social progress

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan attended the inaugural ceremony of the International MOIC Summit Pakistan 2025 here at the Higher Education Commission (HEC).

While addressing the opening session, he reaffirmed the government's unwavering commitment to empowering young people and creating transformative opportunities through inclusive policies, skills development, and global engagement. Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan emphasized that youth are Pakistan's most valuable national asset and the key drivers of future progress.

He highlighted that empowering young people is central to the country's development strategy. He added that targeted investments in education, innovation, and employment are vital to prepare Pakistan's youth for global competition.

Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan recalled his tenure in Punjab, where Pakistan's first National Youth Policy was introduced under the leadership of then Chief Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. He described the policy as a historic milestone that created structured pathways for personal, academic, and professional growth. He noted that the federal government is now expanding this vision nationwide to ensure comprehensive youth empowerment at every level. Rana Mashhood Ahmad



Khan stressed that prioritizing youth is critical for sustainable economic and social progress. He highlighted ongoing initiatives to enhance education quality, expand technical and vocational training, and generate meaningful employment opportunities. He added that these efforts aim to transform youth into productive contributors to the

nation's growth and innovation.

Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan outlined flagship programs under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme aligned with the 4Es framework. Khan explained that these include scholarships, skills development, entrepreneurship support, and employment facilitation. He emphasized that all in-

itiatives are merit-based, transparent, and ensure equal opportunities for every young citizen.

Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan underlined the significance of international platforms such as the MOIC Summit in fostering youth leadership and global collaboration. He said such forums allow young people to present innovative ideas, engage with international partners, and contribute to sustainable development goals. Chief PMYP announced that Pakistan will soon launch its first National E-Sports Policy, opening new digital and gaming-sector career pathways for youth.

Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan noted that forums like MOIC are essential for nurturing youth leadership. Speaking at the event, the President of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) praised Pakistan's youth-centric policies and described them as forward-looking and impactful. He added that Pakistan is emerging as a strong advocate for youth empowerment in the Muslim world, and platforms like MOIC foster shared vision and collaboration.

Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan concluded by emphasizing that the International MOIC Summit Pakistan 2025 provides a platform for youth leaders, experts, policymakers, and international stakeholders. He said the summit focuses on youth development, innovation, entrepreneurship, and global partnerships. It offers participants the opportunity to share solutions, exchange best practices, and contribute to effective policymaking, unlocking the full potential of Pakistan's youth.

Governor Punjab honours
Rizwan for excellence in sports

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Governor of Punjab, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, met with renowned sports dietitian and healthcare entrepreneur Rizwan Aftab Ahmed, acknowledging his valuable contributions to sports, healthcare, and humanitarian services in Pakistan. During the meeting, the Governor praised Ahmed's tireless efforts in uplifting national athletes and advancing medical nutrition across the country. He honored him with two Certificates of Achievement – one recognizing his role as Director of the National Hospital & Medical Centre (DHA, Lahore), and the other for his leadership as CEO of ACTIVIT, a medical-grade nutritional supplement brand. Rizwan Aftab Ahmed is widely recognized for establishing ACTIVERSE, a unique sup-



port ecosystem that provides comprehensive medical, nutritional, and financial assistance to Pakistan's elite athletes. His work has played a pivotal role in athlete rehabilitation, injury recovery, and performance optimization, earning him a reputation as an "unofficial safety net" for the nation's sporting talent. Through ACTIVERSE, he

has mentored and supported several of Pakistan's top sports figures, including Olympic gold medalist Arshad Nadeem, Commonwealth weightlifting champion Nooh Dastagir Butt, tennis legend Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, undefeated boxing champion Usman Wazeer, and Guinness World Record holder and alpinist Shehroze

Kashif. In cricket, his guidance and support have extended to some of the country's most prominent names, including legendary fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, national team players Salman Ali Agha and Shan Masood, as well as emerging talents Sahibzada Farhan and Hasan Nawaz, among others. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that Rizwan Aftab Ahmed embodies the true spirit of service and excellence, adding that individuals like him project a positive image of Pakistan on the global stage. In response, Rizwan Aftab Ahmed thanked the Governor for the honor and reaffirmed his commitment to serving the nation. "I am deeply humbled by this recognition. I pledge to continue working for our athletes, our healthcare system, and humanity at large, so that Pakistan shines on the world stage," he said.

American Tien
beats Belgian
Blockx to win Next
Gen ATP Finals title

JEDDAH: American Learner Tien overpowered Belgian opponent Alexander Blockx 4-3(4) 4-2 4-1 to win the Next Gen ATP Finals on Sunday, the year-ending exhibition tournament between the eight highest-ranked players on the tour aged 20 and under. The tournament uses a modified format, where a player needs to win four games to clinch a set, and winning one point at deuce is enough to take the game.

Tien, who won his first trophy on the tour at the Moselle Open last month, held his nerve and made only 12 unforced errors while Blockx had 23, as the American won the match in just under an hour. "I'm really happy. I knew it was going to be a tough match. I don't think (Blockx) missed a serve for the first set-and-a-half. He's been playing great in these conditions all week," said Tien, who lost last year's final to Joao Fonseca.

Blockx, who served seven aces while his opponent had only one, made his intentions clear from the start, attacking the left-handed Tien's backhand with a fast serve and running up to the net to apply pressure. Tien, ranked 28th in the world, pushed Blockx back with a well-placed lob before winning the point with a drive volley and although Blockx, ranked 116th, saved a break point and pushed the first set into a tiebreaker, top seed Tien outplayed his fellow 20-year-old. Tien won the second set with a decisive break, using his powerful forehand to push Blockx back until the under-pressure Belgian second seed hit over the baseline. – Agencies

Pakistan
emerges as
key players
in Trump
policy

FROM PAGE 01

ternational regional strategy, reshaping US policy and rewriting the balance of South Asia in 2025. The article states that the thaw in US-Pakistan relations began with a series of discreet counterterrorism exchanges and a key moment came in March when President Trump praised Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts during a national address. This was seen as a break from longstanding policy and marked a shift in Washington's approach, recognizing Pakistan as a newer and stronger ally. It highlights that what had long been a brittle, transactional relationship began to take on greater importance as both sides realigned to the new realities. The article states that a decisive turning point came with Pakistan's unexpected showing in its brief, but intense May clash with India, an outcome that reportedly left President Trump stunned. The conflict showcased a level of military discipline, strategic focus and asymmetric capability that Washington had thought unattainable. The article states that officials in Washington, who had casually written off Pakistan as a fading power, began referring to it once again as a serious regional actor. The article also mentions the growing relationship between President Trump and Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir including their lunch meeting. The luncheon meeting was the first for any head of Pakistan's military in history. This was followed by the red carpet visit of Syed Asim Munir to Central Command Headquarters for high-level talks. At the beginning of 2026, Washington Times article states that Pakistan sits near the center of President Trump's emerging grand strategy for South Asia and the Far East.

Two get
death
sentence in
blasphemy
case

FROM PAGE 01

ined Rs500,000 under Section 295-C, 10 years imprisonment under Section 295-A, seven years under PECA 2016, and five years along with a fine of Rs50,000 under ATA 1997. A senior police official of Sahiwal district told Dawn that "a total of 22 blasphemy-related cases were registered in Sahiwal district in 2025". This verdict marks one of the most severe punishments handed down by the court under blasphemy-related provisions during the current year. Earlier in March, a Rawalpindi court had sentenced five men accused of blasphemy to death, life imprisonment and a total of 100 years in prison.

Mbappé equals 'idol' Ronaldo with his
record 59th goal in a year for Real Madrid

Kylian Mbappé Equals Cristiano Ronaldo's Real Madrid Single-Year Record with 59th Goal, Secures 2-0 Win Over Sevilla as Madrid Eyes Title Amid Coach Alonso's Pressure and Defensive Struggles

BARCELONA: Kylian Mbappé scored his 59th goal for Real Madrid in 2025 on Saturday to equal the club record for the most in a year held by Cristiano Ronaldo. The milestone was about to escape the France striker until he converted a penalty kick with four minutes left to complete a 2-0 win over 10-man Sevilla in Madrid's final game of the year. Mbappé matched Ronaldo's tally from 2013 on his 27th birthday. After embracing his teammates, he marked the feat with a subdued version of Ronaldo's trademark goal celebration – whereby the Portugal forward leaps up and thrusts his arms downwards upon landing – before blowing a kiss at the television cameras. The former Paris Saint-Germain star, who joined Madrid in the summer of 2024, has scored 29 times for Madrid this season, including a league-leading 18. "It's incredible, in my first (full) year to do what Cristiano did. (He's) my idol, the best player in the history of Real Madrid,"



Mbappé said. "My celebration is for him. I wanted to do that because he helped me adapt here and now I can help Madrid win games with my goals. I wanted to share it with him. I have a really good relationship with him, he is my friend, and I wish him and all Madrid fans a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." Jude Bellingham scored with a header in the 38th minute and Sevilla lost defender Marcao to a second booking for rash tackles with 20 minutes left. – Agencies

Jacob Duffy's nine-for seals NZ series win over WI

Jacob Duffy's Career-Best 9-Wicket Haul Guides New Zealand to 323-Run Victory Over West Indies, Securing 2-0 Series Win at Bay Oval with Conway and Latham Centuries

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Jacob Duffy produced a career-best performance as New Zealand crushed West Indies by 323 runs in the third Test at Bay Oval to seal the series 2-0. Duffy claimed five wickets in the second innings to finish with outstanding match figures of 9 for 128, as the visitors were bowled out for 138 while chasing an improbable target of 462.

He returned figures of 5/42 in the second innings, while Ajaz Patel also impressed with his best home Test performance, picking up 3 for 23 in the innings and 6/136 in the match after going wicketless in his previous three Tests in New Zealand. West Indies began the final day with the aim of batting time, and openers Brandon King and John Campbell showed early resilience. On a pitch offering uneven bounce, the pair negotiated the first session with discipline, finding scoring opportunities through the off side. King was the more fluent, striking crisp cover drives and confident pulls on his way to a well-compiled fifty that included 10 boundaries.

Campbell, meanwhile, settled in for a long stay and survived an early leg-before appeal off Michael Rae that was overturned on review. By the drinks break, West Indies had reached 74 without loss. The hosts finally broke through soon after, triggering a dramatic collapse. Duffy

removed King for 67 with a short ball that climbed awkwardly and took the glove. Ajaz then struck when Campbell misused an attempted big hit and was well caught by Glenn Phillips at mid-on. The wickets began to tumble as Kavem Hodge edged a defensive prod off Ajaz to short leg, where Rachin Ravindra completed a sharp reflex catch. Duffy continued to exploit the bounce and movement, dismissing Alick Athanaze with a loose drive that found the edge before removing Justin Greaves with

another low-length delivery, Daryl Mitchell holding a hard catch at first slip. From a strong position of 87 without loss, West Indies slumped to 99 for 5 by lunch, with Shai Hope and Roston Chase left to steady the innings. The resistance was short-lived. Chase fell after a 52-ball stand that yielded just six runs, gloving a sharp bouncer from Duffy to second slip to become the seamer's fourth victim. Hope showed immense patience in a 78-ball knock for just three runs but was eventually

trapped lbw by Ajaz following a successful DRS review. Phillips then bowled Kemar Roach through the gate, while Tevin Inlach continued to fight, reaching Tea unbeaten on 15 off 78 balls as West Indies went into the interval at 138 for 8.

After the break, Anderson Phillip, who had been dropped earlier, was dismissed lbw by Ravindra. Duffy returned with the second new ball and promptly bowled Jayden Seales for a duck, wrapping up the match in the final session. Earlier in the Test, Devon Conway and Tom Latham made history by becoming the only opening pair to score centuries in both innings of a Test match.

Conway's magnificent 227 and Latham's 137, along with Ravindra's unbeaten 72, propelled New Zealand to 575-8 declared in the first innings. West Indies replied with 420, with Hodge's unbeaten 123 the lone century, while King made 63 and three other batters fell in the 40s. Duffy picked up four wickets in the innings, with Ajaz claiming three. New Zealand then piled on the pressure with a rapid 306 for 2 declared in just 54 overs in the second innings, once again built on centuries from Conway and Latham. Set a daunting target, West Indies fell well short, as Duffy's brilliance sealed a dominant win and a comprehensive series triumph for the hosts. – Agencies



Briefs

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated 03 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.23 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 280.25. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 281.1 and Rs 283.2, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 50 paise to close at Rs 328.70, from the previous day's close of Rs 328.20, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.79, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs01 and closed at Rs 375.82 compared to the previous day's Rs 374.82. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham declined by 01 paise and closed at Rs 76.29, while Saudi Riyal surged by 01 paise to close Rs 74.71.—APP

Gold price rises by Rs 6,200 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of per tola 24-karat gold in Pakistan increased by Rs6,200 on Monday, reaching Rs462,362 compared to Rs456,162 on the previous day. According to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold rose by Rs5,315, climbing to Rs396,400 from Rs391,085 on last day. Likewise, the rate of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up by Rs4,872, closing at Rs363,379 against Rs358,507. In the international market, gold prices increased by \$62, reaching \$4,400 compared to \$4,338 on the previous day. Meanwhile, the price of per tola silver rose by Rs218, reaching Rs7,205 from Rs6,987 on the last trading day. The 10-gram silver price increased by Rs187, closing at Rs6,177 as against Rs5,990 the previous day. International silver prices also witnessed an uptick of \$2.18, rising to \$69.30 compared to \$67.15.—APP

EBRD supports construction of food supplement plant in Kazakhstan

ASTANA: The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is providing a loan of up to 25 million to Orzax Central Asia – a newly established subsidiary of Orzax Türkiye – for the construction and operation of a greenfield food supplement production facility in Turkistan region of Kazakhstan. ebrd.com reports. The new facility will be Orzax Türkiye's first international production base, forming a cornerstone of the company's growth strategy. Once operational, the plant will meet customer demand across Asia and eastern Europe, establishing Kazakhstan as a regional manufacturing hub for high-quality food supplements. By expanding local production of safe, certified supplements, the project will help to improve access to affordable nutritional products, supporting healthier diets and reducing the burden on public health systems in Kazakhstan, Central Asia as a whole and beyond Kazakhstan is currently heavily reliant on imports for many processed foods and nutritional supplements – a gap that limits innovation, restricts workforce development and prevents the country from fully exploiting the value of its agricultural resources. This project represents a significant milestone in addressing that dependence. Beyond the increase in production capacity, the facility will also serve as a platform for knowledge transfer and skills development, bringing international expertise to the local workforce and creating new employment opportunities in advanced manufacturing.—APP

Pak envoy meet HICs seeking more Chinese investments

Ambassador Hashmi appreciated the HICs' sustained efforts across a wide geographic spread, ranging from Hong Kong-Macao-Greater Bay Area, the region known for innovation and science and technology, Xinjiang which is a gateway to Pakistan, Shandong a major industrial base and Henan as an emerging agriculture hub

DNA

BEIJING: Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's Ambassador to China held individual meetings with Pakistan's Honorary Investment Counsellors (HICs) in China to take stock of their work, strengthen coordination, and set priorities for the year ahead. The meeting was attended by Ms. Ma Xiaoli, representing Mr. Yuan Jinming, Mr. Zhang Baozhong, Mr. Wang Zihai and Mr. Jian Peng. Besides individual meetings, the Ambassador also held a collective working luncheon with the HICs.

Ambassador Hashmi appreciated the HICs' sustained efforts across a wide geographic spread, ranging from Hong Kong-Macao-Greater Bay Area, the region known for innovation and science and technology, Xinjiang which is a gateway to Pakistan, Shandong a major industrial base and Henan as an emerging agriculture hub. He underscored the HICs' important role in advancing trade, investment and people-to-people linkages. He encouraged them to synergize their efforts with Pakistan's national development priorities and mobilize Chinese investments in export-oriented sectors of Pakistan. Highlighting progress made in the past two years to mobilize in-



vestment in priority sectors, the Ambassador briefed them on the context of identifying 21 priority sectors, channeling investments in these sectors through joint ventures to boost productive capacities and integrating investments with human capital development. The Ambassador expressed satisfaction over the unprecedented results achieved from the two B2B Investment Conferences held in Shenzhen and Beijing

and six sectoral investment roadshows held since last year which cumulatively have yielded signing of over 300 MoUs and 25 Joint Ventures worth \$11 billion so far. He shared with them the active follow up mechanism underway in Pakistan at high level to provide facilitation in implanting the MoUs. The Ambassador advised HICs to actively pursue implementation of MoUs falling within their respective jurisdic-

tions to translate commitments into tangible outcomes.

Ambassador Hashmi also briefed the HICs on preparations made so far for the first sectoral, China focused Agriculture Investment Conference on 19 January 2026 in Islamabad and appreciated the role the HICs were playing to encourage participation by leading Chinese agricultural enterprises. The HICs welcomed the initiative to convene focused annual review

by the Ambassador, marking the beginning of an institutionalized engagement with the HICs. They shared their plans for 2026 and expressed resolve to lend their full support to the Embassy's economic diplomacy agenda, especially enhancement of Chinese investments in Pakistan and increase in Pakistani exports to China, while boosting bilateral cooperation in these mutually beneficial areas.

Trump removes nearly 30 career diplomats

Politico was the first to report on the ambassadorial recalls, which have drawn concern from some lawmakers and the union representing American diplomats

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration is recalling nearly 30 career diplomats from ambassadorial and other senior embassy posts as it moves to reshape the US diplomatic posture abroad with personnel deemed fully supportive of President Donald Trump's "America First" priorities. The chiefs of mission in at least 29 countries were informed last week that their tenures would end in January, according to two State Department officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal personnel moves. All of them had taken up their posts in the Biden administration but had survived an initial purge in the early months of Trump's second term that targeted mainly political appointees. That changed on Wednesday when they began to receive notices from officials in Washington about their imminent departures. Ambassadors serve at the pleasure of the president although they typically remain at their posts for three to four years. Those affected by the shake-up are not losing their foreign service jobs but will be returning to Washington for other assignments should they wish to take them, the officials said. The State Department declined to comment on specific numbers or ambassadors affected, but defended the changes, calling them "a standard process in any administration." It noted that an ambassador is "a personal representative of the president and it is the president's right to ensure that he has individuals in these countries who advance the America First agenda. Africa is the continent most affected by the removals, with ambassadors from 13 countries being removed: Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia and Uganda. Second is Asia, with ambassadorial changes coming to six countries: Fiji, Laos, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Vietnam affected. Four countries in Europe (Armenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovakia) are affected; as are two each in the Middle East (Algeria and Egypt); South and Central Asia (Nepal and Sri Lanka); and the Western Hemisphere (Guatemala and Suriname). Politico was the first to report on the ambassadorial recalls, which have drawn concern from some lawmakers and the union representing American diplomats.—DNA

Israeli FM urges Jews to move to Israel week after Sydney attack

JERUSALEM: Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar called on Sunday for Jews in Western countries to move to Israel to escape rising antisemitism, one week after 15 were shot dead at a Jewish event in Sydney. "Jews have the right to live in safety everywhere. But we see and fully understand what is happening, and we have a certain historical experience. Today, Jews are being hunted across the world," Saar said at a public candle lighting marking the last day of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. "Today I call on Jews in England, Jews in France, Jews in Australia, Jews in Canada, Jews in Belgium: come to the Land of Israel! Come home!" Saar said at the ceremony, held with leaders of Jewish communities and organizations worldwide. Since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, sparked by Hamas's unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, Israeli leaders have repeatedly denounced a surge in antisemitism in Western countries and accused their governments of failing to curb it. Australian authorities have said the December 14 attack on a Hanukkah event on Sydney's Bondi Beach was inspired by the ideology of the Islamic State jihadist group. On Tuesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged Western governments to better protect their Jewish citizens.

"I demand that Western governments do what is necessary to fight antisemitism and provide the required safety and security for Jewish communities worldwide," Netanyahu said in a video address. In October, Saar accused British authorities of failing to take action to curb a "toxic wave of antisemitism" following an attack outside a Manchester synagogue on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, in which two people were killed and four wounded.—APP

Japan prepares to restart world's biggest nuclear plant

NIIGATA: Japan took the final step to allow the world's largest nuclear power plant to resume operations with a regional vote on Monday, a watershed moment in the country's return to nuclear energy nearly 15 years after the Fukushima disaster. Kashiwazaki-Kariwa, located about 220 km (136 miles) northwest of Tokyo, was among 54 reactors shut after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami crippled the Fukushima Daiichi plant in the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl. Since then, Japan has restarted 14 of the 33 that remain operable, as it tries to wean itself off imported fossil fuels. Kashiwazaki-Kariwa will be the first operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), which ran the doomed Fukushima plant. On Monday, Niigata prefecture's assembly passed a vote of confidence on Niigata Governor Hideyo Hanazumi, who backed the restart last month, effectively allowing for the plant to begin operations again. "This is a milestone, but this is not the end," Hanazumi told reporters after the vote. "There is no end in terms of ensuring the safety of Niigata residents." While lawmakers voted in support of Hanazumi, the assembly session, the last for the year, exposed the community's divisions over the restart, despite new jobs and potentially lower electricity bills. "This is nothing other than a political settlement that does not take into account the will of the Niigata residents," an assembly member opposed to the restart told fellow lawmakers as the vote was about to begin. Outside, around 300 protesters stood in the cold holding banners reading 'No Nukes', 'We oppose the restart of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa' and 'Support Fukushima'. "I am truly angry from the bottom of my heart," Kenichiro Ishiyama, a 77-year-old protester from Niigata city, told Reuters after the vote. "If something was to happen at the plant, we would be the ones to suffer the consequences." TEPCO is considering reactivating the first of seven reactors at the plant on January 20, public broadcaster NHK reported. Kashiwazaki-Kariwa's total capacity is 8.2 GW, enough to power a few million homes. The pending restart would bring one 1.36 GW unit online next year and start another one with the same capacity around 2030. "We remain firmly committed to never repeating such an accident and ensuring Niigata residents never experience anything similar," said TEPCO spokesperson Masakatsu Takata. Takata declined to comment on timing. TEPCO shares closed up 2 percent in afternoon trade in Tokyo, higher than the wider Nikkei index, which was up 1.8 percent. TEPCO earlier this year pledged to inject 100 billion yen (\$641 million) into the prefecture over the next 10 years as it sought to win the support of Niigata residents. But a survey published by the prefecture in October found 60 percent of residents did not think conditions for the restart had been met. Nearly 70 percent were worried about TEPCO operating the plant. Ayako Oga, 52, settled in Niigata after fleeing the area around the Fukushima plant in 2011 with 160,000 other evacuees. Her old home was inside the 20 km irradiated exclusion zone. The farmer and anti-nuclear activist has joined the Niigata protests. "We know firsthand the risk of a nuclear accident and cannot dismiss it," said Oga, adding that she still struggles with post-traumatic stress-like symptoms from what happened at Fukushima.—DNA

Coast Guard pursuing another tanker helping Venezuela skirt sanctions

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida: The US Coast Guard on Sunday was pursuing another sanctioned oil tanker in the Caribbean Sea as the Trump administration appeared to be intensifying its targeting of such vessels connected to the Venezuelan government. The pursuit of the tanker, which was confirmed by a US official briefed on the operation, comes after the US administration announced Saturday it had seized a tanker for the second time in less than two weeks. The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly about the ongoing operation and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said Sunday's pursuit involved "a sanctioned dark fleet vessel that is part of Venezuela's illegal sanctions evasion." The official said the vessel was flying a false flag and under a judicial seizure order. The Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the US Coast Guard, deferred questions about the operation to the White House, which did not offer comment on the operation. Saturday's predawn seizure of a Panama-flagged vessel called Centuries targeted what the White House described as a "falsely flagged vessel operating as part of the Venezuelan shadow fleet to traffic stolen oil." The Coast Guard, with assistance from the Navy, seized a sanctioned tanker called Skipper on Dec. 10, another part of the shadow fleet of tankers that the US says operates on the fringes of the law to move sanctioned cargo. It was not even flying a nation's flag when it was seized by

the Coast Guard. President Donald Trump, after that first seizure, said that the US would carry out a "blockade" of Venezuela. It all comes as Trump has ratcheted up his rhetoric toward Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. This past week Trump demanded that Venezuela return assets that it seized from US oil companies years ago, justifying anew his announcement of a "blockade" against oil tankers traveling to or from the South American country that face American sanctions. Trump cited the lost US investments in Venezuela when asked about his newest tactic in a pressure campaign against Maduro, suggesting the Republican administration's moves are at least somewhat motivated by disputes over oil investments, along with accusations of drug trafficking. Some sanctioned tankers already are diverting away from Venezuela. US oil companies dominated Venezuela's petroleum industry until the country's leaders moved to nationalize the sector, first in the 1970s and again in the 21st century under Maduro and his predecessor, Hugo Chávez. Compensation offered by Venezuela was deemed insufficient, and in 2014, an international arbitration panel ordered the country's socialist government to pay \$1.6 billion to ExxonMobil. Maduro said in a message Sunday on Telegram that Venezuela has spent months "denouncing, challenging and defeating a campaign of aggression that goes from psychological terrorism to corsairs attacking oil tankers." He added: "We are ready to accelerate

the pace of our deep revolution!" Sen. Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, who has been critical of Trump's Venezuela policy, called the tanker seizures a "provocation and a prelude to war." "Look, at any point in time, there are 20, 30 governments around the world that we don't like that are either socialist or communist or have human rights violations," Paul said on ABC's "This Week." "But it isn't the job of the American soldier to be the policeman of the world." The targeting of tankers comes as Trump has ordered the Defense Department to carry out a series of attacks on vessels in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean that his administration alleges are smuggling fentanyl and other illegal drugs into the United States and beyond. At least 104 people have been killed in 28 known strikes since early September. The strikes have faced scrutiny from US lawmakers and human rights activists, who say the administration has offered scant evidence that its targets are indeed drug smugglers and that the fatal strikes amount to extrajudicial killings. Trump has repeatedly said Maduro's days in power are numbered. White House chief of staff Susie Wiles said in an interview with Vanity Fair published last week that Trump "wants to keep on blowing boats up until Maduro cries uncle." Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Virginia, told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that Trump's use of military to mount pressure on Maduro runs contrary to Trump's pledge to keep the United States out of unnecessary wars.—Agencies

Kyzylorda region to attract over 750b tenge in investments

ASTANA : Around 1.6 trillion tenge in investments were attracted to the Kyzylorda region's economy between 2022 and 2024, akim (governor) of the region, Nurlybek Nalibayev, said at a briefing of the Central Communications Service, Qazinform News Agency reports.

According to him, the region has established a favorable investment climate, and new major projects are being implemented. Over the period from 2022 to 2024, around 1.6 trillion tenge in investments were attracted to the regional economy.

"This year, the plan was to attract 631.4 billion tenge in investments to the region. As of the end of November, 717.9 billion tenge has already been secured, exceeding the target by 13.7%. The total volume of investments is expected to surpass 750 billion tenge by yearend," Nurlybek Nalibayev said. He added that compared to 2021, the volume of investments increased by 233%, with private investments accounting for 70%.

"Foreign direct investment reached \$173 million in the first half of the year and is projected to climb to \$280 million by yearend," the governor said. Earlier, Qazinform News Agency reported that Kyzylorda region is implementing a set of measures aimed at more efficient use of irrigation water.—APP

UAE president discusses AI, tech coop with Elon Follow

ABU DHABI: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met on Sunday with Elon Musk for talks focused on artificial intelligence, advanced technology and international cooperation in emerging sectors.

According to WAM, the two discussed ongoing developments in AI and next-generation technologies, and how such tools could be deployed to improve quality of life, accelerate global innovation and support long-term economic development.

Both sides stressed the importance of international partnerships and knowledge exchange to speed up technological adoption and strengthen countries' ability to respond to future challenges.

The meeting was attended by senior UAE leaders including the crown princes of Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Musk has maintained warm ties with the Emirates in recent years, appearing at government-backed technology forums and positioning Tesla and SpaceX as partners in the region's innovation push.

He spoke at the World Government Summit in Dubai in 2017 and again in 2023, where he praised the UAE's focus on digital transformation.—APP

Syrian security forces dismantle Daesh terror cell

LONDON: Syrian internal security units dismantled a cell of the Daesh terror group in the Daraya area southwest of Damascus on Sunday.

Authorities, in coordination with the General Intelligence Directorate, arrested a Daesh hideout and arrested several militants Syria and the United States have accused the terror group of carrying out a deadly ambush earlier this month that resulted in the deaths of three Americans and injuries to two Syrian service personnel in Palmyra, in central Syria. Brig. Gen. Ahmad al-Dalati, head of internal security in the Damascus countryside, announced that the operation resulted in the dismantling of the cell and the arrest of a Daesh leader, along with six other members. Several weapons and ammunition were also seized, he added. He said the operation is part of the interior ministry's broader strategy to eliminate terrorist sources, avert threats to community security, and maintain peace and stability in the country, the Syrian Arab News Agency reported.—APP

Briefs

What is gross metering and how will it impact solar consumers?

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Amid prevailing solar boom in the country, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has advised a major policy shift seeking to replace the existing net metering system with a gross metering mechanism for rooftop solar consumers, citing a growing financial burden on conventional grid users. Under the proposed Nepra Prosumer Regulations (NPR), a newly drafted 18-page document uploaded to the regulator's website, future domestic solar consumers will trade electricity with their respective distribution companies (Discos) through gross metering rather than net metering. However, existing net metering consumers with valid seven-year contracts will continue to sell their surplus electricity at Rs22 per unit until the expiry of their agreements. For new solar installations, electricity exports will be compensated under a gross metering framework at a proposed buyback tariff of Rs11.30 per unit. These contracts will be valid for five years and may be extended on a mutual basis. Nepra has invited feedback from stakeholders and consumers in 30 days and may hold a public hearing before finalising the regulations, an official said.

Bondi shooters conducted 'tactical' training in countryside

NEWS DESK

SYDNEY: Two suspects in last week's deadly mass shooting at Australia's Bondi Beach trained for the attack in the countryside, police alleged in court documents Monday, as Prime Minister Anthony Albanese vowed tougher laws against hate speech and extremism. Father and son Sajid Akram and Naveed are accused of targeting a Hanukkah event on Bondi Beach, killing 15 people in the nation's deadliest mass shooting in almost three decades. Police documents released Monday said the two had carried out "firearms training" in what was believed to be the New South Wales countryside before the shooting. Pictures were released showing the accused firing shotguns and moving in what authorities described as a "tactical manner". The pair also recorded a video in October railing against "Zionists" while sitting in front of a Daesh flag and detailing their motivations for the attack, police said. And they made a nighttime "reconnaissance" trip to Bondi Beach just days before the killings, documents showed.

Forex reserves hit three-year high

Import cover improves without debt buildup: finance ministry

SBP reserves have been rebuilt from \$2.9 billion to about \$15.9 billion, nearly a 5.5x increase, and forward liabilities have been reduced from \$5.7 billion in February 2023 to below \$2 billion. This time, reserves rose while debt stabilized, improving both stock and quality of external buffers

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad has said that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have reached their highest level since March 2022, underscoring a material strengthening of the country's external position and a clear break from past, debt-led stabilization cycles. "Quality over quantity: forex reserves rise, import cover improves - without debt buildup/decline in foreign debt-GDP in 2022-2025 vs 2015-2022. Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have reached their highest level since March 2022, underscoring a material strengthening of the country's external position and a clear break from past, debt-led stabilisation cycles", he posted on his official 'X' handle. He said total foreign exchange reserves

have risen to \$21.1 billion, with the State Bank of Pakistan (State Bank of Pakistan) holding \$15.9 billion (the highest level since March 4, 2022) while commercial banks' reserves stand at \$5.2 billion. Import cover has improved to over 2.60-month from 2.38-month earlier, compared to less than two weeks in February 2023, indicating greater resilience in trade and payments. Khurram noted that the current reserve accumulation was structurally different from earlier episodes, as confidence has been rebuilt largely without fresh external borrowing. Comparing trends, he said that during the period from June 2015 to June 2022, external public sector debt increased from \$55 billion to \$100 billion (an average rise of \$6.4 billion per year), while SBP's foreign exchange reserves declined, resulting in higher debt and

weaker buffers. In contrast, since June 2022 till 2025, public sector external debt has remained broadly unchanged in absolute terms, while the external debt-to-GDP ratio has declined from 31 percent to 26 percent by June 2025. SBP reserves have been rebuilt from \$2.9 billion to about \$15.9 billion, nearly a 5.5x increase, and forward liabilities have been reduced from \$5.7 billion in February 2023 to below \$2 billion. This time, reserves rose while debt stabilized, improving both stock and quality of external buffers. For stakeholders, markets and investors, he said this signaled a reduction in sovereign external risk, greater durability of macroeconomic stability, greater confidence that stability is sustainable, and improved prospects for medium-term credit and ratings outlook. For businesses and corporates, he said the improved FX liquidity and import

planning reduced uncertainty around payments and LCs, and more stable environment for pricing, costing, and investment. For the economy and public, he said lower risk of external shocks feeding into inflation, stronger capacity to manage volatility without disruption, and gradual restoration of economic confidence. The advisor said Pakistan has rebuilt reserves without piling up debt, restored import cover from weeks to months, forward FX risk materially reduced and strengthened its external position both quantitatively and qualitatively. He said rising forex reserves and sharply improved import cover reflect a stronger, more resilient, and more credible external position built this time on reforms, discipline, and sustainability, not debt. "This is not just a numerical recovery - It is a structural improvement in economic strength and confidence," he remarked.



BAGHDAD: President Asif Ali Zardari visited shrines and offered nawafil and met the administrators of the shrines. - DNA

President pays respects at holy shrines in Baghdad

BAGHDAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday visited the holy shrines of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA) and Imam-e-Azam Abu Hanifa (RA) here. The president, who is on a four-day visit to Iraq, also visited the shrines of Imam Musa al-Kazim and Imam Muhammad al-Taqi al-Jawad (AS) at Kazimiya. He offered Fateha at the shrines and prayed for peace, unity, and security of the Muslim Ummah. At the Kazimiya shrine, President Zardari penned his remarks in the visitors' book. He described the teachings of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) as an eternal source of knowledge, patience, wisdom, and moral strength. He also held meetings with the custodians and preachers at all the shrines. - APP

Moscow car blast kills Russian general

MOSCOW: A senior Russian general was killed in southern Moscow on Monday after an explosive device placed under his car went off, investigators said in a statement. Russia's Investigative Committee, which examines major crimes, said it had opened a probe into the "murder" of Lieutenant General Fani Sarvarov, head of the training department within the General Staff. The possibility that the attack was "linked" to "Ukrainian special forces" was among the lines of inquiry, it said. Since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, Kyiv has been blamed for several attacks targeting Russian military officials and pro-Kremlin personalities in Russia and in Russian-controlled Ukrainian regions. - APP

Global nuclear arms control under pressure in 2026

PARIS: The fragile global legal framework for nuclear weapons control faces further setbacks in 2026, eroding guardrails to avoid a nuclear crisis. The first half of the year will see two key events: the US-Russia bilateral treaty, New START, expires on February 5, and in April, New York hosts the Review Conference (RevCon) of the Treaty on the NPT - the cornerstone of global nuclear security frameworks. The RevCon, held every four to five years, is meant to keep the NPT alive. But during the last two sessions, the 191 signatory states failed to agree on a final document, and experts expect the same outcome in April. "I think this is going to be a difficult RevCon," said Alexandra Bell, head of US-based global security nonprofit the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, at a UN-hosted online conference in early December. "In terms of the current state and near future prospects of nuclear arms control architecture, things are bleak," she added. Anton Khlopov, director of Russian think-tank the Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS), took an even starker point of view, saying at the same event that "we are at the point of almost complete dismantlement of arms control architecture". - APP

'Punjab LG polls to be on party basis, government assures LHC

Petitioner requests court to make assistant advocate general's statement on party-based polls a part of record

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Monday apprised the Lahore High Court (LHC) that the local government elections will be held on a party basis and will feature the issuance of party tickets. Appearing before the court during a case hearing pertaining to multiple petitions filed against the Local Government Act 2025, the Punjab's assistant advocate general told Justice Sultan Tanveer Ahmed that the local government department has submitted its report before the LHC. The development relates to the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) October decision to hold the LG polls in the province under the Punjab Local Government Act, 2025. During the hearing today, petitioner Sheikh Imtiaz's lawyer

requested the court to make the assistant advocate general's statement on party-based polls a part of the record. Representing the electoral body, ECP Law DG Khurram Shahzad said that the authority had written as many as 80 letters to the Punjab government in the last four years over LG polls. "We are bound to hold elections under whatever act the government brings," he told the court. Shahzad also highlighted that the provincial government had given a January 10 deadline for arrangements for the elections. The court then adjourned the hearing till Tuesday (tomorrow). It is pertinent to mention here that the petitioner argued that amendments made to the Punjab Local Government Act 2017 had resulted in local government elections being conducted on a non-party basis, which, according to the plea, would undermine democratic norms.

US, Ukraine hail 'productive' Miami talks

MIAMI: US and Ukrainian envoys issued a joint statement on Sunday that hailed "productive and constructive" talks in Miami but did not announce any apparent breakthrough in efforts to end the war with Russia.

Top representatives from both Ukraine and Russia, as well as Kyiv's European allies, have been in southern Florida over the past several days for a series of separate talks hosted by US President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff. The meetings were the latest in a weeks-long diplomatic blitz over plans to end the war, after Washington last month presented a 28-point proposal widely seen as echoing the Kremlin's demands.

It has since been redrafted following Ukraine and Europe's involvement, though its contents have not been publicly disclosed. "Over the last three days in Florida, the Ukrainian delegation held a series of productive and constructive meetings with American and European partners," Witkoff and Ukraine's top negotiator, Rustem Umerov, said in separate statements on X. They said a bilateral US-Ukraine meeting focused on developing and aligning positions on "four key documents" - a "20-point plan," a "Multilateral security guarantee framework," a "US Security guarantee framework for Ukraine" and an "economic & prosperity plan." "Particular attention was given to discussing timelines and the sequencing of next steps," they said, without announcing any further meetings. - APP

New Zealand concludes free trade agreement with India

DNA

NEW DELHI: New Zealand and India struck a free trade agreement, both governments said on Monday, making it easier for New Zealand's exporters to reach the world's biggest population and an economy forecast to be worth NZ\$12 trillion (\$7 trillion) by 2030. The agreement eliminates or reduces tariffs on 95% of New Zealand's exports to India with more than half of products to be duty free on day one of the pact, improving access to India's rapidly expanding middle class, the New Zealand government said. New Zealand would offer some 1,667 temporary work visas a year for people in areas where it has skills shortages, including doctors, nurses, teachers, technology professionals and engineers, and another 1,000 places a year in its working holiday visa program, matching Australia's free trade pact with India. "The gains are wide-ranging and significant," said New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon. "India is the world's most populous country and is the fastest-growing big economy, and that creates opportunities for jobs for Kiwis, exports and growth," he added.

Southeast Asia bloc meets to press Thailand, Cambodia on truce

Malaysia, which chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, expressed hope the talks in Kuala Lumpur would help achieve a lasting ceasefire between the two countries, both bloc members

KUALA LUMPUR: Southeast Asian foreign ministers met Monday in Malaysia for crisis talks aimed at halting deadly border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia, which pressed on despite regional and international diplomacy. Renewed fighting this month has killed at least 22 people in Thailand and 19 in Cambodia, and displaced more than 900,000 on both sides, officials said. Malaysia, which chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), expressed hope the talks in Kuala Lumpur would help achieve a lasting ceasefire between the two countries, both bloc members. Speaking at the start of Monday's meeting, Malaysia's Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan urged the feuding neighbours and other ASEAN representatives to "give this matter our most urgent attention." "We must consider the wider ramifications of the continued escalation of the situation for the people we serve," Mohamad said. Last week, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said ASEAN's duty "is to present the facts, but more importantly,

to press upon them (Thailand and Cambodia) that it is imperative for them to secure peace." Thailand's National Security Council secretary-general Chatchai Bangchud on Monday acknowledged international efforts at the ASEAN meeting in Kuala Lumpur, but insisted "the process should be bilateral between Thailand and Cambodia". Meanwhile Phnom Penh's defence ministry said the fighting continued early Monday with Thailand firing artillery shells into Cambodian territory, wounding one civilian. The violence shattered a fragile truce reached after five days of clashes in July, mediated by the US, China and Malaysia. In October, US President Donald Trump backed a follow-on declaration touting trade deals after they agreed to prolong the truce. Each side has blamed the other for instigating the clashes, claiming self-defence and trading accusations of attacks on civilians. On Sunday, both Cambodia and Thailand said Monday's gathering could help de-escalate tensions. Both governments have confirmed they would send their top diplomats to the meeting. - APP

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