



# Islamabad POST

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## Japan funds eye care facilities in Abbottabad

Detailed News On Page-08

## Pakistan, Russia ties discussed at roundtable

Detailed News On Page-08



## Khwaja Asif opposes Fazl standpoint

Detailed News On Page-01



### 'No blackmailing'

## Talks with PTI only possible on 'legitimate' demands

PM Shehbaz said that PTI founder Imran Khan and his associates were also discussing about holding talks. The prime minister said that he had previously invited PTI leaders for dialogue and had also extended the invitation on the National Assembly floor

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that the talks with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf are possible only on "legitimate" demands and attempts at blackmail under the guise of dialogue will not be tolerated. Addressing the federal cabinet meeting, PM Shehbaz said that PTI founder Imran Khan and his associates were also discussing about holding talks. The prime minister said that he had previously invited PTI leaders for dialogue and had also extended the invitation on the National Assembly floor. "Discussions could only be held on legitimate demands. Blackmailing will not work under the guise of negotiations, said the prime minister. His remarks came two days after PTI's jailed founder, Imran Khan, dismissed Mahmood Khan Achakzai's call for dialogue. "My message for Sohail Afridi is to prepare for a street movement. The entire nation must rise for their rights!," a post on Imran's X handle read. Akram explained that Achakzai may proceed with his own political initiatives, including dialogue, but PTI leaders are bound to follow Imran Khan's latest directive. According to Akram, Khan has instructed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister to prepare for a protest movement for the rule of law and supremacy of the Constitution. A source close to the federal government had earlier maintained that without an expression of regret or an apology over the May 9 incidents and anti-army campaigns carried out by the party's social media, no meaningful dialogue is possible with the PTI. At a national conference of the opposition alliance held on Saturday,

Continued on Page 06

## PM Shehbaz meets UAE Ambassador

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday met the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Salem Mohammed Salem Al Bawab Al Zaabi, who paid a courtesy call on him here at the Prime Minister's House. The prime minister welcomed Ambassador Al Zaabi and congratulated him on his recent appointment, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. He underscored the longstanding and brotherly relations between Pakistan and the UAE, noting that bilateral ties have been built on mutual respect, close cooperation and enduring friendship over several decades. SAPM Tariq Fatemi and Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch were also present during the meeting. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif conveyed his warm regards to the UAE leadership and said he looked forward to the forthcoming visit of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan,

Continued on Page 06

## Imran Khan sisters stage sit-in outside Adiala jail

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: PTI founder Imran Khan's sister Aleema Khan and PTI workers staged a sit-in at Rawalpindi's Factory Naka on Tuesday as they were barred from moving towards Adiala Jail in a bid to meet the incarcerated ex-premier. Over the past several weeks, the PTI founder has been denied meetings in prison with his family, party members and lawyers, prompting them to stage sit-ins near or outside the prison complex every Tuesday and Thursday — the court-mandated days for visiting Imran. At times, police also used water cannons and baton charges to disperse them. As they again gathered near the prison complex today,

Continued on Page 06

## Committee rejects bill seeking ban on dowry

Bill proposes fines for dowry but allows voluntary gifts by parents

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: A standing committee of the National Assembly on Tuesday rejected a bill proposing a ban on dowry, terming it "impractical". Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) MNA Sharmila Faruqi moved the bill during a meeting on the NA's Standing Committee on Interior under the chair of MNA Raja Khurram Nawaz. The proposed legislation sought to criminalise dowry practices and outlined penalties for violations. However, it included a clause allowing parents to give voluntary gifts.

Continued on Page 06

## Punjab CM not happy with LHC verdict

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed strong concern on Tuesday on the suspension of the Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property Act, 2025 by the Lahore High Court (LHC), arguing that the move would "benefit encroachment and land-grabbing mafias". Maryam's statement issued by the CM's Office comes a day after LHC Chief Justice Aalia Neelum issued an interim order suspending the operation of the newly enacted Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property Act, 2025,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Salem Mohammed Salem Al Bawab Al Zaabi, who paid a courtesy call on him here at the Prime Minister's House. — DNA

### Five cops were martyred

## 8 outlaws killed after attack on police vehicle

The martyred policemen were identified as constables Shahid Iqbal, Samiullah, Arif, Safdar and Muhammad Abrar, who was also the mobile's driver

BUREAU REPORT

LAKKI MARWAT: Eight terrorists were killed in a search operation launched after five cops were martyred when their police mobile came under attack in Gurguri area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak on Tuesday. The district police spokesman, Shaukat Khan, confirmed the incident and the casualties, saying that all of the martyred personnel were constables. The martyred policemen were identified as constables Shahid Iqbal, Samiullah, Arif, Safdar and Muhammad Abrar, who was also the mobile's driver, Khan added. He said that on the instructions of the Kohat Regional Police Office and the Karak district police officer, a joint operation between the Karak Police and Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) was launched in the area. "Eight terrorists were killed as they were pursued through tricky and mountainous terrain," Khan said. "The bodies of the slain terrorists have been shifted to the

Continued on Page 06

### Embarrassment for New Delhi

## Bangladesh summons Indian ambassador

The ministry condemned what it described as premeditated acts of violence and intimidation against diplomatic establishments

DNA

DHAKA: Bangladesh on Tuesday summoned India's high commissioner in Dhaka to protest what it described as violent incidents targeting its diplomatic facilities in India, including vandalism at visa centres and protests outside its mission in New Delhi. Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it summoned Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma to convey Dhaka's grave concern over what it called "regrettable incidents" outside

the Bangladesh High Commission and the ambassador's residence in New Delhi on December 20, as well as vandalism at the Bangladesh Visa Centre in Siliguri on December 22 by "extremist elements." The ministry condemned what it described as premeditated acts of violence and intimidation against diplomatic establishments. It said such acts not only "endanger the safety of diplomatic personnel but also undermine the principles of mutual respect and values of peace and tolerance."

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Corruption charges haunt Albanian govt

NEWS DESK

TIRANA: Protesters in Albania's capital of Tirana hurled petrol bombs at the government building housing Prime Minister Edi Rama's office on Monday, demanding the government's resignation after prosecutors indicted the deputy prime minister for alleged corruption. Political tensions in Albania have escalated in recent weeks after accusations were made against Deputy Prime Minister Belinda Balluku. Along with several officials and private companies, she has been accused of using state funds to favour some companies in major infrastructure projects. She referred to the accusations in parliament last month as "mudslinging, insinuations, half-truths and lies," and stated that she would fully cooperate with the judiciary.

### Khawaja Asif opposes Fazl stance on Taliban

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Tuesday rejected the comparison between Islamabad's actions against the banned TTP and New Delhi's unprovoked action against the country in May as "wrong and inappropriate". The defence minister's remarks come a day after JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman questioned Pakistan's objection to Indian attacks when the country also allegedly conducted cross-border strikes against terrorist targets in Afghanistan. ISPR DG Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry had refuted allegations by the Afghan Taliban that Pakistan had conducted strikes in Afghanistan.

### PIA privatisation

## Arif Habib consortium wins bid with Rs 135 billion offer

Lucky Cement consortium submits Rs134bn offer; federal govt to get Rs10.12bn from bidding proceeds

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Arif Habib Corporation Limited-led consortium acquired a majority stake in Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) with the highest bid of Rs135 billion in an auction held for the privatisation process of the national flag carrier on Tuesday. Arif Habib raised its bid from Rs115 billion to Rs135 billion after the Lucky Cement Limited-led consortium increased its earlier bid of Rs101.5 billion to Rs134 billion in the second round of the open-bidding. Arif Habib and Lucky Cement consortia advanced to the open auction stage after placing offers above the reference price of Rs100 billion, while private airliner Airblue exited the bidding after submitting an offer of Rs26.5 billion. In the first round of the open auction, Lucky Cement submitted a bid of Rs115.5 billion, surpassing Arif Habib's opening offer by Rs500 million. The round concluded with Arif Habib in-

creasing its bid to Rs121 billion, while Lucky Cement closed the session with an offer of Rs120.25 billion. The organisers then announced a 30-minute recess at the request of Lucky Cement. Before the break, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb remarked that whoever emerged successful in the bidding process, the ultimate victory would be Pakistan's. Addressing the ceremony, the finance minister highlighted that all bidders participating in the privatisation process were Pakistani, describing it as a "major and encouraging development" for the country's investment climate. "All the bidders today are from Pakistan, which is a significant milestone. The country's largest and most seasoned business groups are competing for the national airline, which will be led by experienced Pakistani investors," Aurangzeb said. He added that the bidding process would indirectly promote foreign investment by

Continued on Page 06

## Field Marshal Munir hailed

"First prize for adjusting to tempo of Trump's casual approach to the world has to go to Asim Munir," says FT



CENTRELINE REPORT

LONDON: British newspaper Financial Times has described the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir as one of the most effective strategic leaders to emerge amid rapid changes in the global order. "First prize for adjusting to the tempo of Trump's casual approach to the world has to go to Pakistan's Field Marshal Asim Munir," according to an analysis written by journalist Alec Russell in the FT. The report notes Field Marshal Munir as a leading example of a successful "multi-aligner". "He [Field Marshal] is the very model of a middle power multi-aligner, skipping from Washington to Beijing, Riyadh to Tehran." The FT report contrasted Pakistan's

approach with India's experience, noting that New Delhi struggled to adapt to the changing global environment and Trump's informal diplomatic style, making the middle-power strategy more challenging than expected. "... All this is much to the frustration of India, which has not indulged Trump and is finding the middle power game is not as easy as it had hoped," it added. The report comes a day after the Washington Times described 2025 as a turning point in Pakistan-US relations, citing what it called a dramatic shift in Washington's approach. In early January, the US diplomatic and national security relationship with Pakistan was far from cordial, as Islamabad was viewed as being in lockstep with the Taliban, politically questionable and somewhat isolated diplomatically, but it has emerged as a partner of Washington by the end of 2025, according to an analysis written by retired brigadier general in The Washington Times. Brig Gen Mark Kimmitt (retired), a former deputy assistant secretary of defence for Near East and South Asia and former assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, wrote that despite a gradual recovery from the 2022-2023 floods and

Continued on Page 06

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## Traders key partners in Pakistan's development

RAWALPINDI: National Peace Committee for Interfaith Harmony (NPCIH) Punjab Vice President Sheikh Abdul Waheed on Tuesday said that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah always emphasised the importance of the business community's role in Pakistan's economic development. Highlighting social responsibility and the implementation of justice alongside national prosperity, the NPCIH leader, in a statement, said adopting the guiding principles of the Quaid-e-Azam could set Pakistan on a new path of progress even today. He said the Founder of Pakistan regarded traders as the backbone of economic development and described trade and business as the nation's "economic lifeline." He noted that the Quaid-e-Azam encouraged Muslim traders and industrialists to establish banks and shipping companies to form a strong economic structure for the new state. He said the Quaid-e-Azam advised traders to conduct their business with fairness and honesty towards all, and supported an economic system based on Islamic principles that ensures social justice and equality. Sheikh Abdul Waheed added that the Quaid-e-Azam desired to see Pakistan among the leading nations in global markets and urged the business community to uphold ethical values and deliver quality products.—APP

## PFA destroys large quantity of expired chemicals

MUZAFFARGARH: Food Authority action, large quantity of expired chemicals destroyed, heavy fine imposed Punjab Food Authority, during a major operation at a sugar mill in Sinanwan area of Kot Addu, seized the mill for using expired chemicals in the production of sugar. The expired chemicals were destroyed and a heavy fine was imposed. According to a Food Authority spokesperson, a food safety team of the Food Authority, led by the Director of Operations and Deputy Director of Operations of the Food Authority South Punjab, conducted an operation at a sugar mill in Sinanwan area of Kot Addu and recovered 200 kg of chemicals and other items expired since 2024 and destroyed them. A fine of Rs. 500,000 was also imposed on the sugar mill. According to the DG Food Authority South Punjab, during the inspection, in addition to the presence of expired chemicals, poor hygiene and storage arrangements were also found. On this occasion, the DG Punjab Food Authority said that as per the instructions of the Chief Minister of Punjab, indiscriminate action is being taken to suppress elements hostile to health.—APP

# CDF calls for multi-domain preparedness at NDU

The Field Marshal highlighted that hostile elements increasingly employ indirect and ambiguous approaches, including the use of proxies to exploit internal fault lines, rather than overt confrontation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, visited the National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad today, where he was briefed by panel of civil and military participants of ongoing National Security and War Course on their academic perspective about challenges to national security and imperatives for overcoming them. In his interaction, the Field Marshal outlined the complex and evolving global, regional and internal security environment, emphasizing that the country faces broad and persistent challenges. He noted that these challenges span conventional, sub-conventional, intelligence, cyber, information, military, economic and other domains, requiring comprehensive multi-domain preparedness, continuous adaptation and synergy amongst all elements of national power. The Field Marshal highlighted that hostile elements increasingly employ indirect and ambiguous approaches, including the use of proxies to exploit internal fault lines, rather than overt confrontation. He stressed that future leaders must be trained and remain alert to recognize, anticipate, and counter such multi-layered cognitive challenges. The Field Marshal also highlighted that decision-making under uncertainty with clarity and intellectual resilience are critical attributes for operating in today's contested and diffused security environment. The Field Marshal lauded NDU's role as a premier institution in developing strategic thinkers capable of translating rigorous training and academic insight into effective policy formulation and operational outcomes. He underscored that professional military education remains central to strengthening institutional capacity, fostering indigenous capability, and ensuring long-term national resilience. Concluding his address, the Field Marshal appreciated the panels' sharp analysis and conclusions and urged the participants to remain vigilant, adaptive, and steadfast in upholding the values of integrity, discipline, and selfless service. Upon arrival, the COAS & CDF was warmly received by the President NDU.



## CDA plots auction gets total of Rs 14.809b in 2 days

ISLAMABAD: The auction process for residential and commercial plots in the Federal Capital, Islamabad, organized by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), continued on the second day at the Jinnah Convention Centre. A total of PKR 14.809 billion worth of plots have been auctioned in the first two days of the auction. The process is being supervised by the Chairman of the Auction Committee, Member Finance Tahir Naeem, and the members of the Auction Committee. According to details, on the second day of the public auction, Plot No. 12 in Sector D-12 Markaz was auctioned for PKR 1.04 billion. Similarly,

Plot No. 284 A in Sector F-10/3 was auctioned for PKR 24.60 crore. Thus, a total of PKR 1.28 billion worth of plots were sold on the second day of the auction. Furthermore, on the first day of the public auction, Plot No. 15 in the Blue Area (F-8/G-8) was auctioned for PKR 3.52 billion, while Plot No. 17, also in the Blue Area (F-8/G-8), was auctioned for PKR 9.15 billion. On the first day of the auction, Plot No. 37 C in the Orchards Scheme, Murree Road, was auctioned for PKR 42.20 crore, and Plot No. 37 D in the same Orchards Scheme, Murree Road, was auctioned for PKR 42 crore. The auction of residential and commercial plots will continue until 24 December at the Jinnah Convention Centre. Plots of various categories are being offered for investment in the auction. Investors are being provided various discounts and facilities under investor-friendly measures at the auction. An additional 5% discount will be given 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. The facility of building plan approval is also being provided after the initial 25% payment, while possession of the plot can be obtained upon 75% payment.—DNA

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## KP mulls new industrial zones

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to establish new industrial zones to ensure the utilization of surplus electricity in the province. Under this plan, a total of four new industrial zones, including Special Economic Zones (SEZs), will be developed. According to sources on Tuesday, the provincial government's project to generate additional low-cost electricity has been delayed, while there are currently no major industrial units in the relevant areas to consume the extra power. As a result, the government is facing serious challenges in ensuring electricity consumption. Several meetings have already been held between the Industries Department and the Energy Department to address this issue. Following recent developments, the KP government has finalized the decision to set up new industrial zones across the province.—APP

## KP's health initiative brings relief to thousands of diabetes patients

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's flagship health initiative, the "Extension of D-TALK and Insulin for Life Project," continues to provide essential free medicines and insulin to thousands of deserving diabetes patients across the province. According to Project Focal Person Dr. Ashfaq, the program offers free treatment to Type-1 diabetes patients, pregnant women with diabetes, and eligible Type-2 patients from any district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He highlighted that the initiative has become a significant source of relief for poor and underprivileged families, though occasional medicine shortages pose challenges. Dr. Ashfaq credited the project's success to the provincial government's efforts and the foundational work of former Project Director Dr. Aamir. He praised current Project Director Dr. Abrar for his professional leadership and dedication, which have enhanced the program's effectiveness.

Under Dr. Abrar's supervision, greater transparency in medicine distribution has been achieved, with increased focus on district-level monitoring, administrative reforms, and timely delivery of services to patients. These measures have led to notable improvements in overall performance. Beneficiaries have appealed to the government for priority allocation of additional funds to address shortages, ensuring uninterrupted treatment and preventing severe complications from diabetes. Dr. Ashfaq expressed hope that, with Dr. Abrar's continued leadership, the project could expand further, positioning Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a leading province in diabetes care and welfare-oriented healthcare.

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industrial zones, including Special Economic Zones (SEZs), will be developed. According to sources on Tuesday, the provincial government's project to generate additional low-cost electricity has been delayed, while there are currently no major industrial units in the relevant areas to consume the extra power. As a result, the government is facing serious challenges in ensuring electricity consumption. Several meetings have already been held between the Industries Department and the Energy Department to address this issue. Following recent developments, the KP government has finalized the decision to set up new industrial zones across the province. A Special Economic Zone will be established in Katlang, while another economic zone will be developed in Swat. Preparations have also begun for the purchase of 470 acres of land for the Special Industrial Zone in Katlang.—DNA

## Sindh marks \$740m worth of three major PPP milestones with EnerTech

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that his government is setting new benchmarks in infrastructure development, energy, innovation, and environmental sustainability through strategic Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), as the province marked three major milestones with EnerTech Holding Company on Tuesday.

The ceremony organized to mark the Commercial Operations Date (COD) of the Nabisar-Vajihar Water Supply Project, the execution of the concession agreement for the NED Science & Technology Park, and the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the TP-IV Wastewater Treatment Project collectively, these projects represent investments exceeding \$740 million at the CM House. Provincial ministers, Special Assistant to CM on Investment Syed Qasim Naveed, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, CEO EnerTech Holding Co., Kuwait Mr Abdullah Al Mutairi, diplomats and others.

Speaking at a ceremony, Mr Shah said, his initiatives under the PPP framework reflect Sindh's "firm commitment to infrastructure development, energy security, innovation, environmental sustainability, and effective public-private collaboration." The ceremony was attended by provincial ministers, senior officials, representatives of EnerTech Holding Company, diplomats, bankers, financial and legal advisers, and representatives of national media organisations. Terming the Nabisar-Vajihar Water Supply Project a landmark achievement and one of the largest and most complex PPP schemes in Sindh's history, the chief minister said the project would ensure a reliable and sustainable water supply to Thar coal power plants, a communicate said. "This project ensures a reliable and sustainable water supply to Thar coal power projects, directly supporting 1,650 megawatts of power generation and contributing to a reduction in the national cost of electricity," he said. The \$215m project will supply 45 cusecs of water to Thar Block-I power plants. Implemented under a government-to-government PPP arrangement, it has attracted significant foreign direct investment, backed by close cooperation between the governments of Sindh and Kuwait.—DNA

## Pakistan, Bahrain naval chiefs discuss regional maritime security

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Commander of the Royal Bahrain Naval Force, Rear Admiral Ahmed Mohamed Ebrahim Al Bin Ali, visited Naval Headquarters, Islamabad and called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf. Upon arrival, the dignity was received by the CNS. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Navy presented Guard of Honour to Commander of the Royal Bahrain Naval Force. Later, the dignitary laid floral wreath at Shuhada Monument to pay homage to the martyrs of Pakistan Navy. He was then introduced to the Principal Staff Officers at NHQ. During the meeting with Chief of the Naval Staff, matters of mutual interest, regional maritime security and avenues for bilateral naval cooperation were discussed. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance professional interaction and defence collaboration between the two

navies. The visit underscores the

strong and friendly relations between Pakistan and

Bahrain and reflects the shared resolve to promote

peace and stability in the region.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

Dec 01/Romania National Day

Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day

Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day

Dec 05/Thailand National Day

Dec 06/Finland Independence Day

Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day

Dec 09/Tanzania National Day

Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day

Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day

Dec12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day

Dec 16/Bahrain National Day

Dec 16/Kazakhstan Independence Day

Dec 18/Qatar National Day

Dec 18/Niger National Day

Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day

Dec 23/Japan National Day



Emergency	
Rescue (Police).....	15
Bomb Disposal.....	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....	1122
& Rescue Services.....	4451122
Motorway Police.....	9266044
Motorway Police.....	9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....	9222596
Rawalpindi.....	9270601-20

Enquiry	
Edhi Ambulance.....	115
PIA Flight Info.....	114
PIA Cargo.....	9280979
Railway Inquiry.....	117
Railway Exchange.....	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....	5555489
CAA.....	9281092



Hospitals	
CMH.....	5611111
MH.....	561116
Canth Hospital.....	9270907-11
DHQ.....	5556311-4
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

# Romanian studies inaugurated for first time in Pakistan at NUML

Ambassador Dan Stoenescu expressed his sincere appreciation to the Institute of the Romanian Language, the Romanian Cultural Institute, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania for their continued support and commitment in bringing this important project to fruition

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Romania in Pakistan, with the support of the Institute of the Romanian Language and in collaboration with the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), has inaugurated the first-ever academic presence of Romanian Studies in Pakistan. This landmark initiative opens a new academic and cultural gateway between South Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. The inauguration ceremony took place on Tuesday, 23 December 2025, at NUML Islamabad, in the presence of the Ambassador of Romania, Dr. Dan Stoenescu, NUML Rector Maj. Gen. Shahid Mahmood Kayani, the Dean of the Faculty of Languages, Professor Dr. Jamil Asghar Jami, the Director General Brigadier Muhammad Rafiq Khan, Dr. Huma Hayat Khan, Head of National and International Linkages Office, members of the university faculty, representatives of the Romanian diaspora, and members of the diplomatic corps. The event marks the historic introduction of Romanian language, literature, and cultural studies into Pakistan's leading multilingual academic environment. By becoming the first university in the country to offer Romanian language courses, NUML reaffirms its role as a space where languages do not merely coexist, but actively engage in dialogue, responding to a growing global interest in cultural depth, intellectual diversity, and the humanities. Developed in partnership with the Institute of the Romanian Language and supported by the Embassy of Romania in Pakistan, the Romanian Studies program goes beyond language instruction. It creates an interdisciplinary academic space integrating linguistic training, literature, translation, history, and cultural studies, positioning Romania within broader European and South Asian intellectual dialogues. Students are invited not only to learn Romanian, but also to explore a cultural landscape shaped by historical crossroads, memory, creativity, and resilience. As part of the inauguration, the Embassy of Romania donated a collection of books to NUML, comprising volumes



in Romanian and English on Romanian culture, history, civilization, art, and literature. The donation was made with the support of the Romanian Cultural Institute and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, further strengthening the academic foundations of Romanian Studies at NUML. Quoting the renowned Romanian linguist Eugen Co eriu, who described plurilingualism as a form of freedom, the initiative reflects a shared commitment to promoting linguistic diversity and intercultural understanding. The Romanian Studies program will be coordinated by Dr. Oana Ursache, Doctor of Philology, specializing in comparative literature,

culturology, and Hispanic, Oriental, Pre-Columbian, and Arabic literatures. She brings extensive international academic experience, having previously taught at tefan cel Mare University of Suceava, the University of Alicante, the University of Granada, and Arizona State University. In 2021, she also served as Secretary of State at the Department for Romanians Abroad. Following significant academic experience in Spain and the United States, Dr. Ursache has chosen NUML Islamabad to establish a new Center of Romanian Studies, further enhancing the university's academic profile. The introduction of Romanian language

courses—offered for the first time in Pakistan—is expected to strengthen bilateral relations and foster deeper cultural and academic understanding between Romania and Pakistan. With Pakistan's population approaching a quarter of a billion people, the initiative represents a unique opportunity to expand academic cooperation and advance cultural diplomacy. Ambassador Dan Stoenescu expressed his sincere appreciation to the Institute of the Romanian Language, the Romanian Cultural Institute, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania for their continued support and commitment in bringing this important project to fruition.

## ICT admin seeks applications for adoption of unclaimed newborn

ISLAMABAD: The district administration of Islamabad has issued a public notice inviting applications from eligible residents who wish to adopt an unclaimed newborn baby. The announcement has been made by the Office of the District Magistrate, Islamabad Capital Territory, to ensure the lawful and transparent adoption of the child According to the notice, the district administration has taken custody of a newborn baby who remains unclaimed. To secure the child's future care and guardianship, the administration has opened the process for adoption under prescribed rules. The opportunity is available for Islamabad-based, financially stable, childless couples who are interested in adopting a child. Interested applicants have been advised to obtain

the official application form from the Head Clerk (General Branch) at the Deputy Commissioner Office, located in Sector G-11/4, Islamabad. The administration has clarified that only applications submitted on the prescribed form and through the designated office will be considered. Applicants are required to submit the completed application along with all required documents to the same office. These documents will be reviewed by the relevant authorities as part of the adoption process. The notice states that the last date for submission of applications is January 2, 2026. Applications received after this date will not be accepted under any circumstances. The district administration has emphasized that the adoption process will fol-

low legal procedures to protect the rights and welfare of the child. Officials will examine the eligibility of applicants to ensure that the child is placed in a suitable household. Further steps, including verification and approval, will be carried out as per applicable laws and administrative guidelines. Citizens have been advised to carefully review the requirements before applying and to submit complete documentation within the given timeframe. Incomplete applications or those submitted after the deadline will not be processed. This announcement marks the formal start of the adoption process for the unclaimed newborn and outlines the steps for interested couples to apply within the set deadline. — DNA

## 45pc drop in traffic violations, 22pc decline in road accidents

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) recorded a 45 percent reduction in traffic violations during 2025, while road accidents declined by 22 percent, reflecting significant improvements in road safety across the federal capital. An ITP spokesperson told APP on Tuesday that Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Hamza Humayun released the 2025 Performance Audit Report, highlighting major gains achieved through strict enforcement and large-scale public awareness campaigns under the vision of IGP Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi The CTO said that during 2025, more than 762,500 enforcement actions were taken against traffic violations, which played a key role in reducing accidents and improving driving behaviour in the city. He said the enforcement drive focused on five major violations, including wrong-way driving, reckless and over-speed driving, underage and unlicensed driving, lane violations, riding without helmets, and the use of fancy or non-standard number plates. According to the report, action was taken against 34,489 vehicles and motorcycles for lane violations, showing a 22 percent reduction compared to the previous year. — APP

## IGP reviews police drills, holds meetings on law, order

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Tuesday reviewed ongoing police drills at the Police Lines Headquarters and later held meetings with senior officers to assess law and order, crime control and operational preparedness in the federal capital. An official told APP that the IGP Rizvi inspected the exercises where police contingents presented a disciplined march-past, demonstrating coordination, fitness and professional skills. — APP

## Grassroots ideas reshaping Pakistan's climate future

ISLAMABAD: Climate change has become part of everyday life in Pakistan, and alongside national policies, communities are taking meaningful action on the ground. From rural madrassas and farms to city streets and university spaces, locally driven solutions are creating visible change. Together, these initiatives are turning grassroots innovation into a growing force for Pakistan's climate resilience. In rural Sindh, South Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a new environmental ethic is emerging inside madrassas. Teachers

are blending Islamic teachings with climate stewardship, encouraging students to plant micro-forests as acts of 'sadaqa-e-jariyah'. Some madrassas have also shifted to solar power, reducing energy costs while modelling sustainable practices for surrounding communities. In South Punjab and Balochistan, farmers are replacing barbed wire with living fences—dense rows of native shrubs that mark boundaries while enriching soil and restoring biodiversity. These natural fences help reduce soil erosion, create habitats

for birds and insects, and offer a green alternative to expensive imported metal fencing. Urban communities are also finding innovative solutions. Street vendors in Karachi, Lahore, and Gilgit are adopting solar-powered carts to escape the high cost and pollution of generators. Small solar panels now power lights, fans, and charging units, allowing hawkers to work more safely at night and increase their earnings. This small shift within the informal economy is contributing to reduced emissions in crowded urban areas. — APP

## PEC launches national codes to strengthen climate resilience

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) on Tuesday formally launched three landmark national codes aimed at transforming Pakistan's built environment and construction sector in line with global best practices. The newly launched codes include the Green Building Code of Pakistan, Rainwater Harvesting Code and Occupational Safety and Health Code for Construction Sector. The launching ceremony was attended by the international development partners, diplomats, senior government officials, engineering professionals, academia, representatives of the construction industry and other stakeholders reflecting broad national

and international support for Pakistan's sustainability and safety agenda. Dr. Sarosh Hashmat Lodhi, Senior Vice Chairman/ Chair Working Group Technical Codes and Standards outlined the strategic roadmap for implementation and adoption. Providing an overview of the all three codes, Prof. Dr. Faruq Arif emphasized that the codes are designed not only as regulatory instruments but as practical tools to guide climate-resilient infrastructure development, water conservation, and worker safety across Pakistan. Senior Vice President, International Code Council (ICC), Ms Judy Zakreski, being the international partner for development of Green

Building Code of Pakistan and Rainwater Harvesting code, commended PEC's commitment to climate-resilient and sustainable building practices, mentioning that this leadership was clearly demonstrated at COP28 and COP30. The International Labour Organization (ILO) underscored the importance of the Occupational Safety and Health Code as a key step toward safer workplaces and enhanced protection for construction workers, in line with global labour and sustainability frameworks. International partners expressed strong support for Pakistan's initiative and reaffirmed their willingness to collaborate with the PEC in its future endeavours. — APP



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GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN  
DAANISH UNIVERSITY TRUST

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Daanish University Trust (DUT) invites sealed proposals from well-reputed service providers firms under framework contract having their own office setup based in Rawalpindi & Islamabad having registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments, for their pre-qualification for following services for DUT: -

1. Air Travel & Accommodation Services (Domestic and International)

2. Event Management

3. Vehicle Rental Services for DUT.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS/INFORMATION:

1. Only the pre-qualified firms for the above mention services shall be entitled to participate in the RFQ process, i.e. Invitation to Technical/ Financial Bids which will be made to the pre-qualified firms/who have signed the agreement/ contract with the Daanish University Trust.

2. Interested firms may download Instructions to Bidders (ITB) from the website of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training <https://www.mofept.gov.pk> and website of PPRA <https://www.ppra.org.pk>. The Proposals must reach this office on or before January 5th 2026 by 02:00 pm and will be opened on the same day at 02:30 pm. Electronic proposals will not be entertained other than bids required to be submitted through PPRA e-Procurement Portal-EPADS at ([www.eprocure.gov.pk](http://www.eprocure.gov.pk)).

3. The Employer reserve the right to accept or reject any or all offers under PPRA Rules 2004 as amended time to time

For Technical Queries Contact:

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Cell: +92 3455353486

For EPADS Registration & Document Submission Queries Contact

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PID (I) 5198/25



## Briefs

## Govt considers PPP model for wheat procurement policy

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research is in the process of operationalising a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model for wheat procurement under the National Interim Wheat Policy 2025-26. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure maintenance of strategic wheat reserves in country while easing fiscal pressure on the public exchequer. According to a document available with Wealth Pakistan, private sector participation will be enabled through a structured licensing mechanism under the proposed framework. The process will begin with prequalification, followed by the issuance of Requests for Proposals to licensed private entities. The new model has been designed to address longstanding public funding constraints by leveraging the financial capacity and operational efficiency of the private sector. Specifically, licensed private firms will procure wheat on behalf of the government to maintain strategic wheat reserves, which are critical to national food security and market stability. Previously, wheat procurement, storage and handling were carried out directly by the government through the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASCO) and provincial food departments. Under that arrangement, the public sector bore the full financial burden, including procurement costs, storage charges, financing expenses, and operational overheads. Under the PPP model, the procurement of wheat will be undertaken by licensed private sector firms using their own financial resources and/or commercial credit lines. The government's financial role will be limited to incidental and facilitative costs, including capital-related charges, applicable interest costs, storage rentals, and other approved operational overheads. Crucially, the commodity cost of wheat will be borne by the private sector, a shift expected to significantly reduce immediate fiscal pressure on the government while ensuring uninterrupted maintenance of strategic wheat stocks. Tentative timelines for the wheat procurement process have already been framed. However, these timelines are subject to the completion of the requisite approval process and full compliance with the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Rules, 2004. The timelines will commence from the issuance of the prequalification document.

The initiative is limited solely to the maintenance of strategic wheat reserves. Other wheat-related projects and activities will continue to be handled separately by the Plan Section of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research or its attached departments.—APP

## Shaheen chowk underpass nears completion, opening next week

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital is set to witness another major infrastructural upgrade as the Shaheen Chowk Underpass project enters its final stage, with 90 percent of construction work completed. Officials said the underpass is expected to open for traffic next week. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the project site on Saturday to review progress. During the visit, he conducted a detailed inspection of the ongoing construction activity and received a comprehensive briefing from the Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA). Minister Naqvi expressed satisfaction with the pace of work and emphasized that once opened, the underpass would significantly improve traffic flow on the city's main arteries and help reduce congestion across Islamabad. He stressed that no compromise on construction quality would be tolerated and directed the authorities to ensure timely completion. According to the CDA's briefing, the structural work of the underpass has already been completed, while road surfacing and finishing tasks are underway. The minister also instructed the CDA to introduce modern landscaping.—APP

## KS relief concludes 20 free eye treatment camps across Pakistan

By restoring sight and improving vision for tens of thousands of people, KSrelief continues to deliver hope, dignity, and improved well-being to communities in need across Pakistan

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) has successfully concluded a series of 20 comprehensive free eye treatment camps across Pakistan under the Noor Saudi Volunteer Initiative 2025. Implemented in collaboration with Al-Basar International Foundation and Al-Ibrahim Eye Hospital, Karachi, the initiative aimed to deliver essential ophthalmic services to underserved and vulnerable communities, particularly those facing financial constraints or limited access to specialized eye care. The eye camps were strategically organized across urban and remote areas of Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, ensuring broad geographic coverage and equitable access. The initiative focused on early screening, diagnosis, surgical intervention, and vision correction to address preventable and treatable eye conditions and to enhance overall quality of life. During the course of implementation, a total of 79,161 patients benefited from outpatient consultations and eye screenings. Of these, 8,085 sight-restoring surgeries, including cataract and other vision-impairing procedures, were successfully performed by qualified ophthalmic specialists. In addition, 20,096 corrective eyeglasses were distributed free



of cost, along with essential prescribed medications provided on-site. The camps reached thousands of beneficiaries across multiple districts, prioritizing areas with limited ophthalmologic services and high unmet needs. Through these

targeted interventions, KSrelief ensured timely and life-changing eye care for individuals who otherwise would not have been able to afford or access such services. This humanitarian initiative reflects the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's strong commitment to glob-

al health and humanitarian solidarity, particularly in combating preventable blindness. By restoring sight and improving vision for tens of thousands of people, KSrelief continues to deliver hope, dignity, and improved well-being to communities in need across Pakistan.

## Pakistani delegation participates in Pak-China seminar

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani delegation comprising representatives from around 35 public and private sector institutions participated in the Pak-China Young Workers' Seminar Camp 2025, held here and at the historic city of Xi'an, reinforcing bilateral cooperation and people-to-people ties between Pakistan and China. The delegation was led by Prime Minister of Pakistan's Coordinator for Information, Ikhtiar Wali Khan, who addressed the concluding session of the seminar and highlighted the importance of youth engagement, institutional collaboration, and sustained Pak-China friendship, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. The week-long visit aimed to enhance the professional capacities of young workers, promote mutual understanding, and further strengthen bilateral cooperation. Participants took part in training workshops, study visits, and interactive dialogues focusing on development, labor cooperation, and institutional best practices. During the program, the Pakistani delegation visited historical, cultural, and heritage sites in Beijing and Xi'an, while also presenting Pakistan's cultural traditions, social values, and regional diversity to Chinese participants. At the concluding ceremony, Khan highlighted key achievements of the visit and said, "This briefing by Chinese experts and officials on CPEC 2.0, focusing on improved standards and timely completion, is deeply encouraging and heartening." Balochistan was represented by Member of the Provincial Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary for Culture and Tourism, Mir Zareen Khan Magsi. He was accompanied by Staff Welfare Officer of the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), Nasser Raja, and Assistant Chief of the Balochistan Planning and Development Department, Ali bin Mahmood.—DNA

## IFC, Standard Chartered, Engro launch Rs33.6b agri-chain financing

ISLAMABAD: The International Finance Corporation (IFC) on Tuesday announced its first Pakistan rupee-denominated investment through an unfunded Partial Credit Guarantee of up to Rs33.6 billion (about \$120 million equivalent) to support long-term PKR financing by Standard Chartered Bank Pakistan Limited for Engro Fertilizers Limited, aimed at strengthening Pakistan's agricultural value chain. This financing would enable Engro Fertilizers to strengthen the agri-value chain in Pakistan by mobilizing local capital, a news release said. The investment, aimed at strengthening Pakistan's agriculture sector and bolstering food security, also benefits from a first-loss counter guarantee from the IFC-Canada Facility for Resilient Food Systems. This engagement marks IFC's first local currency investment in Pakistan, thus expanding access to long-term financing solutions in both local and foreign currency, critical for economic growth

particularly in important sectors such as agriculture and micro, small, and medium enterprises. By leveraging rupee-denominated financing, Engro Fertilizers, one of Pakistan's leading fertilizer producers, is championing the use of domestic capital to enhance operational resilience. The financing would help Engro Fertilizers make capital investments in maintenance of facilities and turnarounds, enabling uninterrupted supply of urea and other fertilizers to meet national demand. The funding would also support farmer programs, ensuring continuity of initiatives that complement Engro's core mission of reliable production. The agriculture sector is contributing 24 percent of Pakistan's GDP, 70 percent of its exports, and 40 percent of its employment, making it vital for long-term growth. Yet systemic challenges—inefficient supply chains, underfunded farmer programs, low literacy, and rising input costs persist. This investment would help address some of these gaps. "Engro has always strived to solve Pakistan's most pressing issues meaningfully. Using local capital to strengthen local value chains reflects our commitment to the country and to our farmers - the backbone of Pakistan's economy - through reliable fertilizer production. We are grateful to our partners, IFC and Standard Chartered Bank, for enabling us to advance this mission," said Engro Fertilizers CEO Ali Rathore. "This investment reflects the strength of our partnership with Engro Fertilizers and Standard Chartered Bank and our shared commitment to providing innovative solutions to address challenges in a sustainable manner.—DNA

## Al-Shifa surgeons restore vision of 101-year-old patient

DNA

RAWALPINDI : Al-Shifa Trust surgeons have successfully restored vision to a 101-year-old patient suffering from dense cataracts and age-related macular degeneration (AMD), after multiple specialists had declined the case, citing high medical risks. Raza Khan, a resident of Islamabad, underwent the high-risk procedure at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital in Rawalpindi. The surgical team, led by Dr. Sabeehuddin, used advanced surgical tools and special gels to protect the delicate eye tissues, which is especially important in elderly patients. The case carried sentimental weight for the institution, as Mr. Khan was a close friend of the late Lieutenant General Jahan Dad Khan, the trust's founder. Prior to his procedure Khan's family reported being turned away by several ophthalmologists in the twin cities, who felt the patient's age and retinal degeneration posed too great a risk. "The procedure involved more than just removing the cloudy lens," noted the head of the cataract department. "We had to work with retinal problems that usually reduce the chances of success for very elderly patients. To witness recovery at this age shows the progress of modern eye care." Post-operative assessments

confirmed a significant breakthrough as the patient has regained sufficient vision to identify family members and navigate his surroundings independently. His recovery marks one of the oldest successful cataract interventions documented in the region. Al-Shifa Trust currently operates six specialized hospitals across Pakistan, including facilities in Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Kohat, Sukkur, Muzaffarabad, and Gilgit. A seventh hospital is currently under construction in Lahore and is scheduled to begin operations in 2027. According to institutional data, approximately 80 percent of the trust's patients receive treatment free of charge or at heavily subsidized rates. The success comes at a critical time for eye health in Pakistan. National Survey data indicate there are roughly 2.7 million blind individuals in the country, with cataracts accounting for 51 percent of those cases. Despite the high prevalence, surgical coverage remains below 65 percent in rural districts, often leaving the elderly in total darkness. This milestone shines as a testament to the extraordinary growth of complex geriatric interventions within Pakistan's philanthropic healthcare sector. Fueled by the community's generosity, Al-Shifa Trust proudly bridges the gap left by the overstressed public health system, transforming lives through medical excellence.

## Pakistan unveiling the riches of nation

RANA MUHAMMAD WASEEM



Pakistan, a country nestled in South Asia, has often been overshadowed by its tumultuous history and the challenges it has faced. However, beneath the surface lies a land brimming with

immense potential and countless opportunities waiting to be explored. From its ancient civilisations to its modern-day advancements, Pakistan has a rich history that has shaped its present and promises a bright future. To truly understand the opportunities that Pakistan offers, it is essential to delve into its historical tapestry. The region that now constitutes Pakistan has been home to some of the world's oldest civilisations, including the Indus Valley Civilisation, which thrived over 4,000 years ago. This ancient civilisation, known for its advanced urban planning, intricate drainage systems, and sophisticated trade networks, serves as a testament to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the people who inhabited this land. Throughout history, Pakistan has been a crossroads of

cultures, attracting traders, conquerors, and scholars from various parts of the world. The region witnessed the rise and fall of mighty empires, such as the Mauryas, the Mughals, and the British Raj. Each of these periods left an indelible mark on the land, contributing to its diverse cultural heritage and fostering an environment conducive to growth and innovation. In the modern era, Pakistan has faced numerous challenges, including political instability, economic disparities, and security concerns. However, it is important to recognise that these challenges do not define the nation. Pakistan has made significant strides in various sectors, demonstrating its potential as a land of opportunities. One such sector is

agriculture. Pakistan's fertile lands and favourable climate have made it an agricultural powerhouse. The country is among the world's largest producers of cotton, rice, and wheat. With a growing population and increasing demand for food, Pakistan has the potential to become a major player in global food security. Moreover, the government has initiated various programs to modernise the agricultural sector, promoting sustainable practices and enhancing productivity. Another area of immense potential lies in Pakistan's youth population. With over 60% of its population under the age of 30, Pakistan possesses a demographic dividend that can be harnessed to drive economic growth and inno-

vation. The country has a vibrant startup ecosystem, with young entrepreneurs venturing into diverse fields such as technology, e-commerce, and social entrepreneurship. Initiatives like the National Incubation Centres and the Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Program and Prime Minister's LAPTOP scheme are nurturing this entrepreneurial spirit, providing mentorship, funding, and support to young innovators. Pakistan's strategic location at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East offers immense opportunities for trade and connectivity. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, has the potential

to transform Pakistan into a regional economic hub. The development of infrastructure, energy projects, and special economic zones under CPEC is attracting foreign investment and opening new avenues for trade and investment. In lieu of above discussed facts and figures it is summarised that Pakistan is a land of opportunities that transcends its historical challenges. Its rich history, cultural diversity, and strategic location provide a solid foundation for growth and development. By capitalising on its agricultural potential, harnessing the energy and creativity of its youth, and leveraging its strategic position, Pakistan can unlock its true potential and emerge as a thriving nation on the global stage. It is time to shed the preconceived notions and embrace the untapped opportunities that Pakistan has to offer.

## Police put two behind bars

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested two suspects and recovered a cache of illegal weapons, including a Kalashnikov, during an operation carried out under the ongoing Arms-Free Islamabad campaign. An official told APP on Tuesday that a police team of Phulgrah Police Station, working under the supervision of SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza, conducted a targeted operation and apprehended two individuals involved in possessing illegal arms. During the operation, police recovered one Kalashnikov, one G-3 rifle, two .223 bore guns, two pistols of different bores, three daggers and a large quantity of ammunition from the arrested suspects. The official said cases have been registered against the suspects, while further investigation is underway to determine the source of the weapons and any possible links to criminal activities. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq said that Islamabad Capital Territory Police are strictly enforcing a zero-tolerance policy against illegal weapons and the public display of arms, adding that such elements pose a serious threat to public safety. He further said that, on the directions of the Inspector General of Police Islamabad, operations under the Arms-Free Islamabad campaign would continue across the federal capital to ensure the protection of citizens' lives and property.—APP

## YETP to launch nationwide AI Training Program

ISLAMABAD: The Youth Empowerment Training Program (YETP) has announced that it will launch a comprehensive Artificial Intelligence training program for young people across the country in January 2026, aiming to equip youth with industry-relevant digital skills through structured learning and practical training. According to an official of YETP, the initiative has been specifically designed to provide in-depth knowledge and hands-on experience in Artificial Intelligence and related emerging technologies. The program seeks to empower young participants with practical competencies that align with current and future industry demands, enhancing their employability in both local and global markets. The training program will feature well-structured modules covering both foundational and applied concepts of Artificial Intelligence. Participants will engage in practical exercises, real-world problem solving, and project-based learning to ensure they gain meaningful experience beyond theoretical understanding.—APP

## NUML hosts two-day Nexus 25

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML), through its Placement Centre, successfully organized NEXUS 25, a two-day flagship career and innovation event at the NUML main campus Islamabad, bringing together industry leaders, academia, researchers, and students to strengthen industry-academia linkages and promote employability, innovation, and future skills. Day One of NEXUS 25 featured the NUML Job Fair, which attracted 73 leading national and multinational organizations from diverse sectors including technology, banking and finance, real estate, media, education, and corporate services. Renowned organizations such as Huawei, United Bank Limited (UBL), Askari Bank, MG Rawalpindi, AlberuniTech, Khyber Network, Agency 21, Kay2, SKANS, and Imarat Group, among others, participated in the event. The job fair was inaugurated by the Chief Guest, Dr. Noor Anna Malik, Managing Director, National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), along with Rector NUML, Major General (r) Shahid Mehmood Kiani, HI(M). The ceremony was attended by Pro-Rector Research and Strategic Initiatives, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safer Awan, Head Placement Centre, Dr. Zohaib Ahmed, deans, directors, faculty members, industry representatives, and a large number of students. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Noor Anna Malik emphasized the importance of structured industry engagement, employability-oriented education, and continuous skills development to prepare graduates for the evolving job market. The Rector NUML reiterated the university's commitment to bridging the gap between academia and industry through strategic initiatives and career-oriented platforms such as NEXUS 25. The job fair provided students and alumni with opportunities for on-the-spot interviews, career counselling, and professional networking, reinforcing NUML's role in producing industry-ready graduates. Day Two of NEXUS 25 focused on innovation, research, and future discourse, highlighted by an Inter-University Final Year Project (FYP) Competition.—DNA



# Mass displacement must be confronted, not ignored

DR. AZEEM IBRAHIM

THE most dangerous development in today's global refugee crisis is not its scale, but how familiar it has become. According to the UN, more than 110 million people are now forcibly displaced worldwide, a figure that has nearly doubled in the past decade. Yet instead of prompting urgency, this unprecedented level of displacement is increasingly treated as a permanent feature of the international system. Wars continue, people flee, camps expand, and the world adapts to the numbers rather than confronting what they represent. This normalization should alarm us. When displacement becomes background noise, its political, economic, and security consequences deepen rather than fade. The danger is not only humanitarian suffering, but the quiet erosion of international norms built on the assumption that forced displacement is exceptional, temporary, and resolvable. Historically, refugee flows were treated as evidence of political failure demanding correction. Large-scale displacement triggered diplomatic pressure, emergency funding, and sustained efforts to end conflicts or enable safe return. Today, the response is increasingly managerial rather than strategic. Camps are designed to last decades. Humanitarian appeals are chronically underfunded. Policymakers speak of resilience and coping mechanisms instead of resolution. The data reflects this shift. The average length of displacement has risen steadily, with many refugees now spending 15 to 20 years away from home. More than three-quarters of the world's refugees are hosted in low and middle-income countries, often in regions already grappling with unemployment, inflation, and fragile public services. Meanwhile, resettlement opportunities in wealthy states have stagnated, covering only a tiny fraction of global need. This matters because displacement is not a neutral condition. Prolonged displacement consistently correlates with economic stagnation, social tension, and insecurity. Large populations living without legal status or access to formal labor markets distort local economies and place sustained pressure on housing, healthcare, and education systems. Over time, this fuels resentment in host communities and despair among refugees, creating environments where criminal networks and extremist groups can operate more easily. The global response increasingly assumes these risks are manageable so long as displacement is geographically contained. Refugees are kept close to conflict zones. Borders harden further away. Responsibility is shifted on to front-line states, while international burden sharing shrinks. The result is a system that preserves stability for some by exporting instability to others.

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This approach is now colliding with another powerful force: climate change. Climate-related shocks are rapidly becoming a major driver of displacement, often interacting with conflict and political fragility. The World Bank estimates that up to 216 million people could be internally displaced by climate impacts by 2050 if current trends continue. Extreme heat, water scarcity, flooding, and crop failure are already accelerating displacement across the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. The world must reject the idea that living without a country, rights, or future can ever be normal. Climate-driven displacement differs from traditional refugee flows in one crucial way: It is rarely temporary. When farmland becomes unusable due to drought or salinization, or when coastal areas are repeatedly flooded, return is often impossible. These pressures compound existing political tensions and can turn slow-moving environmental stress into sudden humanitarian crises. The Middle East is particularly exposed. Rising temperatures are increasing water scarcity, undermining agriculture, and accelerating urban migration. In fragile states, these pressures interact with weak governance and conflict, amplifying displacement risks. Yet climate displaced populations often fall through legal and policy gaps, receiving less protection and attention than those fleeing war alone. At the same time, humanitarian systems are under severe strain. Despite record displacement, global humanitarian funding is failing to keep pace. In recent years, major UN appeals have been funded at less than 60 percent of requirements, forcing agencies to cut food rations, healthcare services, and education programs. These reductions do not solve displacement; they entrench it, stripping people of the tools needed to rebuild their lives. The normalization of displacement also weakens international law. Refugee protection frameworks were built on the assumption that forced displacement was a deviation from the norm. When displacement is treated as permanent, the obligation to prevent it and resolve its causes quietly erodes. Temporary protection becomes indefinite exclusion. Rights give way to containment. This has serious implications for regional stability. Host countries that have shown extraordinary generosity face mounting political and economic pressure. Refugees, denied legal pathways to self-reliance, remain dependent on shrinking aid. Children grow up without education or prospects. Human capital is wasted on a massive scale. These are not just moral failures. They are strategic ones. Normalization also distorts global priorities. Conflicts that generate refugees fade from diplomatic focus precisely because their consequences appear managed. As long as displacement does not cross certain borders, it loses urgency. This creates a dangerous incentive structure in which unresolved crises are tolerated rather than addressed. History suggests this approach is short sighted. Prolonged displacement rarely remains contained. It drives onward migration, fuels instability, and eventually reaches the doorsteps of those who assumed distance equaled insulation. The costs deferred today are paid later, often at far greater expense. Reversing this trajectory does not require unrealistic solutions. It requires restoring the principle that displacement is a failure, not a baseline. Refugee crises must once again be treated as political problems demanding political solutions, supported by sustained diplomacy, conflict prevention, and climate adaptation strategies. Host countries must be supported not as holding zones, but as partners whose stability is a shared global interest.

# When Capitalism Gives Back

Qamar Bashir



This is not a handout in the conventional sense. It is not welfare, nor is it consumption-driven assistance. It is capital formation—distributed at birth. What makes this initiative particularly striking is its momentum. Following the Dell announcement, other philanthropists and corporate beneficiaries of the American capitalist system have begun making similar pledges. What began as a single act of generosity is rapidly evolving into a movement—one that channels private wealth into a nationwide social investment framework

CAPITALISM, at its core, is a system built on freedom—the freedom to compete, to innovate, and to accumulate wealth without an upper limit imposed by the state. In a free-market economy, every individual has the right to amass as much wealth as talent, timing, risk-taking, and opportunity allow. Nowhere is this reality more visible than in the United States, where capitalism has produced astonishing prosperity alongside extreme concentration of wealth. The scale of that concentration is often difficult to comprehend. The combined wealth of America's ten richest individuals rivals—or exceeds—the total economic output of many developing nations, and is comparable to the GDP of more than a dozen smaller countries combined. At the same time, that wealth equals the collective net worth of tens of millions of ordinary Americans. This stark imbalance is frequently cited as evidence of capitalism's moral failure. Yet this is only half the story. History shows that capitalism is not merely a machine for accumulation; it is also a system that, at its most mature stage, often turns inward—forcing its greatest beneficiaries to confront uncomfortable questions about meaning, legacy, and responsibility. As individuals approach the latter stages of life, a realization dawns with growing clarity: none of the wealth accumulated over decades can be carried beyond death. At that moment, capital—once a symbol of power, success, and security—becomes a burden unless it is transformed into purpose. It is here that capitalism, paradoxically, often produces its most noble outcomes. The United States has seen this pattern repeatedly. Bill and Melinda Gates created one of the world's most influential philanthropic foundations, targeting global health, education, poverty reduction, and disease eradication. Their work has saved millions of lives, empowered small entrepreneurs, and altered the trajectory of entire societies. This was not the rejection of capitalism, but its final evolution—capital redirected from accumulation to social investment. Now, a new and potentially transformative chapter is being written. Michael and Susan Dell have pledged an extraordinary sum—approximately \$6.2 billion—toward an initiative designed to fundamentally alter the financial starting point of American children. The vision is both simple and radical: to open an investment account for every child born between 2025 and 2028, seeded at birth and invested in broad-based index funds. By the time a child reaches adulthood, this account could exceed

\$100,000, usable for higher education, home ownership, or launching a business. If left untouched until mid-adulthood, the value could rise several-fold—potentially surpassing \$700,000. This is not a handout in the conventional sense. It is not welfare, nor is it consumption-driven assistance. It is capital formation—distributed at birth. What makes this initiative particularly striking is its momentum. Following the Dell announcement, other philanthropists and corporate beneficiaries of the American capitalist system have begun making similar pledges. What began as a single act of generosity is rapidly evolving into a movement—one that channels private wealth into a nationwide social investment framework. If implemented at scale, the implications are profound. For millions of families—rich and poor alike—the crushing financial anxiety associated with raising children could be dramatically reduced. Parents struggle to fund education, navigate healthcare costs, support young adults through early adulthood, and prepare children for a competitive world. This initiative shifts part of that burden from households to a class of individuals who benefited most from the system itself. In effect, capitalism would be financing its own social correction. Children who once would have been locked out of higher education due to lack of funds could now pursue academic excellence without lifelong debt. Young adults could start businesses without mortgaging their future. Families could enter marriage and parenthood with financial resilience rather than fear. Emergencies—medical, economic, or personal—could be met without catastrophic consequences. From a macroeconomic perspective, this is seed capital for the nation itself. Millions of small endowments compounding over decades would translate into higher productivity, increased entrepreneurship, and greater social stability. In theory, it is a virtuous cycle: wealth creates opportunity; opportunity creates productivity; productivity sustains growth. Yet for all its promise, this intervention raises a question that must not be ignored. Struggle has always been a powerful engine of human development. Scarcity forces creativity. Hardship cultivates resilience. The absence of safety nets often compels individuals to innovate, persevere, and build character through adversity. Many of history's most successful entrepreneurs, thinkers, and leaders were forged in environments of constraint rather than comfort. This initiative introduces an unprecedented level of financial security at birth. While it removes

destructive poverty, it may also reduce the constructive pressure that fuels ambition. The concern is not whether children will become lazy—an oversimplification—but whether the psychological edge that comes from necessity will be blunted. Will guaranteed capital reduce risk-taking, or will it empower smarter risk-taking? Will it foster entrepreneurship, or dilute hunger? These are not ideological questions; they are empirical ones. Before such an intervention is expanded nationwide, rigorous longitudinal studies must be conducted. Policymakers, economists, behavioral scientists, and educators must examine whether early financial security enhances productivity or dampens drive. The effects may differ across communities, cultures, and income brackets. The same intervention that liberates one child may unintentionally limit another. The stakes are enormous. This is not a pilot program affecting thousands; it is a structural change that could shape the character of an entire generation. And yet, despite these uncertainties, one truth remains undeniable. Capitalism, when left to accumulate unchecked, produces inequality. But when its greatest beneficiaries consciously redirect wealth toward collective uplift, it can also produce social renewal on a scale no state-driven redistribution has ever achieved. What is unfolding in the United States today is not abandonment of capitalism—it is its moral maturation. The wealthy are not being coerced. They are volunteering. The system is not being dismantled; it is being refined. Wealth earned through free markets is returning to society not as charity alone, but as structured opportunity—invested in the future rather than consumed in the present. America's greatness has always rested on its ability to reinvent itself without destroying its foundations. If this initiative succeeds, it may stand as one of the most consequential innovations in social policy—not imposed by government fiat, but enabled by private conscience. Whether it becomes a triumph or a cautionary tale depends on one thing: the willingness to study its impact honestly before scaling it irrevocably. Capitalism has planted the seed. Wisdom must decide how it grows.

– 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

# Bondi Beach hero destroyed West's false image of Muslims

Dalia Al-Aqidi

Some Arab states recognized this danger early. Countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt took decisive action. They named the threat, banned the organizations and dismantled their networks. However, most Western countries did not. Instead, Islamist movements learned how to exploit Western political systems and democratic freedoms. They mastered the language of victimhood. They weaponized accusations of racism and Islamophobia. They infiltrated universities, charities, political parties and civil institutions. Under the banner of free speech, the flags of Daesh, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Al-Qassam Brigades have been raised openly in Western cities

THE eyes of the world were frozen on television screens last week as a horrific terrorist attack unfolded in full view on Bondi Beach in Sydney, one of Australia's largest and most open cities. What should have been a moment of joy, families gathering by the sea to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, turned into a scene of terror, blood and chaos. The footage raced across social media, raw and unfiltered, beyond anyone's ability to contain it. Unlike traditional news outlets, which try to protect viewers from the worst horrors, these videos exposed everything. Bloodied bodies lay scattered across the sand – children, women and men turned into victims in a place meant for life and joy. Screams and chaos filled the air. One gunman was clearly visible, firing into the crowd with no hesitation, no mercy and no regard for human life. Bullets rained down indiscriminately. Within minutes, it became clear that this was not random violence. It was a targeted act of terror. As news channels filled with commentators, analysts and experts, the familiar language of condemnation followed. Politicians spoke and panels debated. The world watched in shock. Then something unexpected happened. From the chaos emerged a man no one knew. With nothing but courage, he moved toward the second gunman. He fought him at close range, tearing the weapon from his hands. He placed his own body between the attacker and the fleeing crowd, men, women and children screaming, running, clinging to life. He was shot. He was wounded. Still, he stood his ground. He stopped the second attacker and saved many lives. Later, the truth about the killers came out. They were extremists, a father and son of Indian origin, who carried out the attack calmly and deliberately, driven by extremist beliefs and deep hatred. Once again, the conversation returned to radicalism. Once again, the West was forced to confront an old and painful question: How has this ideology managed to radicalize minds within open societies, turning individuals into killers under the banner of extreme views? But this time, the story did not end there. The identity of the man who stopped the massacre was finally revealed. His name is Ahmed Al-Ahmed, a Syrian-born Muslim. He did not pause to calculate risk. He did not think of his own safety, his family or his future. He did not ask who the victims were or what faith they followed. He acted because innocent lives were in danger.

In that moment, Al-Ahmed did what years of political speeches, academic papers and televised debates have attempted to do: He exposed a truth that many have tried to explain. What he did in Sydney was not an isolated act of bravery. It was the culmination of years of moderate Muslim activism in the West – quiet, persistent and often ignored activism that insists on one essential truth: There is a real and fundamental difference between Muslims and extremists. Al-Ahmed did not issue a statement or chant a slogan. He acted. In doing so, he reminded Western societies of the values that millions of Muslim immigrants live by every day. People like Al-Ahmed do not merely defend Muslims from collective blame; they raise the moral standard for everyone. They bring pride not only to Muslims but to humanity as a whole. For decades, politicians, analysts, activists and community leaders have tried to draw a clear line between Islam as a faith and Islamism as a radical political ideology. These efforts have often been attacked by both ends of the political spectrum. The far left dismisses the distinction as "Islamophobia." The far right rejects it entirely, claiming it excuses terrorism. That brave man drew that line without words. Radicalism is not Islam. It never was and will never be. Al-Ahmed did not ask who the victims were or what faith they followed. He acted because innocent lives were in danger. Political Islamism is an ideology of power, not faith. It seeks domination, not coexistence. It feeds on grievance, not spirituality. And when given space, it produces violence. This is not a theoretical argument. It is a historical fact. From the Muslim Brotherhood emerged Al-Qaeda, Daesh and Hamas. This ideology did not appear overnight. It was cultivated, organized and exported, often hiding behind the language of social justice, civil rights and religious freedom. Some Arab states recognized this danger early. Countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt took decisive action. They named the threat, banned the organizations and dismantled their networks. However, most Western countries did not. Instead, Islamist movements learned how to exploit Western political systems and democratic freedoms. They mastered the language of victimhood. They weaponized accusations of racism and Islamophobia. They infiltrated universities, charities, political parties and civil institutions. Under the banner of free speech, the flags of Daesh, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Al-Qassam Brigades have

been raised openly in Western cities. Calls for a "global intifada" have echoed through streets and campuses, clear and explicit calls to target Jews everywhere. Slowly and dangerously, a false image took hold that every Muslim is a potential terrorist. This lie has harmed Muslims profoundly. It has erased the voices of those who reject violence. It has silenced reformers. It has punished entire communities for the crimes of an ideology they did not create and do not support. Then Al-Ahmed shattered that image. A Muslim immigrant from an Arab country stopped terror with his bare hands. He did not protect Jews because they were Jews. He protected humans because they were human. But this story is not only about heroism. It is a warning. Western governments must finally act with seriousness. Monitoring radicalization is not oppression; it is protection. Watching those who glorify violence, praise terrorist groups or openly call for death is not discrimination; it is a responsibility. Peaceful criticism of governments and policies is a constitutional right. Celebrating terror is not. Some mosques must be held accountable when they become centers of indoctrination and recruitment. But radicalization does not happen only in prayer halls. It happens online, in chatrooms, videogames and social media spaces, targeting young minds. At the same time, Western governments must open real channels of cooperation with moderate Muslim leaders, those who reject extremism and political Islam and believe in citizenship, law and coexistence. These voices exist. They must be empowered, not sidelined. Most urgently, the Muslim Brotherhood and the organizations that serve as its civil cover must be designated as terrorist entities and banned. No democracy can survive if an antidemocratic ideology is allowed to operate freely within its institutions. Responsibility also falls on the Muslim communities themselves. Silence is no longer an option. Political Islamists have aligned themselves with the far left, exploiting the language of social justice while spreading intolerance. This alliance is dangerous, for Muslims, for Jews and for Western societies alike. Once again, thank you, Ahmed Al-Ahmed. You did not just stop a terrorist. You exposed an ideology. And we must always remember: what begins with the Jews does not end with the Jews.

– Dalia Al-Aqidi is executive director at the American Center for Counter Extremism.



Briefs

Talks with PTI only possible on 'legitimate'...

FROM PAGE 01

its head, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, declared that the Constitution had been reduced to tatters. Achakzai urged former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to step forward and initiate dialogue to steer the country out of crisis.

## PM Shehbaz meets UAE Ambassador

FROM PAGE 01

President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, to Pakistan. Expressing satisfaction over the volume of bilateral trade, the prime minister emphasized the need to further strengthen economic cooperation, including trade and investment. He identified energy, minerals, information technology, railways and aviation as key areas for enhanced collaboration and invited increased UAE investment to support Pakistan's economic growth and stability. The prime minister also acknowledged the UAE's continued support for Pakistan, particularly its assistance during times of need and its contribution to humanitarian and development initiatives. Ambassador Al Zaabi thanked the prime minister for the meeting and conveyed greetings and best wishes from President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He reaffirmed the UAE's commitment to deepening its partnership with Pakistan and expressed readiness to explore new avenues of cooperation for the mutual benefit of both countries.

## Arif Habib consortium wins bid...

FROM PAGE 01

boosting investor confidence and underscoring Pakistan's commitment to transparent economic reforms. The session, which resumed with a base price of Rs125 billion, concluded with Arif Habib securing a 75% majority stake in PIA with a winning bid of Rs135 billion. The Lucky Cement Limited-led consortium comprised power producer Hub Power Holdings Limited, Kohat Cement Company Limited KOHC, and investment firm Metro Ventures. The Arif Habib consortium included fertiliser maker Fatima Fertiliser Company Limited, private school network City Schools and real estate firm Lake City Holdings Limited.

## Field Marshal Munir...

FROM PAGE 01

recent growth in gross domestic product, its economy still depended on external financing. Analysts warned that Pakistan could face its "most severe" national security challenge in at least a decade and possibly since the 1990s. Yet by the end of 2025, Pakistan appears to have gone from pariah to partner. Few nations have experienced a reputational swing as swift or dramatic. Pakistan has emerged as a pillar of President Trump's evolving foreign policy vision for South Asia.

## 8 outlaws killed after..

FROM PAGE 01

hospital for a post-mortem, while the process of identifying them is underway." While the exact details of the attack remain unclear, an image shared by the police spokesman showed what appeared to be the charred remains of the vehicle. Meanwhile, a press release from the Karak Police stated that funeral prayers had been offered for the five martyrs, who were presented with full honours. "In the funeral prayer ceremony, a decorated contingent of police offered a salute to the martyrs, while flowers were placed on the bodies of the martyrs wrapped in the national flag," the press release read.

# PSB Adjudicator dismisses appeal against PTF elections

*The petitioner had alleged irregularities in the electoral process, including objections over the vote of the International Lawn Tennis Club Pakistan (ILTCP). The impugned PTF elections were held on February 10, 2024, prior to the promulgation of the Sports Election Regulations (SERP) 2024. Furthermore, the elections were not conducted by an Election Commission appointed under Rule 17 of the PSB Constitution, rendering the prerequisites for invoking Regulation 9(3) inapplicable*

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's iconic tennis star Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi will continue as President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) after the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Adjudicator dismissed a petition challenging the federation's elections, declaring it non-maintainable, time-barred, and beyond jurisdiction. According to the detailed order issued by PSB Adjudicator Senator Pervaiz Rashid, the petition filed by former Davis Cup captain Hameed-ul-Haq against the PTF elections was rejected on multiple legal grounds, including lack of jurisdiction, limitation, and locus standi. The petitioner had alleged irregularities

in the electoral process, including objections over the vote of the International Lawn Tennis Club Pakistan (ILTCP). The impugned PTF elections were held on February 10, 2024, prior to the promulgation of the Sports Election Regulations (SERP) 2024. Furthermore, the elections were not conducted by an Election Commission appointed under Rule 17 of the PSB Constitution, rendering the prerequisites for invoking Regulation 9(3) inapplicable. The order emphasized that no challenge was filed within the prescribed statutory period, making the petition hopelessly time-barred, with the bar of limitation striking at the very root of jurisdiction. The Adjudicator ruled that the elections had already attained finality and could not be reopened.

During the proceedings, Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi stated on record that his election as PTF President has been formally acknowledged by the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) and recognized by the International Tennis Federation (ITF). He further informed the Adjudicator that he has been nominated as a member of the PSB Board, and that the PTF has continued to receive grants from the Pakistan Sports Board following the elections. These developments, the order observed, clearly demonstrate that the PTF elections have been acted upon and accepted at both national and international levels, including by the PSB itself. The order further relied on the Islamabad High Court's judgment dated June 18, 2025, in W.P. No. 1105/2024 (Col. (R)

Muhammad Asif Dar vs Federation of Pakistan), wherein the court held that a person who is neither a contesting candidate nor an aggrieved party lacks the legal standing to challenge sports federation elections. The High Court also ruled that such disputes must be resolved strictly within the constitutional framework of the Pakistan Sports Board. The Adjudicator stated that the reasoning of the High Court squarely applied to the present case. In view of these findings, the PSB Adjudicator concluded that the petition was not maintainable, the petitioner lacked locus standi, the decision of the Election Commissioner had attained finality, and the petition was barred by limitation. Consequently, the petition filed by Hameed-ul-Haq was dismissed.

## Shayan Afridi wins El Paso Sports Commission Jr Open Tennis Tournament

Pakistan junior tennis star Shayan Afridi wins El Paso Junior Open in Texas, showcasing rising talent after Orange Bowl appearance, highlighting Pakistan Tennis Federation's growing international development success program abroad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's promising junior tennis player Shayan Afridi won the El Paso Sports Commission Junior Open Tennis Tournament (14 & Under Category) after a commanding performance in the final, where he defeated Andrew Hiotellkis by 4-0. The final match was played at the El Paso Tennis Club, Texas, United States. Shayan Afridi, along with fellow junior player Rashid Ali, is currently in the United States. Before arriving in Texas, both players participated in the prestigious Junior Orange Bowl International Tennis Championship in Miami, where they competed in the main draw, a significant achievement at the international junior level,

said a press release. Following the Orange Bowl, the Pakistan Tennis Federation, in collaboration with the BARD Foundation, sent Shayan Afridi and Rashid Ali to Texas for a one-month training and competition program under the supervision of renowned and ATP-Certified Trainer Eduardo Vicencio Lalovic. During this period, both players have been undergoing intensive training while also participating in local tournaments to enhance their competitive experience. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation, praised the young players and said Shayan Afridi and Rashid Ali are very talented young players and represent the future

of Pakistan tennis. Competing in the main draw of the Junior Orange Bowl International Tennis Championship is not easy, as it features the world's best junior players, but both Shayan and Rashid proved their ability by earning entry in the main draw and competing at that level. The Pakistan Tennis Federation is committed to providing international exposure and quality training opportunities to our juniors. With the support of the BARD Foundation, we sent these players to Texas for specialized training under renowned and ATP-Certified Trainer Eduardo Vicencio Lalovic, and the results are already visible. Shayan's tournament victory is a

clear sign that our junior development pathway is moving in the right direction." The President-PTF further added that such international training and competition opportunities are crucial for building confidence, discipline, and match temperament among young players, and PTF will continue to invest in junior talent development. The Secretary General of PTF also congratulated Shayan Afridi on his outstanding achievement and stated that the Federation's focus on junior tennis is beginning to bear fruit. He said Shayan's performance is a strong encouragement for other young players in Pakistan and a matter of great pride for the country. - APP

## Rogers stars as Villa beat Man Utd to boost title bid



BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa stepped up their unexpected Premier League title challenge as Morgan Rogers' brilliant brace sealed a 2-1 win against Manchester United on Sunday. Unai Emery's side took the lead through Rogers' stunning strike late in the first half at Villa Park. Matheus Cunha levelled for United moments later but Rogers bagged his sixth goal in his last six league appearances after the interval to clinch Villa's 10th successive victory in all competitions. Unai Emery's third-placed side are just three points adrift of leaders Arsenal and one behind second-placed Manchester City as they chase a first English title since 1981. Villa are on their best winning run in all competitions since 1914, when they secured 11 successive victories. They have won seven consecutive top-flight matches for the first time since 1989-90, when they finished second under Graham Taylor. Villa's ascent into the title race is even more remarkable as it comes after their worst start to a league campaign for 28 years, featuring just two points and one goal scored in their opening five matches. Emery has turned Villa Park into a fortress, with just one Premier League home defeat in 2025, fewer than any other team. - Agencie

## Napoli beat Bologna to lift Italian Super Cup

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia: Napoli won the Italian Super Cup on Monday as David Neres scored twice to secure the reigning Serie A champions a 2-0 win over Bologna in the final in Jeddah. Brazilian winger Neres curled in a brilliant shot from distance to give Napoli the lead before half-time against last season's Italian Cup winners. He struck again in the second half after intercepting a weak pass from Bologna goalkeeper Federico Ravaglia as he tried to play out from the back. Neres finished with three goals in the Super Cup after also scoring in the 2-0 semifinal win over AC Milan last week. It is the third time Napoli have won the competition, after 1990 and 2014. "The lads deserve congratulations," Napoli coach Antonio Conte told Sport Mediaset. "They showed how much they wanted this trophy for the fans, and we'll also have a great Christmas celebration now with a new trophy in the cabinet." Traditionally featuring the Serie A and Italian Cup champions, since 2023 the Italian Super Cup has also included the runners-up from league and cup. The four-team tournament is contracted to be held in Saudi Arabia until 2029. - Agencies

## PSB Adjudicator Dismisses Appeal Against PTF Elections

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applicable. The order emphasized that no challenge was filed within the prescribed statutory period, making the petition hopelessly time-barred, with the bar of limitation striking at the very root of jurisdiction. The Adjudicator ruled that the elections had already attained finality and could not be reopened. During the proceedings, Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi stated on record that his election as PTF President has been formally acknowledged by the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) and recognized by the International Tennis Federation (ITF). He further informed the Adjudicator that he has been nominated as a member of the PSB Board, and that the PTF has continued to receive grants from the Pakistan Sports Board following the elections. These developments, the order observed, clearly demonstrate that the PTF elections have been acted upon and accepted at both national and international levels, including by the PSB itself. The order further relied on the Islamabad High Court's judgment dated June 18, 2025, in W.P. No. 1105/2024 (Col. (R) Muhammad Asif Dar vs Federation of Pakistan), wherein the court held that a person who is neither a contesting candidate nor an aggrieved party lacks the legal standing to challenge sports federation elections.

## US President Donald Trump says would be 'smart' for Venezuela's Maduro to step down

*Venezuela's key ally Moscow, however, expressed its "full support" for Maduro's government, as Washington has dialed up military operations and threats against Caracas*

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said Monday it would be "smart" for Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to step down, as US naval forces pressed a blockade on the South American country's oil wealth. Venezuela's key ally Moscow, however, expressed its "full support" for Maduro's government, as Washington has dialed up military operations and threats against Caracas. Asked by reporters at his Florida home if Washington's threats were designed to force Maduro to leave office after 12 years, Trump said: "That's up to him, what he wants to do. I think it would be smart for him to do that." But he added: "If he wants to do something - if he plays tough, it'll be the last time he's ever able to play tough." Firing back just hours later, Maduro said that Trump would be "better off" if he focused on his own country's problems rather than threatening Caracas. "He would be better off in his own country on economic and social issues, and he would be better off in the world if he took care of his

country's affairs," Maduro said in a speech broadcast on public television. The pledge from Moscow, which is embroiled in the war in Ukraine, came on the eve of a UN Security Council meeting Tuesday to discuss the mounting crisis. In a phone call, the foreign ministers of the allied nations blasted the US actions, which have included strikes on alleged drug-trafficking boats and the seizure of two oil tankers. A third ship was being pursued, a US official told AFP on Sunday. "The ministers expressed their deep concern over the escalation of Washington's actions in the Caribbean Sea, which could have serious consequences for the region and threaten international shipping," the Russian foreign ministry said of the call between Sergei Lavrov and Venezuelan counterpart Yvan Gil. "The Russian side reaffirmed its full support for and solidarity with the Venezuelan leadership and people in the current context," it added in a statement. US forces have since September launched strikes on boats that

Washington claims, without providing evidence, were trafficking drugs in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean. More than 100 people have been killed - some of them fishermen, according to their families and governments. US President Trump on December 16 also announced a blockade of "sanctioned oil vessels" sailing to and from Venezuela. Trump claims Caracas under Maduro is using oil money to finance "drug terrorism, human trafficking, murder and kidnapping." He has also accused Venezuela of taking "all of our oil" - in an apparent reference to the country's nationalization of the petroleum sector, and said: "we want it back." Caracas, in turn, fears Washington is seeking regime change, and has accused Washington of "international piracy." Moscow's statement said Lavrov and Gil agreed in their call to "coordinate their actions on the international stage, particularly at the UN." Russia and China, another Venezuela ally, backed Caracas's request for a UNSC

meeting to discuss what it called "the ongoing US aggression." On Telegram, Venezuela's Gil said he and Lavrov had discussed "the aggressions and flagrant violations of international law being perpetrated in the Caribbean: attacks on vessels, extrajudicial executions, and illicit acts of piracy carried out by the United States government." Gil said Lavrov had affirmed Moscow's "full support in the face of hostilities against our country." Last week, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio brushed aside Moscow's stated support for Caracas. Washington, he said, was "not concerned about an escalation with Russia with regards to Venezuela" as "they have their hands full in Ukraine." US-Russia relations have soured in recent weeks as Trump has voiced frustration with Moscow over the lack of a resolution to the Ukraine war. Gil on Monday also read a letter on state TV, signed by Maduro and addressed to UN member nations, warning the US blockade "will affect the supply of oil and energy" globally. - Agencies

## Committee rejects bill seeking ban on dowry

FROM PAGE 01

The bill failed to sail through as members of the committee "unanimously" declared it "impractical". In a post on X, the PPP lawmaker confirmed the same, saying that discussion during the meeting "reflected encouragement rather than restraint of dowry".

## PM Shehbaz condemns firing on...

FROM PAGE 01

the sacrifices of the police force, stating that police personnel have always played a frontline role in the war against terrorism and have rendered unparalleled services to ensure peace and security in the country. "Entire nation salutes the martyrs who laid down their lives in the line of duty," the prime minister said, adding that their sacrifices would never be forgotten. Reiterating the government's resolve, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that Pakistan remains fully committed to the complete elimination of terrorism in all its forms.

## Imran Khan sisters stage sti-in...

FROM PAGE 01

Aleema said that Imran was being kept in "solitary confinement", stressing that the "government had become so fearful of Imran's message that they had resorted to breaking the law" - in a reference to the police presence at the scene. Aleema's video statement was posted on PTT's X account, in which she was standing in front of a riot fence. Police could also be seen in riot gear behind the fence. Imran, imprisoned since August 2023, is serving a 14-year sentence at the Adiala jail in a £190 million corruption case and also faces pending trials under the Anti-Terrorism Act related to the protests of May 9, 2023. Bushra Bibi is also serving a seven-year sentence in £190 million corruption case.

## Punjab CM not happy with LHC verdict

FROM PAGE 01

which empowers dispute resolution committees led by deputy commissioners to resolve property disputes. The ordinance was approved by the Punjab chief minister on Oct 31 and mandates the resolution of land disputes within 90 days. The law has been challenged in the LHC, about which Maryam argued that its enactment was aimed at providing "long-awaited relief to millions of citizens suffering from prolonged land and property disputes". "The legislation, for the first time, fixed a 90-day time frame for the resolution of land and property cases that have historically dragged on for years and even generations," she said, terming the law a "major step" toward protecting ordinary citizens from powerful land grabbers and mafias. Maryam emphasised that the "democratically elected Punjab Assembly had passed the law to free the public from the grip of influential land mafias".

## Bangladesh summons Indian...

FROM PAGE 01

Calling for a proper investigation, the ministry said: "Bangladesh expects the Government of India to immediately take appropriate steps in accordance with its international and diplomatic obligations to safeguard the dignity and security of diplomatic personnel and establishments." According to Bangladeshi media, around 20 to 25 protesters had gathered in front of the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on Saturday evening. According to mission officials, the protesters raised anti-Bangladesh slogans and issued threats against the Bangladesh high commissioner, Prothom Alo reported.



## Briefs

**Hunger strikers launch legal action against UK govt**

LONDON: Hunger strikers from Palestine Action in the UK have launched legal action against the government, accusing it of abandoning the policy framework for prison safety, The Independent reported. A pre-action letter was sent to Justice Secretary David Lammy by a legal firm representing the activists. It came as several imprisoned members of the banned organization — including one who has refused food for 51 days — were hospitalized due to their deteriorating health while on hunger strike. They say they have sent several letters to Lammy, who is also deputy prime minister, but have received no response. He was urged in the latest letter to respond within 24 hours as the issue is a “matter of urgency.” The letter added: “Our clients’ health continues to deteriorate, such that the risk of their dying increases every day.” An “urgent meeting” is needed “with the proposed defendant to discuss the deterioration of our clients’ health and to discuss attempts to resolve the situation,” it said.—APP

**India commits \$450m for Sri Lanka post-cyclone recovery**

NEW DELHI: India pledged on Tuesday a \$450-million package for Sri Lanka’s recovery and reconstruction after Cyclone Ditwah, the largest assistance commitment announced so far. When it made landfall in late November, Cyclone Ditwah turned into Sri Lanka’s most severe weather disaster in recent history, with 640 deaths, millions affected, billions of dollars in direct damage, and far-reaching impacts on agriculture, infrastructure and vulnerable communities. The World Bank estimates direct losses at about \$4.1 billion, roughly 4 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, as floodwaters and landslides have devastated homes, agricultural land, and infrastructure. India’s aid package was announced by Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar who is on a two-day visit to Colombo as Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s special envoy on cyclone response. He met Sri Lanka’s President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya on Tuesday. In a media briefing, Jaishankar said he had handed a letter from Modi to Dissanayake, committing to a “reconstruction package of \$450 million” and “how expeditiously this commitment can be delivered.—APP

**At least 5 killed after Mexican Navy plane on medical mission crashes**

DALLAS: A small Mexican Navy plane transporting a young medical patient and seven others crashed Monday near Galveston, killing at least five people and setting off a search in waters along the Texas coast, officials said. Four of the people aboard were Navy officers and four were civilians, including a child, Mexico’s Navy said in a statement to The Associated Press. Two of the passengers were from a nonprofit that provides aid to Mexican children with severe burns, including transports to a Galveston hospital. US Coast Guard Petty Officer Luke Baker said at least five aboard had died but did not identify which passengers. The cause of the crash is under investigation. Mexico’s Marines said in a statement that it is sending “its deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in this tragic accident.” The crash took place Monday afternoon in Galveston Bay near the base of the causeway that connects Galveston Island to the mainland. Emergency responders and search teams rushed to the scene near the popular beach destination along the Texas coast that is about 50 miles (80.5 kilometers) southeast of Houston. Sky Decker, a professional yacht captain who lives about a mile (1.6 kilometers) from the crash site, said he jumped in his boat to see if he could help.—APP



NAJAF, Iraq: President Asif Ali Zardari paid respects at the holy shrine of Hazrat Ali (R.A.), offered nawafil prayers and met the administrators of the shrine.

# Rs 33.6b chain financing to boost agriculture

ISLAMABAD :The International Finance Corporation (IFC) on Tuesday announced its first Pakistan rupee-denominated investment through an unfunded Partial Credit Guarantee of up to Rs33.6 billion (about \$120 million equivalent) to support long-term PKR financing by Standard Chartered Bank Pakistan Limited for Engro Fertilizers Limited, aimed at strengthening Pakistan’s agricultural value chain. This financing would enable Engro Fertilizers to strengthen the agri-value chain in Pakistan by mobilizing local capital, a news release said. The investment, aimed at strengthening Pakistan’s agriculture sector and bolstering food security, also benefits from a first-loss counter guarantee from the IFC-Canada Facility for Resilient Food Systems. This engagement marks IFC’s first local currency investment in Pakistan, thus

expanding access to long-term financing solutions in both local and foreign currency, critical for economic growth particularly in important sectors such as agriculture and micro, small, and medium enterprises. By leveraging rupee-denominated financing, Engro Fertilizers, one of Pakistan’s leading fertilizer producers, is championing the use of domestic capital to enhance operational resilience. The financing would help Engro Fertilizers make capital investments in maintenance of facilities and turnarounds, enabling uninterrupted supply of urea and other fertilizers to meet national demand. The funding would also support farmer programs, ensuring continuity of initiatives that complement Engro’s core mission of reliable production. The agriculture sector is contributing 24 percent of Pakistan’s GDP, 70 percent of its exports, and 40 percent of its em-

ployment, making it vital for long-term growth. Yet systemic challenges—inefficient supply chains, underfunded farmer programs, low literacy, and rising input costs persist. This investment would help address some of these gaps. “Engro has always strived to solve Pakistan’s most pressing issues meaningfully. Using local capital to strengthen local value chains reflects our commitment to the country and to our farmers — the backbone of Pakistan’s economy — through reliable fertilizer production. We are grateful to our partners, IFC and Standard Chartered Bank, for enabling us to advance this mission,” said Engro Fertilizers CEO Ali Rathore. “This investment reflects the strength of our partnership with Engro Fertilizers and Standard Chartered Bank and our shared commitment to providing innovative solutions to address challenges in a sustainable manner. Through this pro-

ject, we are opening new pathways for local currency long-term financing that support growth and financial resilience to manage country risk in a sector vital to the country’s economy,” said Ashruf Megahed, Regional Industry Head, Manufacturing, Agribusiness & Services, Middle East and Central Asia at IFC. Commenting on the occasion, Rehan Shaikh, CEO and Head of Coverage, Standard Chartered Pakistan stated, “At Standard Chartered we are committed to financing solutions that enable sustainable growth and long-term resilience across Pakistan’s economy. This partnership with IFC and Engro Fertilizers reflects our shared vision of strengthening food security and supporting one of the country’s most critical value chains. Standard Chartered is keen to continue working with IFC to replicate this successful structure across its network.—DNA

## Hundreds protest in New Delhi over killing of Hindu man in Bangladesh

NEW DELHI: Hundreds of people protested near Bangladesh’s High Commission in New Delhi on Tuesday against the lynching of a Hindu man over allegations of blasphemy that has exacerbated tensions between Hindu-majority India and its Muslim-majority neighbour. Factory worker Dipu Chandra Das, 27, was beaten and set on fire in Bangladesh’s Mymensingh district last week by a crowd that accused him of making derogatory remarks about the Prophet. At least 10 people have been arrested in connection with his death. The lynching has worsened relations between India and its neighbour weeks before Bangladesh holds a parliamentary election, and both countries have suspended visa services. Ties have been strained since Bangladesh’s former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to New Delhi following deadly protests against her last year. Tuesday’s demonstration, called by Hindu groups, involved people clashing with police personnel as they tried to push through barricades set up near the High Commission, television footage showed. They also chanted slogans and burnt pictures of Yunus, with some holding posters demanding “boycott Bangladesh”. “We needed to raise the voice of Hindus in Bangladesh in Delhi, and we have done that... as long as even one Hindu is being harmed there, we will be awake and will not stop,” a protester told broadcaster India Today. Demonstrations were also held in other parts of the country, including Jammu and Kashmir territory. Bangladesh said it summoned the Indian envoy on Tuesday to express concern over a similar protest near its mission in New Delhi on Saturday and “violent protests” outside other diplomatic missions, urging India to investigate the incidents. India’s foreign ministry said on Sunday that the New Delhi demonstration consisted of “20-25 youths” who were dispersed by police after a few minutes, adding that India was “committed to ensure the safety of foreign missions”.—APP

## Sudan’s PM takes peace plan to UN

UNITED NATIONS: Sudan’s prime minister on Monday proposed a wide-ranging peace initiative to end a nearly 1,000-day war with a rival paramilitary force, but the United States urged both sides to accept the Trump administration’s call for an immediate humanitarian truce. Kamil Idris, who heads Sudan’s transitional civilian government, told the Security Council his plan calls for a ceasefire monitored by the United Nations, African Union and Arab League, and the withdrawal of paramilitary forces from all areas they occupy, their placement in supervised camps and their disarmament. Sudan plunged into chaos in April 2023 when a power struggle between the military and the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces exploded into open fighting, with widespread mass killings and rapes, and ethnically motivated violence. This has amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity, according to the UN and international rights groups. It seemed highly unlikely the RSF would support the prime minister’s proposal, which would essentially give government forces a victory and take away their military power. In an indirect reference to the truce supported by the US and key mediators Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, known as the Quad, Idris stressed to the UN Security Council that the government’s proposal is “homemade — not imposed on us.” In early November, the Rapid Support Forces agreed to a humanitarian truce. At that time, a Sudanese military official told The Associated Press the army welcomed the Quad’s proposal but would only agree to a truce when the RSF completely withdraws from civilian areas and gives up their weapons — key provisions in the plan Idris put forward on Monday. Idris said unless the paramilitary forces were confined to camps, a truce had “no chance for success.” He challenged the 15 members of the Security Council to back his proposal. “This initiative can mark the moment when Sudan steps back from the edge and the international community — You! You! — stood on the right side of history,” the Sudanese prime minister said. He said the council should “be remembered not as a witness to collapse, but as a partner in recovery.” US deputy ambassador Jeffrey Bartos, who spoke to the council before Idris, said the Trump administration has offered a humanitarian truce as a way forward and “We urge both belligerents to accept this plan without preconditions immediately.” Bartos said the Trump administration strongly condemns the horrific violence across Darfur and the Kordofan region — and the atrocities committed by both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, who must be held accountable. UAE Ambassador Mohamed Abushahab, a member of the Quad, said there is an immediate opportunity to implement the humanitarian truce and get aid to Sudanese civilians in desperate need. “Lessons of history and present realities make it clear that unilateral efforts by either of the warring parties are not sustainable and will only prolong the war,” he warned. Abushahab said a humanitarian truce must be followed by a permanent ceasefire “and a pathway toward civilian rule independent of the warring parties.” UN Assistant Secretary-General for political affairs Khaled Khiri reflected escalating council concerns about the Sudan war, which has been fueled by the continuing supply of increasingly sophisticated weapons. He criticized unnamed countries that refuse to stop supplying weapons, and both government and paramilitary forces for remaining unwilling to compromise or de-escalate. “While they were able to stop fighting to preserve oil revenues, they have so far failed to do the same to protect their population,” Khiri said. “The backers of both sides must use their influence to help stop the slaughter, not to cause further devastation.” The devastating war in Sudan has killed more than 40,000 people according to UN figures, but aid groups say the true number could be many times higher. The conflict has created the world’s largest humanitarian crisis, with over 14 million people displaced, disease outbreaks and famine spreading in parts of the country.—DNA

## Chinese scientists discover how Earth’s deep mantle water made planet habitable

GUANGZHOU: Chinese scientists have uncovered a crucial mechanism explaining how Earth may have stored vast quantities of water in its infancy, shedding new light on the planet’s dramatic evolution from a fiery ball of magma to the life-nurturing world of today. Researchers from the Guangzhou Institute of Geochemistry under the Chinese Academy of Sciences have experimentally demonstrated that the planet’s deep mantle could have acted as a massive reservoir for water over four billion years ago, according to the study published on Friday in the journal Science. “Where did the water go when Earth’s early magma oceans crystallized? For the deepest mantle, the answer has been elusive,” the journal stated in an editorial summary. The key lies in bridgmanite, the dominant mineral in the lower mantle. While previously thought to have limited water storage capacity, the Chinese team has discovered that the mineral actually exhibits a powerful, temperature-dependent ability to trap water. They recreated the extreme conditions of the lower mantle

— high pressure and scorching temperatures up to approximately 4,100 degrees Celsius — using a sophisticated diamond anvil cell apparatus combined with laser heating. Their findings reveal a paradox: the hotter the environment, the more efficiently bridgmanite captures and stores water molecules during its formation from cooling magma. This process could have locked away in the solid mantle an amount of water equivalent to between 0.08 and 1 times the volume of all modern oceans, according to the study. This primordial “water stockpile” has been gradually cycled back to the surface through volcanic activities, contributing to the formation of a blue, habitable planet. Meanwhile, China’s core artificial intelligence (AI) industry scale is expected to exceed the 1-trillion-yuan (\$140 billion) benchmark in 2025, according to industry data, a trend that experts said highlights the vast potential of the country’s AI development, driven by broader application scenarios, technological progress and policy

support. According to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT), China’s core AI industry exceeded 900 billion yuan in 2024, up 24 percent year-on-year, China Media Group reported on Sunday. In 2025, the figure is expected to surpass 1.2 trillion yuan, with growth accelerating further, the report said. Since the beginning of this year, the application of large-language AI models in the manufacturing segment has expanded significantly, with the share of application cases rising from 19.9 percent last year to 25.9 percent, helping drive rapid growth in the overall AI industry, according to the report. Multiple factors have underpinned the fast development of China’s AI industry, among which are broader application scenarios that outpace those of many countries in terms of market scale and demand, Ma Jihua, a veteran technology industry analyst, told the Global Times on Sunday, citing cases spanning the internet, financial services and manufacturing sectors.—Agencies

## Israel defense minister vows to stay in Gaza, establish outposts

JERUSALEM: Defense Minister Israel Katz on Tuesday vowed Israel will remain in Gaza and pledged to establish outposts in the north of the Palestinian territory, according to a video of a speech published by Israeli media. His remarks, reported across Israeli media, come as a fragile US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas holds in Gaza. Mediators are pressing for the implementation of the next phases of the truce, which would involve an Israeli withdrawal from the territory. Speaking at an event in the Israeli settlement of Beit El in the occupied West Bank, Katz said: “We are deep inside Gaza, and we will never leave Gaza — there will be no such thing.” “We are there to protect, to prevent what happened (from happening again),” he added, according to a video published by Israeli news site Ynet. Katz also vowed to establish outposts in the north of Gaza in place of settlements that had been evacuated during Israel’s unilateral disengagement from the territory in 2005. “When the time comes, God willing, we will establish in northern Gaza, Nahal outposts in place of the communities that were uprooted,” Katz said, referring to military-agricultural settlements set up by Israeli soldiers.—APP

## Syrian, SDF agree to de-escalate after Aleppo violence

DAMASCUS: Syrian government forces and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces agreed to de-escalate on Monday evening in the northern city of Aleppo, after a wave of attacks that both sides blamed on each other left at least two civilians dead and several wounded. Syria’s state news agency SANA, citing the defense ministry, said the army’s general command issued an order to stop targeting the SDF’s fire sources. The SDF said in a statement later that it had issued instructions to stop responding to attacks by Syrian government forces following de-escalation contacts. The Syrian health ministry said two people were killed and several were wounded in shelling by the SDF on residential neighborhoods in the city. The injuries included two children and two civil defense workers. The violence erupted hours after Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said during a visit to Damascus that the SDF appeared to have no intention of honoring a commitment to integrate into the state’s armed forces by an agreed year-end deadline. Türkiye views the US-backed SDF, which controls swathes of northeastern Syria, as a terrorist organization and has warned of military action if the group does not honor the agreement.—APP

## Syrian forces seize SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles

LONDON: Syrian security forces discovered a cache of SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles on Monday in Al-Bukamal, a city near the border with Iraq. The Interior Ministry said the weapons, seized by the Internal Security Directorate during a raid on a house, would have been smuggled out of the country. Investigations are continuing to identify and arrest those responsible for the smuggling attempt, officials said. The ministry said it remains committed to efforts to combat smuggling and other illegal activities as part of its efforts to protect the security and stability of the nation, the Syrian Arab News Agency reported. The latest seizure comes just days after authorities intercepted what was described as a significant arms-smuggling shipment on Dec. 17 in the Damascus countryside. The weapons seized included rocket-propelled grenades destined for Lebanon. And on Dec. 20, a joint operation by security forces from the Damascus countryside and Daraa resulted in the arrest of five people accused of smuggling weapons to illegal groups in Syria, including the terrorist organization Daesh.—APP



## Briefs

President  
Asif Zardari  
pays visit to  
holy sites in  
Najaf, Kufa

NAJAF: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday visited the holy cities of Najaf and Kufa, where he paid respects at key religious sites and offered prayers.

In Najaf, the President visited the shrine of Hazrat Ali (RA), where he offered Fateha and prayed. He later proceeded to Kufa, where he offered Nawafil prayers at Masjid-e-Kufa and visited the house attributed to Hazrat Ali (RA). During his visit, President Zardari prayed for peace, unity, and harmony among the Muslim Ummah.

The president also met with administrators and religious scholars in Najaf and Kufa. The meetings were attended by the Governor of Najaf and other senior officials. – APP

Pakistan  
pushes  
for Sudan  
ceasefire

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: As the flames of war continue to engulf Sudan, Pakistan has called for an immediate ceasefire, protection of civilians, and unfettered humanitarian access, leading to a peaceful political transition that reflects the aspirations of the Sudanese people. “There is no military solution to the conflict in Sudan,” Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Monday.

“The only durable path forward lies in a political dialogue and reconciliation,” he said during a debate on the rapidly deteriorating situation in Sudan.

The conflict erupted in April 2023 amid a power struggle between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Since then, fighting has spread nationwide, devastating cities, displacing millions, and pushing parts of the country – including areas of Darfur – into famine conditions.

“Sudan’s crisis is deepening, and the cost is being paid most acutely by the civilians. Even the United Nations peacekeepers have not been spared,” the Pakistani envoy told the 15-member Council.

In this regard, Ambassador Jadoon condemned last week’s deadly drone attack on the peacekeepers serving UNISFA (United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei) deployed in the disputed area between Sudan and South Sudan. “We convey our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Bangladesh, and to the families of the six fallen peacekeepers, and wish a swift recovery to those injured.”

Pointing out that the attack did not occur in a vacuum, he said the Secretary-General’s latest report had warned of the growing threats to peacekeepers, including the persistent encroachment of RSF in UNISFA’s operating environment. Earlier this year, RSF kidnapped 60 peacekeepers and seized UN assets and fuel trucks, he said, urging the Council to ensure that peacekeepers are not left exposed to predictable threats without consequence for those who attack them. RSF, he added, has also been on a rampage, including the killing of children in a kindergarten and attacks on schools and hospitals in Kordofan, a region in central Sudan, after the atrocities in Al-Genina and El-Fasher.

“Before El-Fasher fell, this Council and the broader international community were warned, repeatedly, of the consequences of inaction,” the Pakistani envoy said, pointing out that Security Council Resolution 2736 demanded that the siege of El-Fasher be lifted and called for the protection of civilians and humanitarian access. “Yet we saw defiance on the ground, followed by catastrophic outcomes, undermining the credibility of the Council,” he said.

Islamabad roundtable highlights  
growing Russia–Pakistan coop

*In his opening remarks, Russian Ambassador Albert P. Khorev highlighted the growing momentum in Russia–Pakistan political dialogue and noted the increasing engagement between the legislative bodies of the two countries*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Islamabad hosted a roundtable discussion titled “Russia–Pakistan: Overview of the Modern Stage of Bilateral Relations,” in collaboration with the Consortium for Asia Pacific and Eurasian Studies (CAPES). The forum brought together more than 40 representatives from leading universities and research institutions across Pakistan, including Islamabad, Peshawar, Lahore, Faisalabad, Karachi, Sargodha, and Okara.

In his opening remarks, Russian Ambassador Albert P. Khorev highlighted the growing momentum in Russia–Pakistan political dialogue and noted the increasing engagement between the legislative bodies of the two countries. He underscored the steady expansion of cultural ties and the constructive interaction between religious organizations in Russia and Pakistan, stressing that the peoples of both nations are united by their shared commitment to traditional spiritual and moral values.

The Ambassador reaffirmed Russia’s readiness to intensify efforts toward the implementation of joint projects aimed at deepening



cooperation between the two friendly neighboring countries, particularly within the broader Eurasian region.

Addressing the participants, Russian Trade Representative in Islamabad Denis Nevzorov outlined key trends in bilateral trade and economic cooperation during 2025. He also briefed the audience on the 16th INNOPROM International Industrial Exhibition, scheduled to be held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, from July 6 to 9, 2026, and invited Pakistani stakeholders to actively participate in the event.

The roundtable featured interactive discussions that generated a number of proposals to enhance people-to-people contacts between Russia and Pakistan. Key initiatives included the resumption of direct flights between the two countries, the launch of joint educational programs between Russian and Pakistani universities, and the translation of Russian classical and contemporary literary works into Urdu. The event concluded with a shared understanding of the strong interest within Pakistan’s academic and scientific communities to further expand dialogue with the Russian Federation and to promote closer economic, cultural, educational, and humanitarian cooperation between the citizens of the two friendly states.

“Turkiye and Iran can’t be  
Excluded from Regional  
Proceedings”, Iranian Expert

DNA

Islamabad: “Turkiye and Iran are natural partners because of their close proximity to each other”, marked Ms Fatemeh Asadi, a foreign affairs specialist based in Tehran. She was speaking to an event organized by Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad to discuss the prospects of Turkiye and Iran collaboration in the Middle East.

Speaking to a wide range of audience, Ms Asadi viewed that Syrian situation was volatile and required attention by regional stakeholders. She was of the opinion that no country could influence Syria completely and therefore, it was in the interest of regional stakeholders to find common grounds. She rejected the notion of Iran’s weakness and instead opined that Iran’s priorities had changed vis-à-vis the region and that Iran now sought pragmatism in its relations. Since Israel seeks the division of Syria which could cause instability in the entire region, Turkiye finds in Iran a feasible partner to keep Syria unified, Ms Asadi pointed out.

Ambassador Edmund Fitton-Brown, Senior Fellow at Foundation for Defense of Democracies (USA), argued that despite having upper hand in its relations with Iran,

Turkiye sought to manage the bilateral relations. However, the partnership between Turkiye and Iran is limited since Turkiye desires to keep the US on board as well, Ambassador Brown noted.

He also viewed the increased fragmentation in the geopolitical landscape with the possible emergence of KSA-UAE arrangement that could be detrimental to Turkiye’s interests in Syria. Finally, Ambassador Brown highlighted that if Syria fails to form an inclusive government, it could lead to renewed sectarian tensions which might force the US to disengage from the Turkiye-backed setup in the country. Mr Ferahim Eliyev, Research Fellow at Crescent Research Center, Azerbaijan, described Turkiye-Iran partnership as tactical based on realpolitik instead of any ideology. Turkiye views Israeli actions as destabilizing in the region and therefore, is willing to cooperate with Iran to manage the Syrian crisis, he added.

Mr Eliyev also outlined that Turkiye wanted to present itself as a credible mediator between the new administrator in Syria and Iran and that’s why, the partnership between the two is situational. Furthermore, Turkiye is adamant to continue cooperating with Iran in economic sphere despite sanctions which makes their bilateral partnership in Syria even more crucial.

Australian state set to  
pass tougher gun laws  
after Bondi attack

*Fifteen people were killed, and dozens injured in mass shooting at Jewish Hanukkah celebration at Bondi on Dec 14*

NEWS DESK

SYDNEY: Australia’s most populous state is set to pass tougher gun laws, ban the display of terrorist symbols and curb protests after the state parliament’s lower house cleared a bill late on Monday in an emergency sitting following the Bondi mass shooting. The terrorism and other legislation amendment bill won support from the opposition Liberal Party in New South Wales state, and is expected to clear the upper house on Tuesday. The ruling centre-left Labour government has proposed capping most individual gun licences at four firearms and allowing up to 10 for farmers. Fifteen people were killed and dozens were injured in the mass shooting at a Jewish Hanukkah celebration at Bondi on December 14, a shock attack that has prompted calls for tougher gun laws and stronger action against antisemitism. Police said one alleged gunman, Sajid Akram, 50, who was shot dead by officers, owned six firearms. His 24-year-old son Naveed, faces 59 charges, including murder and terrorism. Although Australia tightened gun laws after a 1996 shooting that killed 35 people, a police firearms registry showed more than 70 people in New South Wales, which includes Sydney, each own over 100 guns.

Kuwait signs  
\$4.1 billion  
deal with  
China to  
build port

In 2023, Kuwait signed seven MoUs with China on projects, including Mubarak al-Kabeer Port

CENTRELINE REPORT

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait has signed a deal worth \$4.1 billion with China to complete the construction of a major port, as the oil-rich country seeks to diversify its economy with a bigger role in global trade. The State Audit Bureau, a government oversight body responsible for monitoring public funds, on Monday said “the engineering, procurement, and construction contract to complete the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project will cost 1.28 billion Kuwaiti dinars (\$4.164 billion)”. Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attended the “ceremony for inking the engineering-supply-construction contract for building Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port on Boubyan island,” state media reported. He said the key project would “enhance Kuwait’s share in the regional and international trade and global supply chain”. Chinese acting charge d’affaires Liu Xiang said the deal “constitutes participation in the ‘belt and road’ initiative”. In 2023, Kuwait signed seven memoranda of understanding with China on projects including the Mubarak al-Kabeer Port, as well as housing, water treatment, and renewable energy.

Winter aid  
delivery  
continues in  
war-hit Gaza

UNITED NATIONS: Despite the ceasefire in the war-shattered Gaza Strip, humanitarian workers continue to receive reports of Israeli airstrikes, shelling and gunfire in all five governorates, according to the United Nations.

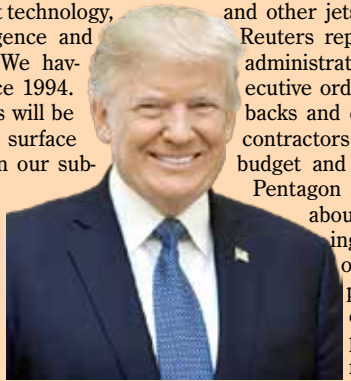
This has resulted in casualties and disruptions to aid operations over the past 24 hours, UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters at Headquarters, in New York. Still, efforts to deliver assistance to the most vulnerable families continue during the cold and wet winter season, although a rescue mission to reach an injured person in Gaza City was denied, the spokesperson said.

“Amid the severe lack of shelter across the Strip, people are staying in buildings that are either partially or mostly damaged as they try to protect their families from the elements,” he said. Several buildings collapsed over the weekend due to stormy conditions, with casualties reported, according to humanitarian partners. Additionally, three quarters of women-headed households urgently need shelter support, and two thirds desperately need clothing. Dujarric said that UN partners continue to work to improve access to dignified shelter for the estimated 1.3 million people in Gaza. – APP

US president unveils plan for  
‘Trump-class’ battleships

*New warships to ultimately result in “more tonnage, firepower under construction than at any time in history: officials*

WASHINGTON: President Trump on Monday announced plans for a new “Trump class” of battleships, marking the start of an expanded naval buildup and signalling increased scrutiny of defence contractors over production delays and cost overruns. The announcement represents the latest example of the president re-branding an aspect of the federal government in his image. Trump – who has previously criticised the appearance of US warships – will be personally involved in the designs. He said the ships will weigh more than 30,000 tonnes, larger than current destroyers, and be equipped with the latest technology, including artificial intelligence and directed energy lasers. “We haven’t built a battleship since 1994. These cutting-edge vessels will be some of the most lethal surface warfare ships... other than our submarines,” Trump said. Some US officials have warned that a failure to build new battleships in recent years has handed an advantage to economic and military rival China. Trump downplayed Chi-



na’s influence on the decision, saying the expansion was “a counter to everybody.” He said the naval expansion would also be paired with renewed pressure on defence contractors to speed up production and rein in costs. He said he will meet with major defence firms next week to address delays and overruns, and to examine whether executive compensation, stock buybacks and dividends are contributing to missed production targets. “We don’t want to have executives making \$50 million a year, issuing big dividends to everybody, and also doing buybacks” while production of F-35s and other jets languishes, Trump said. Reuters reported last week that the administration was planning an executive order to limit dividends, buybacks and executive pay for defence contractors whose projects are over-budget and delayed. Trump and the Pentagon have been complaining about the expensive, slow-moving and entrenched nature of the defence industry, promising dramatic changes that would make the production of war equipment more nimble. – DNA

ECC approves 600 MHz  
spectrum auction as  
govt eyes rolling out 5G  
IT minister says spectrum advisory  
committee's recommendations will  
be taken to the cabinet soon

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee has approved auction of 600 MHz spectrum which would not only improve the internet speed but also pave way for the roll out of 5G internet in the country, Information Technology and Telecommunication (IT) Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja said on Tuesday. Addressing a joint presser along with Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the IT minister said the federal government was eyeing completing the internet spectrum auction by early 2026 after the ECC’s nod.

Expanding on the matter, IT Minister Khawaja said that spectrum advisory committee’s recommendations will be taken to the cabinet soon and that consultation with other relevant parties, including the telecom sector, will be ensured during the process. “Due to a lack of spectrum, internet speed in Pakistan is not up to world standards,” the minister noted, adding that the government is going to hold an auction of 600 MHz spectrum. Highlighting that the internet formed the basis of the entire digital system, she said that the government will increase both the speed as well as internet access and that efforts were being made to complete the auction in the first week of February 2026.

The spectrum auction announcement comes as slow internet speed, coupled with intermittent outages and restricted access on various occasions, are not uncommon for the netizens in the country. As per Ookla Speedtest Global Index, Pakistan ranked 97th globally with regards to mobile internet speed which was measured at 24.79Mbps in November. The statistics were much worse for fixed broadband speed where the country ranked 146 with download speed of mere 18.27Mbps.

## Japan funds construction of eyecare facility

DNA

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, on Tuesday, inaugurated a project for the construction of eyecare facility in Tehsil Havelian, District Abbottabad. The project was implemented by Lok Sudhar Association, a non-governmental organization working to improve the essential eyecare services for underserved communities in Havelian. The Government of Japan, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Program, had provided financial assistance of 51,407 USD which was allocated in 2024 for the construction for eyecare facility and provision of advanced ophthalmology equipment used in the diagnosis of different ophthalmic diseases and cataract surgeries. The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Japanese Embassy officials, NGO board members and local community representatives.

Lok Sudhar Association, with more than twenty five years of experience in community uplift and social sector initiatives, has worked collaboratively with various donors to deliver impactful projects. This project funded by the Government of Japan, improved the quality of eyecare service in Havelian, especially enabled to access cataract surgery for the first time in this region. This initiative responds to the pressing medical needs of over 350,000 people in Tehsil Havelian and adjoining areas. After the completion of the project, almost 30,000 patients have undergone treatment and 1,260 cataract surgeries were operated in this facility in one year. This facility significantly reduces the financial and physical burden on elderly and vulnerable patients who often faced delays in receiving timely medical care. H.E. Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, while speaking at the cere-



mony, congratulated Lok Sudhar Association on the successful completion of the project. Ambassador Akamatsu emphasized that provision of affordable health facility is the one of the top priorities in Japan’s assistance policy toward Pakistan. Ambassador Akamatsu also highlighted that the access to quality treatment is the basic prerequi-

site for any nation to achieve social prosperity. Ambassador Akamatsu stressed that Government of Japan would continue to support the people of Pakistan, to improve their living standards and represented his sincere wish that this project would certainly strengthen the longstanding friendship between the people of Japan and Pakistan.