



Islamabad POST

Thursday, December 25, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Pakistan, China ties poised for a quantum leap

Detailed News On Page-08

Pakistan urges restraint to ease US-Venezuela row

Detailed News On Page-08



Chinese envoy highlights media role

Detailed News On Page-08



PIA privatization

'We have not lost our pride'

PM's aide Muhamamd Ali says national airline privatisation to yield Rs10bn in cash and Rs45bn in equity value

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Rejecting criticism over the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Prime Minister's Adviser on Privatisation Muhammad Ali on Tuesday said that the move does not undermine national pride but aims to restore the carrier's lost strength and efficiency. Addressing a joint press conference with Federal Information Minister Atta Tarar, Muhammad Ali said that claims circulating on social media suggesting that the airline was sold for less than the value of its aircraft were incorrect and misleading, adding that such assertions do not reflect the facts of the privatisation process. He said that PIA once operated a fleet of around 50 aircraft, but currently only 17 to 19 planes are operational, while 12 aircraft are on lease.

EDITORIAL ON PAGE 5

The adviser also addressed the claims that the government would only get Rs10 billion from the PIA's privatisation, stating that the government would get 7.5% in cash and 25% in equity's value — amounting to Rs10 billion and 45 billion, respectively. He said the government would receive a total of Rs55 billion from the bidding proceeds, while Rs125 billion would be reinvested in PIA. "PIA privatisation has been successfully completed and the entire nation witnessed the transparent process." On the airline's financial decline, the adviser said PIA's performance deteriorated significantly after 2009. He revealed that the national carrier incurred losses of Rs500 billion over the past 10 years. The process now moves to final approvals by the Privatisation Commission board and the cabinet, expected within days, with contract signing likely

Continued on Page 06

Khawaja Asif blames bureaucracy for public sector's decline

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, who also heads the country's aviation sector, has held bureaucracy responsible for the decline of the public sector while lamenting that politicians are often blamed for it. "Those responsible for the ruin of [public sector] institutions will be held accountable," Asif said while speaking on Geo News' programme "Geo Pakistan" on Wednesday.

The minister's remarks come in the wake of Pakistan International Airlines' (PIA) successful privatisation bid held a day earlier where consortium led by Arif Habib Corporation emerged as the top bidder for 75% stake in the national carrier via offering Rs135 billion. The auction marked Pakistan's first major privatisation in nearly two decades and comes amid pressure to reform loss-making state firms under a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. 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

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif presents shields to the members of government team which led the privatisation of PIA. — DNA

Mystery shrouds death of Libyan Army Chief

DNA

TRIPOLI: The sudden death of Libya's army chief of staff, General Mohammed Ali Ahmed AHaddad, in a plane crash near Turkey's capital has sparked shock, grief and growing speculation across the war-torn North African country, with questions multiplying over whether the incident was a tragic accident or something far more sinister. General Haddad, a senior military figure aligned with Libya's UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU) based in Tripoli, died on Tuesday when the jet he was travelling in crashed shortly after departing Ankara. According to Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, the aircraft went down while returning from an official visit to Turkey, killing all five people on board.

Continued on Page 06

Saudi Arabia condemns attack on police

NEWS DESK

RIVADH: The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday has condemned an attack that targeted Pakistani police in the country's northwest, killing five personnel. Five Pakistani police personnel were killed on Tuesday when their van was ambushed in a bombing and shooting attack claimed by the militant Pakistani Taliban. "The Kingdom reiterates its total rejection of all terrorist and extremist acts and its condemnation of attempts to undermine the security and stability of Pakistan and it's brotherly people," a statement by the foreign ministry said.

Continued on Page 06

PM orders to expedite expansion work at all ports

Shehbaz Sharif also directed all port-related institutions to further strengthen coordination among them to minimize cargo dwell time

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed to expedite dredging and expansion work at all ports to facilitate berthing of large vessels. He was chairing a meeting regarding the working group constituted for reforms in Pakistani ports in Islamabad on Wednesday. The Prime Minister also directed improvement of rail connectivity from ports to enhance inland transportation of cargo. He emphasized that ports play a crucial role in boosting business activity and accelerating economic growth in the country. Shehbaz Sharif also directed all port-related institutions to further strengthen coordination among them to minimize cargo dwell time. He instructed to further reduce various port charges and to introduce a transparent mechanism for the auction of abandoned cargo. He directed the establishment of separate yards for abandoned cargo at ports across the country in collaboration with internationally renowned companies.

Continued on Page 06

PM assures to empower youth

DNA

MUZZAFARABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir will surely gain freedom from India and become part of Pakistan. He was addressing laptop distribution ceremony at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, on Wednesday. Referring to the Indian atrocities in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), the Prime Minister emphasized that the Kashmiri people are rendering immense sacrifices for their cause. He reiterated his strong commitment to not only making Pakistan a great nation through collective efforts and unity, but also to securing the right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people. The Prime Minister also highlighted that

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

27 cops martyred in 134 attacks

DNA

BANNU: Bannu Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Sajjad Khan said on Wednesday that 27 cops were martyred in 134 terrorist attacks targeting personnel in the district in 2025. He made the remarks while addressing a press briefing at his office, where he gave a detailed breakdown of the overall law and order situation in the district and operations carried out against terrorist elements. According to the DIG, Bannu police conducted comprehensive, well-organised and result-oriented operations against militants. He said the data showed that during 2025, a total of 134 terrorist attacks targeted police stations, police posts, checkpoints, police mobiles and police parties. In these attacks, 27 police personnel were martyred, while 79 sustained injuries. In retaliatory action by police, 53 terrorists were killed and 163 were injured, he said. The DIG said that Bannu police carried out 168 intelligence-based operations across the district, resulting in the arrest of 105 terrorists and the elimination of 65 terrorists. Overall, successful action was taken against 170 terrorists, he said. He further stated that police and security forces jointly conducted successful operations in the areas of Miryan, Haved, Daud Shah, Mamand Khel and Domel. During these joint operations, one police constable was martyred while 11 police personnel and five civilians were injured, he said. As a result of these operations, 22 terrorists were killed and four were arrested, and several terrorist hideouts and houses were also demolished. He also said that terrorists had carried out 20 drone attacks targeting police installations and civilian populations, in which 19 police personnel were injured.

Finance Minister says

2.7% economic growth not enough

Aurangzeb highlighted that Pakistan has entered the fiscal year 2025 from a position of renewed strength, marked by macroeconomic stability, improving external balances, and a firm commitment to structural reform

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Pakistan has reached a critical turning point, with macroeconomic stability, sustained reforms, and policy continuity restoring confidence and steering the economy towards export-led, long-term growth. However, in an interview with USA Today, the finance czar pointed out that the economic growth of 2.7% in the previous fiscal year, though positive, is insufficient to absorb the needs of a rapidly growing population. The minister said macroeconomic stability was opening new horizons for domestic and global investors, and positioning the country for sustainable, long-term economic growth. He said this transition has been enabled by macroeconomic stabilisation, easing inflation and improved external balances, with

Continued on Page 06

IAEA lauds Pak's efforts to combat cancer via PAEC

DNA

NEW YORK: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has commended Pakistan for its effort to combat cancer via the provision of medical facilities through the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), the Foreign Office said on Wednesday. In a video statement, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said that more than 100,000 people die from cancer in Pakistan each year, with the number surpassing 10 million globally. Warning that cancer deaths were expected to rise by 75% by 2050,

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan urges JCPOA diplomacy revival on Iran

Islamabad opposes hasty snapback move, cautioning that sanctions hurt ordinary people most

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Pakistan told the UN Security Council it opposes any hasty move to re-impose sanctions through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism on Iran and urged members to revive the spirit of the nuclear deal through diplomacy and dialogue, warning coercive measures deepen mistrust and hurt ordinary people most. In a statement at the Council briefing on Iran's nuclear issue on Tuesday, Pakistan's Acting Permanent Representative Ambassador Usman Jadoon thanked UN Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for the briefing. He said Pakistan's position is grounded in the belief that all issues concerning Iran's nuclear programme must be resolved through dialogue, with more time provided for diplomacy to succeed, while avoiding confrontation and preserving the JCPOA framework until a successor arrangement is reached. Ambassador Jadoon recalled that the Security Council last met on the issue in September in the wake of developments concerning the JCPOA snapback mechanism. He said it was "deeply regrettable" that divisions in the Council and

Continued on Page 06

'Latest peace plan offers Ukrainian withdrawal from east'

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has given details of an updated peace plan that offers Russia the potential withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the east that Moscow has demanded. Giving details of the 20-point plan agreed by US and Ukrainian negotiators in Florida at the weekend, Zelensky said the Russians would give their response once the Americans had spoken to them. Describing the plan as "the main framework for ending the war" Zelensky said it proposed security guarantees from the US, Nato and Europeans for a co-ordinated military response if Russia invaded Ukraine again. On the key question of Ukraine's eastern Donbas,

Continued on Page 06

MURREE SPARKLETT'S
Bottled Drinking Water

WATER TASTES BEST IN GLASS!!

CARBONATED WATER ALSO AVAILABLE IN GLASS BOTTLE

330ml 750ml

For Sales & Supply Contact:

Adel Butt 03334131756	Qaiser Waheed 03325808422	Riaz Muhammad 0335 5111043
--------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

Acid attack accused awarded life imprisonment

BUREWALA: Additional District and Sessions Judge Syed Muhammad Omar sentenced an accused to life imprisonment and ordered him to pay Rs 17.7 million as fine and compensation after charges of attacking and injuring a female school teacher with acid were proved against him.

According to deputy district public prosecutor Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal, accused Muhammad Ashfaq, who had attacked the private school teacher Ghulam Sabiraan after she had rejected his marriage proposal, was also sentenced to 11-year imprisonment.

Acid attack is heinous offense and those involved deserve no leniency, DPO Vehari Tasawur Iqbal said in a statement. He commended police investigators for effective investigations with evidence that culminated into conviction of the accused.—APP

Safdar warns of environmental disaster in KP

BATTAGRAM: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Captain (R) Muhammad Safdar Wednesday has strongly criticized the indiscriminate and large-scale cutting of forests in Tehsil Allai of District Battagram, describing it as an unprecedented plunder of national wealth.

He expressed these views while talking to the media during his visit to the area. He witnessed distressing scenes of deforestation where forests worth billions and even trillions of rupees have been mercilessly felled, turning once-green mountains into barren and lifeless landscapes. Captain (R) Muhammad Safdar stated that the destruction of forests was not limited to Battagram alone but had spread across the entire Hazara Division, including Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Torgar and Kohistan. He alleged that despite tall claims made by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led government over the past decade regarding environmental protection and large-scale plantation drives, the ground realities presented a completely different picture.—APP

Christmas cake-cutting ceremony held

LAHORE: Minister for Local Government Zeeshan Rafique on Wednesday attended a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony as the chief guest, organised by the Suthra Punjab Authority at Huzuri Bagh Lahore. Secretary Local Government Shakeel Ahmed Mian, Commissioner Lahore Maryam Khan, Deputy Commissioner Musa Raza and Director General Suthra Punjab Authority Babar Sahib Din were also present. Pastor Hamid Aziz led a prayer before the cake-cutting ceremony.

Addressing the gathering, Zeeshan Rafique extended Christmas greetings to the Christian community, particularly the workers of Suthra Punjab, and said that Christmas is a festival of joy that is shared by all. He termed Suthra Punjab workers as the “real heroes” behind the success of the sanitation initiative, adding that the project is now being discussed worldwide.—APP

CCC vows zero tolerance for malicious efforts against national unity

The COAS paid rich tribute to the unwavering courage, professionalism, and sacrifices of the Pakistan Armed Forces, and appreciated their resolute conduct in sustained, intelligence-based counter-terrorism operations across the country in recent months

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Corps Commanders Conference (CCC) while categorically rejecting the nexus between terrorism, crime, and vested political interests on Wednesday vowed that no malicious interest, political or otherwise, aimed at undermining national unity, security and stability would be tolerated, nor would anyone be allowed to create divisions between the Armed Forces and the people of Pakistan. The 273rd Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) held here at General Headquarters (GHQ) with Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) in the Chair, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). The Forum undertook a comprehensive review of prevailing internal and external security environment, with particular emphasis on evolving threats and operational preparedness, it further said. The participants reaffirmed that all terrorists under the tutelage of Indian sponsors, along with their facilitators and abettors, would be dealt with decisively and without exception. The Forum appreciated Balochistan Special Development Initiatives, directed towards local empowerment and social engagements to address challenges of terrorism related to governance. The participants noted the need for similar public-centric initiatives elsewhere also in line with National Action Plan to ensure enduring peace and stability. The Forum underscored Pakistan's steadfast commitment to the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people for their right to self-determination, and reaffirmed Pakistan's principled position on the Palestine issue, calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza, and a credible pathway to Palestinian statehood. The Forum offered Fateha for the Shuhada of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies, and innocent civilians who laid down their lives in recent terrorist incidents, while defending the motherland against foreign-sponsored terrorism. The COAS paid



rich tribute to the unwavering courage, professionalism, and sacrifices of the Pakistan Armed Forces, and appreciated their resolute conduct in sustained, intelligence-based counter-terrorism operations across the country in recent months. He highlighted that owing to combined efforts of the Government, military and steadfast support of the people of Pakistan, our country is steadily and surely leaping towards stability, greater opportunities and respect. In his concluding remarks, the

COAS & CDF directed Commanders to maintain the highest standards of operational readiness, discipline, training, physical fitness, technological innovations and battlefield adaptability. He expressed full confidence in Pakistan Army's capability to effectively counter complete spectrum of threats, ranging from conventional and sub-conventional to hybrid and asymmetric challenges, while steadfastly safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Agreement signed to strengthen primary healthcare in KP

PESHAWAR: The Primary Health Care Reforms Project of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department and Greenstar Social Marketing Pakistan have signed an agreement to improve basic healthcare services across the province through a public-private partnership. This collaboration aims to strengthen Basic Health Units, address shortages of human resources, and enhance the overall quality of healthcare delivery, ensuring better

and more effective access to medical services for the public, said an official release. Under the terms of the agreement, Greenstar Social Marketing Pakistan will work with the Health Department to deploy trained medical staff to selected health facilities identified by the Primary Health Care Reforms Project, with a primary focus on improving service standards. The signing ceremony took place at the Health

Secretariat in Peshawar and was attended by Provincial Health Minister Khaliq-ur-Rehman, Secretary Health Shahidullah Khan, senior officials from the Health Department, and management from Greenstar. The agreement was signed by Dr. Syed Aziz-ur-Rehman, Chief Executive Officer of Greenstar Social Marketing Pakistan, and Dr. Ikramullah Khan, Project Director of the Primary Health Care Reforms Project.—APP

Quaid's life role model for every Pakistani: Speakers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Women University (RWU) organized a seminar and an art exhibition to mark the birth anniversary of the Founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Nasreen Azhar, Council Member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and a prominent eyewitness to events linked with Pakistan's freedom movement, was the chief guest. Addressing the event she highlighted Quaid-e-Azam's visionary leadership, democratic ideals, and firm commitment to human rights. Recalling the pre-Partition era and the painful experiences of migration, she noted that people of different religions once lived together with mutual respect. —APP

Govt launches coalition to combat malnutrition

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab government has rolled out a much needed initiative to address nutritional deficiencies and achieve fortified staples in the province. A national 'Millers for Nutrition' coalition was formally launched in a ceremonial event in Murree, bringing together flour and edible oil millers, government regulators, industry leaders and development partners to promote large-scale food fortification. The initiative builds on the national launch of the Millers for Nutrition program which was inaugurated in July this year. The program aims to empower millers to fortify staple foods such as wheat flour and edible oil with essential micronutrients like iron, folic acid, vitamins A and D, and zinc to improve the nutritional

quality of everyday diets across the province. The launching ceremony, organized by Nutrition International in collaboration with TechnoServe, drew participation from key stakeholders including Punjab Food Authority, President Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) Badaruddin Kakar, President Punjab Flour Mills Association, senior officials from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), flour and edible oil mill owners, representatives of food regulatory bodies, industry associations, development partners, and media personnel. Addressing the ceremony, DG Punjab Food Authority, Muhammad Asim Javed assured the food industry of full regulatory support, describing

malnutrition as a grave public health challenge affecting millions of children and women in Pakistan. He called for collective efforts to address the challenge. “Nutritional deficiencies are a serious issue, which needs collective action from all stakeholders,” he said. He emphasized that such collaborative platforms would strengthen ties between the food industry and regulatory authorities, facilitating better enforcement of fortification standards. PFMA President Badaruddin Kakar highlighted the fundamental right of every individual to receive adequate nutrition through the daily meal. He expressed the association's firm commitment and complete backing for the initiative. —APP

35 beggars detained as distt admin launches citywide drive

ISLAMABAD: The district administration detained 35 professional beggars during a targeted operation carried out in key areas of the federal capital. The action was led by the Assistant Commissioner (City) and covered Blue Area, Sector F-6, Sector F-7, and Aabpara, according to the spokesman of ICT administration here. He said the drive is part of an ongoing effort to curb organized begging and improve public order in busy commercial and residential zones. Officials stated that teams conducted checks at traffic signals, markets, and public spaces where complaints had been received from residents and traders. During the operation, individuals identified as professional beggars were taken into custody and shifted to police lock-ups for further legal action. The administration said the move aims to discourage organized begging networks that operate across the city. The Assistant Commissioner (City) said the operation was carried out after repeated reports from citizens about the presence of groups engaged in begging at major crossings and shopping areas. The district administration noted that similar actions will continue in other sectors of Islamabad. Officials said the campaign is not limited to one-day activity and will be expanded based on field assessments and public feedback. They added that coordination with police and social welfare departments is being strengthened to ensure follow-up measures. —APP

Minister Arora distributes Christmas grant cheques

MULTAN: Punjab Minister for Human Rights and Minority Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora distributed Christmas grant cheques among the Christian families and joined celebrations by cutting a cake during his visit to Multan. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Nauman Siddique and CPO Sadiq Ali Dogar were also present, along with other officials besides Christian community representatives, who thanked Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for immediate release of Christmas grant that enabled them celebrate the day with religious fervour. The minister said the CM Punjab had taken exemplary steps for welfare of the minority communities including Christians and reaffirmed the government's commitment to interfaith harmony and minority welfare. Ramesh Arora added that special and effective arrangements had been ensured at churches and Christian colonies across Multan to facilitate peaceful Christmas celebrations. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Nauman Siddique congratulated the Christian community on Christmas and said that the district administration stood shoulder to shoulder with minority communities on all occasions, ensuring security, facilitation and equal rights for all citizens. Meanwhile, Punjab minister for human rights and minority affairs also visited Catholic Church Bishop House in Multan and met with Chairman of Catholic Commission on Interfaith Harmony and Dialogue, Bishop of Multan, Bishop Yousuf Sohan and discussed with him the steps taken so far by the Punjab government to facilitate Christian community. Ramesh Singh Arora said that Punjab government was committed to promote interfaith harmony, tolerance and mutual respect to ensure people from all faiths coexist peacefully and prosper. Bishop Yousuf Sohan thanked the Punjab government for taking special steps to facilitate the Christian community for Christmas celebrations. Samuel Clement, National Director Catholic Commission for Interfaith Harmony and Dialogue, said on the occasion that Punjab government has won hearts by special initiatives for the Christian community facilitation.—APP

Pakistan, Oman naval chiefs call for enhanced bilateral ties

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman, Rear Admiral Saif Bin Nasser Bin Mohsin Al Rahbi called on Admiral Naveed Ashraf, NI, NI (M), T Bt, Chief of

the Naval Staff, at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional maritime security and bilateral naval cooperation were discussed. The visiting dignity lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Navy

and acknowledged its continued contributions towards ensuring maritime security and stability in the region. Later, Chief of the Naval Staff and Commander Royal Navy of Oman signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) related to sharing of

white shipping information in a ceremony held at Naval Headquarters. The MoU is aimed at establishing guidelines and procedures for information sharing in order to enhance mutual awareness of white shipping. Pakistan and Oman enjoy geographical proximity sharing common maritime boundaries. The bilateral relations between brotherly countries cover wide ranging scope including economic cooperation, people to people contacts and strong defence ties. Both navies have deep professional relations which are manifested through PN and RNO ELSTS (Expert Level Staff Talks), training, bilateral exercises and participation in multilateral exercises.



Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority
Government of Pakistan

NOTICE OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

NOTICE REGARDING PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON REVISION OF RATE OF RETURN (ROR) STUDY FOR TRANSMISSION & DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES OPERATING UNDER EXISTING TARIFF REGIME FOR NATURAL GAS SECTOR OF PAKISTAN

- Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), in pursuance of Section 6, 7 & 8 of the OGRA Ordinance, 2002 determines tariffs for regulated activities viz; transmission, distribution & sale whose licenses provide for such determination. OGRA, under Section 6(2)(s)(t) of the OGRA Ordinance, 2002 read with respective license conditions has to determine reasonable rate of return which may be earned by the licensees in undertaking of its regulated activity pertaining to Natural Gas. Currently, OGRA, since 2018, is allowing market based rate of return to the gas utilities viz; SNGPL and SSGC on the value of its average net fixed assets in operation for each financial year.
- OGRA, considering latest gas sector dynamics including demand/supply, price volatility, market liberalization and benchmarking in this regard undertaken world over, has decided to review existing ROR formula through an independent consultant as per the terms of reference advertised in Daily News & Daily Express on July 04, 2025. The advertisement including Terms of Reference (TORs) is available at OGRA's official website.
- OGRA, after receipt of first draft report as furnished by M/s. KPMG, has decided to call public consultation with all stakeholders as per its TORs and the relevant legal provisions to ensure transparency and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Accordingly, OGRA invites comments from all stakeholders, interested/affected persons/parties including but not limited to Federal Government, Provincial Governments, Ministries/Divisions, Autonomous Bodies, private parties and all categories of retail consumers of Gas viz; industry, power, textile, fertilizer, commercial, CNG, domestic, etc.
- In order to make the process meaningful, OGRA has decided to hold Public Consultation Sessions as per following schedule:

Location	Lahore	Peshawar	Islamabad	Karachi	Quetta
Date:	January 05, 2026	January 07, 2026	January 09, 2026	January 12, 2026	January 14, 2026
Time:	10:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.
Venue:	Royal Swiss Hotel, Lahore	Serena Hotel, Peshawar	OGRA, Head Office, G-10/4, Islamabad	Marriot Hotel, Karachi	Serena Hotel, Quetta

- All stakeholders, general public and interested / affected persons are hereby informed of the above proceedings for effective participation and valuable input. The report is available at OGRA's official website (www.ogra.org.pk/studies-2).

Senior Registrar,
Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority
Plot No. 37&39, Mauve Area, G-10/4, Islamabad.
Phone No. 051-9108889
E-mail: registrar@ogra.org.pk

Public Service Message:

گیس کی جان لیوا حادثات کا سبب بن سکتی ہے، احتیاطی تدابیر یقینی بنائیں اور حادثات سے بچیں۔

National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

Dec 01/Romania National Day

Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day

Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day

Dec 05/Thailand National Day

Dec 06/Finland Independence Day

Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day

Dec 09/Tanzania National Day

Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day

Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day

Dec12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day

Dec 16/Bahrain National Day


Dec 16/Kazakhstan Independence Day

Dec 18/Qatar National Day

Dec 18/Niger National Day

Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day

Dec 23/Japan National Day



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

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


Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police...9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114


PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

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

Ethiopian envoy discusses business coop with RCCI chief

Usman Shaukat, President of the RCCI emphasized that people-to-people relations are the key drivers of economic diplomacy, requiring a concentrated focus from both sides to bring the two nations closer.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Oumer Hussein Oba, Ambassador-designate of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, paid a maiden visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) on Wednesday to discuss bilateral cooperation, and high-light extraordinary investment opportunities within Ethiopia's flourishing economic sectors. The meeting covered a broad range of issues, including trade, investment, institutional linkages, and future collaborations. Both sides discussed mechanisms for seamless cooperation to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two nations. Addressing the business gathering representing various economic sectors of Pakistan, the Ambassador briefed them on the homegrown economic reforms undertaken by the Ethiopian government. These reforms have created massive business opportunities in five primary sectors including agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, mining, tourism, and ICT, he added. The Ambassador also urged the business community to participate in the high-level "Invest in Ethiopia" forum, scheduled for March 26-27, 2026 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The event is expected to bring together over 700 international investors, policymakers, and development partners from across the globe. He assured the RCCI that the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad would provide full support to Pakistani businesses looking to explore the untapped potential of bilateral economic



relations. Usman Shaukat, President of the RCCI, welcomed the Ambassador and highlighted the growing cooperation between the Embassy and the Chamber. He emphasized that people-to-people relations are the key drivers of economic diplomacy, requiring a concentrated focus

from both sides to bring the two nations closer. The President further highlighted the immense potential for trade and investment, praising the economic development achieved by Ethiopia under the leadership of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed. Senior Vice President Mr.

Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Mr. Fahad Barlas, and Former President Mr. Raja Amer also spoke regarding the future of Ethiopia-Pakistan relations. The discussion concluded with a Q&A session and a cake-cutting ceremony organized by the RCCI to celebrate Christmas.

HEC to showcase Lab-to-Market innovations

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan is set to host the landmark "Technology Development Fund (TDF) Impact showcasing 2025 (TIS'25)" on December 30, marking a defining moment in the country's transition towards a knowledge-based economy. The event will bring together business leaders, industry experts, policymakers, researchers and investors to witness the scale and maturity of Pakistan's applied research landscape and the technological solutions emerging from local universities. Launched with an investment of Rs. 2.9 billion approved under the Public Sector Development Programme, TDF has proven to be a vital engine for national growth by transforming academic intellectual property into tangible economic assets. Over the past several years, TDF has evolved into a national engine for commercialization and technology transfer, linking university-based R&D with industry needs, said a press release issued here Wednesday. The programme's footprint has expanded considerably, with 200+ projects awarded to date and 192 already completed. These projects have collectively produced 192 prototypes and process improvements, 300+ research publications – including 241 in impact factor journals – and a growing portfolio of intellectual property comprising 116 national and international patents. The momentum of commercializa-

tion is equally notable, with 162 technology licenses signed, 18 start-up and spin-off initiatives nurtured, and 23 projects generating revenue. In addition, TDF-backed projects have supported job creation across economic sectors, while universities have benefitted from over Rs. 680 million worth of technical and research equipment added through TDF-supported initiatives. TIS'25 aims to translate this accumulated impact into an interactive platform where over 100 TDF-funded technologies will be showcased to the country's industrial and corporate ecosystem. These innovations span over critical domains such as Health, Agriculture, Biotechnology, Engineering, Energy Systems, Environmental Management, and Emerging Technologies. For industry and private-sector decision-makers, the event offers an opportunity to explore indigenous solutions that reduce import dependence, strengthen supply chains, and improve production efficiency. For investors, it opens access to deal flow based on verified technologies that are backed by academic expertise and prototype validation. The event will feature a series of focused panel discussions and a fireside chat, bringing together prominent voices from government, academia, and the private sector. These conversations will examine the structural disconnects that have traditionally

limited Pakistan's research-to-market pipeline and highlight ways in which stronger Triple Helix cooperation – among universities, industry, and government – can accelerate value creation. For businesses grappling with rising input costs and increased competition, the technologies on display at TIS'25 will demonstrate how local innovation can serve as a practical lever for growth. TDF's growing results are particularly relevant at a time when Pakistan ranks 99th out of 139 countries in the Global Innovation Index 2025 and continues to struggle with low industrial competitiveness and high import dependence. With a youth population of over 62 million, leveraging indigenous innovation is a strategic necessity. Through demand-driven funding, TRL-based progression frameworks, and stronger commercialization support within universities, TDF is helping convert academic knowledge into economic outcomes, creating pathways for local production, job creation, and technology localization. For Pakistan's corporate community and industrial sector, TIS'25 arrives as an important reminder: the solutions to many of the country's most persistent challenges are being developed within its own universities. What is now required is a stronger bridge between research and industry – a bridge that TDF has built and TIS'25 aims to strengthen further. –DNA

Over 3,500 cops deployed to churches' security

He added that special police contingents have also been deployed around recreational spots to ensure public safety

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have issued a comprehensive security plan for Christmas, deploying more than 3,500 police officers across the federal capital to ensure the safety of churches and Christian worshippers. A police spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq is personally supervising all security duties to ensure foolproof arrangements during Christmas celebrations. He said special security measures have been put in place at sensitive churches, where additional police personnel have been deployed, while special patrolling teams are conducting continuous rounds in surrounding areas. The spokesperson said security has also been tightened at the city's entry and exit points, with enhanced checking to prevent any untoward incident. Police and volunteers have been deputed at church entrances to conduct body searches and ensure controlled access. He said supervisory officers are maintaining close coordination with church administrations through continuous liaison and mutual consultation to ensure smooth and secure conduct of religious activities. Sensitive churches are also being monitored through Safe City cameras, while special traffic squads have been formed to keep traffic flowing smoothly around churches and busy areas. The spokesperson said strict action would be taken against one-wheeling, hooliganism and other violations, adding that traffic officers have been directed to take action against offenders without discrimination. He added that special police contingents have also been deployed around recreational spots to ensure public safety. The spokesperson said protection of citizens' lives and property remains the top priority of Islamabad Police, and all possible measures are being taken to ensure peaceful and secure Christmas celebrations in the federal capital. –DNA

Wife gets life imprisonment for killing husband

RAWALPINDI: The Additional District and Sessions Court has convicted and sentenced two individuals in a murder case. The crime occurred in April and was reported at Sadiqabad Police Station. After a detailed trial that examined forensic evidence, witness statements, and other material placed on record, Judge Nadia Ikram Malik delivered the verdict. Sania Shahzad was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. She was also ordered to pay Rs. 400,000.0 as compensation to the legal heirs of the deceased. In addition, under Section 201, for causing the disappearance of evidence or giving false information to screen the offender, she received seven years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000.0. Junaid Bhatti, the main character, was convicted of the murder charge and sentenced to death. He was further ordered to pay Rs 400,000.0 in compensation. Under Section 452, for house-trespass after preparation to commit an offence, he was awarded seven years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000.0. City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani commended the investigation team, the SSP Investigation wing, and the legal cell for their thorough work and consistent court performance. –APP

Privatization of PIA reflects strong investor confidence

ISLAMABAD :Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry while terming privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) a historic step on Wednesday said that it reflects strong investor confidence in Pakistan's economy. In his message on social media platform X, the minister congratulated Arif Habib Ltd consortium on the successful Rs. 135 billion bid for PIA. "This milestone is a positive signal of economic stability, effective reforms, and renewed trust in Pakistan's future," he wrote on X. "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, with the efforts of Deputy PM Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Defense Minister Khawaja Asif, Muhammad Ali Advisor on Privatization, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, and the support of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan continues to move toward growth, transparency, and economic revival," he said. –APP

Qatari delegation visits ANF hqs to boost counter-narcotics coop

The DG ANF underscored Pakistan's commitment to enhancing international collaboration in counter-narcotics efforts and welcomed Qatar's proactive engagement in the field

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A high-level delegation from the State of Qatar, led by Brigadier Hamad Mohamed Al-Muraikhi, Assistant Director of the Forensic Laboratory Department, visited the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Headquarters on Wednesday to strengthen bilateral cooperation against drug trafficking and abuse. The delegation was received by Director General Anti-Narcotics Force, Major General Abdul Moeed, HI(M), along with senior ANF officers. The DG ANF underscored Pakistan's commitment to enhancing international collaboration in counter-narcotics efforts and welcomed Qatar's proactive engagement in the field. The visiting team, comprising experts from Qatar's forensic and law enforcement departments, was given a comprehensive briefing on ANF's operational framework and ongoing initiatives. This was followed by detailed bilateral discussions on expanding cooperation in counter-narcotics operations, forensic collaboration, intelligence sharing and capacity building. Both sides reaffirmed their shared resolve to address the growing challenge of drug abuse, agreeing that the menace disproportionately affects vulnerable segments of society, particularly the youth. The talks also stressed the need for coordinated action against drug trafficking networks exploiting regional and transnational routes for illicit drug movement. The visit highlighted the growing coordination between Pakistan and Qatar during 2025, particularly following the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Conference held in April. It reaffirmed the strong ties between the two brotherly Muslim countries, with both sides reiterating their commitment to a whole-of-nation approach and collective action at regional and global forums to eliminate drug abuse and trafficking. –



Briefs

Police van attacked by inter-provincial dacoit gang

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police came under attack when members of an inter-provincial dacoit gang opened fire on a police van in the jurisdiction of Shams Colony Police Station, leaving a detained suspect injured during the incident. An official told APP on Wednesday that the detained suspect, identified as Shah Sawar alias "Krash," was being taken back after recovery of a snatched motorcycle in connection with a case registered at Shams Colony Police Station when the attack occurred near I-12. He said that four armed suspects riding two motorcycles intercepted the police van and opened indiscriminate fire. During the exchange, Shah Sawar was injured by shots fired by his own accomplices. The official added that the police team remained safe due to bulletproof jackets and proper security measures. However, the police vehicle sustained damage after being hit by bullets on its front and side. The injured suspect was shifted to a hospital for medical treatment. According to police records, Shah Sawar was wanted by Islamabad and Rawalpindi police in more than 10 serious criminal cases. He was also a proclaimed offender in cases involving firing on police and terrorism registered at Sabzi Mandi and Khanna police stations. The official said that search operations are underway to arrest the remaining accomplices involved in the attack.—APP

PFA seals hotel, fines food outlets

RAWALPINDI: As the first winter rain further lowered temperatures and triggered a surge of tourists to Murree, the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Wednesday launched a crackdown on food outlets operating under unhygienic conditions, sealing a hotel and penalising several others along the Mall Road. PFA Director General Asim Javed led enforcement teams and conducted surprise inspections of food points in the main commercial area of the hill station. During the operation, 20 food outlets were checked for compliance with food safety and hygiene standards. A PFA spokesman said a well-known hotel was sealed immediately over poor sanitation and serious violations of food safety laws, while three food points were fined a total of Rs 80,000. Notices were also issued to 16 other outlets, directing them to improve hygiene standards without delay. Speaking on the occasion, Asim Javed said ensuring the availability of safe, quality and hygienic food for tourists in Murree was the authority's top priority, adding that no negligence would be tolerated in this regard.—APP

Commissioner directs immediate redress of civic complaints

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Engineer Aamir Khattak on Wednesday directed assistant commissioners across the division to ensure prompt redress of public complaints related to cleanliness, drainage, road repairs, streetlights and other civic facilities. Presiding over a meeting of assistant commissioners, the commissioner emphasised the need for enhanced field presence to provide maximum relief to citizens, urging officers to take public complaints seriously and accord top priority to improving performance. He directed all departments to regularly review their key performance indicators (KPIs) and immediately address weak areas. He also instructed the formation of effective field teams and stressed the timely installation and repair of manhole covers to prevent inconvenience to the public. The commissioner further ordered regular monitoring of field teams and called for effective measures to fully resolve complaints regarding stray dogs, directing the relevant departments to work with clear timelines.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the working group constituted for reforms in Pakistani ports.DNA

Pak signals confidence as eco reforms deliver results: USA Today

Emphasising the country's reform momentum, economic potential, and natural beauty, he reiterated that Pakistan is transitioning from a narrative of crisis management to one of opportunity and transformation, offering promising prospects for those willing to engage with a market on the cusp of sustainable growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, said that Pakistan has reached a critical turning point, with macroeconomic stability, sustained reforms, and policy continuity restoring confidence and steering the economy towards export-led, long-term growth. In an interview with USA Today, the minister said this was opening new horizons for domestic and global investors, and positioning the country for sustainable, long-term economic growth. He said this transition has been enabled by macroeconomic stabilisation, easing inflation and improved external balances, with the government driving export-led, productivity-based growth through structural reforms, sustaining reform momentum despite challenges, and actively encouraging global investment in emerging opportunities across agriculture, minerals, technology and climate resilience. Aurangzeb highlighted that Pakistan has entered the fiscal year 2025 from a position of renewed strength, marked by macroeconomic stability, improving external balances, and a firm commitment to structural reform. He noted that, for the first time in several years, Pakistan has achieved both a primary fiscal surplus and a current account surplus, signalling a decisive shift away from the cycle of recurring deficits. Strong remittance inflows have played a critical

role in supporting this turnaround, while inflation has fallen sharply from a peak of 38 percent to single-digit levels. Foreign exchange reserves have risen to over 14.5 billion dollars, providing import cover of approximately two and a half months, and the exchange rate has remained stable, helping to restore investor confidence. Senator Aurangzeb emphasised that while macroeconomic stabilisation is an essential foundation, sustainable growth remains the central challenge. He pointed out that the economic growth of 2.7 percent in the previous fiscal year, though positive, is insufficient to absorb the needs of a rapidly growing population. Drawing lessons from the past, he underlined that Pakistan is consciously moving away from a consumption- and debt-driven growth model towards an export-led strategy. The current budget, he explained, reflects this shift through structural reforms in taxation, energy pricing, and state-owned enterprises, alongside far-reaching tariff reforms aimed at dismantling decades of protectionism and enhancing global competitiveness. He highlighted that Pakistan is aligning its economic strategy with changing global demand patterns, identifying information technology services, textiles, and agricultural exports as key areas with strong potential. He noted that IT exports have already crossed four billion US dollars and could double within five years with sustained regulatory clarity and infrastructure development. Efforts are also underway to simplify tax regimes

for exporters and reduce bureaucratic hurdles in order to foster long-term productivity and competitiveness. Addressing the broader reform agenda, Senator Aurangzeb stated that privatisation of state-owned enterprises, tariff liberalisation, and restructuring of the energy sector are designed to address deep-rooted inefficiencies that have historically strained public finances. These reforms, he said, are part of a longer-term vision, echoing the World Bank's assessment of Pakistan's potential "East Asia moment." He referred to the ten-year Country Partnership Framework with the World Bank, the first of its kind, which places emphasis on economic reform alongside climate resilience and population management. The Federal Minister also underscored that Pakistan's future hinges on addressing existential challenges beyond fiscal indicators. Population growth, climate change, child stunting, learning poverty and the exclusion of girls from education were identified as critical issues that must be tackled to safeguard the country's long-term productive capacity. He stressed that increasing women's participation in education and the workforce is both a social imperative and an economic necessity. On climate resilience, he highlighted Pakistan's engagement with multilateral partners to strengthen preparedness against increasingly frequent floods and droughts. While acknowledging the risks that remain, including global commodity price shocks, external debt pressures, and political un-

certainty, Senator Aurangzeb reaffirmed the government's commitment to staying the reform course despite geopolitical and domestic challenges. He emphasised that discipline, consistency, and international cooperation remain central to safeguarding recent gains. Highlighting opportunities for investors, the Federal Minister pointed to agriculture, minerals and mining, and the emerging digital economy as priority sectors. He drew attention to Pakistan's vast agricultural potential, the strategic importance of the Tethyan Copper Belt in Balochistan amid rising global demand for critical minerals, and the growing focus on data centres, artificial intelligence, and digital services. He noted that regulatory frameworks are being updated to support innovation and encourage foreign investment, particularly from the United States, describing technological change as a major game-changer for Pakistan. Towards the end, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb conveyed a clear message to the international community, inviting global investors and partners to engage with Pakistan through trade, investment, and collaboration. Emphasising the country's reform momentum, economic potential, and natural beauty, he reiterated that Pakistan is transitioning from a narrative of crisis management to one of opportunity and transformation, offering promising prospects for those willing to engage with a market on the cusp of sustainable growth.

Interior Minister pays surprise visit to Islamabad Traffic Centre

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday paid a surprise visit to the Islamabad Traffic Centre at Faizabad to inspect facilities available to citizens and review the overall licensing process. During the visit, the minister examined all stages of the driving licence issuance system, including the token room, sign-test area and physical test centres. He interacted directly with applicants to gauge staff performance and understand on-ground challenges. "When did you arrive? When will your turn come?" Naqvi asked citizens as he moved through the centre. One applicant complained that the licensing procedure was slow and requested the minister to speed up the system "I have already instructed the IG. We will make the system faster," Naqvi assured him. The interior minister listened to citizens' grievances and directed officials to take immediate corrective measures. Chief Traffic Officer SSP Hamza Humayun briefed the minister on each step of the licensing workflow. Naqvi stressed that every process at the traffic centre must be transparent and timely. He instructed the provision of additional machines and facilities to manage the growing number of applicants.—APP

DIG Tariq dismisses former SHO

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq has dismissed a former station house officer (SHO) from service after allegations of serious misconduct involving a woman doctor were proven in a departmental inquiry. An official told APP on Wednesday that the DIG Operations Tariq ordered the dismissal of former SHO of Lohibher Police Station, Sub-Inspector Sohail Kahut, following completion of an internal inquiry which substantiated the allegations. The official said the action was taken under the Islamabad Police's zero-tolerance policy against misuse of authority, unethical conduct and behaviour unbecoming of a police officer, adding that disciplinary proceedings were completed in accordance with departmental rules. According to police sources, the affected woman doctor has been contacted and guided to submit a formal application if she wishes to pursue further legal action, so that criminal proceedings may be initiated under the law. DIG ICT Police Tariq said that Islamabad Police have a strong and transparent internal accountability system, and no officer is above the law. "Any act that violates public trust, dignity or professional ethics will not be tolerated," he said.—APP

Ali Pervaiz Malik calls for religious tolerance

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik on Wednesday said that nobody should be discriminated against on the basis of religion, reiterating the government's resolve to promote interfaith harmony. Addressing at a special event organized by Oil & Gas Development Company (OGDC) to celebrate Christmas, he appreciated the dedication and hard work of the workforce that serves the country day and night. He said that the Christian members of the petroleum sector are an integral part of the national workforce and emphasized that the celebration reflected unity and mutual respect, said a press release. On behalf of the Government of Pakistan and the Petroleum Division, he extended heartfelt Christmas greetings to the Christian community. Ali Pervaiz Malik prayed for unity saying, "May Allah keep us together in happiness and sorrow and help us build Pakistan as envisioned by Quaid-e-Azam." He reiterated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the entire government firmly believe that true progress can only be achieved through inclusive growth,

where every segment of society is given equal importance. The Minister also directed all organizations under the Petroleum Division to follow OGDC's example and organize Christmas celebrations to promote harmony. Managing Director OGDC, Ahmed Hayat Lak, thanked the Federal Minister for taking time out of his busy schedule to participate in the celebrations. He highlighted that OGDC has been observing Christmas every year, and this year the celebrations have been expanded to include a day-long event on Sunday for the families of Christian employees, in addition to today's ceremony. He further shared that the diversity and inclusion policy, recently approved by OGDC's Board of Directors, aims to enhance women and minority representation within the organization. Pastor Babur led special Christmas prayers, emphasizing that the true spirit of Christmas lies in peace, love, and harmony. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Pakistan and the Federal Minister for embracing the Christmas celebrations and appreciated the government's initiatives toward promoting interfaith harmony.—APP

FIA sets up three-desk Public Facilitation Centre

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency has established a Public Facilitation Centre at its headquarters in Islamabad as part of ongoing reforms and restructuring initiatives aimed at improving public service delivery. An FIA official told APP on Wednesday that the centre was set up on the directions of Director General FIA Riffat Mukhtar, with the objective of providing multiple public services under one roof in a transparent and citizen-friendly manner. The Public Facilitation Centre was formally inaugurated by Additional Director General FIA (Immigration Wing) Muhammad Jaffar, in the presence of Director Administration Sarfaraz Khan Warak and other senior FIA officers. The official said that three dedicated service counters have been established at the centre to facilitate the public efficiently. An information counter will guide citizens regarding FIA services and complaint procedures, while a complaints counter will allow timely submission of grievances for prompt redressal. He added that a special counter for travel history has also been set up, where citizens can obtain travel-related records and relevant information through a streamlined process. Speaking on the occasion, Additional DG FIA Muhammad Jaffar said that the FIA was utilising all available resources to improve public facilitation and ensure transparency in service delivery. He said the new centre would play a key role in providing timely information and improving public trust in the institution. He further said that FIA was continuously enhancing its service standards through modern technology and public-friendly policies, adding that the Public Facilitation Centre was a positive step towards strengthening the organisation's credibility and responsiveness.—APP

CPB takes 1,209 children into protective custody

RAWALPINDI: The Child Protection Bureau (CPB) Rawalpindi took 1,209 children into protective custody during 2025 and registered 31 cases against those involved in child labour, exploitation and abuse, a senior official said. Talking to APP on Wednesday, District Officer Child Protection

Bureau Rawalpindi Rao Khalil said the bureau was working across the district on a daily basis for the protection, welfare and rehabilitation of children in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and the directions of CPB Chairperson Sarah Ahmed. He said that during the year, 256

rescue operations were carried out, resulting in 1,209 children being taken into protective custody, while 363 missing or runaway children were traced and reunited with their families. Rao Khalil said the CPB helpline received 589 calls in 2025 from citizens seeking assistance regarding child

labour, exploitation and missing children. He said 31 cases were registered and suspects arrested for forcing children into begging, labour or abuse. He added that 1,963 children were provided counselling, education and training to support their mental and physical development, rehabilitation and capacity building.—APP

ITP issues traffic advisory

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has issued a traffic advisory in view of ongoing development work on the Faizabad Loops extension, advising motorists to follow designated alternative routes to avoid inconvenience. An ITP spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that due to the under-construction Faizabad Loops, traffic movement may remain affected in the area during the development phase.—APP

NOW IN PAKISTAN

Invisible Braces
Dental Implants

Dr. Abrar & Associates
DENTAL SURGEONS

House # 6-A, Ismail Zabeeh Road, (Service Road Parallel to Faisal Avenue) F-8/3, Islamabad.
e-mail: abrar.associates@yahoo.com | www.drabrarassociates.com
Ph: +92 51 228 7691 / +92 51 228 7692 | Fax: +92 51 228 7693

PIA finally privatised: a bold economic step or another costly gamble?

AFTER decades of debate, failed reform attempts and mounting financial losses, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has finally been privatised, marking one of the most significant economic decisions taken by the government in recent years. The national flag carrier was sold for a bid of Rs 135 billion, with the Arif Habib Group emerging as the successful bidder. According to Arif Habib, the Fauji Foundation will also join the consortium, a move that, in the view of many observers, adds considerable strength to the deal due to the institutional and military-backed presence of the Fauji Foundation. The government has expressed immense satisfaction over the transaction. Federal ministers and senior officials have openly celebrated the sale, describing PIA as a “white elephant” that had been draining national resources for years. According to official figures, the airline had accumulated massive losses, relied heavily on government bailouts, and was unable to compete with regional and international carriers. For the government, privatisation represents a long-awaited relief for the national exchequer and a step toward fiscal discipline. Government leaders argue that the sale reflects economic pragmatism rather than ideological preference. They maintain that the state’s role is not to run commercial enterprises but to focus on governance, regulation, and public welfare. In their view, PIA’s privatisation will end political interference, improve efficiency, and enable professional management to turn the airline into a profitable and world-class carrier. Both the government and the buyers have projected optimism, promising that PIA will be given a new corporate identity, its fleet will be expanded and modernised, and service standards will be raised to international levels. The inclusion of the Fauji Foundation in the consortium has been highlighted as a stabilising factor. Supporters believe its presence will bring discipline, credibility, and long-term commitment, addressing concerns about governance and sustainability. The consortium has assured that PIA’s revival plan includes fleet enhancement, route expansion, better customer service, and restoration of the airline’s global reputation. However, the decision has also triggered strong criticism from various quarters. Many citizens, labour unions, and political commentators have slammed the privatisation, calling it the sale of a national asset and a clear admission of state failure. According to critics, selling PIA means the government has effectively acknowledged its inability to run public sector

Pakistan’s First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

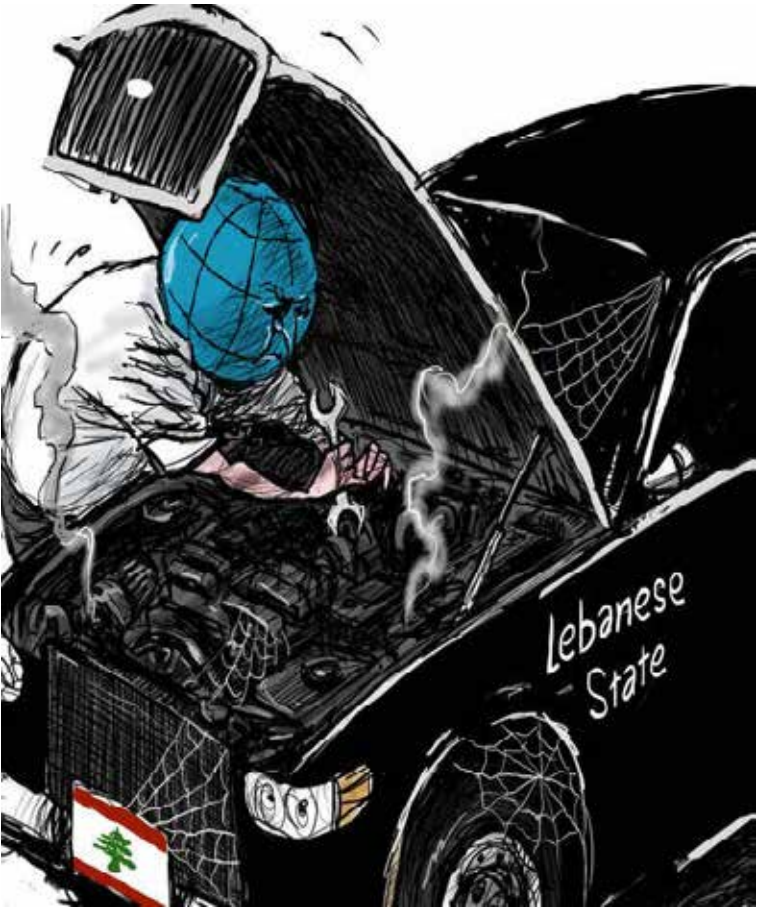
Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 187

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



institutions. They see the move as evidence of bad governance, chronic mismanagement, and lack of political will to reform state-owned enterprises. For many Pakistanis, PIA is not just an airline but a symbol of national pride, once regarded as one of Asia’s finest carriers. Critics argue that instead of privatising, the government should have focused on internal reforms, accountability, and professional management. They fear that public interest may be compromised in the pursuit of short-term financial relief. Scepticism is further fuelled by Pakistan’s past experience with privatisation, particularly the case of Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL). Almost 19 years ago, PTCL was handed over to the UAE-based Etisalat group. That deal remains controversial to this day. The UAE company is still alleged to owe money to Pakistan, while Etisalat maintains that the Pakistani government failed to hand over certain assets promised under the agreement. More importantly, public perception of PTCL has deteriorated sharply since privatisation. Service quality declined, customer support weakened. As a result, millions of users abandoned landlines in favour of mobile phones and alternative service providers. Another major concern relates to human resources. After PTCL’s privatisation, many skilled and experienced employees left the company, either due to retrenchment policies or dissatisfaction with the new management’s attitude. Critics fear a similar scenario at PIA, where thousands of employees may face layoffs or choose to leave, leading to a loss of institutional knowledge and operational expertise. Labour unions have already voiced concerns about job security, working conditions, and the future of employees under private management. There is also apprehension that aggressive cost-cutting measures may undermine service quality, at least in the short term. Aviation experts caution that turning around a struggling airline is a complex process that requires not just capital injection but also strategic planning, regulatory support, and sustained commitment. Despite these fears, some analysts believe that privatisation was inevitable. They argue that PIA had reached a point where continued state ownership was no longer viable. Chronic political interference, overstaffing, poor decision-making, and mounting debt had crippled the airline. From this perspective, private ownership offers the only realistic chance for revival, provided the process is transparent and well-regulated. Ultimately, PIA’s privatisation represents both hope and risk. It could mark the beginning of a successful turnaround story, transforming a loss-making airline into a competitive global player. Alternatively, it could repeat past mistakes, deepening public distrust in privatisation policies. The real test will lie in implementation: how the new consortium manages the airline, protects employees’ rights, improves services, and delivers on its promises. Only time will tell whether this historic decision brings good news for Pakistan’s aviation sector or becomes another cautionary tale in the country’s economic history.

Quaid-e-Azam’s Vision and the Imperative of Defending Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Quaid-e-Azam was equally conscious that defence policy could not be divorced from moral and constitutional principles. While he stressed strength and readiness, he also emphasized that Pakistan would not be an aggressor state. Its armed forces were to be guardians of peace, protectors of sovereignty, and defenders of the rights of its people. This balance between strength and restraint became a defining feature of Pakistan’s early defence outlook

FROM the very first day of Pakistan’s emergence on the world map, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah displayed a clear and sober understanding of the strategic realities confronting the newborn state. Independence did not come in a benign environment. It was achieved amid bloodshed, mass migration, and the open hostility of a much larger neighbour that had never reconciled itself to the idea of Pakistan. Quaid-e-Azam was under no illusion about India’s intentions, nor did he underestimate the vulnerabilities of a country that was born with limited resources, divided territories, and an uncertain future. His approach to national defence was therefore not emotional or impulsive; it was rooted in realism, foresight, and an acute sense of responsibility. Long before independence, Quaid-e-Azam had warned that the demand for Pakistan was not merely a constitutional exercise but a struggle for survival and dignity. After 14 August 1947, when the responsibility of governance fell upon his shoulders, his concerns about India’s aggressive posture became even more pronounced. The unresolved disputes at the time of Partition, particularly over Jammu and Kashmir, the division of military assets, and the economic strangulation attempted through the withholding of Pakistan’s financial share, reinforced his belief that Pakistan could not afford complacency in matters of defence. As Governor-General, Quaid-e-Azam gave unambiguous directions that the defence of the homeland must be treated as a sacred trust. Despite severe shortages of equipment, trained manpower, and infrastructure, he insisted that no effort should be spared in building strong and disciplined armed forces. He made it clear to the civil administration and military leadership alike that national security was inseparable from national survival. His correspondence and instructions during the early months of independence reflect a constant emphasis on preparedness, vigilance, and unity of command. One of the most telling illustrations of his strategic thinking was his address to the officers of the Pa-

kistan Armed Forces at the Staff College, Quetta, in June 14, 1948. In that historic speech, Quaid-e-Azam reminded the officers that Pakistan’s defence did not rest solely on weapons, numbers, or technology, but on faith, discipline, and selfless devotion to duty. At the same time, he candidly spoke of the dangers facing Pakistan, cautioning that the country’s enemies would exploit any weakness, internal division, or lapse in preparedness. He urged the armed forces to remain above politics, to serve the state with loyalty, and to be ever ready to defend the country’s frontiers. Quaid-e-Azam was equally conscious that defence policy could not be divorced from moral and constitutional principles. While he stressed strength and readiness, he also emphasized that Pakistan would not be an aggressor state. Its armed forces were to be guardians of peace, protectors of sovereignty, and defenders of the rights of its people. This balance between strength and restraint became a defining feature of Pakistan’s early defence outlook. His personal involvement in defence matters was remarkable, especially given his failing health. He took keen interest in the establishment and organization of Pakistan’s Army, Navy, and Air Force, ensuring that they were structured on professional lines despite inheriting only a fraction of the resources of undivided India. He encouraged the development of indigenous capacity and self-reliance, fully aware that dependence on external powers could compromise national autonomy. After Quaid-e-Azam’s passing, successive rulers and governments, irrespective of political differences, broadly adhered to the defence principles he laid down. The emphasis on safeguarding sovereignty, maintaining a credible defence posture, and remaining alert to external threats became enduring elements of state policy. While Pakistan’s internal and external challenges evolved over time, the foundational vision of its founder continued to guide strategic thinking. Quaid-e-Azam’s legacy in matters of defence is

therefore not limited to specific orders or historical incidents; it lies in the mindset he sought to cultivate. He taught a vulnerable nation to face harsh realities with courage rather than denial, to prepare for adversity without losing moral clarity, and to recognize that freedom, once achieved, must be constantly defended. In an era when Pakistan was struggling simply to stand on its feet, he ensured that the defence of the homeland was never treated as a secondary concern. The way forward for Pakistan’s defence lies in a comprehensive and balanced approach. Military strength must continue to be modernized through technology, indigenous defence production, and professional training, while ensuring that preparedness keeps pace with emerging domains such as cyber and space. Equally important is economic stability, for no nation can sustain strong defence without a resilient economy. Internal unity, constitutional governance, and harmony among state institutions are indispensable, as internal divisions weaken national resolve more than external threats. Diplomacy must complement defence, enabling Pakistan to reduce tensions, build regional stability, and project itself as a responsible and peace-seeking state without compromising its core interests. Quaid-e-Azam’s enduring lesson is that security is not achieved through wishful thinking, nor is peace preserved through weakness. It is secured through strength guided by principle, preparedness anchored in realism, and unity rooted in justice. As Pakistan looks to the future, reaffirming this balanced vision of defence remains essential to safeguarding the sovereignty and dignity for which the nation was created. Today, as Pakistan navigates a complex regional and global environment, the words and wisdom of Quaid-e-Azam remain deeply relevant. His clear-eyed assessment of India’s posture, his insistence on preparedness, and his unwavering commitment to sovereignty continue to remind the nation that peace is best preserved not through wishful thinking, but through strength guided by principle.

Ethical Responsibilities of Journalists During Violent Conflict

Syed Bilal Ali Naqvi

Ethically, one of the priorities that journalists in conflict zones need to adopt is conflict sensitivity since they need to report stories in a way that does not keep feeding certain stereotypes that encourage violence. Peace journalism goes further to motivate journalists to give prominence to peace efforts, including the development of grassroots dialogues or non-violent resistance as opposed to merely highlighting the horror of the battle. Research indicates that positive peace reporting on such injustices as poverty or discrimination minimizes fear and anger...

IN an age where media reporting may either administer more violence or peacemaking, the moral obligations of reporters working in the situations of violent conflicts have never been greater. Where conventional war journalism would focus on violence, elites, and binary victory/defeat, peace journalism relies on the root causes of conflict, voices, and what solutions can solve such problems to promote positive peace, the conditions of justice and equity instead of the absence of open violence. It focuses on ethical principles, historical case studies and criticism to argue that implementing peace journalism would increase journalistic honesty and reduce levels of conflict escalation. Based on the world examples of the war between Israel and Gaza, as well as the Rwandan genocide, the analysis gives insight into the failures and successes related to media activities. This is in general agreement with the ethical advocacy of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), where the primary job is to seek the truth, be independent and minimise harm, as well as, amplifying the propaganda of both warring sides. Ethically, one of the priorities that journalists in conflict zones need to adopt is conflict sensitivity since they need to report stories in a way that does not keep feeding certain stereotypes that encourage violence. Peace journalism goes further to motivate journalists to give prominence to peace efforts, including the development of grassroots dialogues or non-violent resistance as opposed to merely highlighting the horror of the battle. Research indicates that positive peace reporting on such injustices as poverty or discrimination minimizes fear and anger and increases empathy and hope in readers, which makes the choice ethical. But these roles are also burdened by the real-life issues. Journalists must act under pressure with editors wanting sensational news, or in a context where access is controlled by belligerent organi-

sations, which imposes no ties on activity but demands that they respect local norms without taking a side. The application of the principles of peace journalism in real-life conflicts can explain how the lack of adherence to the principles of peace journalism contributes to lapses in ethics and the implementation of these principles can de-escalate violence. This is a graphic example of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, where war journalism prioritized elite propaganda arguing that colonial legacies and economic imbalances are the real causes and proclaimed violence without questioning how it might be reconciled. In terms of ethics, such reporting was against the principle of minimisation of harm as it formed an active part of atrocities. According to the application of peace journalism by looking back, the interestedness peace efforts could have been reported, which might have saved the life of people by creating the opposition that the society would have to peace. Conversely, during the 2014-15 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, though a non-traditional armed conflict, which involved violent confrontation over quarantines, a number of media sources took peace-based strategies. Outlets like the BBC and local stations prioritised local-level responses (e.g. testimonies of survivors, educators on health) over hypothetical sensitivity and violence against health workers. Peace journalism in this case advocated positive peace ensuring that issues of concern like inequity of healthcare were under consideration. A modern example is the 2023 Israel-Gaza war, where the use of cursory press coverage presents one party as an attacker, and another as a victim (in fact, there is no history of violence on both sides). Some such as the Solutions Journalism Network has trained reporters to include stories about solutions to a situation, showing how a story focusing on possible alternatives rather than despair can be told morally. During the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine,

there were instances of such media that could have served as an example of peace journalism. The Guardian outlet included voices of Russian dissidents and Ukrainian citizens who are advocating dialogue in addition to debating geopolitical causes such as NATO expansion. Although it has merits, peace journalism has its own criticisms that bring out ethical arguments in the conflict reporting. The opponents claim that it causes a lack of objectivity because of taking an advocacy position, which may hamper the ethical imperative of holding power to account. Finally, implementation is hindered by the normative bias of peace journalism, which is propagandistic to an individual extent, as well as by commercial pressures of bang stories, or safety threats at war zones. Empirical studies have associated this argument with the fact that standard journalism is equally prejudiced towards violence and that peace journalism will only amplify ethics by ensuring transparency and inclusivity. The accuracy, impartiality, and reduction of harm mindset of peace journalism is a significant improvement of the ethical obligations of journalists in violent conflicts based on the context, voices, and solutions. Real world experiences in Rwanda and in Gaza show how a war orientated reporting can be used to spread violence, whereas a peace oriented approach to reporting leads to reconciliation and empathy. Despite the criticisms that suggest that the framework endangers objectivity, these are not as high as the risk that the framework tends to avoid escalation, as long as the journalists are ready to adhere to high standards. Media organisations have a case to play in the society, and therefore, should focus on training in peace journalism with the current proliferation of conflicts in the digital age with misinformation. Finally, the ethical journalism is not a passive view, but a force of positive action, which leads societies to justice and out of the end-less war.

Briefs

'We have not lost our pride'

FROM PAGE 01
within two weeks and financial close after a 90-day period to meet regulatory and legal conditions. The deal was structured to inject fresh capital into the airline rather than simply transfer ownership, he said. "We did not want a situation where the government sells the airline, takes its money, and the company still collapses," Ali said. PIA auction The auction held on Tuesday marked Pakistan's first major privatisation in nearly two decades and comes amid pressure to reform loss-making state firms under a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. 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.

Khawaja Asif blames bureaucracy for public...

FROM PAGE 01
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. The government officials have said that of the amount paid for the 75% stake, 92.5% of the proceeds will be invested directly into PIA, while the remaining 7.5% — amounting to Rs10.12 billion — will be transferred to the federal government. Speaking about the national airline's privatisation in today's show, Defence Minister Asif blamed former aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan's statement claiming fake credentials of pilots which had resulted in wide-ranging restrictions and adverse repercussions for the national airline during the PTI-led government in 2020.

Pakistan urges JCPOA...

FROM PAGE 01
beyond had widened in recent months, taking the international community further away from resolving the issue, which he said had also been complicated by unilateral actions involving the use of force, violations of the UN Charter, and differing interpretations on invocation of the snapback mechanism. He said Pakistan's position remains unchanged and that diplomacy and dialogue should be the guiding principles for resolving all outstanding issues concerning Iran's nuclear programme in accordance with the rights, obligations and responsibilities of the parties concerned.

2.7% economic growth...

FROM PAGE 01
the government driving export-led, productivity-based growth through structural reforms, sustaining reform momentum despite challenges, and actively encouraging global investment in emerging opportunities across agriculture, minerals, technology and climate resilience. Aurangzeb highlighted that Pakistan has entered the fiscal year 2025 from a position of renewed strength, marked by macroeconomic stability, improving external balances, and a firm commitment to structural reform.

Saudi Arabia condemns attack on police

FROM PAGE 01
The ministry also expressed the kingdom's "sincere condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims and to the government and people of Pakistan in this painful loss."

Contenders Senegal, Nigeria start Cup of Nations campaigns with wins

Nicolas Jackson scored twice as much-fancied Senegal began their Africa Cup of Nations bid with a convincing 3-0 win over Botswana on Tuesday

RABAT: Nicolas Jackson scored twice as much-fancied Senegal began their Africa Cup of Nations bid with a convincing 3-0 win over Botswana on Tuesday, while Nigeria's Super Eagles made harder work of their opening match against Tanzania before claiming a 2-1 victory. Elsewhere there were also wins for the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tunisia as the first round of group matches continued in Morocco, often in torrential rain. Senegal, champions in 2022, are perhaps the biggest threat to Morocco's chances of winning the title on home soil and the Lions of Teranga made light work of Botswana in their Group D opener in Tangier. Jackson, who is currently on loan at Bayern Munich from Chelsea, struck either side of half-time with Cherif Ndiaye completing the scoring late on. It was a predictable outcome to the first match of the tournament for both teams as Senegal are 119 places above Botswana in the world rankings. Heavy rain greeted the teams as they walked onto the pitch at the 75,000-seat stadium, the biggest by capacity of the nine being used in Morocco for the tournament. Two-time African player of the year Sadio Mane, Iliman Ndiaye and Jackson all came close to breaking the deadlock for Senegal before the opener arrived on 40 minutes. Germany-born Ismail Jakobs and Germany-based Jackson combined for the goal, with the former cutting in from the left and pulling the ball back for the latter to finish. A flowing move from midfield with quick, crisp passing then set up Jackson to double the lead just before the hour mark, and Cherif Ndiaye put the cherry on the cake for Senegal as he finished smartly at the end of another fine team move. "The players did the job. We know how important it is to start well in a tournament," said Senegal coach Pape Thiaw. "You could see how much the lads wanted the victory. They played really well." Senegal are level on three points at the top of the group with DR Congo, who edged out Benin 1-0 at Al Medina Stadium in Rabat. Theo Bongonda of Spartak Moscow pounced to score the winner on 16 minutes after the Benin defence left a long ball, while a Cedric Bakambu effort was ruled out for offside early in the second half. "It was a very difficult match. I didn't really know anything



about Benin but they are a really good side," said Bongonda. DR Congo were semi-finalists at the last Cup of Nations and are also hoping to qualify for the 2026 World Cup — they will do so if they win a play-off against New Caledonia or Jamaica in March. Senegal edged out the Leopards to top their World Cup qualifying group and the teams now renew their rivalry in Tangier on Saturday, while Benin and Botswana will look to open their accounts as they clash the same day. Nigeria have come to Morocco aiming to make amends for their failure to qualify for the World Cup and the 2024 AFCON runners-up got off to a winning start in Fes despite being wasteful in front of goal. Star striker Victor Osimhen was among the culprits — he failed to score but could have claimed a hat-trick with better finishing. Akor Adams hit the crossbar before cen-

tre-half Semi Ajayi opened the scoring for the three-time African champions late in the first half as he nodded in Alex Iwobi's cross. Charles M'Mombwa levelled soon after half-time for outsiders Tanzania but they could not build on that to go and claim a first ever win at an AFCON. Instead Atalanta attacker Ademola Lookman, the 2024 African Player of the year, hit back to spare Nigeria's blushes as his rising shot from just outside the box made it 2-1. Nigeria's next Group C outing will be on Saturday against Tunisia, who top the section after easing to a 3-1 win against Uganda at the Rabat Olympic Stadium. Elias Achouri of FC Copenhagen was the star of the show as he scored twice either side of half-time for the 2004 champions. Ellyes Skhiri had given them an early lead while Denis Omedi netted a late consolation for Uganda. — Agencies

Rizwan Ali suffers first MMA defeat as Ismail Khan erupts

BUKHARA: In a night of stark contrasts that laid bare the brutal beauty of mixed martial arts, Pakistan's fighting corps experienced both a poignant end and a violent new beginning at Brave FC 103 on Tuesday. The nation witnessed its undefeated king, Rizwan 'The Haider' Ali, dethroned, only to see another warrior, Ismail 'The Volcano' Khan, announce his arrival as a genuine global force with a breathtaking finish. The main event carried the hopes of a nation on the shoulders of its brightest star, Rizwan. Entering the Bukhara arena with an un-

blemished 11-0 record and seven first-round finishes, the PAKMMA superstar faced a daunting task: defeating the local hero, Nozim 'The Bukhara Warrior' Kalandarov, in his own fortress. Trouble appeared before the fight even began, with the 28-year-old Rizwan missing the lightweight limit, forcing the bout to a 72kg catchweight. In the cage, a more critical problem emerged. Kalandarov executed a flawless grappler's game plan, securing takedowns with ease in every round. Despite a valiant defensive effort, Rizwan, a feared striker, had

no answer for the relentless control and top pressure. After three rounds of one-sided dominance, the judges' unanimous decision was a mere formality, ending Rizwan's historic unbeaten run. In a display of true sportsmanship and resilience, Rizwan addressed the setback directly. "I was the only undefeated fighter of Pakistan fighting on the highest stage — I took a fight against a hero in Central Asia," Rizwan stated while talking to Dawn. "I carried an injury throughout the camp but still decided to go ahead. My loss will go a long way

in teaching me lessons that will help me rise. Big thanks to the people who supported me and I will come back stronger." The eruption of the volcano Earlier in the evening, the Pakistani flag was flown with ruthless authority by Ismail. Facing Kyrgyz submission specialist Rayimbek Tazhibayev in a 60.5kg catchweight bout, 'The Volcano' delivered a performance that was anything but catchweight in its significance. Displaying terrifying fight IQ, Ismail masterfully neutralised his opponent's strengths. — APP

Tunisia ease past Uganda to win Cup of Nations opener

RABAT: Elias Achouri's double helped Tunisia ease to a 3-1 win over Uganda in their opening game at the Africa Cup of Nations on Tuesday. Ellyes Skhiri headed in an early opener and FC Copenhagen winger Achouri then scored twice either side of half-time in a game played in relentless rain in Rabat. Denis Omedi netted a late consolation for Uganda. The result leaves Tunisia on top of Group C after the opening round of matches, above Nigeria on goal difference following a 2-1 victory for the Super Eagles against Tanzania earlier in Fes. "It was a good performance. I think we can take plenty of positives. We got three goals and we wanted to start the competition in the best possible way," Achouri said. "We did that and we are very proud." Tunisia, who have qualified for next year's World Cup, are appearing at a 17th consecutive AFCON and were eager to do better than at the 2024 edition in Ivory Coast in which they were eliminated in the group stage without winning a game. The Carthage Eagles duly got off to a triumphant start on a drenched surface at the Rabat Olympic Stadium, with French-born Eintracht Frankfurt midfielder Skhiri opening the scoring after only 10 minutes. — APP

Benzema's goal propels Al-Ittihad to victory in Asian Champions League

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia: Karim Benzema's second-half strike was enough to give Al-Ittihad a 1-0 win over Nasaf Qarshi of Uzbekistan on Tuesday, placing the Saudi title holders within sight of the Asian Champions League Elite knockout round. The French striker volleyed home from close range at the far post after 57 minutes, meeting a cross from Portuguese winger Roger Fernandes. The victory moved Al-Ittihad to sixth place in the 12-team Western group. With the top eight from the East and West advancing to the round of 16, a win against Qatar's Al-Gharafa in the next match would clinch advancement for the two-time champion. Elsewhere, Roberto Mancini delivered Al-Sadd's first win in dramatic fashion. Trailing 2-1 to Al-Ahli Dubai after 90 minutes, the Qatar club scored three goals in stoppage time to win 4-2, with Spanish striker Rafa Mujica completing his hat trick, and keep faint hopes of advancing alive. — Agencies

Myanmar's military-run elections

UNITED NATIONS: As Myanmar approaches elections scheduled for 28 December, the UN's top human rights official has said that civilians are being coerced from all sides — forced by the military to vote and threatened by armed opposition groups to boycott — in a climate of fear, violence and mass repression. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk warned that the military-controlled ballot is unfolding amid intensified violence, intimidation and arbitrary arrests, leaving no space for free or meaningful participation. — APP

DR Congo beat Benin to kick off Cup of Nations bid

RABAT: The Democratic Republic of Congo edged out Benin 1-0 in their opening game at the Africa Cup of Nations on Tuesday, with Theo Bongonda scoring the only goal of the Group D clash. Bongonda, of Spartak Moscow, pounced to score on 16 minutes at the Al Medina Stadium in Rabat after the Benin defence left a long ball. The Leopards thought they had doubled their lead just after half-time when Cedric Bakambu met a Nathanael Mbuku cross to head home from close range, but the goal was eventually ruled out for offside after a long VAR check. One goal proved enough, however, for a DR Congo side backed by the majority of the crowd and who will hope to emerge from a group which also contains 2022 champions Senegal and Botswana — those teams were due to face off later Tuesday in Tangier. "The most important thing is that we make our people proud," said Bongonda. "It was a very difficult match. I didn't really know anything about Benin but they are a really good side, and nobody has won easily so far in the other games. "We are used to suffering but what matters is that we got the three points even if the performance was not great." DR Congo were semi-finalists at the last Cup of Nations in Ivory Coast early last year but have not gone further than that since winning the trophy as Zaire in 1974. Sebastien Desabre's team, featuring the likes of West Ham United full-back Aaron Wan-Bissaka and the promising Sunderland midfielder Noah Sadiki, are also hoping to qualify for the 2026 World Cup. They will play either New Caledonia or Jamaica in a play-off in Mexico in March, with the winner of that going into Group K at the World Cup alongside Portugal, Uzbekistan and Colombia. — APP

Johnson, Castle shine as Spurs rout Thunder 130-110 LOS

Spurs stun champion Thunder again as Johnson, Castle shine; Flagg dazzles for Mavericks, Nuggets fall, Edwards lifts Timberwolves, reshaping crowded Western Conference playoff race Tuesday night across NBA slate games

ANGELES: Keldon Johnson and Stephen Castle combined for 49 points as the San Antonio Spurs produced a second-half scoring blitz to rout the NBA champion Oklahoma City Thunder 130-110 on Tuesday. Ten days after eliminating the Thunder from the NBA Cup semifinals, the Spurs once again proved too strong for the Western Conference leaders as they powered to their seventh straight victory in San Antonio. Starting shooting guard Castle finished with 24 points including four three-pointers but the key contribution came from Johnson, who added 25 off the bench including five threes. The Thunder fell to 26-4 after the loss, while the Spurs improved to 22-7 to stay in second place in the West. San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama finished with 12 points while reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder scoring with 33 points. "It shows how serious we are — we've got the same aspirations that they have, we just want to come out and compete every time we play them," said Castle, who poured in 10 of his 24 points during the fourth quarter in which the Spurs outscored the

Thunder 43-28. The Denver Nuggets meanwhile missed the chance to close the gap on Oklahoma City after losing a thrilling duel 131-130 against the Dallas Mavericks on the road in Texas. Mavericks prodigy Cooper Flagg once again stole the show, with the gifted 19-year-old



No.1 draft pick scoring a game high 33 points with nine rebounds and nine assists. Flagg's performance was backed by 31 points from Anthony Davis as Dallas outdueled Nuggets duo Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray, who accounted for 60 Denver points. The Nuggets almost snatched

victory at the buzzer, but Peyton Watson's wide open three-point attempt bounced out after hitting the rim. "We're just coming together, trying to have each other's backs," Flagg said. "Obviously Jamal and (Jokic) had it going — so we were just trying to take those guys away and make somebody else beat us." Dallas improved to 12-19 while the Nuggets slipped to 21-8 in the West. Flagg, meanwhile, took encouragement from another hard-fought win by the Mavs, who last week took down the Eastern Conference-leading Detroit Pistons. "We're learning from all these experiences," Flagg said. "You know we've been in a lot of really close games, so just trying to take stuff from those games and learn from it and get better." Elsewhere on Tuesday, Anthony Edwards rattled in 38 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves took down the New York Knicks 115-104 in Minneapolis. Edwards knocked down four three-pointers while teammate Julius Randle added 25 points as the Wolves eclipsed a 40-point performance from Karl-Anthony Towns. Knicks star Jalen Brunson, who scored 47 points in Sunday's win over Miami, missed the game with a right ankle problem. — Agencies

PM assures to empower youth

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan's armed forces delivered a lesson to India in May this year that it will never forget. Shehbaz Sharif said under Pakistan Endowment Fund, the students of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and other regions will be provided with scholarships for education both at home and abroad. He expressed the commitment to empower the youth. He said the laptops are provided to the students purely on merit. He mentioned that these are not machines but a vision which enabled the youth to continue their education and earn livelihoods during the period of Covid. He said four state of the art Daanish schools will be established in Azad Kashmir. He also announced the establishment of Daanish University in AJK.

IAEA lauds Pak's efforts to combat...

FROM PAGE 01
Grossi stressed that the developing countries were being affected the most and hence more needs to be done. "It is why I launched the IAEA's 'Rays of Hope' initiative, procuring radiotherapy machines, conducting life-saving research and providing training and education across the world," he remarked. Highlighting Pakistan's efforts in this regard, the IAEA chief said that the PAEC has established 21 cancer hospitals in the country and trained a fleet of professionals and congratulated the Pakistani authority for establishing the Institute of Nuclear Medicine Oncology and Radiotherapy (Nori).

PM orders to expedite expansion...

FROM PAGE 01
He further advised setting up of initial cargo testing laboratories at ports and elimination of unnecessary laboratory tests. The Prime Minister was briefed on recommendations aimed at improving facilities and introducing reforms at ports to facilitate the business community. He appreciated the efforts of the working group headed by Ziad Bashir for presenting practical and concrete proposals. Speaking on the occasion, Ziad Bashir said transparent privatization of PIA has significantly boosted the confidence of Pakistan's business community.

'Latest peace plan offers...

FROM PAGE 01
Zelensky said a "free economic zone" was a potential option. The 20-point plan is seen as an update of an original 28-point document, agreed by US envoy Steve Witkoff with the Russians several weeks ago, which was widely seen as heavily geared towards the Kremlin's demands. The Russians have insisted that Ukraine pulls out of almost a quarter of its own territory in the eastern Donetsk region in return for a peace deal. The rest is already under Russian occupation.

Mystery shrouds...

FROM PAGE 01
"This followed a tragic and painful incident," Dbeibah said in a statement, describing the loss as a major blow to Libya's military institution and the nation as a whole. Alongside Haddad, the victims included the commander of Libya's ground forces, the director of the military manufacturing authority, an adviser to the chief of staff, and a photographer from Haddad's office. Turkish authorities confirmed that the Dassault Falcon 50-type jet took off from Ankara's Esenboga Airport at around 1710 GMT, en route to Tripoli. Radio contact was lost roughly 40 minutes later while the aircraft was flying over the Haymana district of Ankara province. Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said the plane had requested an emergency landing, but communication could not be re-established. The wreckage was later found near the village of Kesikkavak.

Briefs

Rupee gains 01 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.20 compared to the previous day's closing at Rs 280.21.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 281.05 and Rs 283.1, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 23 paisa to close at Rs 330.34, from the previous day's close of Rs 330.11, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.79, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of 23 paisa and closed at Rs 378.66 compared to the previous day's Rs378.43. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal stood stagnant and closed at Rs 76.29 and Rs 74.70, respectively.—APP

Gold price surges to record Rs 472,862 per tola

ISLAMABAD :The price of 24-karat gold reached a historic peak on Wednesday, climbing by Rs 2,000 to an unprecedented Rs 472,862 per tola as compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 470,862. According to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased sharply by Rs1,714, settling at Rs405,402 against Rs403,688 a day earlier. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose to Rs371,632 from Rs370,060, reflecting an increase of Rs1,572. In the international market, gold prices increased by \$20, reaching \$4,505 compared to \$4,485 on the previous day. Meanwhile, the price of per tola silver rose by Rs500, reaching Rs7,705 from Rs7,205 on the last trading day. The 10-gram silver price increased by Rs428, closing at Rs6,605 as against Rs6,177 the previous day. International silver prices also witnessed an uptick of \$5, rising to \$72.30 compared to \$69.30.—APP

Iran's police chief visits Tajikistan for bilateral security talks

TEHRAN: Iran's Chief of Police Brigadier General Ahmadreza Radan has traveled to Tajikistan to enhance bilateral cooperation in police and law enforcement. Brigadier General Radan arrived in Dushanbeh, the capital of Tajikistan, on Tuesday, following an invitation from the Minister of Internal Affairs, Colonel-General of Militia Rahimzoda Ramazon Khamro. He was welcomed at Dushanbe International Airport by Abdurahmon Alamshozoda, the First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan. APP

Algeria to vote on law declaring French colonization 'state crime'

ALGERIA: Algeria's parliament is set to vote on Wednesday on a law declaring France's colonization of the country a "state crime," and demanding an apology and reparations. The vote comes as the two countries are embroiled in a major diplomatic crisis, and analysts say that while Algeria's move is largely symbolic, it could still be politically significant. The bill states that France holds "legal responsibility for its colonial past in Algeria and the tragedies it caused," according to a draft seen by AFP. The proposed law "is a sovereign act," parliament speaker Brahim Bouhali was quoted by the APS state news agency as saying. It represents "a clear message, both internally and externally, that Algeria's national memory is neither erasable nor negotiable," he added. France's colonization of Algeria from 1830 until 1962 remains a sore spot in relations between the two countries.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A view of the National Flags of Pakistan, PM of Pakistan and President of UAE along the Constitution Avenue during the preparation to welcome the President of the UAE Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who is landing to Pakistan on 26th December for his official visit. — Online

China develop advanced air quality model for pollution simulation

The EPICC model integrates the latest scientific insights into key atmospheric processes. Designed with a modular structure, it allows components to be easily updated or interchanged. The model incorporates advanced chemical representations, such as manganese-catalyzed sulfate formation and aerosol-sunlight interactions.

BEIJING: Chinese researchers have developed a new air quality model that enables more accurate simulation of two major pollutants: fine particulate matter and ground-level ozone. Named the Emission and Atmospheric Processes Integrated and Coupled Community Model (EPICC), it provides a refined tool for understanding and managing complex air pollution challenges, especially in fast-developing regions. Unlike earlier air quality models, which were typically devel-

oped by individual researchers or small teams — an approach that often constrained overall progress — this initiative adopted a collaborative framework. Scientists formed the "EPICC Model Working Group," comprising 59 researchers from 13 institutions, including the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Tsinghua University, and Peking University. Air quality models play a critical role in studying the formation, transport, and trans-

formation of pollutants in the lower atmosphere, supporting the design of effective pollution control strategies. While leading models have historically originated in the United States, the researchers noted that such models are not always well-suited to China's unique pollution profile, which includes coal smoke, photochemical smog, and severe haze. The EPICC model integrates the latest scientific insights into key atmospheric processes. Designed with

a modular structure, it allows components to be easily updated or interchanged. The model incorporates advanced chemical representations, such as manganese-catalyzed sulfate formation and aerosol-sunlight interactions. According to the working group, performance tests demonstrate that EPICC version 1.0 significantly improves the simulation accuracy of particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less (PM_{2.5}) and ozone. It address-

es common shortcomings of earlier models, which tended to underestimate sulfate pollution and overestimate summer ozone concentrations. "This model can serve as a more effective decision-support tool not only for China but also for other rapidly developing countries grappling with similarly complex air pollution issues," the working group added. The study detailing the new model has been published in the journal *Advances in Atmospheric Sciences*.—DNA

Search teams in Turkey recover recorders after plane crash

ANKARA: Search teams in Turkey on Wednesday recovered the cockpit voice and flight data recorders from a jet crash that killed eight people, including Libya's military chief, while efforts to retrieve the victims' remains were still underway, Turkey's interior minister said. The private jet carrying Gen. Muhammad Ali Ahmad Al-Haddad, four other military officials and three crew members crashed on Tuesday, after taking off from Turkey's capital, Ankara, killing everyone on board. Libyan officials said that the cause of the crash was a technical malfunction on the plane. The high-level Libyan delegation was on its way back to Tripoli after holding defense talks in Ankara aimed at boosting military cooperation between the two countries. Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya told journalists at the site of the crash that wreckage was scattered across an area covering three square kilometers (more than a square mile), complicating recovery efforts. Authorities from the Turkish forensic medicine authority were working to recover and identify the remains, he said. A 22-person delegation — including five family members — arrived from Libya early on Wednesday to assist in the investigation, he said. Libyan Prime Minister AbdulHamid Dbeibah confirmed the deaths on Tuesday, describing the crash on Facebook as a "tragic accident" and a "great loss" for Libya. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held a telephone call with Dbeibah, during which he conveyed his condolences and expressed his sorrow over the deaths, his office said. The Turkish leader later also offered his condolences during a televised speech, voicing solidarity with Libya. "An investigation has been launched into this tragic incident that has deeply saddened us, and our ministries will provide information about its progress," Erdogan said. Al-Haddad was the top military commander in western Libya and played a crucial role in the ongoing, UN-brokered efforts to unify Libya's military, which has split, much like the nation's other institutions. The four other military officials who died in the crash were Gen. Al-Fitouri Ghrabil, the head of Libya's ground forces, Brig. Gen. Mahmoud Al-Qatawi, who led the military manufacturing authority, Mohammed Al-Asawi Diab, adviser to the chief of staff, and Mohammed Omar Ahmed Mahjoub, a military photographer with the chief of staff's office.—APP

Six vital sectors drawing US investors to KSA

RIYADH: Six vital sectors are drawing US investors, including entrepreneurs and small businesses, to Saudi markets as the Kingdom continues to develop its regulatory framework and foster innovation, Deborah Lehr, interim CEO of the Meridian International Center, said in an interview with Al-Eqtisadiah. Lehr, who is heading a trade and investment delegation to Saudi Arabia in her capacity as an economic advisor affiliated with the White House, stated that the six sectors include hospitality, luxury goods, and tourism, as well as culture, technology, and others. She noted that Saudi Arabia has significantly eased the process for foreign companies to establish a presence, a critical factor for small and medium-sized enterprises that may not yet have the scale to expand, making the Kingdom an attractive market for both large and innovative small companies. Following the success of the Saudi Crown Prince's recent visit to Washington, she said, Meridian organized a US trade delegation to explore tangible and growing opportunities for US businesses in Saudi Arabia. Translating Vision 2030 priorities into real partnerships. The delegation, which included representatives from Delta, Intel, Pernod Ricard, and Basillina, among others, met a wide range of government officials, private-sector leaders, and entrepreneurs to explore how US companies can participate in Saudi market growth. According to Lehr, discussions were practical and forward-looking, focusing on translating Vision 2030 priorities into real business partnerships. She highlighted that most of the companies in the delegation were large enterprises operating across various sectors, underscoring the diversity of businesses active in Saudi Arabia. She pointed out that these companies joined the mission because they see the potential to scale their operations in Saudi Arabia — whether by increasing flight routes, enhancing airport security, offering advisory services to firms entering the Saudi or US markets, or exploring opportunities in the beverage sector. Lehr hinted to the Saudi minister of investment that the US-Saudi relationship is also increasingly taking on an economic dimension. She noted that bilateral trade stands at around \$40 billion, compared with Saudi-China trade of approximately \$110 billion, highlighting untapped growth potential between the two countries, especially as diplomatic and political ties continue to strengthen. She said the reforms present valuable opportunities for US companies across multiple sectors, including advanced manufacturing, technology and logistics, as well as aviation, tourism and culture, alongside a wide range of services. With the regulatory environment being modernized and business stability increasing, the scope of US investment is set to expand further. More importantly, she added, the greater the engagement of companies, the stronger and more resilient the bilateral relationship will become in the years ahead. She emphasized that Saudi Arabia has undergone deep social and economic transformations, including increased female participation in the workforce and entrepreneurship, while emerging as a cultural hub with a thriving arts scene and new platforms for creative expression. Lehr further said that the world will witness growing global interest from companies and institutions eager to be part of Saudi Arabia's remarkable transformation, amid increasing openness and a willingness to share its history, culture, and ambitions with the world. Lehr highlighted that during her visit, she focused on three key economic priorities. The first is Saudi Arabia's strategic shift of capital from the oil and gas sector toward technology and innovation, a move that signifies not only economic diversification but also the Kingdom's emergence as a globally competitive player. Second, the Kingdom's reform agenda has provided tangible opportunities for foreign companies, reflecting real changes that facilitate international participation in Saudi growth. The third point she focused on was that the strong geopolitical and economic ties between the US and Saudi Arabia have bolstered investor confidence. As the Kingdom strengthens its global role and deepens relationships with partners such as the US, its attractiveness for long-term foreign direct investment continues to grow. She noted that sectors such as artificial intelligence, gaming and entertainment, advanced manufacturing, and the technology ecosystem are areas in which the US has strong competitive advantages, at a time when US firms are seeking new markets that offer stability and long-term potential. —DNA

Egypt, China agree \$1.15b of new industrial projects in SCZONE

RIYADH: Egypt's Suez Canal Economic Zone is set to host three new industrial projects with a combined investment of \$1.15 billion, bringing total investments in the zone to \$5.1 billion in the first half of the 2025/26 fiscal year. The contracts, expected to generate around 5,400 direct job opportunities, expand the footprint of industrial developer TEDA-Egypt in the Ain Sokhna Industrial Zone. The agreements were signed between TEDA-Egypt and China's Xin Feng Ming Group, Chaoyang Langma Tyre, and Tongling Jieya Biotechnology, according to an official statement issued by the Egyptian Cabinet Presidency. This aligns with SCZONE's earlier forecast that revenue will exceed \$4 billion this year, slightly above 2024 levels, with gradual growth expected from the next fiscal year. The Suez Canal generated about \$40 billion between 2019 and 2024 and remains Egypt's largest source of foreign currency. A Facebook post on the official Egyptian Cabinet Presidency page stated: "Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly emphasized that the signing of these three projects reflects the growing confidence

of major international companies in Egypt's investment climate and underscores the advanced infrastructure offered by the SCZONE, as well as its logistical integration through the connection between industrial zones and ports." It added: "This supports the Egyptian state's strategy to deepen local manufacturing, increase exports, and create more job opportunities." The largest project, led by Xin Feng Ming, involves the construction of an integrated polyester fiber and polymer complex with investments exceeding \$800 million, according to SCZONE Chairman Walid Gamal El-Din. The facility will be built over about 400,000 sq. meters and developed in three phases, with a combined annual production capacity of 1.08 million tonnes. It is expected to create around 3,000 jobs. Gamal El-Din further pointed out that construction of the first phase is scheduled to begin in May 2026, with production expected to start in the fourth quarter of 2027. The second and third phases are set to come online between 2029 and 2030. A second project

with Chaoyang Langma will establish a \$190 million tyre manufacturing complex producing heavy-duty truck and passenger car tyres. The facility will span 200,000 sq. meters and employ about 1,400 workers. Once fully operational, it is expected to produce one million truck tyres and 4.5 million passenger car tyres annually, targeting both regional and international markets. Gamal El-Din said the project will be implemented in two phases, starting with construction and the installation of a heavy truck tyre production line in April 2026. A second phase, beginning in September 2028 and lasting 12 months, will expand the heavy-duty truck line and add a passenger car tyre line, including trial runs for both. The third project, led by Tongling Jieya Biotechnology, will involve a \$160 million investment in a health products and nonwoven fabrics complex covering 160,000 sq. meters. The facility is expected to produce up to 10 billion wet wipes, 2 billion baby diapers and 100,000 tonnes of nonwoven fabrics a year, generating about \$270 million in annual revenue at full capacity and employing around 1,000 people. —Agencies

Complete arms embargo on Israel urged

LONDON: Four former senior members of the British Army have urged the government to impose a complete arms embargo on Israel, The Times reported. They also called for a ban on any British involvement in Israeli-owned or Israeli-supported arms manufacturers. The appeal came in a letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, in which the signatories said that amid Gaza's fragile ceasefire, "now is not the time to return to business as usual with the Israeli government." More severe sanctions must be placed on Israel, they said. The letter was signed by John Deverell, a retired brigadier general who served for more than 30 years, and Sir Andrew Graham, a retired lieutenant general and former director general of the Defence Academy of the UK. Deverell was defense attaché in Saudi Arabia and Yemen at the time of the Sept. 11 attacks. Maj. Gen. Peter Currie and Maj. Gen. Charlie Herbert, a former senior British Army commander in Afghanistan, are also signatories. The army is set to decide next year whether to award the British subsidiary of Elbit Systems, a major weapons company, a £2 billion (\$2.7 billion) training contract for soldiers, aimed at future preparedness.—APP

Syrian church marks Christmas, reaffirms faith months after deadly attack

DWEILA: At a church in Syria where a suicide attack killed 25 people in June, hundreds of worshippers gathered before Christmas to remember those they lost and reaffirm their faith. With a small detail of security forces standing guard outside, members of Mar Elias Church held Mass on Tuesday evening and lit an image of Christmas tree made of neon lights on the wall of the courtyard outside. The tree was hung with pictures of those who were killed in the attack.

They include three men the congregation hails as heroes for tackling the bomber, potentially averting a much higher death toll in the June 22 attack.

A man opened fire then detonated an explosive vest inside the Greek Orthodox church in Dweila on the outskirts of Damascus as it was filled with people praying on a Sunday.

Before he detonated the vest, brothers Boutros and Gergis Bechara and another congregant, Milad Haddad, tackled the shooter and pushed him out of the center of the church, congregants said. "If it weren't for the three of them, maybe not one person would remain out of 400 people," said Imad Haddad, the brother of Milad Haddad, who attended Tuesday's Christmas tree lighting.—APP

Jordanian FM, Palestinian VP discuss Trump's Gaza plan

LONDON: Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and Palestinian Authority Vice President Hussein Sheikh have discussed efforts to solidify the ceasefire in Gaza and stop Israeli escalation in the occupied West Bank. In a meeting in Amman on Tuesday, the two officials stressed the need to uphold the Gaza ceasefire and advance to the second phase of the agreement based on the plan by US President Donald Trump. They agreed that achieving stability must be linked to a clear political path leading to a just and comprehensive peace based on a two-state solution, according to the Petra news agency. They said Gaza was an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where Palestinians seek to establish an independent Palestinian state. Safadi and Sheikh addressed the worsening situation in the occupied West Bank, stressing the urgent need for coordinated regional and international efforts to stop illegal Israeli actions that could escalate violence and hinder peace.—APP

Briefs

Pro-Russian
hacking
group attack
French postal
service

DNA

PARIS: A pro-Russian hacking group claimed responsibility for a major cyberattack that halted package deliveries by France's national postal service just days before Christmas, prosecutors said Wednesday. After the claim by the cybercrime group known as Noname057, French intelligence agency DGSI took over the investigation into the hacking attack, the Paris prosecutor's office said in a statement to The Associated Press. The group has been accused of other cyberattacks in Europe, including around a NATO summit in the Netherlands and French government sites. It was the target of a big European police operation earlier this year. Central computer systems at French national postal service La Poste were knocked offline Monday in a distributed denial of service, or DDoS, cyberattack that still wasn't fully resolved by Wednesday morning, the company said. Postal workers couldn't track package deliveries, and online payments at the company's banking arm were also disrupted. It was a major blow to La Poste, which delivered 2.6 billion packages last year and employs more than 200,000 people, during the busiest season of the year. France and other European allies of Ukraine allege that Russia is waging a campaign of "hybrid warfare" to sow division in Western societies and undermine their support for Ukraine. The AP has tracked more than 145 incidents including sabotage, assassinations, cyberattacks, disinformation and other hostile acts that are increasingly draining police resources.

Daytime
movement
of heavy
traffic banned

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The daytime movement of heavy traffic vehicles has been banned in Karachi for two months, it emerged on Wednesday. The development comes as the city has recently witnessed a steep increase in traffic accidents, with many resulting from collisions with heavy vehicles such as dumper trucks and water tankers. A notification issued on Tuesday by Karachi Commissioner Syed Hassan Naqvi, a copy of which is available with Dawn, said that the deputy inspector general of the Karachi Traffic Police had requested the imposition of a ban on the movement of heavy vehicles during the daytime "in order to resolve traffic congestion issues due to the influx of heavy vehicular traffic and to prevent road traffic accidents". The notification added that in the interest of protecting human lives and ensuring the smooth flow of traffic, there were sufficient grounds to proceed under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to regulate the movement of heavy traffic within the city.

Ambassador Jiang highlights
media role in advancing CPEC

The ambassador noted that President Xi Jinping's historic visit to Pakistan in 2015 laid the foundation of the "1+4" cooperation framework for CPEC, while the launch of the Media Forum in Islamabad the same year provided an institutional platform to communicate CPEC's vision and achievements

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong on Tuesday underscored the vital role of media in strengthening China-Pakistan relations and promoting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), while addressing the 9th CPEC Media Forum. He said the Forum has emerged as an influential platform for bilateral media exchanges, contributing significantly to mutual understanding and the successful advancement of CPEC. Addressing media professionals and representatives from various sectors, Ambassador Jiang recalled that since its inception in 2015, the CPEC Media Forum has grown alongside the flagship corridor project, helping create a favourable public opinion environment for its development. He expressed gratitude to journalists and stakeholders from both countries for their continued support to China-Pakistan cooperation. The ambassador noted that President Xi Jinping's historic visit to Pakistan in 2015

Tarar vows to deepen
Pakistan-China ties

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has expressed the government's commitment to further solidify the strong fraternal ties between Pakistan and China. Addressing the 9th Pak-China Media Forum in Islamabad on Wednesday, he said Pakistan has great history and legacy that our elders have left behind regarding Pak-China relations. The Minister said this legacy has now been transformed into China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which brought a great harmony between the two countries. He said the friendship between Pakistan and China is touching to its new heights as both the countries are cooperating with each other in multi-domains including trade and investment, digital technology, media, culture and promoting people to people contacts. The Minister emphasized the need to further strengthen media cooperation especially in the digital field so that we have more digital platforms to tell successful stories of Pak-China times tested friendship. He also called for more people to people exchanges so that people can get together and discuss the reality of Pakistan-China friendship. Attaullah Tarar said only positivity can be associated with Pakistan and China relations and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. He also stressed the need of discouraging fake news and disinformation campaigns on social media. — DNA

laid the foundation of the "1+4" cooperation framework for CPEC, while the launch of the Media Forum in Islamabad the same year provided an institutional platform to communicate CPEC's vision and achievements. Over the past decade, he said, CPEC has evolved into a comprehensive cooperation project spanning multiple sectors and has played a major role in Pakistan's economic and social development, becoming a flagship initiative of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Highlighting the Forum's contributions, Ambassador Jiang said it has effectively shared cooperation stories, countered misleading narratives such as the so-called "debt trap" theory with facts and data, and supported CPEC builders against unfounded criticism. Looking ahead, the ambassador said next year will mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. He reaffirmed China's commitment to working with Pakistan to deepen all-weather strategic cooperation and build a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future.



BAGHDAD: President Asif Ali Zardari pays respects at the shrine of Hazrat Imam Hussain. — DNA

RCCI welcomes
privatisation of PIA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has hailed the successful privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), terming it a commendable and much-needed step towards economic revival and fiscal discipline. RCCI President, Usman Shaukat, in a statement said that the privatisation of low-performing state-owned enterprises had long been a burden on the national exchequer, and the government's decision to offload such entities was both timely and appreciable. "For years, loss-making SOEs have drained public resources. This decision reflects the government's seriousness in addressing inefficiencies and reducing its commercial footprint," he said. "This privatisation deal is a beacon of hope for Pakistan's economy. We are confident that new ownership will bring professional management, fresh investment, and operational efficiency to PIA, enabling it to regain competitiveness in the global aviation market," he added. The successful bidding process, culminating in the Arif Habib consortium's winning bid of Rs. 135 billion, marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's reform agenda. Shaukat expressed optimism that the bleeding of public finances through PIA would now be halted and that the move sends a strong and positive signal to local and foreign investors.

Opposition seeks 'serious' talks with govt

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: A multi-party alliance has signalled that it is ready for talks with the government but demanded that the rulers show seriousness as the doors for negotiations in politics should never be closed. Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) Vice Chairman Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar said the alliance, which also includes the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), was ready to initiate dialogue with the government. "We believe that the doors for negotiations should never be closed. We noted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's statement with seriousness," he said on Geo News' programme "Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Saath". Khokhar was referring to the prime minister's reiteration of his offer for talks with the opposition — but at the same time, emphasised that dialogue between the two sides could only proceed on "legitimate matters." Addressing his cabinet, the prime minister said PTI founder Im-

ran Khan and his associates were also discussing the possibility of talks. He added that he had earlier invited PTI leaders for dialogue and had reiterated the offer on the floor of the National Assembly. "Discussions could only be held on legitimate demands. Blackmailing will not work under the guise of negotiations, he added. The two sides attempted talks at the end of December last year, following more than a year of strained relations, but the effort yielded no outcome. Several subsequent attempts to revive the negotiations were also unsuccessful. Meanwhile, Khokhar, in today's programme, said that all allied parties, including the PTI, had been taken on board during consultations. He said TTAP chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai had already stated that if the government was serious, he would himself obtain the PTI founder's signatures. The alliance leader said the TTAP would not demand the PTI founder's release or the withdrawal of cases during the negotiations. He added that they were ready to hold talks with the government on the Constitution and

a new charter. He said that if the government moved forward, the alliance would then consider the next phase — forming a committee for talks. However, moments before Khokhar's assurance, the PTI had rejected the prime minister's offer for talks, calling the government's approach a reflection of "political panic and intellectual collapse." State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry told Geo News' Shahzeb Khanzada that PTI's position keeps changing by the hour. He said there was still a need to allow clarity to emerge in the party's stance. He said the PTI founder himself made two or three different statements. Chaudhry said the prime minister had made it clear that talks would take place, but there would be no blackmail. A meeting of the TTAP was held under the chairmanship of Achakzai earlier in the day. The meeting was attended by Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, BNP-M leader Sajid Tareen, PTI leader Asad Qaiser, and Khokhar. Opposition alliance spokesperson Akhunda Hussain Yousafzai was also present.

Former PTI
leaders seek
parole for
jailed party
stalwarts

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: A group of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, who have formed a National Dialogue Committee (NDC) to promote political reconciliation, have formally written to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif seeking the release of senior party leaders held in Kot Lakhpat jail on parole.

In a letter sent by Mahmood Maulvi, Imran Ismail, and Fawad Hussain Chaudhry, the committee contended that the release of the arrested leaders is necessary to ensure "meaningful leadership and lend credibility to any proposed dialogue process."

The committee welcomed PM Shehbaz's renewed offer of talks with the opposition, particularly PTI, and described it as a "golden opportunity" to stabilise the country amid deepening political, economic, and institutional challenges.

Notably, the letter does not mention PTI founder Imran Khan, focusing instead on the role of senior party leaders outside the Adiala jail in initiating and sustaining the dialogue process.

Two police
killed in
explosion
in Moscow

MOSCOW: Two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement Wednesday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week. "An explosive device was triggered" as the officers approached the suspect who was near their service vehicle, said the statement by the committee, which probes major crimes. An earlier statement on Telegram said investigators were inspecting the scene and carrying out forensic analysis, including "medical and explosive examinations". The area was cordoned off and had a large police presence, according to images broadcast on Russian television, which quoted witnesses describing an explosion that occurred at around 1:30 am (22:30 GMT Tuesday). — APP

Pakistan urges restraint to
ease US-Venezuela tensions

"We urge all sides to engage in diplomacy for peacefully resolving their differences, respecting the imperative of peaceful coexistence and choosing the path of dialogue and cooperation to ensure that the Latin American and Caribbean region is indeed a 'Zone of Peace'"

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: As the United States continues to interdict vessels off the coast of Venezuela, Pakistan Tuesday called on all sides to exercise maximum restraint, de-escalate tensions, and refrain from any actions that could further aggravate the already tense situation. "We firmly believe that the current trajectory serves no one's interest," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council, which met at the request of Venezuela to consider escalating tensions that Caracas attributes to the U.S. actions. "In a world marred by polarization with conflicts affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions around the globe, it is all but imperative to once again underscore the centrality and inviolability of the UN Charter and its core principles", including prohibition on

the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, he said. Any unilateral measures contrary to these principles and tenets of international law risk setting dangerous precedents with far-reaching consequences, the Pakistani envoy said. "We firmly believe that the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of states, as enshrined in the UN Charter, are sacrosanct." Ambassador Jadoon reaffirmed Pakistan's principled position that any measures undertaken to counter transnational organized crime or cross-border narcotics drug trafficking must be undertaken in a cooperative manner and should remain in full conformity with international law. "We urge all sides to engage in diplomacy for peacefully resolving their differences, respecting the imperative of peaceful coexistence and choosing the path of dialogue and cooperation to ensure that the Latin American and Caribbean region is indeed a 'Zone of Peace'".

DECEMBER 2025

Pakistan's Premier News &
Diplomatic Affairs MagazineFind us on:
www.centrelines.com.pk
www.dnanews.com.pk
www.islamabadpost.com.pk

@PostIslamabad/ @Editordnanews

A sister concern of

Islamabad POST

11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-8488394