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Pakistan reaffirms Commitment to Diverse diplomacy

Detailed News On Page-08

Panda bonds to boost Pak economy

Detailed News On Page-08

Terrorism in KP to be dealt with iron hand

Detailed News On Page-08

Tension with Saudi Arabia

UAE announces withdrawal of forces from Yemen

UAE defence ministry says decision made after considering recent developments, potential risks to missions

CENTRELINE REPORT

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates' defence ministry on Tuesday announced that it has ended the mission of its counterterrorism units in Yemen voluntarily, state news agency WAM reported. It said the decision came after a comprehensive assessment following recent developments. The defence ministry also shared its statement in Arabic on X, saying the decision was made after considering recent developments and potential risks to the safety and effectiveness of its counterterrorism missions. The ministry said the "remaining presence was limited to specialised personnel as part of counterterrorism efforts, in coordination with relevant international partners". The announcement comes after a Saudi-led coalition carried out an airstrike on the southern Yemeni port of Mukalla, striking what it described as a foreign military support to UAE-backed southern separatists. Saudi Arabia also backed a call for UAE forces to leave Yemen within 24 hours. The UAE was a member of the Saudi-led coalition battling the Houthis movement in Yemen from 2015. In 2019 it started a drawdown of its troops in the country but remained committed to the Saudi-backed internationally recognised government. The Southern Transitional Council (STC) later decided to seek self-rule in the south and this month advanced in a sudden offensive against Saudi-supported Yemeni government troops. The advance broke years of stalemate, with the STC claiming broad control of the south. Saudi Arabia had warned the STC against military moves in the eastern border province of Hadramout and sought the withdrawal of its forces.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan condemns targeting of Russian President's residence

President, Prime Minister slam the incident

FAISAL SHEKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday condemned the reported targeting of the residence of President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, calling it a grave threat to peace and security. "Pakistan condemns the reported targeting of the residence of His Excellency Vladimir Putin, President of Russian Federation. Such a heinous act constitutes a grave threat to peace, security, and stability, particularly at a time when efforts aimed at peace are underway," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif wrote on his X timeline. The prime minister expressed solidarity with the President of the Russian Federation, and with the government and people of Russia. "We reiterate our firm rejection of all forms of violence and acts intended to undermine security and threaten peace," he added. President Asif Ali Zardari has expressed concern over reports of an attack on

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Trump says 'hell to pay' if Hamas doesn't disarm

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump warned Monday that Hamas would have "hell to pay" if it does not disarm quickly as part of the Gaza deal, which he said Israel was complying with. "If they don't disarm as they agreed to do, then there will be hell to pay for them," Trump told a joint news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida. They have to disarm in a fairly short period of time," Trump said. Trump publicly backs his support behind Netanyahu, who has taken a hard line on moving to the next stage of the Gaza ceasefire plan. "I'm not concerned about anything that Israel's doing," Trump said. "I'm concerned about what other people are doing or maybe aren't doing. But I'm not concerned. They've lived up to the plan."

Pak, ADB sign two accords

FIJAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: Speaking at the signing ceremony in Islamabad, Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs Muhammad Humaiz Karim appreciated ADB's continued support, describing it as a trusted development partner in Pakistan's efforts to advance climate resilience, sustainable agriculture and inclusive growth. He said the South Coast Resilience Project would promote integrated water resources and flood risk management, restore nature-based coastal defences, and strengthen institutional and community capacity for strategic planning. The project will be financed through \$140.5 million from ADB.

Yasmin Rashid's plea against Nawaz Sharif dismissed

Election tribunal declares notification of Nawaz's victory from NA-130 Lahore valid



BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: An election tribunal on Tuesday dismissed a petition filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Dr Yasmin Rashid challenging President Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif's victory from Lahore's NA-130 in the 2024 general elections. The incarcerated PTI senior, in April last year, filed a petition in the election tribunal against the three-time former premier through her lawyers, Ahmed Awaiz and Rana Mudassar. She had stated in her petition that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) issued the notification of Nawaz's victory in violation of the law.

Dr Rashid, who served as Punjab health minister during former premier Imran Khan's rule, claimed that results were manipulated in favour of the PML-N supreme. After hearing arguments from both sides, election tribunal judge Justice (ret'd) Rana Zahid Mahmood declared the notification of Nawaz's victory from NA-130 Lahore valid. It is pertinent to mention here that the PML-N supreme won the NA-130 by securing 171,024 votes, while Dr Yasmin Rashid, who was contesting elections as an independent candidate, bagged 115,043 votes during the elections. The Imran Khan-founded party claimed its mandate was stolen in the February 8, 2024, general elections and results were changed in Form 47a, a document which provides insight into unconfirmed results of a constituency. The former ruling party also claimed they won 180 NA seats, citing statistics of Form 45a. Form 45, also known as the Presiding Officer's Results of the Count, is the form that the presiding officer (PO) is required to sign and provide with their thumb impression and signature to the polling agents.

Uzbek President to visit Pakistan in Feb

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar received a call from Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Bakhtiyor Saidov. Senator Bakhtiyor extended Season's greetings and best wishes for New Year, which were warmly reciprocated by the Deputy PM. FM Bakhtiyor further confirmed the visit of President of Uzbekistan in February 2026. They point to an emerging broader Saudi-Pakistan partnership in the coming days. For Pakistan, a close friend to both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, the situation poses significant challenges that reach far beyond trade and investment. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are indispensable partners for Islamabad, underpinning Pakistan's economic stability through deposits, concessional loans, support, energy supplies on deferred payment, large-scale investments, and remittances from millions of Pakistani expatriates working across the Gulf. Any perception of discord between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi therefore forces Pakistan into a delicate balancing act: maintaining strategic equidistance while ensuring no partner feels sidelined. The UAE President's brief visit to Pakistan on December 26 underscored continuity amid uncertainty. High-level engagements focused on trade, investment, and sectoral cooperation in energy, infrastructure, IT, and logistics—signalling that both sides intend to translate political goodwill into tangible projects. The optics of the visit mattered, too: at a moment when speculation occasionally surfaces about underlying strains in Gulf alignments, the trip projected steadiness and intent to deepen ties. Regardless of the circumstances, Saudi Arabia and the UAE remain vitally important to Pakistan—and Pakistan to them. Islamabad provides a large, skilled workforce, defense cooperation, and a dependable partner in regional security dialogues. For Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, Pakistan is a pivotal South Asian state with strategic geography, a sizeable market, and longstanding military-to-military and intelligence linkages. Amid rapidly evolving Middle East dynamics from shifting security calculations to economic diversification drives Islamabad is widely believed to be engaging discreetly to ease frictions between the two Gulf powers, even as each pursues distinct regional and economic agendas.

Bangladesh ex-PM Khaleda Zia dies aged 80

President, PM Shehbaz condole the death of Khaleda Zia

DNA

DHAKA: Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who many believed would sweep elections next year to lead her country once again, died on Tuesday aged 80, her Bangladesh Nationalist Party said. "The BNP Chairperson and former prime minister, the national leader Begum Khaleda Zia, passed away today at 6:00 am (0000 GMT), just after the Fajr (dawn) prayer," the party said in a statement. "We pray for the forgiveness of her soul and request everyone to offer prayers for her departed soul," it added. Despite years of health and imprisonment, Zia vowed in November to campaign in elections set for February 2026—the first vote since a mass uprising toppled her arch-rival Sheikh Hasina last year.



The BNP is widely seen as a frontrunner. But in late November she was rushed to hospital, where, despite the best efforts of doctors, her condition declined from a raft of health issues. Nevertheless, hours before her death, party workers had on Monday submitted nomination papers on her

Continued on Page 06

Escalating Gulf rivalry and Pakistan's options

“For Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, Pakistan is a pivotal South Asian state with strategic geography, a sizeable market, and longstanding military-to-military and intelligence linkages. Amid rapidly evolving Middle East dynamics from shifting security calculations to economic diversification drives Islamabad is widely believed to be engaging discreetly to ease frictions between the two Gulf powers, even as each pursues distinct regional and economic agendas”

SITUATIONER

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

IN a significant escalation highlighting the deepening rift between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Saudi-led coalition executed a precise airstrike on Yemen's Port of Mukalla on Tuesday, targeting weapons and military vehicles reportedly shipped from the UAE to bolster separatist forces. Saudi officials described the operation as "limited," with no civilian casualties or collateral damage reported. The strike focused on shipments arriving from the UAE's Fujairah port, which Riyadh claims were unloaded without authorization to support the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC). The STC has recently consolidated control over key eastern provinces, including Hadramout and al-Mahra, prompting

stern warnings from the coalition. This marks a pivotal shift: Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, once unified in their intervention against the Houthis, are now openly clashing over Yemen's future. Saudi Arabia prioritizes a unified Yemen under the internationally recognised government, while the UAE supports southern separatism through the STC. The airstrike underscores Riyadh's abandonment of restraint, signalling a willingness to confront perceived threats to its interests directly and forcefully. The implications extend far beyond Yemen. This power struggle is regional, with Sudan potentially the next battleground. Saudi Arabia backs the Sudanese Armed Forces, while the UAE is said to have been supporting the rival Rapid Support Forces—mirroring the proxy dynamics now turning direct in Yemen. As fractures widen in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is actively reinforcing alliances elsewhere. Recent diplomatic engagements, including meetings in Islamabad be-

tween Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Malki and Sudanese counterpart, point to an emerging broader Saudi-Sudan partnership in the coming days. For Pakistan, a close friend to both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, the situation poses significant challenges that reach far beyond trade and investment. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are indispensable partners for Islamabad, underpinning Pakistan's economic stability through deposits, concessional loans, support, energy supplies on deferred payment, large-scale investments, and remittances from millions of Pakistani expatriates working across the Gulf. Any perception of discord between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi therefore forces Pakistan into a delicate balancing act: maintaining strategic equidistance while ensuring no partner feels sidelined. The UAE President's brief visit to Pakistan on December 26 underscored continuity amid uncertainty. High-level engagements focused on trade, investment, and sectoral cooperation in energy, infrastructure, IT, and logistics—signalling that both sides intend to translate political goodwill into tangible projects. The optics of the visit mattered, too: at a moment when speculation occasionally surfaces about underlying strains in Gulf alignments, the trip projected steadiness and intent to deepen ties. Regardless of the circumstances, Saudi Arabia and the UAE remain vitally important to Pakistan—and Pakistan to them. Islamabad provides a large, skilled workforce, defense cooperation, and a dependable partner in regional security dialogues. For Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, Pakistan is a pivotal South Asian state with strategic geography, a sizeable market, and longstanding military-to-military and intelligence linkages. Amid rapidly evolving Middle East dynamics from shifting security calculations to economic diversification drives Islamabad is widely believed to be engaging discreetly to ease frictions between the two Gulf powers, even as each pursues

distinct regional and economic agendas. Such behind-the-scenes efforts align with Pakistan's traditional role as a bridge-builder in the Muslim world, seeking deescalation and pragmatic coordination rather than zero-sum competition among allies. This is a true test for nations allied with both sides, as the onco-solid Gulf front shows signs of internal differentiation. The ripple effects are unpredictable: maritime security in the Red Sea, investment pipelines and energy flows, labor market policies affecting expatriates, and broader diplomatic alignments could all feed the impact. For Pakistan, the path forward will require disciplined message management, calibrated economic diplomacy, and an unwavering focus on mutually beneficial projects. Success will be measured less by headline breakthroughs than by preserving strategic trust, insulating economic cooperation from political headlines, and keeping channels open so that competition does not harden into confrontation.

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Kundi invites investors to explore opportunities in KP

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has said that the province offers immense opportunities for investment due to its abundant natural resources, talented youth, and strategic geographical location. He said that Peshawar serves as a gateway to Central Asia and that providing a conducive environment for business and investment promotion in the province is his top priority. The Governor was speaking at the chief guest at the second Global Awards Ceremony organized by the Pakistan Executive Forum (PEF) at the Governor's House, Peshawar, on Tuesday. He invited local and overseas business leaders to explore and benefit from investment opportunities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and contribute to the province's economic development. The ceremony was attended by PEF Central Chairman Munir Ahmed Shah, Country President Nauman Wasim, Head of Saudi

Chapter Kamran Ali Qureshi, Head of Qatar Chapter Kamil Rahim, Head of Peshawar Chapter Adnan Jilal, Head of Lahore Chapter Rana Tanzeer, Head of Sialkot Chapter Tariq, Head of Gujranwala Chapter Umar Farooq, Head of Islamabad Chapter Gul Zehra, Head of Karachi Chapter Saad Hamidi, representatives from SMEs including Rashid Iwan, KP EZIMAC's Nabila Afridi, former KP Minister Ali Shah, and a large number of business personalities from across the country and overseas Pakistanis. Participants highlighted investment opportunities in various sectors and shared their suggestions. They also thanked the Governor for hosting the event at the Governor's House. Governor Kundi distributed awards among business leaders in recognition of their outstanding performance. A special award was presented to the PEF Country President, while the Pakistani Executive Forum also presented a commemorative shield to the Governor of

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. While addressing the gathering, the Governor congratulated PEF office-bearers and award recipients, saying that organizations like PEF play a vital role in economic stability, promotion of business leadership, and projecting a positive image of Pakistan. He added that such platforms also serve as an effective source of guidance and motivation for the younger generation, expressing optimism, Governor Kundi said that through collective efforts, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would reach new heights in trade and business and soon emerge as a prominent hub for investment in the country. He welcomed the proposals presented during the ceremony and assured the business community of full support from the Governor's House for investment promotion, industrialization, SME development, and youth empowerment. "The doors of the Governor's House remain open all times for domestic and foreign investors," he affirmed.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Executive Director General, ISA, Ms. Imrana Wazir welcoming former Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Mehmood Hayat at ISA

KP cabinet approves financial assistance for flood victims of Buner

PESHAWAR: Provincial Cabinet has approved financial assistance to compensate for the losses suffered by people in Buner and other areas of the province due to the flood disaster in 2025. Provincial Minister Syed Fakhr Jahan said in a statement here, Provincial Minister for Finance, Taxation, and Narcotics Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Syed Fakhr Jahan, said that financial compensation for the losses of owners of shops, rickshaws, petrol pumps, vehicles, flour water mills, and factories affected by the flood disaster that occurred in 2025 in Buner and other parts of the province has been approved. He said that this step is an important effort by the government for the flood-affected people of Buner and other affected areas, which will help compensate the losses of the affected families. In August 2025, a devastating flood caused by lightning strikes resulted in significant loss of life and property in District Buner. On the request of Provincial Minister Syed Fakhr Jahan, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, during his visit to Buner, also announced an increase in compensation for affected houses and human lives. However, losses to rickshaws and vehicles, petrol pumps, water mills, shops, and marble factories had been left out of the compensation. Now, the government has approved financial compensation for these losses as well.—APP

CCP draws line on deceptive marketing in 2025

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) strengthened enforcement against deceptive marketing across real estate, consumer goods, automobiles, education, cosmetics, and agricultural machinery to protect consumers and promote fair competition. In the real estate sector, the CCP initiated a major inquiry into misleading advertisements by housing societies and developers. Based on intelligence from the Market Intelligence Unit (MIU) and the Office of Fair Trade (OFT), the Commission found widespread misrepresentation, said a release issued here on Tuesday. Many projects falsely claimed to be located in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) or portrayed the Capital Development

Authority (CDA) despite being outside its jurisdiction. The CCP invited consumers, investors, and overseas Pakistanis to submit evidence through its online complaint portal. A key case involved Kingdom Valley (Pvt.) Limited. The CCP imposed a PKR 150 million penalty for falsely marketing "Kingdom Valley Islamabad," misrepresenting links with Naya Pakistan Housing Program and NAPHIDA, and making misleading NOC claims. During 2025, the Islamabad High Court dismissed PKR 25 million for deceptive pricing during the launch of the Islamabad Tucson. The Commission found that "introductory prices" were offered for less than 24 hours, followed by an immediate price increase, with disclaimers displayed in hard-to-read text.—APP

Advisory issued for Murree tourists amid rain, snowfall forecast

RAWALPINDI: The Murree district administration on Tuesday issued a special advisory for tourists visiting the hill station, Galiyat and adjoining areas as in view of the prevailing weather forecast.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department has predicted rain and snowfall from December 30, which may continue until January 2 in these areas. The district administration advised the tourists to check weather conditions through print, electronic and social media before travelling. The advisory stressed that the use of tyre chains is mandatory in snowbound areas, vehicle tyre pressure should be maintained properly, and fuel tanks must be kept full before starting the journey.

The district administration urged the tourists to strictly follow traffic police instructions to ensure smooth traffic flow and to travel in line with the traffic management plan. It also emphasised adherence to the standard operating procedures and the promotion of environmentally friendly tourism. Tourists facing any difficulty or emergency have been advised to seek guidance and assistance from facilitation centres. Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Zahir Abbas Shirazi said the district administration's foremost priority was to ensure the safety and convenience of tourists. He appealed to the public to avoid unnecessary travel during possible rain and snowfall and to prioritise their own safety as well as that of others. He added that officers and personnel of all relevant departments were actively deployed in the field to provide maximum facilitation to tourists. The district administration further announced that help desks had been established at designated points to provide tourists with information regarding routes, weather conditions and other essential matters.—APP

CM agrees to setup walled city authority for Peshawar beautification

PESHAWAR: An important meeting regarding the revitalization of Peshawar plan was held at the Higher Secretariat, Peshawar, under the chairmanship of Chief Minister (CM) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi and important decisions were taken. According to a spokesperson for the Chief Minister's House, far-reaching decisions were made in the meeting to modernize the overall urban structure of the provincial capital, improve basic facilities, preserve historical heritage, and transform Peshawar into a beautiful and clean city. It was decided to constitute a special committee to ensure effective implementation of the revitalization plan, while all relevant departments were directed to ensure progress within the defined timelines. CM Muhammad Sohail Afridi instructed the concerned authorities to upgrade solid waste management, sewage, drainage, and water supply systems in line with modern requirements and to promote urban forestation in the city. He also agreed to the proposal for the establishment of a Walled City Authority and a Horticulture Authority and directed them to begin preparatory work. The CM stated that Peshawar is

the face of the province and every possible effort will be made to beautify it. He said that all resources required for the uplift of Peshawar will be provided on a priority basis. While briefing the meeting on the plan, it was informed that under the revitalization plan, 34 main roads with a total length of 165 kilometers will be upgraded, equipped with modern lighting and soundified system, new road electric cleaners will be purchased, a sewage treatment plant will be established, and Shah Alam Khata (Shah's Katha) will be rehabilitated, along with other measures. On this occasion, Muhammad Sohail Afridi directed that clear timelines be set for the implementation of the revitalization plan and that timely completion and practical progress of all projects be ensured under all circumstances, so that the provincial capital, Peshawar, can truly be transformed into a modern and beautiful city. Provincial Minister for Local Government, Moensha Khan Afridi, said Secretary Shabbah Ali Shah, Secretary Local Government, Commissioner Peshawar, DG PIA, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, and other relevant officials attended the meeting.—APP

Pr-Zakori intersection. Likewise, it was decided to establish a high-tech children's park in Hayatabad. The briefing also stated that historical sites in Peshawar, including Gor Khatri, Sethi House, and Bibi Jan Shrine, will be restored to their original condition, while a state-of-the-art food street will be established at Chowk Yagdar. The meeting was informed that to improve the cleanliness system, new road electric cleaners will be purchased, a sewage treatment plant will be established, and Shah Alam Khata (Shah's Katha) will be rehabilitated, along with other measures. On this occasion, Muhammad Sohail Afridi directed that clear timelines be set for the implementation of the revitalization plan and that timely completion and practical progress of all projects be ensured under all circumstances, so that the provincial capital, Peshawar, can truly be transformed into a modern and beautiful city. Provincial Minister for Local Government, Moensha Khan Afridi, said Secretary Shabbah Ali Shah, Secretary Local Government, Commissioner Peshawar, DG PIA, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, and other relevant officials attended the meeting.—APP

Lanjar reviews status of ongoing developmental schemes of Police

KARACHI: An important and comprehensive review meeting regarding the current status of ongoing development schemes of the Sindh Police Department was held at the Central Police Office, under the chairmanship of Sindh Home Minister Zauq Hassan Lanjar. The meeting thoroughly reviewed ongoing and pending schemes under the Annual Development Programme (ADP), release of funds, challenges being faced, and future requirements. IGP Sindh Ghulam Nahi Memon briefed the Sindh Home Minister in detail on the overall progress of development schemes being implemented under the ADP, including fund releases, pace of work, and operational challenges. On the occasion, the IGP Sindh thanked the Sindh Home Minister and the Government of Sindh, stating that the provincial government had fully supported all police development schemes and extended complete cooperation in their approval. He pointed out that several police development schemes had been pending for many years and had become unnecessary or ineffective in light of current requirements. He proposed that such schemes should be reviewed afresh and either discontinued or modified in accordance with present-day needs. While addressing the meeting, Sindh Home Minister Zauq Hassan Lanjar said that the primary objective of the meeting was to conduct a comprehensive review of all development schemes of the Sindh Police, to cancel unnecessary projects, and set clear timelines for ongoing schemes. He directed that projects nearing completion should be finalized at the earliest and handed over to the police department so that their benefits could be realized in a timely manner. The Sindh Home Minister Zauq Hassan Lanjar instructed the formation of a committee comprising DIG Headquarters, DIG Training, concerned SSPs, and the Superintendent Engineer (Police). The committee will conduct a detailed review of long-pending schemes and submit its report, on the basis of which decisions will be taken regarding continuation, discontinuation, or modification of the schemes. He further directed that schemes related to the construction of police barracks, police stations, watch towers, and police check posts be resolved on a priority basis. He also instructed that a separate report be presented on projects delayed due to non-release of funds. Lanjar added that a comprehensive four-phase housing scheme should be prepared for police officers from Grade 16 to Grade 20. Clear directives were issued that, in the future, no development scheme should be initiated without the approval of the Home Minister. He emphasized that the completion of women police stations under construction in various districts, submission of a review report on proposed police stations in riverine (Kacha) areas, and the strategic importance of these schemes in view of ongoing police operations in those regions.—APP

PTI wasted another opportunity of dialogue: Ikhtair

He said that PTI has never reciprocated positively to the Govt dialogue offer and escaped of talks in the past

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Information and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Affairs, Ikhtair Wali Khan, on Tuesday said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has wasted yet another important opportunity for negotiations with the government, and under the current circumstances, there appear to be no prospects for any kind of dialogue. Talking to the media, Ikhtair Wali Khan said that despite the Prime Minister's offer for talks, PTI chose the path of

protest in London, where it initiated a series of protests. He said that in such an environment, constructive negotiations do not seem possible. Ikhtair Wali Khan made it clear that negotiations with PTI are not a compulsion for the government, nor does the government stand to gain or lose anything from them. PTI has itself worsened the situation through its conduct and poor decisions and has repeatedly

squandered the opportunities it was given. Referring to the visit of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi to Punjab, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister said that it had been decided that traditional hospitality would be extended upon his arrival at the Punjab Assembly and bouquets of flowers would be presented. However, he said, PTI leaders created such negative attitudes and a sphere that none of this could take place. He added that under the guise

of freedom of expression, inappropriate language was used against the Chief Minister of Punjab, which further aggravated the situation. Ikhtair Wali Khan further said that had it not been for certain remnants of the past, PTI's government would not have survived. He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the PM said that he would invite CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz to a public rally in Peshawar and would demonstrate such a rally that everyone would come to realize the reality. In

response to another question, he said that misbehavior and uncivil conduct in the assembly would not be tolerated under any circumstances. He emphasized that the use of abusive language in the name of freedom of expression is unacceptable, and that had any language not been used, the situation would not have deteriorated to this extent. He said that PTI has never reciprocated positively to the Govt dialogue offer and escaped of talks in the past.—APP

**GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
DAAHISH UNIVERSITY TRUST**

CORRIGENDUM

It is to inform that Daanish University Trust's advertisement No. PID (1) 5198/25 dated 24/12/2025 for hiring of Air Travel & Accommodation Services (Domestic and International), Event Management & Vehicle Rental Services for the Daanish University Trust may be read as **"the competent authority has extended the closing date for submission of proposals from January 5th 2026 to January 12th 2026."**

Shah Jehan PID (1) 5352/25
Deputy Secretary (HEC)
M/o Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training,
C Block, Pak Secretariat, Islamabad.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

Dec 01/Romania National Day	Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day
Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day	Dec 05/Thailand National Day
Dec 06/Finland Independence Day	Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day
Dec 09/Tanzania National Day	Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day
Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day	Dec 12/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.....1122 & 16	Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & 16
Rescue Services.....451122	Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.....9270601-20	Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20	

Enquiry

Ethi Ambulance.....115	Pia Flight Info.....114
Pia Cargo.....9280979	Railway Enquiry.....117
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489	CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....561111	MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital.....927097-11	DIQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7	Hyd Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79	Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International.....4603666	



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43	CIA.....9218301-04
Met Office.....5555684	RDA.....5555684
TMA.....5570886	Contonment Board.....9270151-3



Water Tank

Corporation.....9209224	Potstar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343	

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Pak has vast untapped trade potential: Nigerian envoy

Sardar Tahir Mehmood for unlocking new trade avenues with Nigeria

ISLAMABAD: The Charge d' Affaires of the Nigerian High Commission to Pakistan, Mr. Yushau Mohammed, has said that Nigeria and Pakistan enjoy numerous areas of common interest and that his country offers multiple promising avenues for trade and investment. He emphasized that the Government of Pakistan, the private sector, and the people of Pakistan must move forward collectively to fully capitalize on these opportunities. He expressed these views while speaking at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Monday. The meeting was attended by President ICCI Sardar Tahir Mehmood, Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub, Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, former President ICCI and Chairman Diplomatic Affairs Committee Zafar Bakhtawar, along with Executive Members and former office bearers of the Chamber Mr. Yushau Mohammed highlighted that Africa is the third-largest trading partner of Pakistan, underscoring the strong foundation for expanding economic relations. He pointed out existing and potential collaboration between Pakistan and African countries, particularly in education, defence cooperation, military training, equipment supply, and oil exploration. Identifying priority sectors for bilateral cooperation, the Charge d' Affaires mentioned agriculture and agro-processing, pharmaceuticals and healthcare products, textiles and value-added garments, rice, wheat and food crops, engineering goods, and construction materials as key areas where both countries can benefit through joint ventures and trade partnerships. Appreciating the proactive role of ICCI, he lauded the Chamber's efforts in promoting trade and investment linkages



with overseas entrepreneurs through engagement with relevant chambers. He also consistently the ICCI leadership to plan a visit to Abuja to further strengthen institutional and business-to-business cooperation. In his welcome address, President ICCI Sardar Tahir Mehmood stated that Pakistan and Nigeria enjoy long-standing friendly and cordial relations, based on mutual respect, shared aspirations, and cooperation at bilateral and multilateral platforms. He said both countries are leading economies in their respective regions and possess immense potential to deepen collaboration, particularly in the fields of trade, investment, and economic cooperation. He

further said that the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has consistently played a pivotal role in promoting economic diplomacy and strengthening international trade linkages, and remains fully committed to facilitating closer engagement between the business communities of Pakistan and Nigeria. Senior Vice President ICCI Tahir Ayub expressed the hope that stronger collaboration between ICCI and Nigerian trade and investment institutions would help unlock new avenues of cooperation and contribute to sustainable economic growth for both countries. Former President ICCI and Chairman Diplomatic Affairs Committee

Zafar Bakhtawar termed the interaction an excellent opportunity for enhancing trade volumes, improving connectivity, addressing market access issues, and encouraging two-way investments. He also suggested the formation of a joint think tank to explore new areas of cooperation and long-term partnership between Pakistan and Nigeria. Among others present on the occasion were Garba Awaralu, Third Secretary (Economic, Trade and Investment) Nigerian High Commission, Executive Members Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Wassam Chaudhry, Imran Minhas, Zafar Minhas, and former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry.—DNA

Noose tightened on lane violators, professional beggars

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, in coordination with the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP), have decided to further intensify action against motorcyclists involved in lane violations and professional beggars operating across the federal capital, as part of efforts to restore an orderly traffic system and curb nuisance on roads. An official told APP on Tuesday that, on the directions of SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza, instructions have been issued to all zonal SPs, SDPOs and SDOs to ensure strict, across-the-board enforcement against lane violations, wrong-way driving and riding motor cycles without helmets. He said the Islamabad Traffic Police would play a key role in the campaign to improve traffic discipline and road safety. The official said lane violations by motorcyclists pose serious risks to other road users and disrupt traffic flow, adding that coordinated operations by ICT Police and ITP would continue without discrimination to deter violators.—APP

PIA retired employees appreciate govt

ISLAMABAD, Dec 30 (APP): The Pakistan International Airlines Retired Employees Association (PIAREA) thanked government for continuation of allowances and all other benefits following the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). The association conveyed its views during its 16th annual gathering held under the chairmanship of Syed Tahir Hassan. A large number of retired PIA employees attended the meeting, according to a press release issued on Tuesday. PIAREA office-bearers said the government has assured the continuation of pension, medical facilities and concessional travel tickets for retired employees after privatisation. They particularly acknowledged the Prime Minister (PM), Adviser to the PM on Privatisation/Chairman of the Privatisation Commission Muhammad Ali, Chairman PIA Holding Company Limited (PIAHCL) Tariq Bajwa, and others for their support. Welcoming the assurances, the participants termed the decision a significant step towards safeguarding the welfare and well-being of retired PIA employees.—APP

Puppet show highlights child protection, good parenting, mental health

ISLAMABAD: Secours Islamique France (SIF) organized its annual awareness event at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), featuring an engaging puppet show on child protection, safeguarding, good parenting, and mental health. The puppet show creatively blended entertainment with strong social messaging, aiming to sensitize families and children to critical issues related to safety, well-being, and responsible parenting. The event opened with welcome remarks by Dr. Akif Ahsan, Head of Mission, Secours Islamique France (SIF), who highlighted SIF's 31 years of global humanitarian service and its presence in Pakistan since 2010. He shared that SIF's on-ground programs, launched 31 years ago in Gaza, currently support over 10,000 orphaned students, ensuring education and socio-economic continuity. He also noted that SIF promotes skills development initiatives to empower vulnerable communities. Addressing Pakistan's child-related challenges, he stated that while the country faces numerous issues, education remains the most critical. He pointed to alarming realities, including approximately 1,000 deaths annually among children under five due to preventable causes, along with persistent problems of child labor, child marriages, violence against children, and child protection violations. He further noted that 26 million children are out of school, while malnutrition is increasing, leading SIF to launch a school meal programme. A panel discussion, moderated by Habib Ahmad Laghari, brought together experts from law enforcement, international organizations, and civil society. Nazma Raza, Deputy Director, National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), said that cases involving children are handled on a priority basis with strict confidentiality and sensitivity. She emphasized that child protection is first and foremost the responsibility of the state, after which it becomes shared responsibility of parents, communities, and institutions. She further highlighted that globally, one out of every eight children is sexually abused, underscoring the scale of the issue. She outlined parents' actions toward keeping children safe, including ensuring they are supervised by trusted individuals, from Oxford storyteller, stated that storytelling is one of the most effective tools for child learning and behavioral change, as children learn best through narratives rather than lectures. She also highlighted that nearly 90 percent of child abuse cases remain unreported, making awareness and open communication critical.—DNA

Mega medical camp benefits 1,500 deserving patients

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Akbar Niaz Teaching Hospital (ANTH), in collaboration with the Lions Clubs of Rawalpindi-Islamabad and Bardasht, Pakistan, organized a Mega Medical Camp at the Syeda Hafsa Begum Welfare Complex, Tarnol, Islamabad, aimed at improving access to essential healthcare services and promoting disease prevention among underserved communities. The camp benefited over 1,500 individuals, including a large number of women, elderly citizens, and children. Beneficiaries expressed relief and gratitude at receiving timely medical attention, diagnostic services, and medicines in one location—many noting that such access significantly reduced the financial burden and encouraged early consultation for ongoing health concerns, said a release issued here on Tuesday. Medical consultations were provided across a broad range of specialties, including Pediatrics, Gynecology, Psychiatry, Urology, Cardiology, Pulmonology,

Gastroenterology, Kidney Care, Dermatology, Physical Therapy, as well as Dental and Eye care services. Diagnostic and screening facilities such as ECG, bone density testing, BMI assessment, blood sugar testing, and blood pressure monitoring were also made available. Medicines were provided to patients by ANTH and Bardasht Pakistan, ensuring comprehensive care for all beneficiaries. Dr. Arif Masood, Lions Clubs District Governor 305 N2, Pakistan, attended the camp as Chief Guest and appreciated the initiative, highlighting the importance of community-based healthcare programs in strengthening preventive care and facilitating early diagnosis, particularly for populations with limited access to medical facilities. Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Patron-in-Chief of Bardasht Pakistan and former Senator and Federal Minister, thanked Akbar Niaz Teaching Hospital and Lions Clubs, and observed that collaborative efforts of this nature

play a vital role in bridging gaps in healthcare access and raising public awareness about health and wellness. Mr. Yasir Khan Niaz, Group CEO, GAK Healthcare International, and ANTH, reaffirmed the organization's commitment to community welfare, emphasizing the need to extend quality healthcare services beyond hospital settings through sustained outreach and preventive health initiatives. The dignitaries alongside the President of Bardasht Pakistan, Dr. Zubair Hassan, lauded the camp, interwoven with healthcare professionals and patients, and reviewed the services being delivered. Organizers stated that the primary objective of the initiative is to provide not only to provide essential medical support but also to promote healthy lifestyles and preventive healthcare practices. The initiative was widely appreciated by local residents, who described it as timely, reassuring, and impactful.—APP

YPF President, Turkish MP discuss youth, digital policy, parliamentary links

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Young Parliamentarians Forum (YFP), Syeda Nooshen Iltibar, held a virtual meeting with Turkish Member of Parliament Zeynep Yildiz to discuss ways to expand cooperation between Pakistan and Turkey. The talks focused on youth leadership, digital policy, education, and parliamentary exchanges, with both sides agreeing to continue engagement through joint programs and future visits. According to a press release issued by the National Assembly Secretariat, Syeda Nooshen Iltibar, MNA, met Ms. Zeynep Yildiz, a Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Ms. Yildiz also holds the TURKPA Group of Women Parliamentarians, serves as spokesperson of the Digital Media Commission, and is a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The meeting reviewed options to strengthen Pakistan-Turkey relations through youth lawmakers and closer parliamentary coordination. Both leaders

noted the longstanding ties between the two countries and agreed that youth participation can support policy dialogue and legislative cooperation. Welcoming the Turkish MP, Syeda Nooshen Iltibar, spoke about the role of young parliamentarians in public decision-making. She said that cooperation among young legislators can support new ideas, public participation, and stronger institutions. She also appreciated Ms. Yildiz's work with youth and her involvement in parliamentary affairs. During the discussion, the YFP President thanked the Government of Turkey for offering 250 fully funded scholarships to Pakistani students. She said the scholarships can help build long-term links between the people of both countries. Keeping in view Ms. Yildiz's background in law from Bilkent University, both sides discussed academic and training opportunities in areas linked to digital law, artificial intelligence policy, ethics, and public policy related to new technologies. Syeda Nooshen Iltibar

outlined YFP's work to support young members of parliament and to include youth voices in governance. She proposed structured youth exchanges, including joint training sessions, mentorship programs, and forums to share experiences on youth participation in politics. She referred to Ms. Yildiz's political journey as an example of youth involvement in public life. The meeting also covered digital governance. The YFP President suggested joint activities such as workshops on artificial intelligence policy, programs on digital media awareness, and short study visits focused on digital governance. She said young people with digital skills can play a role in legislative work and public engagement. Women's participation in the economy was another topic. Both sides discussed support for women-led businesses in Pakistan by using the Turkish experience in design and digital marketing. The discussion included traditional crafts such as embroidery.—APP

WAPDA achieves several key targets

ISLAMABAD: The outgoing 2025 proved to be a satisfactory year for Hydropower and Water Sectors in Pakistan. WAPDA contributed consistently high quantities of clean, green and low-cost hydel electricity to the National Grid, and could also achieve several key targets on its under-construction mega Projects despite diverse and serious challenges. In the year 2025, WAPDA's 22 hydel power stations cumulatively generated 23,12 billion units — about 30 percent of the total generation in the system. WAPDA's hydel electricity with a tariff of just Rs 3.83 per unit kept on subsidising the country's entire power sector this year too, thus significantly contributing toward economic stability and social development in Pakistan. If compared with the basket tariff, WAPDA's hydel electricity stands out to be the most affordable energy in Pakistan. Besides, it is the most sustain-

able source of energy with zero carbon emission during its generation in the perspective of climatic phenomena across the globe. As per the details of WAPDA's hydel generation in 2025, Tarbela Hydel Power Station contributed 14.3 billion units, while Tarbela 4th Extension 5.5 billion units, Ghazi Barotha Hydel Power Station 6.5 billion units, Mangla Hydel Power Station 3.6 billion units, Warsak Hydel Power Station 0.77 billion units and Chashma Hydel Power Station 0.79 billion units. Balance 1.56 billion units were generated by 3 High-Head Hydel Power Stations, Jinnah Hydel Power Station and other Small Hydel Power Stations. During the year 2025, construction work kept progressing at a satisfactory pace on WAPDA's eight under-construction Projects, including Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Datta, Tarbela 5th Extension and Greater

Karachi Bulk Water Supply Scheme, known as KIV. During the year, Mohmand Dam Project achieved a major milestone, as filling of Main Dam started in August. Likewise, Diamer Basha Dam and Datta Hydropower Project are set for placing/pouring roller-compacted-concrete (RCC) on main dams during 2026, as pre-requisites for completion. 560 million gallons per day (MGD) will also be made available for municipal use — 240 MGD for Karachi through KIV Phase-I and 300 MGD for Peshawar through Mohmand Dam.—APP

India's new normal collapses as Pak reinforces deterrence

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's strategic resolve and calibrated response have decisively reset the regional balance, senior security analysts, diplomats and scholars observed on Tuesday as the Information Security Academy (ISA), in collaboration with the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), hosted a high-level dialogue on (Indian Aggression and Pakistan's Strategic Response) in Islamabad. Youth Asia was passing through a defining moment marked not by routine tension but by the failure of India's coercive strategy to impose a so-called "new normal" on Pakistan. The event commenced with the national anthem, followed by a keynote address by former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General (R) Zubair Mehmood Hayat, who attended as the Guest of Honour. He said South Asia was passing through a decisive phase marked by the collapse of India's attempt to impose a so-called "new normal" on Pakistan. He said India's strategy of coercive and unilateral strategic, political, military and diplomatic moves, exposing serious flaws in its military strategy. Pakistan's measured yet resolute response, he noted, had redrafted the military equation, imposed tangible costs and punctured myths surrounding escalation dominance, dealing a significant blow to India's credibility. He added that India had misread Pakistan's strategic culture by mistaking restraint and unity for weakness and unity for division, while nationalism and media hype could not substitute for sound strategy. Outlining the way forward, General Hayat said the onus now lay on India to accept the new strategic reality by abandoning coercive fantasies and returning to diplomacy, realism and restraint, though he saw little evidence of such a shift. He stressed that Pakistan must continue to act as a net stabilizer by maintaining credible deterrence, strengthening economic resilience and institutional cohesion, and preparing for hybrid and narrative threats. Emphasizing that preparedness was not provocation, he said peace without deterrence was an illusion and stability without readiness amounted to surrender, adding that Pakistan must remain vigilant, prepared and resolute until wisdom prevailed across the border. Ambassador Juhar Saleem, President of the Institute of Regional Studies, said South Asia was entering a more volatile phase in which prudence must guide policy as much as boldness, warning that the margin for error in regional crises was rapidly shrinking. He said the May 2025 conflict reaffirmed that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remained the region's central tinderbox and that failure to address its political, humanitarian and legal dimensions would leave South Asia vulnerable to recurring crises.—APP

Briefs

RCCI hosts
interaction
session
with UK
Conservative
Party leader

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) hosted a business interaction session with Maria Aftab, a UK Conservative Party leader, entrepreneur and former Sutton Central by-election candidate, aimed at promoting bilateral trade and investment ties between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The session, held on Monday, focused on enhancing UK-Pakistan business collaboration, exploring investment opportunities and promoting franchise development, with participants highlighting the potential for new trade avenues and strategic partnerships. In his welcome address, RCCI President Usman Shaukat lauded Maria Aftab's efforts to promote entrepreneurship and the branding and marketing of Pakistani products in the UK. He assured the chamber's full support for attracting foreign investment and facilitating joint ventures with Pakistani companies. A memorandum of understanding was also signed on the occasion to promote Pakistani businesses in overseas markets.—APP

Abbasi
announces
Rs100,000
reward for
Railway
Police
Constable

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has announced a cash reward of Rs100,000 for Railway Police Constable Rao Sharif in recognition of his exemplary honesty and sense of duty. The minister said that the reward amount would be paid from his personal funds as a gesture of appreciation for the constable's integrity, said a news release. Praising Rao Sharif's conduct, Hanif Abbasi said that officers like him represent the true and positive image of Pakistan Railways. He emphasized that honesty and devotion to duty are the real strength of state institutions, adding that such actions help build and reinforce public trust in government departments. Constable Rao Sharif earned widespread appreciation after he returned a bag containing Rs3.8 million that he found on a train. Demonstrating exceptional responsibility, he traced the rightful owner and handed over the cash to Karachi-based trader Mohsin at Rohri Railway Station. The minister lauded the constable's act as a shining example for others to follow and expressed hope that such instances would inspire greater professionalism and integrity across public service institutions.—APP

ITP sets up 8
checkpoints
to curb bikers'
lane violations

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) have established eight checkpoints across the federal capital to prevent lane violations by motorcyclists and ensure safer traffic flow. An ITP spokesperson told APP on Tuesday that lane violations by bikers pose serious risks to other road users and often lead to fatal accidents. He said the checkpoints have been set up at key locations to strictly monitor lane discipline and discourage wrong-way driving. The spokesperson added that violations not only endanger lives but also disrupt smooth traffic movement, therefore a crackdown against lane violations and wrong-way driving is under way. He urged motorcyclists to follow lane discipline and traffic rules to avoid legal action and contribute to road safety. The Islamabad Traffic Police remain committed to maintaining smooth traffic flow and providing maximum facilitation to citizens on the roads. For updates and guidance, citizens may contact the Traffic Helpline 1915 or Puar15.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Saeed Al Maliki hosted reception for the visiting Saudi minister as his residence. DNA

Ahsan calls for greater national
unity, interfaith harmony

He emphasized that interfaith dialogue was essential for peaceful coexistence and social stability, and that religious tolerance and dialogue played a critical role in eliminating extremism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday said that Saibaane-Pakistan represents a national narrative aimed at promoting interfaith harmony, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, stressing that without peace and harmony, sustainable development is not possible. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of Saibaane-Pakistan, a national narrative for interfaith harmony and social cohesion, the minister said the initiative would strengthen the national narrative against extremism and intolerance, similar to Paigham-e-Pakistan which was launched in 2018 to counter extremist ideologies and promote unity across society.

The event was jointly organized by Paigham-e-Pakistan Centre for Peace, Reconciliation and Reconstruction Studies, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Peace and Development Unit, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiative, and Council of Islamic Ideology. He said Pakistan's Constitution guarantees religious freedom to all citizens and ensures equal rights irrespective of faith, adding that minorities in Pakistan have representation in all walks of life. He recalled that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had clearly guaranteed religious

freedom and equal citizenship for all Pakistanis. He emphasized that interfaith dialogue was essential for peaceful coexistence and social stability, and that religious tolerance and dialogue played a critical role in eliminating extremism. He said harmony among followers of different faiths was vital for Pakistan's progress, adding that the Charter of Medina remained the earliest model of citizenship, religious freedom, rule of law and mutual respect. "We want a Pakistan based on brotherhood and unity, not hatred," he said. Sharing a personal reflection, Ahsan Iqbal recalled the assassination attempt on him in 2018, saying that while the bullet struck his body, the message reached his heart,

reinforcing his resolve to work against extremism. He stressed the need to disarm minds from the weapons of hatred and prejudice. Calling for a collective national effort, Ahsan Iqbal appealed to religious scholars not to let differences turn into hatred, to political leaders to disagree without spreading enmity, to media to amplify voices of peace rather than extremism, to teachers to instill tolerance in children, and to civil society to continue healing social divisions. "I urge everyone to revive Quaid-e-Azam's Pakistan — a state where religion provides moral guidance, not denial of civil rights and where all citizens are equal," he remarked.

Glowing tributes paid to
Prof Shawl

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a webinar here on Tuesday paid glowing tributes to the late Kashmiri Intellectual, Professor Nazir Ahmed Shawl, remembering him as a towering intellectual and an unwavering advocate of the Kashmir cause whose lifelong struggle, scholarship and diplomacy left a profound imprint at national and international levels. The late leader had breathed his last on the intervening night of December 29 and 30, 2023 in London, said a news release. The webinar, organised by the United Kashmir Journalists Association (UKJA) to pay tribute to the late leader on his second death anniversary, was moderated by senior journalist Dr. M. Ashraf Wani. The speakers, while recalling Prof Shawl's multifaceted contributions, said he exemplified the rare combination of intellect and action and remained steadfast to his principles till his last breath. They noted that he dedicated his entire political and intellectual struggle to becoming the voice of the oppressed Kashmiri people and to awakening global public opinion about the true nature of the Kashmir dispute and its just resolution. Senior APJIC leader, Muhammad Farooq Rehmani said Prof Shawl fought on multiple fronts and served the cause with extraordinary courage and consistency. He observed that even during periods of ill health, Prof Shawl never allowed personal hardship to distract him from his mission. Rehmani said the prevailing challenging times called for a renewed reflection on Prof Shawl's mission, urging the younger generation to draw inspiration from his legacy of perseverance, clarity of purpose and unwavering commitment. Executive Director, International Council for Human Rights Kashmir Centre (ICHRK) A Majid Trambho said Prof Shawl was an exceptional personality whose commitment to the cause remained unshaken till the very end. He said Prof Shawl continued engaging with politicians, diplomats, scholars, friends and family even in his final days, consistently conveying a clear message of the right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir.—DNA

NDMA warns residents
as cold snap, snow hit

ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)'s Expert Dr. Tayyab Shah on Tuesday advised residents and motorists to remain alert as a weather advisory continues from December 30 to January 2, warning of cold weather and intensified rain and snowfall ahead of the New Year. Talking to a local news channel, he said the NDMA has issued a weather advisory for the next two to three days, with a westerly system entering tonight, bringing rain to most areas and snowfall to mountains, expected to intensify on December 30. He added that under the influence of this system, rain is expected to continue in the upper and central regions on December 31, with its effects possibly lasting until the morning of January 2. He said that the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast cold and cloudy conditions in Islamabad, along with rain, fog, and snowfall in various parts of the country. Responding to a query, he expressed serious concern over the impacts of climate change, highlighting rapid glacier re-

gression, loss of natural ice buffering and increasing threats to water security. He warned that these changes could have far-reaching consequences for agriculture, livelihoods, and disaster preparedness in the country. He added that the government is actively participating in global climate initiatives and has undertaken several key measures to address these challenges. These include promoting electric vehicles to reduce carbon emissions, implementing smart climate-resilient agricultural practices to protect crops, expanding renewable energy projects, improving water management systems, and strengthening early warning mechanisms for climate-related disasters, he mentioned. Together, these steps aim to build resilience and safeguard communities against the long-term effects of climate change, he added. He further said that compared to 2025, snowfall is expected to increase in 2026, but this will mostly be light, powdery snow and not significant enough to replenish glaciers or ice reserves.—APP

Wani raises alarm over land
seizures, rights abuses in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: Kashmir Relations (KIIR) Chairman, Ataf Hussain Wani has expressed his deep concern over ongoing land acquisition, environmental destruction, and human rights violations in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In a joint letter, addressed to UN special rapporteurs, the KIIR chief said that the imminent threat faced by the people of Jammu and Kashmir to their environment, livelihoods, and cultural heritage highlights that ongoing land acquisitions carried out under the guise of so-called development

projects reflect a profound disregard and lack of sensitivity on the part of the Government of India toward the social, ecological, and cultural realities of the region. "It also reflects Indian government's failure to uphold the internationally recognized commitment that had made under the UN-CIP resolutions," he said. "Following the abrogation of Article 370, the Government of India introduced new legislation and amended the Land Grants Rules that dismantled longstanding land protections, opened land transfers to non-residents, and vested sweeping powers over so-

called "strategic" land in central agencies and armed forces", the communiqué said, adding that between 2019 and 2022, more than 2,359 hectares of state land were reportedly acquired by the government, raising serious concerns about demographic engineering and the marginalization of indigenous communities. Highlighting the devastating impacts of the proposed railway project in Pulwama and Shopian, Ataf Hussain Wani noted that the project is expected to destroy approximately 700,000 fruit-bearing trees, consume over 600 acres of fertile agricultural land, and di-

rectly affect the livelihoods of more than 100 families. He said that experts have already warned of severe ecological consequences, including deforestation, soil degradation, disruption of irrigation systems, and long-term damage to the region's fragile environmental balance. Despite official claims of economic and tourism benefits, he said, "Local communities view these 'infrastructure projects' including the Z-Mohr tunnel inaugurated in January 2025 as serving military and strategic objectives rather than genuine civilian development".—DNA

Wali responds
Afridi's
challenge

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Affairs, Ihtisar Wali Khan, on Tuesday accepted the challenge from CM Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sahai Afridi for the Punjab CM to hold a public gathering in the province and called on CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz to visit KPK, noting that previous gatherings in the region had drawn historic crowds and suggesting that another event could attract massive public participation. Speaking with a local media channel, Wali Khan said that they accepted the challenge from CM KPK Sahai Afridi for political gatherings, adding, they are ready and not afraid, showing that people are watching how the current leadership is performing.

Further, he reminded everyone that Maryam Nawaz and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif have a long history of holding large and successful gatherings in Peshawar. Wali Khan also invited the CM of Punjab to come and show their political strength, while criticizing the KPK leadership for poor governance and disrespectful language. He further criticized Sahai Afridi's recent visit to Lahore, saying that his use of uncivilized language and disrespectful behavior was unacceptable. Responding to a query, Wali Khan also condemned Sahai Afridi's visit to Lahore, describing it as a threat to democratic norms and proper political conduct.

He said such actions highlight the weakness of the KPK leadership and their inability to govern responsibly, while their words and behavior continue to disrespect both the public and political opponents. Talking about the negotiations, Wali Khan said that the government has offered talks many times, but PTI is not serious about meaningful dialogue. He said that after this Lahore visit, the PTI leadership has further lost the opportunity to prove themselves and should apologize for showing disrespect to the armed forces, there can be no compromise when it comes to national institutions.—APP

Islamabad roads under
strict monitoring

ISLAMABAD: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Hamza Humayun, in a strict move to curb accidents, on Tuesday announced that the ITP has launched an aggressive crackdown on motorcycles and heavy vehicles violating "lane discipline", enforcing dedicated lanes, green-marked awareness zones and continuous technology-based monitoring to ensure responsible riding is strictly followed. Speaking to a local media channel, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Hamza Humayun stated that the majority of accidents on Islamabad's express and arterial highways are caused by reckless motorbikes and even heavy vehicles violating lane discipline. He emphasized that such behavior is extremely dangerous and a leading cause of road accidents, putting both riders and other road users at serious risk. Responding to a query, he added that major lane violations by bikers have been observed on expressways from Khanapal to Faisalabad and along Club Road, highlighting these as high-risk zones for accidents. Captain Humayun warned that such reckless riding will no longer be tolerated and that the ITP is strictly enforcing traffic rules on these stretches. Under the ongoing crackdown, he said about 1,360 motorcycles were checked, out of which 292 were found violating rules and 189 impounded. The operation covers 22 areas of Islamabad, with six dedicated checkpoints and awareness boards installed across main roads to educate riders about lane discipline and safe riding practices. The CTO stressed that all violators of dedicated lanes and green-marked routes will face immediate penalties, including fines and impoundment.—DNA

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Afghanistan under Taliban: isolation, suppression, and uncertain future

THE future of Afghanistan under Taliban rule presents a complex picture of internal challenges, strained international relations, and cautious regional engagement. Since their return to power in August 2021, the Taliban have sought to project a new image of a more pragmatic and diplomatic entity. Yet, beneath the façade of political engagement, their governance remains marked by repression, human rights violations, and decisions that further isolate the war-torn nation from the modern world.

In a move that has shocked both Afghans and the international community, the Taliban recently imposed a nationwide ban on internet services, plunging the country into an unprecedented communication blackout. The ban, which they justified on the grounds of curbing "immoral" content and foreign influence, has cut off millions of Afghans from access to information, business opportunities, education, and even contact with family members abroad. In modern times, such tactics are not only impractical but also counterproductive. The internet is a lifeline for global connectivity, trade, education, and governance. By shutting it down, the Taliban risk further alienating themselves from the rest of the world while exacerbating the daily hardships of ordinary Afghans. Businesses reliant on digital transactions have collapsed overnight, universities cannot function, and humanitarian agencies face severe difficulties in coordinating relief efforts. This blackout represents more than just a technical barrier; it symbolizes the Taliban's desire to control thought, expression, and communication in an age where connectivity defines progress. Experts warn that such a regressive policy will deepen Afghanistan's isolation, push its youth further into despair, and undermine any prospects for long-term economic recovery.

The Taliban's rule continues to be defined by harsh restrictions, particularly on women and girls. Despite initial promises of moderation, they have systematically rolled back freedoms. Girls are banned from schooling beyond the sixth grade, women are excluded from most forms of employment, and their movement is tightly controlled. These restrictions, which human rights groups describe as "gender apartheid," have robbed half the population of basic dignity and curtailed the nation's potential for economic growth. Reports of arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances of activists, journalists, and political opponents are widespread. The justice system has been replaced with a strict interpretation of Sharia, often enforced through public floggings, amputations, and executions. Such punishments, condemned globally, reflect the Taliban's rigid ideology and unwillingness to align with international norms.

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When Faith Is Hijacked

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Psychologists studying suicide terrorism agree that most attackers are not mentally ill in the clinical sense. Rather, they are psychologically conditioned through isolation, repetitive indoctrination, and emotional exploitation. Recruiters exploit personal loss, perceived injustice, and identity crises, gradually constructing a worldview in which violence is sanctified and death is glorified. The individual's sense of self is replaced by absolute obedience to an imposed ideology, making moral reasoning appear sinful and doubt a betrayal. The responsibility of the state in countering this threat is therefore comprehensive

LIFE is a sacred trust bestowed upon man only once, and in Islamic belief it is neither accidental nor ownerless. It is granted by Allah Almighty with a purpose and a moral framework. When this life is lived in obedience to Allah and in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), it brings dignity, balance, and inner peace in this world and eternal success in the hereafter. The Qur'an leaves no ambiguity regarding the sanctity of life. Allah commands, "Do not kill yourselves; surely Allah is Most Merciful to you" (Surah An-Nisa, 4:29). This divine injunction alone is sufficient to declare suicide, in all its forms, unlawful in Islam. The gravity of taking an innocent life is further emphasised in Surah Al-Ma'idah, where Allah declares that killing one person unjustly is akin to killing all of humanity, while saving one life is equivalent to saving all mankind (5:32). In this moral universe, suicide attacks stand as a double crime: self-destruction coupled with the killing of innocents. The Hadith literature reinforces this prohibition with unmistakable clarity. In Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) warned that a person who kills himself will face severe punishment in the hereafter, repeating the act eternally as a consequence of defying divine decree. Such narrations leave no theological space for those who attempt to glorify suicide under the guise of martyrdom. Islam draws a sharp and principled distinction between martyrdom and suicide. Martyrdom occurs when a believer is killed while lawfully defending faith, land, or people, without the intention of ending his own life. Suicide attacks, by contrast, are deliberate acts of self-annihilation designed to spread fear and chaos, often targeting civilians. The Prophet (peace be upon him) strictly prohibited the killing of women, children, and

non-combatants even during war, as recorded in Sahih Bukhari. There exists no example in Islamic history where suicide bombings were sanctioned or practised.

Yet, despite this clarity, suicide terrorism has emerged in the modern era as a weapon of asymmetric warfare. In Pakistan, such acts are neither organic expressions of faith nor spontaneous acts of devotion. They are the result of systematic indoctrination orchestrated by anti-state networks, extremist organisations, and hostile foreign elements seeking to destabilise the country. Vulnerable individuals are identified, isolated, and gradually stripped of moral autonomy through distorted religious narratives.

A disturbing reminder of this reality emerged recently, when authorities reportedly intercepted a young woman from Balochistan who was being prepared for a suicide attack. Initial investigations suggest that she had been subjected to intense ideological conditioning and emotional manipulation. Her case reflects a broader pattern in which female—often portrayed as symbols of innocence—are exploited precisely because of their vulnerability, trauma, and marginalisation. She was not an architect of violence but a victim of a calculated process designed to convert despair into destruction. Psychologists studying suicide terrorism agree that most attackers are not mentally ill in the clinical sense. Rather, they are psychologically conditioned through isolation, repetitive indoctrination, and emotional exploitation. Recruiters exploit personal loss, perceived injustice, and identity crises, gradually constructing a worldview in which violence is sanctified and death is glorified. The individual's sense of self is replaced by absolute obedience to an imposed ideology, making moral reasoning appear sinful and doubt a betrayal.

The responsibility of the state in countering this threat is therefore comprehensive. While intelligence-led operations are essential to

dismantle terrorist networks, force alone cannot defeat an ideology. The state must reclaim religious discourse through credible scholars who can explain, with reference to the Qur'an and Sunnah, that suicide attacks have no legitimacy in Islam. Mosques, educational institutions, and media platforms must consistently counter extremist distortions with authentic religious guidance.

Equally important is addressing the socio-economic environment that extremists exploit. Poverty, lack of education, injustice, and prolonged instability create fertile ground for radical narratives. Long-term peace requires investment in education, equitable development, and responsive governance. De-radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes, combining psychological counselling with religious re-education, must be expanded to rescue those who have been misled before they cross irreversible thresholds.

Special attention must also be paid to the families of terrorists who are killed or arrested during counter-terrorism operations. These families are often ideologically prepared in advance, taught to glorify violence and nurture resentment. If ignored, they risk becoming reservoirs of future radicalisation. Compassionate but vigilant state engagement—through counselling, economic support, and corrective religious instruction—is essential to break this cycle.

In conclusion, suicide attacks are neither acts of faith nor expressions of courage. They are crimes born of deception, despair, and manipulation. Islam is a religion that values and protects life, while completely rejecting all principles and beliefs that contradict this ideology. Pakistan's response must therefore remain balanced and resolute—firm in security, clear in ideology, compassionate in rehabilitation, and just in governance—so that life remains what Allah intended it to be; a sacred trust, not a weapon.

The bitter lessons of Bondi Beach attack

Yossi Mekelberg

Protesting the killing of more than 70,000 Palestinians in Gaza, the widespread devastation and the unbearable and inexcusable humanitarian disaster for millions of people there is not only legitimate, but a very necessary show of the strength of civil societies across the globe. However, there has also been a dog-whistle incitement against

Jews that goes beyond constructive criticism and calls to stop the war and ensure accountability. At times deliberately, in other cases out of ignorance — including by keynote speakers at mass rallies...

THE very thought that anyone, in the name of whatever distorted ideology or religion they claim to follow, should believe that shooting innocent and defenseless people who are complete strangers to them is the right thing to do is shocking and terrifying. I do not know if it is possible to eradicate this phenomenon from our societies completely, but I firmly believe that we have not done enough to achieve this goal. It is not enough, although it is inevitable, to be shocked in the face of this month's mass shooting at Bondi Beach, where two gunmen, father and son in this case, targeted hundreds of people who were attending the first evening of the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah. It is what we learn from these killings that must make us determined to prevent the next atrocity, and the one after.

There are two aspects of this horrific incident that require immediate, urgent, determined and conviction-driven action. The first is the need for all of us, whether in the private or public eye, to become cognizant of the implications of what we say, how we say it and to whom we are saying it. The second issue that we cannot continue to be forgiving about is the unbearable case with which people can acquire lethal weapons. How was Sajid Akram, who allegedly carried out the Bondi Beach attack along with his son Naveed, legally allowed to own six rifles and shotguns?

In recent times, the deterioration in the public discourse, which has also entered the private domain, has created a permissive environment for violence, both verbal and physical, including in the political sphere but not restricted to it. The too-easy, get-out-of-jail card is to blame social media, using it to distance the people behind it, proprietors and users, from the platforms themselves. All evidence confirms that the proliferation of arms among civilians results in many more deaths than lives saved. Social media is an enabler that increasingly reveals and releases the worst of too many of us. Over the last two years, since the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023, and the war that followed in Gaza, antisemitism and Islamopho-

bias have reached unprecedented levels, in the streets as well as through the computer and mobile screens of the keyboard. One also cannot ignore that the other side of the coin is that, because of the expression of hate speech and the physical attacks that target people or institutions of specific minorities, there is also a cynical attempt to silence entirely legitimate debate and thereby investigate. A mistaken belief that the torch of the pain and anger caused by Oct. 7 and what has happened since in Gaza and the West Bank are understandable. As has been repeatedly pointed out, the ills of occupation — and the litany of these ills is long and extremely disturbing — could not justify the atrocities of that day, nor those committed by Israel in response. What is also intolerable is to associate all Palestinians with Hamas, to claim that "there are no innocent people in Gaza," or to blame all Israelis or even Jews abroad for the behavior of the Israeli government and its military.

Protesting the killing of more than 70,000 Palestinians in Gaza, the widespread devastation and the unbearable and inexcusable humanitarian disaster for millions of people there is not only legitimate, but a very necessary show of the strength of civil societies across the globe. However, there has also been a dog-whistle incitement against Jews that goes beyond constructive criticism and calls to stop the war and ensure accountability. At times deliberately, in other cases out of ignorance — including by keynote speakers at mass rallies — the criticism has gone beyond questioning the behavior of Israel in Gaza and as far as questioning the legitimacy of the existence of Israel and of Zionism in all its shades. At times, it has morphed into antisemitic slurs. Some placards and slogans have been clearly antisemitic, including "Jews control America" or one in which the Star of David on an improvised Israeli flag was replaced by a swastika. At the same time, for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to lash out at Australian PM Anthony Albanese following the attack in Sydney and claim that "your

call for a Palestinian state pours fuel on the antisemitic fire" is a complete falsehood that should be rejected outright. It was no more than another cynical attempt by Netanyahu to score cheap points with his base by exploiting this tragedy.

Whenever such a deadly attack takes place, there is little doubt that a security failure has happened and there is an investigation. A mistaken belief that the torch of the pain and anger caused by Oct. 7 and what has happened since in Gaza and the West Bank are understandable. As has been repeatedly pointed out, the ills of occupation — and the litany of these ills is long and extremely disturbing — could not justify the atrocities of that day, nor those committed by Israel in response. What is also intolerable is to associate all Palestinians with Hamas, to claim that "there are no innocent people in Gaza," or to blame all Israelis or even Jews abroad for the behavior of the Israeli government and its military. Protesting the killing of more than 70,000 Palestinians in Gaza, the widespread devastation and the unbearable and inexcusable humanitarian disaster for millions of people there is not only legitimate, but a very necessary show of the strength of civil societies across the globe. However, there has also been a dog-whistle incitement against Jews that goes beyond constructive criticism and calls to stop the war and ensure accountability. At times deliberately, in other cases out of ignorance — including by keynote speakers at mass rallies — the criticism has gone beyond questioning the behavior of Israel in Gaza and as far as questioning the legitimacy of the existence of Israel and of Zionism in all its shades. At times, it has morphed into antisemitic slurs. Some placards and slogans have been clearly antisemitic, including "Jews control America" or one in which the Star of David on an improvised Israeli flag was replaced by a swastika. At the same time, for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to lash out at Australian PM Anthony Albanese following the attack in Sydney and claim that "your

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Yossi Mekelberg is professor of international relations and an associate fellow of the MENA Program at Chatham House.

Briefs

UAE
announces
withdrawal
of forces
from Yemen

FROM PAGE 01

The STC dismissed the Saudi call. The coalition said the Mukalla port strike caused no casualties or collateral damage, according to Saudi state media. Two sources told Reuters that the strike targeted the dock where the cargo of the two ships was unloaded. Footage on Yemen's state TV showed what it said was black smoke rising from the port in the early morning after the strike, with burned vehicles at the port. UAE-backed forces control large swathes of land in the south including the strategically key province of Hadramout. Yemeni presidential council head Alimi imposed a no-fly zone and a sea and ground blockade on all ports and crossings for 72 hours, except for exemptions authorised by the coalition. Hadramout borders Saudi Arabia and has cultural and historical ties with it. Many prominent Saudis trace their origins to the area. Since 2022 the STC has been part of an alliance that controls southern areas outside Houthis control, under a Saudi-backed power-sharing initiative. The Houthis control the northern region, including Sanaa, the capital. "We will continue to prevent any military support from any country to any Yemeni faction without coordination with the legitimate government," the coalition added. Earlier, the head of Yemen's presidential council asked the UAE forces to leave Yemen within 24 hours. Yemen's presidential council head, Rashid Al-Alimi, also cancelled a defence pact with the UAE. The Yemeni state news agency said, and complained of the UAE's support for the STC. "Unfortunately, it has been definitively confirmed that the UAE pressured and directed the STC to undermine and rebel against the authority of the state through military escalation," he added. In a statement, the UAE's foreign ministry said that it was disappointed with Saudi Arabia's statement regarding Yemen and surprised by the airstrike. The ministry said that the shipment, struck in the airstrike, did not contain any weapons. The vehicles that were unloaded were not meant for any Yemeni party but were shipped for use by UAE forces operating in Yemen, it added.

Pakistan
condemns
targeting...

FROM PAGE 01

the residence of President Vladimir Putin, cautioning that such incidents risk undermining ongoing efforts aimed at a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The President said that at a critical moment, when talks to end the war are at a sensitive stage, actions that escalate tensions are extremely counterproductive. He urged both sides to exercise the highest degree of restraint and to direct their actions towards the success of dialogue and diplomacy. President Zardari emphasised that peace remains the only viable path forward and that restraint and responsibility are essential to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

PM Shehbaz
meets UAE
President...

FROM PAGE 01

His Highness's dynamic and visionary leadership, the Prime Minister thanked the UAE President for his patronage and commitment to foster stronger ties between the two countries. He also appreciated the UAE for hosting 2.1 million Pakistanis, who were playing an important role in strengthening ties between both countries. In addition to bilateral co-operation, the two leaders also exchanged views on a variety of subjects. The meeting capped off a year of extensive leadership-level engagements between Pakistan and the UAE.

A Polo, Tent Pegging
Championship concludes

The championship reflects the Pakistan Army's rich traditions of sportsmanship, discipline, and excellence. Eight teams participated in the championship in which Peshawar Corps emerged victorious, while Gujranwala Corps secured the runners-up position

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The 50th Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Polo and Tent Pegging Championship 2025 concluded with the closing ceremony at the Jinnah Polo Fields (JPF), Lahore. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), IJ, COAS & CDF, presided over the closing ceremony as the Chief Guest while Minister of Interior and Chief Secretary Punjab along with large number of spectators were present at the occasion, said a press release issued here by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Upon arrival, he was received by the Corps Commander Lahore and Chairman Pakistan Polo Federation. The championship reflects the Pakistan Army's rich traditions of sportsmanship, discipline, and excellence. Eight teams participated in the championship in which Peshawar Corps emerged victorious, while Gujranwala Corps secured the runners-up position.

During the closing ceremony, the Chief Guest distributed prizes among the winning and participating players.



Bollywood film 'Battle of Galwan' sparks controversy

BEIJING: The Indian film 'Battle of Galwan', which claims to be based on the 2020 clashes between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan region and is scheduled for release in April 2026, had its trailer released by lead actor Salman Khan on December 27, sparking online controversy.

Salman Khan, best known to Chinese audiences as the lead actor in Bajrang Bhaijaan, is often teased by Chinese netizens for playing roles that appear too invincible, with plots too simplistic, and visual effects so exaggerated that make the drama seem unreal.

In the film, Salman Khan plays Colonel Bikkam Singh, a role that Indian media claimed captured Bollywood's attention for his so-called pivotal role in the 2020 Galwan Valley clash.

A Chinese expert said that Bollywood films at most provide an entertainment-dream, a conventionally charged portrayal, but no amount of cinematic exaggeration can rewrite the

history or shake the PLA's determination to defend China's sovereign territory. The film has also drawn other controversies online, with users pointing to issues such as the appearance and costumes of extras, actors' hairstyles that do not match their military roles or the extreme cold implied in the storyline, and, most importantly, a portrayal that does not align with the facts.

Some local media, including India Today, have hyped the film as being based on the events that took place between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan region on June 15, 2020, claiming that about 200 Indian soldiers bravely defended their territory against a force of 1,200 Chinese soldiers.

However, some netizens have pushed back against such narratives. A Weibo user under the handle "Qingning Ryue" commented that the Indian 'over-the-top' film seriously contradicted the facts.

Another Weibo user, "Sika 98", mocked the film and the related media hype, saying, "When history falls short, Bollywood steps in."

Four Chinese officers and soldiers sacrificed their lives, and one was heavily injured during the incident. They have been awarded by the Central Military Commission. A total of 20 Indian soldiers died in the skirmishes.

Song Zhongping, a Chinese military expert, told the Global Times that India's use of films, especially Bollywood productions, to stir nationalist sentiment is unsurprising, reflecting a deeply rooted cultural and political tradition. - Agencies

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Cristiano Ronaldo
reveals bold career
target after Best Middle
Eastern Player win

Ronaldo Targets 1,000 Goals After Best Middle Eastern Player Award, Commits to Playing Past 40, Staying Motivated with Al-Nassr, And Ending Portugal Career At 2026 World Cup Finale, Farewell

DUBAI: Cristiano Ronaldo has set a new and inspiring career target after being named the Best Middle Eastern Player win at Global Soccer Awards. The Portuguese football captain talked to the crowd after receiving his award in Dubai, "It's hard to continue playing, but I am motivated. My passion is high and I want to continue. It doesn't matter when I play, whether in the Middle East or Europe." "I always enjoy football and want to keep going. My goal is to reach 1,000 goals, and I will, if I stay injury-free," the 40-year-old soccer player vowed. Ronaldo scored two goals in Al-Nassr's 3-0 victory against Al-Ahli on Saturday, bringing his total career goals to 856. Alone in 2025, he made goals around 40. The soccer player joined Al-Nassr in 2022 and he signed a new contract, aiming to stay with Al-Nassr until he is at least 42-years-old. Prior to that, the former Real Madrid legend told Pierre Moscovici about his plans to retire soon, considering it an emotional farewell.

For Portugal, Ronaldo is the highest-ever scorer with 143 goals. He also holds records for Real Madrid's top scorer with 450 goals and top player to score 100-plus goals for four clubs, including Real Madrid, Manchester United, Juventus, and Al-Nassr. He has also announced that the 2026 World Cup hosted by the US, Canada, and Mexico will be the last time he plays for his national team. Moreover, Ronaldo also helped Portugal win its first major men's international trophy at Euro 2016. During the event, the Portugal football star also presented Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic with the newly-launched Globe Sports Award at Dubai's Atlantis, The Royal. - Agencies

PIA to
resume
London
flights...

FROM PAGE 01

approval for four weekly flight slots at London's Heathrow Airport. These slots had previously been allocated to Turkish Airlines to keep them active while the PIA's UK operations remained suspended. They said the arrangement was made to ensure the slots were not forfeited during the suspension period imposed on the airline. With restrictions now easing, the airline has formally informed Heathrow Airport in writing of its decision to restart London flights from March 2026. The resumption of London flights is also to be taken against the backdrop of PIA's successful privatisation, where its 75% stake has been sold to a consortium headed by the Arif Habib Corporation. Since then, the consortium, which bought the airline for \$613.5 billion, has said that it plans to expand the fleet to 64 aircraft in phases. Furthermore, the Fauji Fertiliser Company Limited has joined the Arif Habib consortium and will not only contribute to the airline's financial support and corporate expertise but will also be part of the management structure.

Bangladesh
ex-PM
Khaleda Zia
dies aged 80

FROM PAGE 01

behal for three constituencies for the polls. During her final days, interim leader Muhammad Yunus called for the release of Zia, calling her a "source of utmost inspiration for the nation". BNP's media chief Masudul Karim had also confirmed Zia's death to AFP. Zia was jailed for corruption in 2018 under Hasina's government, which also blamed her for spreading abroad for medical treatment. She was released last year, shortly after Hasina was forced from power. There had been plans earlier this month to fly her on a special air ambulance to London, but her condition was not stable enough. Her son, political heavyweight Tarique Rahman, only returned to Bangladesh after 17 years in self-imposed exile on Thursday, where he was welcomed back by huge crowds of joyous supporters. Rahman will lead the party through the February 12 general election, and is expected to be put forward as prime minister if his party wins a majority. President Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday expressed their grief over the death of former Bangladesh Prime Minister and Chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party Khaleda Zia. The president and prime minister, in separate posts on their X timelines, conveyed condolences to the family and the people of Bangladesh, lauding the leadership and services of late Khaleda Zia.

China
grants
Pakistan
exclusive...

FROM PAGE 01

Industry analysts say the corridor could reduce fuel burn and scheduling uncertainty arising from limited or sensitive routings across the subcontinent. Overflight approvals and air traffic management in the region have often been subject to geopolitical considerations, with carriers balancing efficiency against airspace constraints. For regional aviation, the corridor underscores the growing role of China's airspace infrastructure in connecting South and West Asia. It also highlights the interplay of bilateral air services agreements, ICAO principles governing overflight rights, and state-to-state coordination on air traffic flows. Bangladesh aviation stakeholders have signaled interest in reciprocal schedule alignment, including potential co-scheduling arrangements for cooperation, contingent on final timetables and safety assessments. Pakistani carriers are expected to announce inaugural schedules after conducting demonstration flights and completing regulatory compliance.

Veteran Pakistani
diplomat Rafeuddin
Ahmed laid to rest

NEW YORK: Eminent Pakistani diplomat Rafeuddin Ahmed, who passed away on Saturday, was laid to rest on Monday in a graveyard in the adjoining state of New Jersey. Ahmed, who served the United Nations for decades in top positions, breathed his last in a New York Hospital after a protracted illness. He was 92. His Namaz-Janaza was attended by a large number of people, including his friends and UN colleagues as well as family members. The Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, Ambassador Usman Jaleel, represented the Pakistani government at the funeral. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmed, the permanent representative, is currently in Islamabad. In a statement following Rafeuddin Ahmed's death, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmed paid tributes to him, saying he was a "leading figure in international diplomacy". Ahmed served the UN with distinction in prominent positions as an undersecretary-general, Chief of Cabinet to Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia (UN ESCAP) and various key assignments as Special Envoy/ Representative of the Secretary-General. - Agencies

The race to find Formula 1's
first-ever woman champion

NOTTINGHAM: A dozen girls whizzed around an English karting track, part of a pioneering drive to draw women into motorsports and maybe even race to the top in male-dominated Formula 1. A special test day in October in Nottingham aimed to address a major gender gap in F1, one of the flashiest of sports. Italian Lella Lombardi was the last woman to compete in an F1 Grand Prix in 1976, and the absence of women on the circuit is linked to young girls' limited exposure to motorsports, according to gender parity organisations. More Than Equal, a non-profit that supports women drivers, said girls start karting two years later than boys on average. Seventime F1 champion Lewis Hamilton, for example, got into the formula aged just eight. These are the first steps that a girl could take, Cameron Biggs, coaching and academy project manager at Motorsport UK, told AFP. "We're really trying to join the dots between grassroots and elite." The enthusiasm was palpable among the youngsters, who were mostly new to karting. Some attended the taster day, supported by makeup company Charlotte Tilbury, after watching F1 while others were encouraged by their parents. None seemed put off by F1's

breakneck speed, the thrumming engines and the prospect of driving a vehicle years before they are old enough to have a driver's licence. "On the second time, I came first and I'm very proud," beamed 11-year-old Megan. "I watch Formula 1 quite often, and so I kind of know how to get around the track," said Erin, also 11. F1's official website boasts a global fanbase of 827 million people - a 61 per cent increase since 2018. But there is a paradox: F1 is one of the world's few nongender-segregated sports yet one of the most male-dominated. "We know that the pathway for female drivers hasn't successfully got a woman into Formula One competitively in the last 50 years," More Than Equal's head of driver development Lauren Furrow told AFP. That means that girls are "not thriving within" the current system, she said. The organisation has pledged to "make history" by training a woman not just to compete but to win. "We know that this is a real challenge and that it's never been done before," CEO Tom Stanton told AFP. More Than Equal lists limited access to motorsports at an early age, cultural and structural biases, sponsorship gaps and a lack of role models at the top as barriers obstructing women's entry into F1. - DNA

England announce squad for SL tour, T20 WC 2026

The Sri Lanka tour includes three ODIs and three IT20s

LONDON: The England Men's selection panel has named the squads for next month's white-ball tour of Sri Lanka and a provisional squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, hosted jointly by India and Sri Lanka in February and March. The Sri Lanka tour includes three One-Day International (ODIs) and three IT20s. Nottinghamshire seamer Josh Tongue has been selected in the IT20 squad for the first time. Sussex fast bowler Jofra Archer is included in the provisional T20 World Cup squad but will miss the tour of Sri Lanka as he continues his rehabilitation with the England medical team following the left side strain sustained during the third Ashes Test in Adelaide earlier this month. Durham seamer Brydon Carse is included in the squads touring Sri Lanka. Surrey batting all-rounder Will Jacks returns to both squads, having missed the New Zealand white-ball tour in October. Opinion writing workshops: Kent top-order batter Zak Crawley returns to

the ODI squad for the first time since December 2023 and will be looking to add to his eight caps in the format. The tour party departs on 18 Jan - uary 2026.

England Men's ODI Squad - Sri Lanka Tour (15 players)
Harry Brook (York-

shire) (Captain)
Rehan Ahmed (Leicestershire)
Tom Banton (Somerset)
Jacob Bethell (Warwickshire)
Jos Buttler (Lancashire)
Brydon Carse (Durham)
Zak Crawley (Kent)
Sam Curran (Surrey)
Liam Dawson (Hamp-

shire)
Ben Duckett (Nottinghamshire)
Will Jacks (Surrey)
Jamie Overton (Surrey)
Adil Rashid (Yorkshire)
Joe Root (Yorkshire)
Luke Wood (Lancashire)
England T20 Squad for Sri Lanka and T20 World Cup
Harry Brook (Yorkshire) (Cap-

tain)
Rehan Ahmed (Leicestershire)
Jofra Archer (Sussex) ICC Men's T20 World Cup only
Tom Banton (Somerset)
Jacob Bethell (Warwickshire)
Jos Buttler (Lancashire)
Brydon Carse (Durham)
Sri Lanka tour only
Sam Curran (Surrey)
Liam Dawson (Hamp-

shire)
Ben Duckett (Nottinghamshire)
Will Jacks (Surrey)
Jamie Overton (Surrey)
Adil Rashid (Yorkshire)
Phil Salt (Lancashire)
Josh Tongue (Nottinghamshire)
Luke Wood (Lancashire). - APP



Briefs

Syria reveals
new post-
Assad
banknotes

DAMASCUS: Syrian leader Ahmad Al-Sharaa unveiled on Monday new banknotes replacing those showing ousted ruler Bashar Assad and his family, hoping the Syrian pound can regain some of the value lost to over a decade of war.

Improving the standing of the Syrian pound is among the greatest challenges for Syria's new authorities, who will remove two zeros, in a process known as redenomination.

The new bills, which range from 10 to 500 Syrian pounds, will enter circulation on January 1. They show images of roses, wheat, olives, oranges and other agricultural symbols for which Syria is famous.

After unveiling the banknotes, Sharaa said the new currency marks "the end of a previous, unblemished phase and the beginning of a new phase that the Syrian people... aspire to."

"The new currency design is an expression of the new national identity and a move away from the veneration of individuals. Since the start of Syria's civil war in 2011, the pound has plunged from 50 to around 11,000 against the greenback, and Syrians are forced to carry huge wads of banknotes even for basic needs like grocery shopping. The removal of the zeros, which does not impact the currency's value, was done to make transactions easier and restore trust in the Syrian pound. 'If someone wants to buy something simple, they need to carry bags in order to trade, so people go for dollars,' Sharaa said, adding that the currency revamp will boost 'the national currency within the country and strengthen trust.' 'Syria deserves a strong economy and a stable currency,' he added.

—APP

Kais urges
removing
all obstacles
facing small
farmers

TUNIS: President Kais Saied met Monday at the Carthage Palace Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, Ezzeddine Ben Cheikh, CEO of the National Olive Oil Office, Most Ben Omar and CEO of the National Food Office, Nizar Agari. At the outset of the meeting, the head of State reiterated that agriculture is part of Tunisia's national security, stressing that God has endowed the country with abundant resources and blessed it with a record harvest after a prolonged period of drought. He underscored that a sacred national duty requires removing all obstacles, especially those facing small farmers, so that they can fully and fairly obtain their rights, from olive harvesting and pressing to marketing across the country and abroad. He emphasised the need for swift and urgent intervention to alleviate their suffering. According to a statement from the Presidency, the head of State renewed his emphasis on the role of the National Olive Oil Office, noting that the increase in storage capacity between last year and the current year remains below expectations, with only a modest rise that does not meet needs.—APP

China holds
central
rural work
conference

BEIJING: The annual central rural work conference was held from Monday to Tuesday in Beijing, mapping out priorities for the country's rural work in 2026. Prior to the conference, a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee put forward requirements for the conference and work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made instructions. Xi said that the year 2026 marks the beginning of the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), and it is of vital importance to do a good job in the work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers.—APP



JAKARTA: Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, Pakistan ambassador to Indonesia had a productive meeting with Vice Minister of Trade. They exchanged views on deepening bilateral trade & economic co-operation and reaffirmed their commitment to expanding trade volumes & concluding Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Pakistan and Indonesia by 2027-DNA

ECC approves TSGs, pays
tribute to late Dr. Shamshad

The ECC also reviewed and approved a summary of the Defence Division seeking a Technical Supplementary Grant for the procurement of bullet-proof vehicles, noting the operational imperatives and security-related requirements underpinning the proposal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet was held today at the Finance Division under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aunurrahman. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Power, Solar and Renewable Energy, Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Federal Minister for Investment, Commerce and Industries, and

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the concerned ministries, divisions, and regulatory bodies. At the outset, the Committee offered Faizullah the departed soul of former Federal Minister for Finance and former Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar. Paying tribute, the Chair acknowledged her distinguished service to the country, noting that her contributions went well beyond her role as a career minister. He highlighted that key institutional and tax policy reforms implemented

subsequently were conceptualized during her tenure, and observed that her leadership and vision would continue to positively impact economic governance. The Committee extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and colleagues. Subsequently, the ECC subsequently took up the agenda items placed before it, and considered and approved summary submitted by the Cabinet Division regarding the grant of a Technical Supplementary Grant for the award of reward money to the Pakistan Under-19 Men's Cricket Team,

Bangladesh halts
controversial
relocation of
Rohingya refugees

DHAKA: When Bangladesh launched a multi-million-dollar project to relocate Rohingyas to a remote island, it promised a better life. Five years on, the controversial plan has stalled, as authorities find it is unsustainable and refugees flee back to overcrowded mainland camps. The Bhasan Char island emerged naturally from river sediments some 20 years ago. It lies in the Bay of Bengal, over 60 km from Bangladesh's mainland. Never inhabited, the 40 sq. km area was developed to accommodate 100,000 Rohingyas from the cramped camps of the coastal Cox's Bazar district. Relocation to the island started in early December 2020, despite protests from the UN and humanitarian organisations, which warned that it was vulnerable to cyclones and flooding, and that its isolation restricted access to emergency services. Over 1,600 people were then moved to Bhasan Char by the Bangladesh Navy, followed by another 1,800 the same month. During 25 such transfers, more than 28,000 refugees were resettled on the island by October 2024. The relocation project was spearheaded by the government of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted last year. The new administration has since suspended it indefinitely. "The Bangladesh government will not conduct any further relocation of the Rohingyas to Bhasan Char island. The main reason is that the country's present government considers the project not viable," Mizanur Rahman, refugee relief and reputation commissioner in Cox's Bazar, told Arab News on Sunday. The government's decision was prompted by data from UN agencies, which showed that operations on Bhasan Char involved 30 percent higher costs compared with the mainland camps in Cox's Bazar, Rahman said. "On the other hand, the Rohingyas are not voluntarily coming forward for relocation to the island. Many of those previously relocated have fled... Around 29,000 are currently living on the island, while about 10,000 have returned to Cox's Bazar on their own.—APP

Ethiopian, Moroccan
envoys in Islamabad discuss
regional cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan, Dr. Omer H. Oba, paid a courtesy call on Mohammed Karim, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Pakistan, and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in Islamabad. The meeting, held at the Embassy of Morocco, focused on matters of regional importance and strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties. Ambassador presented Ethiopia's land-

mark initiatives for sustainable development, highlighting their positive impact within the Horn of Africa and beyond. Discussions were described as constructive, centering on enhanced collaboration for regional stability and integration. The Ethiopian envoy reiterated a steadfast commitment to working closely with the Dean's office to advance Pan-Africanism and shared continental objectives. The dialogue underscores the ongoing diplomatic engagement among African nations represented in Pakistan, aiming to foster unity and cooperative progress on regional platforms.

China fires missiles on second day
of military drills around Taiwan

DNA

BEIJING: China launched missiles and deployed dozens of fighter aircraft and navy vessels around Taiwan on Tuesday for a second day of live-fire drills aimed at simulating a blockade of the self-ruled island's key ports and assaults on maritime targets. The two-day war games code-named "Justice Mission 2025" have been slammed by Taipei as "highly provocative and reckless." China claims Taiwan as part of its sovereign territory and has refused to rule out military action to seize the island democracy. APP journalists in Pingtan — a Chinese island at the closest point to Taiwan's main island — saw a volley of rockets blast into the air at around 9:00 am (0100 GMT) on Tuesday, leaving trails of white smoke. At least 10 were launched in quick succession, sending a booming sound reverberating across the sky and drawing stares toward the seafloor to snap photos and videos on their phones. China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) said in a statement shortly afterwards that it had "conducted long-range live-fire drills in the waters to the north of the Taiwan Island and achieved desired effects." The show of force follows a bumper round of arms sales to Taipei by the United States — Taiwan's main security backer — and comments from Japan's prime minister that the use of force against Taiwan could warrant a military response from Tokyo. China's top diplomat Wang Yi said Tuesday that Beijing would "forcefully counter"

large-scale US weapons sales to Taiwan, adding that any attempt to obstruct China's unification with the island "will be met with a resolute response." Foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian called the drills a "punitive response to Taiwan independence separatist forces and a necessary action to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity." Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te expressed his "strongest condemnation" and said Beijing was "deliberately undermining regional stability through military intimidation." "This is a blatant provocation against regional security and the international order," he wrote on Facebook, adding that Taipei would not escalate the situation. "Live-fire training" China said on Tuesday morning that it had deployed destroyers, frigates, fighters and bombers "to conduct drills on subjects of identification and verification, warning and expulsion, simulated strikes, assault on maritime targets, as well as anti-air and anti-submarine operations." A statement from the PLA's Eastern Theater Command said the exercises in the waters to the north and south of Taiwan "tested capabilities of sea-air coordination and integrated blockade and control." State broadcaster CCTV reported that a core theme of the exercises was a "blockade" of key Taiwanese ports, including Keelung in the north and Keelung in the south. Chinese authorities published a map of five large zones around Taiwan where the war games would take place. They are due to finish at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday. Taiwan said the zones, some of which are within 12 nautical miles of its coast, had affected international shipping and aviation routes.

Dozens of flights to Taiwan's Kinmen and Matsu islands were canceled, according to the island's Civil Aviation Administration, affecting around 5,000 passengers. While more than 850 scheduled international flights will be "affected" and could face delays, Taiwan's defense ministry said on Tuesday it had detected 130 Chinese military aircraft near the island, as well as 14 Chinese navy ships and eight unspecified government vessels, in the 24 hours ending 6:00 am. Taiwan's coast guard said it deployed 14 ships to monitor the naval activity, "employing a one-on-one shadowing approach to forcefully deter the vessels." Stoic reaction: Many ordinary Taiwanese reacted stoically. "There have been so many drills like this over the years that we are used to it," said fishmonger Chiang Sheng-nan, 24, at a market in the capital Taipei. "If you stand your ground, there's nothing to be afraid of," added fritseller Tseng Chang-chih, 80. "War? Impossible. It's just posturing. If they really attacked Taiwan, they would have to pay a price." China's military last held large-scale drills involving live firing around Taiwan in April — surprise maneuvers condemned by Taipei. Beijing said this month it would take "resolute and forceful measures" to safeguard its territory after Taiwan said the United States had approved a major \$11 billion arms sale. US President Donald Trump said he was not concerned about the drills, appearing to brush aside the possibility of counterparty Xi Jinping ordering an invasion of Taiwan. "I don't believe he's going to be doing it," Trump said.

EPZA
digitalization
inevitable
for better
performance

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Haroon Akhtar Khan, on Tuesday reviewed the challenges faced by the Export Processing Zones Authority (EPZA) to review the challenges faced by the authority and to deliberate on its future course of action, said a release issued.

During the meeting, Mr. Haroon Akhtar Khan emphasized that immediate improvement in the performance of EPZA is essential. He stated that, in line with the vision of Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif, the Export Processing Zones Authority must play a pivotal role in enhancing Pakistan's exports.

The Special Assistant underscored the need to strengthen security arrangements and fire readiness across all export processing zones, forming a critical for investor confidence and operational continuity. He further stressed that performance improvement is not possible without complete digitalization of EPZA.—APP

Syria imposes
night curfew
on port city

DAMASCUS: Syrian authorities imposed an overnight curfew in the port city of Latakia on Tuesday after attacks in predominantly Alawite neighborhoods a day prior. The interior ministry announced a "curfew in Latakia city, effective from 5:00 p.m. (1400 GMT) on Tuesday, December 30, 2025, until 5:00 a.m. (0500 GMT) on Wednesday, December 31, 2025." Individuals attacked Alawite-majority neighborhoods on Monday, damaging cars and vandalizing shops. The attacks came a day after three people were killed during mass protests by the minority community that followed a bombing in Homs. One of them was a member of Syria's security forces, according to a security source. Syrian authorities said on Monday forces "reinforced their deployment in a number of neighborhoods in the city of Latakia, as part of measures taken to monitor the situation on the ground, enhance security and stability, and ensure the safety of citizens and property." Latakia, a mixed city in Syria's Alawite coastal heartland, also has several Sunni-majority neighborhoods.—APP

Xi calls for solidly
advancing rural
revitalization
across the board

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for solidly advancing rural revitalization across the board, promoting integrated urban-rural development, with a strong focus on agricultural and rural work. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in his instructions on work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers, which were learned at the annual central rural work conference held in Beijing from Monday to Tuesday. The conference analyzed the current situation and challenges facing the country's rural work and mapped out policy priorities in 2026. Prior to the conference, a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee put forward requirements for the conference and work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers. Xi said that the year 2026 marks the beginning of the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), and it is of vital importance to do a good job in the work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers. Efforts should be made to ensure grain production and enhance the efficacy of policies that strengthen agriculture, benefit rural areas, and enrich farmers. Xi said China should work to keep the prices of important agricultural products such as grain at a reasonable level and promote stable income growth for farmers, he said.—APP

Briefs

Naqvi, KP governor discuss security

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi held a detailed meeting on Tuesday to review the province's security situation and ongoing counter-terrorism operations. Governor Kundi briefed the interior minister on the challenges facing KP, particularly in its border regions, where security forces are engaged in operations against militant networks. He stressed that federal-level cooperation was crucial for restoring peace in the province. Interior Minister Naqvi assured the governor of the federal government's complete support, declaring that establishing peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained a top national priority. He praised the sacrifices of KP's people in the fight against terrorism and vowed that no leniency would be shown to militants or their facilitators. Naqvi emphasized that joint efforts were underway to dismantle extremist elements, while Governor Kundi called for more coordinated and unified measures to counter the threat of terrorism. — APP

Erdogan, Nigerian President Tchiiani talk

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held a telephone conversation with Nigerian President Abdurrahman Tchiiani. The leaders discussed bilateral relations between Turkey and Niger and regional issues. During the conversation, President Erdogan stated that relations between Turkey and Niger... During the meeting, President Erdogan stated that the two countries in many areas, especially energy, mining, and defense. — Agencies

India expedites massive hydropower projects on Chenab River

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a move termed by Pakistan as a deliberate "weaponization of water," India has fast-tracked massive hydropower projects on the Chenab River, escalating tensions over the decades-old Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) of 1960. Officials say New Delhi is aggressively manipulating river flows while building some of the largest dams in the India-Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). According to highly placed sources, the centrepiece of India's push is the 1,855 megawatts Sarskot Hydropower Project, which received environmental clearance in October 2025. Located in the Ramban district, this run-of-river project will include a 192.5-metre-high dam and an underground powerhouse capable of generating 8,000 million units of electricity annually. Stage I will feature six 225MW units and one 56MW unit, followed by two additional 225MW units in Stage II. The project covers 1,401 hectares, including 847 hectares of forest land, and will displace local communities. The Sarskot project, initially approved in 2017, gained momentum in 2025 following India's controversial announcement to hold the IWT in abeyance — a move Pakistan rejected as illegal and provocative. Analysts warn that the project, along with other megaprojects, signals India's intent to assert control over rivers allocated to Pakistan under the treaty. — APP

Pak reaffirms commitment to Multilateral Diplomacy

Pakistan's diplomatic outreach at the UN continues to play a pivotal role in fostering peace and stability, aligning with the government's broader vision for a rules-based international order



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a significant diplomatic engagement underscoring Pakistan's steady

fast focus on multilateralism, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar received Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Ambassador Asim Iltis, at

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today. During the meeting, Ambassador Asim Iltis provided a comprehensive briefing on the Pakistan Mission's ongoing activities in New York, with particular emphasis on en-

gagements at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and other key UN bodies. He highlighted the Mission's sustained efforts to effectively project Pakistan's core foreign policy priorities on the global stage, including the longstanding issues of Jammu and Kashmir and the Palestinian cause. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister appreciated the Mission's proactive role and reiterated the critical importance of the United Nations and multilateral institutions in promoting global peace, security, and sustainable economic development. Senator Ishaq stressed that Pakistan remains deeply committed to upholding the principles of the UN Charter and advancing dialogue-driven solutions to international challenges. This high-level interaction comes as Pakistan continues its active participation as a non-permanent member of the UNSC for the 2025-2026 term, where it has consistently advocated for just resolutions to longstanding disputes and greater international cooperation on pressing global issues. The meeting reflects Islamabad's ongoing dedication to multilateral diplomacy amid evolving regional and international dynamics, ensuring that Pakistan's voice on key matters—particularly the right to self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and support for Palestinian rights—remains prominent at the world's premier forum. Pakistan's diplomatic outreach at the UN continues to play a pivotal role in fostering peace and stability, aligning with the government's broader vision for a rules-based international order.

US pledges \$2 billion for UN aid, with 'adapt, shrink or die' warning

GENEVA: Washington on Monday pledged an initial \$2 billion for United Nations humanitarian aid in 2026 — far less than it has provided in recent years — warning UN agencies to "adapt, shrink or die". With its pledge, announced at the US mission in Geneva alongside UN aid chief Tom Fletcher, the United States is pursuing a dramatic overhaul of how it funds UN humanitarian work. Instead of handing funds to individual agencies, the United States will funnel its contributions through the UN aid agency OCHA, headed by Fletcher, which earlier this year launched a so-called Humanitarian Reset to improve efficiency and accountability. The US funds — welcomed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres — will then be distributed to 17 selected countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine. The UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, which provides swift aid as new emergencies erupt or when existing crises rapidly deteriorate, will also receive a tranche of money. "It is an initial anchor commitment," Jeremy Levin, the senior US official for foreign assistance, humanitarian affairs and religious freedom, told reporters. "There are other countries that we will add, as we continue to get more funding into this mechanism."

Among the crises not listed were Yemen and Afghanistan, where Levin stressed the need to "prevent diversion to

the Taliban and other US-designated foreign terrorist organisations". Gaza was also absent, but Levin said there would be more focus on aid for the war-ravaged Palestinian territory as US President Donald Trump's truce plan with Israel moves forward. "This new model will better share the burden of UN humanitarian work with other developed countries and will require the UN to cut bloat, remove duplication, and commit to powerful new impact, accountability and oversight mechanisms," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on X. Levin challenged other countries to match or beat US funding for UN aid. According to UN data, the United States remained the top humanitarian aid donor in the world in 2025, but that amount fell significantly to \$2.7 billion — down from around \$11 billion in 2023 and 2024 — and from over \$14 billion in 2022. Other key donor countries have also been tightening their belts, triggering major upheaval in the global aid sector. "Individual UN agencies will need to adapt, shrink, or die," a State Department statement said. Fletcher, who is British, said the US pledge was an "extraordinary" commitment, while Guterres said it would help save lives. "Every dollar counts — and we are committed to making the most of this support to deliver real results for people in desperate need," Guterres' spokesman, Stephanie Dujarric, said in a statement. — APP

Pakistan poised for inaugural Panda Bond issuance



SAIFULLAH ANSARI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Awan, has said that Pakistan is preparing for the inaugural issuance of a Panda Bond in

the Chinese capital market, marking a significant milestone in deepening financial and economic ties between Pakistan and China. Speaking in an interview with China Global Television Network (CGTN), the Finance Minister emphasized that the move reflects the growing strength, maturity and diversification of bilateral relations, which continue to evolve from infrastructure-led cooperation to a broad-based, market-driven economic partnership. Highlighting China's position as Pakistan's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade nearing USD 17 billion in the first eight months of the year, Senator Awan underscored that the relationship in the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Finance Minister explained that while CPEC Phase-I focused on building critical infrastructure including roads, ports, airports and energy projects, CPEC Phase-II has now been formally launched following high-level engagements with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang earlier this year. He said the new phase is centered on monetizing existing infrastructure and is increasingly driven by business-to-business (B2B) cooperation, reflecting a shift toward sustainable, private-sector-led growth. Responding to questions on Pakistan's economic priorities, Senator Awan identified agriculture, minerals and mining, artificial intelligence and the digital economy as key areas attracting Chinese investment.

At UN, Pakistan warns Israel's recognition of 'Somaliland'

The 'Somaliland' region remains an integral, inseparable, and inalienable part of Somalia

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan Tuesday condemned Israel's "direct assault" on Somalia's unity and territorial integrity through the "unlawful" recognition of "Somaliland" region, warning that the move could threaten stability in the Horn of Africa and undercut Mogadishu's sovereignty and political cohesion. "The 'Somaliland' region remains an integral, inseparable, and inalienable part of Somalia. No external actor has either the legal standing or the moral authority to alter that fundamental reality," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council, which discussed recent developments in "Somaliland" and Israel's official recognition of the region. "Any action that diverts attention, weakens cohesion or fuels division is profoundly irresponsible," he added. Israel's occupation of Palestinian land has been a central

source of instability and conflict in the Middle East for decades, the Pakistan envoy said. "It is now exporting this destabilizing conduct to the Horn of Africa." Most speakers in the debate decried the Israeli move in clear terms, with only the United States and Israel defending it. Israel "has the same right to conduct diplomatic relations as any other sovereign State," the United States Deputy Permanent Representative, Tanya Bruce, told the 15-member Council. "We have no announcement to make regarding US recognition of 'Somaliland' and there has been no change in American policy," she added. Israel's announcement triggered broad regional and international pushback, including a joint statement by 20 Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries rejecting and condemning the action. Pakistan is a signatory to that statement. Regional organizations and partners — including the League of Arab States, the Eastern African Community, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the European Union — reiterated the need to respect Somalia's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

India says its economy has overtaken Japan

DNA

NEW DELHI: India has overtaken Japan as the world's fourth-largest economy — and officials hope to pass Germany within three years, the government's end-of-year economic review calculates. Official confirmation, however, depends on data due in 2026 when final annual gross domestic product figures are released, with IMF suggesting India will cross over Japan next year. "India is among the world's fastest-growing major economies and is well-positioned to sustain this momentum," read the government economic briefing note, which was released late Monday. "With GDP valued at \$4.18 trillion, India has surpassed Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy, and is poised to displace Germany from the third rank in the next two-and-a-half to three years, with projected GDP of \$7.2 trillion by 2030." IMF projections for 2026 put India's economy at \$4.51 trillion, compared with Japan's \$4.46 trillion. New Delhi's upbeat assessment comes despite economic worries after Washington in August hit New Delhi with huge tariffs over its purchases of Russian oil. India said continued growth reflects its "resilience amid persistent global trade uncertainties".

Iran President for listening to farmers demands

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's president urged his government to listen to the "legitimate demands" of protesters, state media reported on Tuesday, after several days of demonstrations by shopkeepers in Tehran over economic hardships. Shopkeepers in the capital had shut their stores for the second day in a row on Monday, after Iran's embattled currency hit new lows on the unofficial market. The US dollar was trading at around 1.42 million rials on Sunday — compared to \$20,000 rials a year ago — and the euro nearing 1.7 million rials, according to price monitoring websites. "I have asked the interior minister to listen to the legitimate demands of the protesters by engaging in dialogue with their representatives so that the government can do everything",

Two killed in strike on drug boat in Eastern Pacific

WASHINGTON: The US military said Monday two people were killed in a strike on an alleged drug-smuggling boat in the Eastern Pacific, bringing the total killed in Washington's campaign in the region to at least 107. In a post to X, US Southern Command said "intelligence confirmed the vessel was transiting along known narco-trafficking routes in the Eastern Pacific and was engaged in narco-trafficking operations," adding two men were killed. The post included a black-and-white video of the "lethal kinetic strike" on a small boat, with what appeared to be two explosive fires and flaming debris visible. Since September, the US military has carried out at least 30 strikes on what it says are boats used to smuggle drugs to the United States, with the majority of the attacks occurring in the Eastern Pacific. Some have also occurred in the Caribbean Sea. The administration has provided no evidence that the targeted boats were involved in drug trafficking, prompting debate about the legality of these operations. International law experts and rights groups say the strikes likely amount to extrajudicial killings, a charge that Washington denies. The US military's post did not specify where exactly the strike took place. News of the latest attack came after US President Donald Trump confirmed Monday that Washington had hit and destroyed a docking area for alleged drug boats in Venezuela, in what could amount to the first land strike of the military campaign said to target drug trafficking. — APP

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