



Islamabad POST

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Information Minister says Imran Khan report given to his family

Detailed News On Page-08

Pak against budget cut of UN police

Detailed News On Page-08



Interior Minister hails security forces action

Detailed News On Page-03



Terror strikes Islamabad

32 martyred as bomber targets imambargah

Russian President writes letters to President, PM; Germany and other countries express sympathies with the victims' families; IGP Islamabad cousin also among the martyred

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: At least 32 people were martyred and dozens others injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up inside an imambargah during Friday prayers in Islamabad's Tarlai area, confirmed officials. Police sources said that terrorists linked to the "Fitna al-Khawarij" targeted the Imambargah Khadijat-ul-Kubra in the federal capital. Security forces are conducting operations against the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban-Pakistan (TTP) and recently gunned down 24 terrorists belonging to the Indian proxy militant outfit. The suicide bomber detonated himself after being stopped at the entrance of the mosque, eyewitnesses told Geo News, adding that the terrorists first opened fired and then resorted to the bombing. The main door is at least 30 metres away from the imambargah's gate. When the terrorist reached the main gate, the religious facility's guards tried to stop him, following which an exchange of fire took place. He then ran inside at least 20 metres, and as the prayer was underway, he blew himself up. There are homes nearby this imambargah. The suicide bomber used such heavy explosives that the windowpanes of these residential units sustained damage. Security guards also received injuries during the firing. The windows of the three-storey imambargah have also broken. Following the tragic blast, law enforcers – including those from Pakistan Army troops and Rangers – cordoned off the area, and rescue personnel began a rescue operation. The bodies and injured people are being taken to medical facilities – and the Pims administration has said that it cannot cater to more patients.

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24 khwarij terrorists killed in KPK

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces killed 24 khwarij belonging to Indian Proxy Fitna Al Khwarij in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. "On reported presence of khwarij, an intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in Orakzai District. During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location and after an intense fire exchange, 14 khwarij were sent to hell," said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). Another intelligence based operation by Security forces was conducted in Khyber District. In ensuing fire exchange, 10 more khwarij were effectively neutralised. "Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian sponsored kharij found in the area as relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azme Istehkam" (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out menace of foreign sponsored and supported terrorism from the country," the news release said. – APP



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari confers the Nishan-e-Pakistan on the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mirziyoyev Shavkat Miromonovich, during a Special Investiture Ceremony. – DNA

President Zardari says

Pak, Uzbekistan relations from cordial to excellent

Welcoming President Mirziyoyev, President Asif Ali Zardari expressed confidence that the visit would prove productive and forward-looking

President confers highest civil award on Uzbek President

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a significant gesture of diplomatic friendship and deepening bilateral ties, President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday conferred Pakistan's highest civil award, the

Nishan-e-Pakistan, on the visiting President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev. A Special Investiture Ceremony was held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, attended by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, federal ministers, senior officials, and dignitaries from both countries. The award was presented to President Mirziyoyev in recognition of his "outstanding services for strengthening fraternal relations, economic and strategic partnership" between

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ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its close and brotherly relations with Uzbekistan and views the partnership as a natural and enduring one rooted in shared history, culture and faith. He said that Pakistan is committed to elevating bilateral relations to new heights through closer cooperation in connectivity, trade and people-to-people contacts. The President made these remarks during

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Cementing friendly bonds PM invites Uzbek firms to invest in Pakistan

Says both sides signed a protocol on Friday to achieve an "ambitious yet easily achievable" target of increasing bilateral trade to \$2 billion in five years

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday invited Uzbek business firms to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan's textile, pharmaceutical, mining, agriculture, and tourism sectors, as private sector entities from both countries signed MoUs worth \$3.4 billion for B2B cooperation. The prime minister, addressing the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Business Forum held here along with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who is on a two-day state visit

here, said that both sides had signed a protocol on Friday to achieve an "ambitious yet easily achievable" target of increasing bilateral trade to \$2 billion in five years. At the forum attended by the ministers and businessmen from both sides, the two leaders assured the investors to provide a conducive business environment with no room for systemic hurdles. Both leaders welcomed the B2B deals with the Uzbek president, calling it "very much achievable" because both sides had a very good

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Top Russian general shot several times

DNA

MOSCOW: A high-profile general in Russia's military has been shot several times and wounded in Moscow. Lt Gen Vladimir Alexeyev was immediately taken to hospital after the attack in a residential block of flats on the north-western outskirts of the Russian capital and his condition is unknown. Alexeyev is number two in the main directorate of Russia's GRU military intelligence and the latest high-ranking military figure to have been targeted in the capital since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began almost four years ago. He was placed under European Union and UK sanctions after the GRU was accused of being behind the 2018 nerve agent attack in Salisbury in the UK.

Iran, US start talks in Oman

NEWS DESK

OMAN: Iran and the United States commenced high-stakes negotiations in Oman on Friday over Tehran's nuclear programme, but a dispute over the agenda suggests progress will be hard won amid the threat of a regional Middle East war. While both sides have signaled readiness to revive diplomacy over Tehran's long-running nuclear dispute with the West, Washington wants the talks to cover Iran's nuclear programme, its ballistic missiles, support for armed groups around the region and its "treatment of their own people".

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. – Editor

Attack on polio team leaves police cop dead

The polio team remained safe as they were administering polio drops to children inside a house. The body of the martyred police officer was taken to Chaman Civil Hospital for necessary legal procedures

BUREAU REPORT

CHAMAN: An attack took place on a polio eradication team in the Roghani area of Union Council Chaman, resulting in the death of a police officer assigned to security. According to details, unknown militants attacked during the polio campaign. A police officer protecting the polio team was martyred at the scene. Deputy Commissioner Chaman Habib Ahmed Bangalzai said the polio team was engaged in the campaign when armed militants on a motorcycle attacked, martyring police officer Nizamuddin on the spot. The polio team remained safe as they were administering polio drops to children inside a house. The body of the martyred police officer was taken to Chaman Civil Hospital for necessary legal procedures. After the incident, police cordoned off the area, and security arrangements were further tightened, the deputy commissioner said.

Terrorist group surrenders in Balochistan

APP

QUETTA: Security forces have achieved a major success under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna in Balochistan, as a group of notorious terrorists surrendered and laid down their arms, signaling a positive step toward restoring peace in the province. The surrender is the result of coordinated efforts by security forces and brother of the Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Aftab Bugti, aimed at promoting stability and reconciliation in the region. It is pertinent to mention here that the group previously involved in acts of

Continued on Page 06

Japan, Pakistan celebrate 74 years of friendship

Ambassador Shuichi expresses shock over the blast incident in Islamabad



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, has said that Japan and Pakistan are celebrating the enduring 74 year milestone of diplomatic friendship between the two countries and outlined a roadmap for future cooperation centered on people-to-people interaction. The Ambassador stated this while speaking at a Media Networking Get-Together hosted at his residence on Friday. He also expressed grief over the blast incident in Islamabad. Recounting his travels since arriving in November 2024—from Punjab and Sindh's industrial hubs to Mohenjo-daro, Taxila,

and the Northern areas—the Ambassador praised Pakistan's cultural richness and warm people. "Each visit has left unforgettable memories and deep appreciation for its rich history and culture," he said. "One of the things that has impressed me most since I arrived in Pakistan is the trust and affection that the people of Pakistan have for Japan. This is the result of various factors such as 74 years of diplomatic relations, Japan's support through ODA, the presence of Japanese companies, and the trust in Japanese products", said the Ambassador. Ambassador Akamatsu, in his speech, detailed a robust agenda for 2026 and ahead, focusing on economic expansion, technological collaboration, and the legacy of the historic Osaka-Kansai Expo 2025. While spotlighting the three primary pillars shaping the future of Japan-Pakistan relations, the Ambassador outlined his key priorities: expanding and deepening mutual understanding and cooperation through human-to-human interaction, strengthening economic ties, and promoting Japanese cuisine. Underscoring the importance of active

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Youth empowerment through technology key

HAVELIAN: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Friday said that empowering youth through education and modern technology is essential for ensuring a bright future for Pakistan. He expressed these views while addressing students during the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme distribution ceremony at Abbottabad University of Science and Technology. The federal minister further said that for continuing the laptop scheme and termed it an investment in knowledge rather than a mere distribution of devices. He said access to technology has become a necessity in the modern era and such initiatives enable students to compete at the global level. Sarda Yousuf informed that the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme was first launched in 2013 during the tenure of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, under which nearly 600,000 laptops have been distributed on merit across the country. He said the current phase reflects the government's commitment to transparency, merit, and equal opportunities for students. Highlighting the role of Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, the Federal Minister said the institution has emerged as an important center of learning and technology with more than 6,000 enrolled students and over 80 highly qualified faculty members. He added that the university's proximity to CPEC routes provides unique opportunities for research, innovation, and employment, and suggested a separate interchange for the university to facilitate students and staff. Responding to students' concerns, the minister assured that efforts would be made to arrange additional transport facilities, including more buses, to address commuting issues. He also spoke about reviving the unified prayer timing system in mosques, emphasizing the importance of prayer and moral values alongside education. Congratulating the students who received laptops, the Federal Minister said the award was a result of their hard work, dedication, and merit. He also praised the university administration and faculty for their role in nurturing young talent and contributing to national development.—APP

Rawalpindi Police deploy extensive measures

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police deployed over 1,200 personnel to prevent kite flying and celebratory firing, officials said on Friday. A spokesman said senior officers were present in the field, supervising arrangements, with mobile units and the Dolphin Force carrying out special patrols across the city. Monitoring was also being conducted from the rooftops of high-rise buildings, and drones and other modern technical resources were being used for area surveillance. The police, the spokesman added, "have held awareness walks and put up banners to inform citizens, and announcements are being made in mosques to discourage kite flying and firing".—APP

ICCI hosts Uzbek delegation for talks on joint ventures

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has reaffirmed the Chamber's strong commitment to facilitating the business community by fostering meaningful collaborations with overseas chambers to enhance trade, investment, and sectoral growth. He expressed these views while welcoming Deputy Director General of the Agency of Plant Protection and Quarantine under the Cabinet of Ministry of Agriculture of Uzbekistan, Ulugbek Yunusov, who visited ICCI along with a three-member delegation to explore avenues of cooperation, particularly in the fruit and vegetable sector. Highlighting the close historical and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that ICCI is actively working to strengthen international business linkages through B2B meetings, Business Opportunity Conferences, and recognition ceremonies to create tangible outcomes for the private sector. He further apprised the visiting delegation that ICCI is planning to convene an International Industrial Exhibition, in collaboration with embassies and foreign missions, to showcase the trade and investment potential of friendly countries by emphasizing that such initiatives would provide an effective platform for joint ventures, technology transfer, and market access, ultimately contributing to sustainable economic growth in both countries. Speaking on the occasion, the visiting guest showcased Uzbekistan's vast potential in the fruit sector and expressed keen interest



in developing joint ventures with Pakistani stakeholders to boost bilateral fruit exports and enhance overall agricultural productivity. He also sought ICCI's support in establishing strong linkages with key players of Pakistan's fruit and vegetable sector. Praising Pa-

kistan's youth, he said that the country's young population is well equipped with IT and digital expertise, therefore e-commerce platforms could serve as an effective tool for expanding agricultural trade and accessing international markets. Senior Vice President ICCI,

Tahir Ayub, highlighted the fruit and vegetable potential of the region and informed the delegation about the various countries to which exports are currently being carried out. He also mentioned that security uncertainty in Afghanistan remains the most significant bottleneck

for the Southern Corridor. Those present on the occasion included Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, former ICCI Presidents Zubair Ahmed Malik, Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi, Executive Member Ishaq Sial, Naveed Akhtar Satti, and ICCI members.

CM Balochistan highlights rising foreign investment

QUETTA: Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that there has been a significant increase in foreign investors' interest in the province, reflecting growing confidence in Balochistan's economic potential and investment environment. Outlining the government's economic vision, Sarfraz Bugti in a post shared on social media platform X, said that the provincial administration is fully committed to promoting investment and creating new economic opportunities. He emphasized that attracting both local and foreign investment remains a top priority for the government. The Chief Minister revealed that Saudi investors have shown particular interest in key sectors such as energy, minerals, agriculture, and infrastructure, which he described as holding immense potential for sustainable devel-

opment and long-term growth in the province. Sarfraz Bugti assured that the provincial government will provide all possible facilities and a conducive environment to foreign investors. He reiterated that practical steps are being taken to ensure ease of doing business, security, and institutional support, positioning Balochistan as an attractive destination for international investment. Expressing optimism, he said that foreign investment would contribute to economic stability, job creation, and overall development in the province, paving the way for a stronger and more prosperous Balochistan. Saudi Investors expresses keen interest in investing in Balochistan: Bilal Khan Kakar Vice Chairman of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT), Bilal Khan Kakar, has said that Saudi Prince Mansour

bin Mohammed Al Saud has expressed keen interest in investing in Balochistan. A high-level meeting to discuss investment opportunities in Balochistan was held under the chairmanship of Saudi Prince Mansour bin Mohammed Al Saud and Bilal Khan Kakar, Vice Chairman of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade. The meeting focused on bilateral investment prospects and explored potential opportunities across various sectors in Balochistan. According to a press release, both sides held detailed discussions on strengthening economic and trade cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, expressing strong commitment to enhancing mutual collaboration. Speaking on the occasion, Bilal Khan Kakar highlighted that Balochistan is rich in natural resources.—DNA

Proclaimed offender among five held

TANK: The Tank police have carried out special search, snap-checking, and strike operations across the district, resulting in the arrest of a proclaimed offender and four suspects along with the recovery of 1,250 grams of hashish and a motorcycle. According to police spokesman, the operations were conducted at multiple locations following the directives of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Samad Khan. The police have arrested a proclaimed offender wanted in a case registered at Police Station Gul Imam. During snap checking, police also checked 30 motorcycles and one tenant, detained one suspicious individual. In a separate operation, the police arrested an accused from the Umar Khel area of Umar Adda. During the operation, police recovered 1,250 grams of hashish and one motorcycle. Additionally, police teams inspected five rented houses and eight sensitive locations, detained another suspicious individual, and initiated preventive proceedings against three persons. Overall, the police checked 30 motorcycles, six rented houses, and eight sensitive sites during the district-wide operations. The police spokesman stated that such targeted operations will continue to curb crime, discourage drug trafficking, and ensure lasting peace and security in the district.—APP

KP CM hands over modern security equipment to Police

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohail Afridi on Friday visited the Peshawar Police Lines, where he laid floral wreaths at the Martyrs' Memorial and offered Fateha. On the occasion, the CM paid rich tribute to the sacrifices of officers and personnel of the KP police. During the visit, the CM formally handed over bulletproof vehicles and modern security equipment to the police. The equipment included bulletproof and non-bulletproof vehicles, motorcycles, SMGs, bulletproof jackets, bulletproof helmets, and sniper rifles. Addressing the gathering, Sohail Afridi said that for the past two decades, the KP police have remained on the front lines in the fight against terrorism and have never hesitated to make su-

preme sacrifices. He stated that unfortunately, a certain mindset failed to give due recognition to these great sacrifices; however, the provincial government stands firmly with its police force and is fulfilling all their requirements on an emergency basis. The CM informed that after assuming office, the government allocated Rs 7.7 billion to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), while a special package of Rs 7.2 billion was approved for the Special Branch. Similarly, Rs 6.5 billion has been released to strengthen security infrastructure and enhance police capacity in the merged districts. He said that the CTD and Special Branch are being further strengthened, new recruitments will be made, and modern infrastructure will be devel-

oped. An additional grant of Rs 3.8 billion has been approved for the Safe Cities Project, which is being expanded from Peshawar to divisional headquarters and merged districts. Expressing confidence, the CM said that the province will soon be freed from the menace of terrorism. He added that decisions imposed through closed-door meetings cause serious harm. He urged elements using political pressure on the police to refrain and allow the KP police to remain non-political. He further stated that during a jirga held in the KP Assembly, it was unanimously agreed that military operations are not a solution. Instead, a comprehensive and long-term policy against terrorism should be formulated by taking political and religious parties.—DNA

CM's bold move brings back Basant

ISLAMABAD: MPA and Chairperson of the Punjab Women Protection Authority, Hina Parvez Butt, on Friday praised Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz for reviving the historic Basant festival, saying the initiative has swept citizens into a vibrant craze of festivity and reconnecting families. Hina Parvez Butt, while speaking to a local news channel, said that CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz's bold decision to revive the historic Basant festival has brought renewed joy and cultural vibrancy across the province. She said citizens are once again immersed in the colourful festivity, celebrating through bright traditional attire, festive foods, music and kite flying, which has strengthened family bonding and social harmony. Hina Parvez Butt admired the CM for what she termed a commendable and visionary move, stating that the revival of Basant reflects the government's commitment to preserving Punjab's cultural heritage. She added that such initiatives not only uplift public morale but also revive traditions that connect generations and promote unity within society. She further stressed that the Punjab government has rightly given top priority to public safety, noting that strict measures and effective implementation mechanisms have been put in place to ensure a safe and well-managed celebration. She said CM Maryam Nawaz's leadership has ensured that festivity and safety go hand in hand, setting a positive example of responsible governance.—APP

Palestine at a Crossroads: The Future of the Palestinian Cause

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized a public talk under its Distinguished Lecture series, titled, 'Palestine at a Crossroads: The Future of the Palestinian Cause under the Board of Peace.' The Chief Guest at the event was Mr. Mohammad Makram Omar Moh'd Balawi, Secretary General of the League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds (LP4Q), Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President, Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), was the keynote speaker at the event. Dr. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, BOG, ISSI also spoke on the occasion. Dr. Amina Khan, in her welcome remarks said, that despite global outrage and mounting evidence, Israel remains actively engaged in the systematic genocide of the Palestinian people, marked by mass civilian killings, destruction of entire communities, and the deliberate dismantling of Palestinian life in Gaza and the other

occupied territories. Any credible pathway forward, including initiatives such as the Board of Peace, must be anchored in justice, accountability, and the realisation of Palestinian self-determination in accordance with UN resolutions and international law. Mr. Makram Balawi, while expressing his views said that Pakistan's acknowledged stance on Palestine is historically defined. Palestinians are going through a very sensitive phase while President Trump is defining a new world order. One of the reasons for this untenable situation is the inaction by the UN. Meanwhile world is repeating the Israeli narrative about Palestine. He further pointed out that the Israeli settler colonialism is evident in occupied Palestine. In his opinion, the Trump era is one of its kind as he views international politics like a kind of a deal. There is no focus on finding a political solution for the Palestinian people and this is the main challenge. The Europeans are now talking about a two-state solution but not doing anything substantive about it. Israel has always been ignoring the two-state solution and there is also talk about recognizing Jerusalem as the new capital of Israel. However, Is-

raeli atrocities have led to changing perceptions and as a result we witnessed large demonstration in the big cities in the West. He further emphasized that as Palestinians, we are happy that Muslim counties are involved in the Board of Peace, but it is not a good solution. The choice is very challenging; however, Palestinians are satisfied that they have Muslim countries in the board of peace as a balancing factor. The Board of Peace is a project of Trump and this is likely to collapse sooner. Israelis are also undermining Trumps plan and are pushing Palestinians to retaliate. He concluded that Israel wants to create an environment where Palestinians find it difficult to survive. Senator Mushahid Hussain stated that the discourse on Palestine has changed with the emergence of three key realities: growing awareness in Western countries of Israeli brutality, increasing perception within the Arab and Muslim world of Israel as a major threat, and the rise of a coordinated Indo-Israeli nexus driven by extremist ideologies of Hindutva and Zionism respectively, linking the issues of Kashmir and Palestine.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

- Feb 04/Sri Lanka National Day
- Feb 06/N. Zealand National Day
- Feb 06/Uganda Army Day
- Feb 11//Iran Revolution day
- Feb 16/DPR Korea National Day
- Feb 16/Lithuania National Day
- Feb 18/Gambia National Day
- Feb 19/Nepal Democracy Day
- Feb 23/Uzbekistan National Day
- Feb 23/Brunei National Day
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- Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar presents a photo album to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mirziyoyev Shavkat Miromonovich, in the presence of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at Aiwan-e-Sadr. DNA

Pak emerging as strategic trade gateway for C. Asia

He said the recent visits marked a pivotal moment for Pakistan–Central Asia relations, adding that with sustained political commitment and active private-sector participation, Pakistan could anchor a new phase of regional cooperation, positioning itself as a key driver of regional trade, connectivity and shared economic growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD :Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) on Friday said a quiet but consequential shift was underway in Central Asia's geo-economic outlook, with Pakistan increasingly emerging at the centre of regional recalibration as a strategic southern gateway for trade, connectivity and economic diversification. While talking to the media here, Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman, President Pakistan Business Forum, said recent high-level visits of Central Asian leaders to Islamabad

reflected growing regional recognition of Pakistan as a viable and strategic partner for trade and economic cooperation. He said the evolving engagement marked a turning point in regional economic thinking, where geography, market access and connectivity were converging to elevate Pakistan's role in Central Asia's future trade architecture. The back-to-back visits of the Presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to Pakistan, following the visit of the President of Kyrgyzstan two months earlier, were more than routine diplomatic exchanges, he said,

adding that together they signalled a deliberate shift by Central Asian states toward deeper economic engagement with Pakistan. For landlocked Central Asian economies, he said, Pakistan offered a shorter, more reliable and cost-effective route to warm-water ports, providing direct access to South Asia, the Middle East and global markets, which could significantly enhance their export competitiveness and regional integration. Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman said discussions during these visits focused on translating political goodwill into tangible economic

outcomes, including expansion of bilateral trade, facilitation of investment flows, and strengthening of transit trade and logistics frameworks. He noted that Pakistan's growing industrial base, large consumer market and improving connectivity infrastructure had positioned the country as a natural partner for Central Asian economies seeking diversification and resilience amid changing global trade dynamics. The PBF president said Pakistan's importance for the region extended beyond transit trade, citing strong complementarities in sectors

such as energy, agriculture, textiles, pharmaceuticals, information technology and manufacturing. He said Central Asian states could supply energy resources and industrial inputs, while Pakistan offered value-added manufacturing capacity, skilled human capital and access to downstream markets, adding that this synergy, if effectively harnessed, could substantially raise bilateral trade volumes that currently remained well below potential. Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman said the frequency and level of recent engagements reflected growing confidence in Pakistan's economic trajectory

and its ability to play a stabilising and connective role in the region. He emphasised that improved trade facilitation, functional banking channels and consistent policy support would be critical to converting strategic interest into sustained commercial outcomes. He said the recent visits marked a pivotal moment for Pakistan–Central Asia relations, adding that with sustained political commitment and active private-sector participation, Pakistan could anchor a new phase of regional cooperation, positioning itself as a key driver of regional trade, connectivity and shared economic growth

Joint security checkpoints lawful: Talal

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Muhammad Talal Badar on Friday informed the Senate that joint security check posts were fully lawful, equipped with body cameras, surveillance systems and helplines, and had been established solely to ensure public safety amid prevailing security challenges Responding to a calling attention notice raised Asad Qasim regarding the hardships being faced by the people of Balochistan and Sindh due to prolonged daily queues at the Ranger's pickets at the Hub Chowki, he said setting up joint check posts was permitted under Section 6 of the Rangers Ordinance, while Pakistan Customs had also sought Rangers' assistance under anti-smuggling

rules notified through an SRO in 2023. He said the provincial government of Sindh had played a key role in establishing and facilitating these check posts in consultation with all stakeholders. Talal Badar told the House that around 10 joint check posts were operational at different locations, adding that nearly 4,000 vehicles passed through one such check post daily, underscoring its importance from both law and order and anti-smuggling perspectives. He said the check posts were also meant to curb the movement of weapons and ammunition, often based on intelligence-led information. The minister acknowledged that commuters might face inconvenience at times but

stressed that these measures were necessary in view of the security situation. To address public complaints, he said dedicated helplines, including a WhatsApp number, had been activated, and any complaint received was promptly inquired into. An officer of inspector rank or above, he added, remained present at the check posts at all times to supervise operations. He assured the Senate that additional personnel and facilities would be provided where required and that coordination with the provincial government would be further strengthened to improve traffic flow and public convenience without compromising security.—APP

Pakistan, Uzbekistan sign MoU to jointly fight corruption

The signing of the MoU marks a significant step forward in Pakistan – Uzbekistan relations & mutual resolve of both nations to promote transparency and good governance

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Anti-corruption Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ACAU) and the National Accountability Bureau of Islamic Republic of Pakistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen mutual cooperation in the fight against corruption.

The MoU signing ceremony was held on the occasion of two day visit of President of Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, underscoring the shared commitment of both countries to United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The MoU was signed by Deputy Chairman NAB Sohail Na-

sir and Abdulaziz Kamilov, Advisor to the President on Foreign Policy, Uzbekistan. The signed agreement provides a comprehensive framework for institutional coordination, cooperation and capacity building to prevent and combat corruption within the respective competencies of both agencies. The contours of this mutual cooperation include information sharing with respect to trendy typologies and general methods of corrupt practices of both countries. It also commits to provision of technical and methodological assistance in addition to exchange of expertise & human resource personnel in areas like forensic, accounting assets investigation, forensic engineering & money laundering. Capacity build-

ing and public awareness campaigns are also a major part of the cooperation.

The heads of both anti-graft agencies expressed their confidence that the MoU will amplify institutional linkages and effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in both countries.

Deputy Chairman NAB told the Media that corruption is a major obstacle to economic development and public trust. He emphasized that the transnational nature of the financial crimes & illicit assets requires strong bilateral cooperation among member states of UNCAC. The signing of the MoU marks a significant step forward in Pakistan – Uzbekistan relations & mutual resolve of both nations to promote transparency and good governance.

Polio drive successfully continues

ISLAMABAD: As part of renewed nationwide efforts to eradicate polio, the first national polio eradication campaign of 2026 is successfully entering its fifth day on Friday, with authorities urging parents across the country to fully cooperate with polio teams.

The campaign will run until February 8, with health workers visiting homes in Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to administer vaccinations to children under five years of age, said Health Minister Mustafa Kamal while speaking to a private news channel. The minister appealed to families and local communities to work hand-in-hand with health workers, stressing that only through collective cooperation can the polio teams reach every child and protect them from the disease. The minister emphasized that successful polio eradication depends on collective effort, urging families and local communities to support health teams during the campaign and ensure that every eligible child receives the vaccine. He emphasized that the government is fully committed to eradicating the virus within the year and urged all stakeholders to do their part in supporting the effort. The minister explained that polio remains a highly contagious and untreatable disease that can leave children permanently paralyzed. He said the only reliable defence is to give every child under five repeated doses of the oral polio vaccine during each campaign, while also ensuring they receive all routine immunizations on time.



Naqvi hails security forces


ISLAMABAD:Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has lauded Pakistan's security forces for their successful counter-terrorism operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, acknowledging their swift action and professional excellence in neutralising 24 militants linked to the Kharijite extremist network. In a statement, Naqvi said the forces "thwarted the nefarious objectives of the terrorists through timely and decisive action," adding that the nation highly values their sacrifices and commitment to restoring peace in the region. The interior minister reiterated that security operations will continue "until the complete eradication of the Indian-backed Kharijite terrorist elements.—APP


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Briefs

Two bills introduced in National Assembly

ISLAMABAD: Two bills were introduced in the National Assembly on Friday and were referred to the relevant committees for further consideration. The bills included one seeking to amend the Centres of Excellence Act, 1974, titled The Centres of Excellence (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and another to establish the Federal Government Real Estate Management Authority, titled The Federal Government Real Estate Management Authority Bill, 2026. Meanwhile, a report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights was presented on a bill to amend the Islamabad Capital Territory Senior Citizens Act, 2021, titled The Islamabad Capital Territory Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, 2025.—APP

Vibrant kite festival lights up Lahore

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan on Friday highlighted that those flying kites are primarily responsible for safety during the celebrations, adding that for Gen Z, experiencing this tradition for the first time should be a source of enjoyment for everyone, beyond politics. During an exclusive interview with a private news channel, Malik Muhammad Ahmad said the vibrant Kite festival has once again brightened Lahore, bringing colour, joy and excitement to citizens of all ages especially children experiencing it for the first time. Ahmad Khan emphasized that while the festival is a celebration of tradition and happiness, safety remains the top priority. He urged everyone participating in the festivities to follow all safety guidelines, highlighting that responsible behavior is key to ensuring that this grand event continues to be enjoyed by all. He emphasized that the success of the festival largely depends on people's behavior, as responsible participation ensures the tradition continues safely. Speaking about the revival of the festival, Malik described it as a brave decision by the government, noting that safety SOPs must be strictly followed.—APP

IRSA releases 67,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 67,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1491.00 feet which was 89.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 14,500 cusecs and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1201.50 feet, which was 151.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 6,800 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kala-bagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 30,400, 29,500, 29,400, and 9,200 cusecs, respectively.—APP

Rs1.8m minimum standard fee agreed for private medical colleges

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Mukhtar Ahmad Malik on Friday apprised the Senate that a consensus had been reached to fix Rs1.8 million as the minimum standard fee for private medical colleges, while institutions charging fees above would be required to provide proper justification. Replying to a question raised by Senator Rubina Qaimkhani during Question Hour, the minister said that under the PMDC Act, 2023, the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) did not have the authority to directly reduce the fees of private medical colleges. However,

“Difficult to predict outcome of US-Iran talks”, say experts

Rear Admiral (R), Faisal Ali Shah, emphasized that Iran should not be understood solely through the western perspective as the system was institutionalized even to the very basic level

DNA

: The Institute of Regional Studies held a roundtable event to address the ongoing war-scenario between the US and Iran. While opening the discussion, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, mentioned that dire economic conditions made the governance increasingly difficult. It also prompted the external actors like the US and Israel to exploit the grievances of the masses, he argued. Amb Jauhar was of the view that strong statements issued by President Trump against Iran was rather a pressuring tactic to compel Iran for negotiations. Rear Admiral (R), Faisal Ali Shah, emphasized that Iran should not be understood solely through the western perspective as the system was institutionalized even to the very basic level. According to him, the protests were largely directed against specific policies rather than demanding the complete overthrow of the system. He further argued that external shocks did not trigger a full-scale uprising as seen during the 12-day war because many citizens prioritized stability and security over the foreign intervention. He noted that the Iranian protests were often mistread and calls for external intervention were strategically unrealistic. Mr. Muhammad Hussain Baqeri, Chairman Iqbal Forum, opined that Iranian society is in a transitional phase shaped by the evolving



political and social dynamics. Therefore, without having comprehensive security policies, he argued, the long-term stability in social sphere was unlikely. Mr. Alireza Nader from Washington D.C. described that Iranian diaspora put pressure on the US to undertake a decisive action against the Iranian government. He, nevertheless, admitted that any U.S. military action car-

ried a high risk of escalation, potentially expanding into a broader regional conflict. Mr. Nader acknowledged that there remained a limited possibility of diplomacy between the US and Iran but significant concessions were unlikely to be made. Mr. Jawed Rana, Editor of The Counter Narrative, told the audience that Iran's institutional and governmental structures remained strong and resilient de-

spite economic hardships. He argued that the Iranian institutions are powerful which were able to contain the economic unrest. He suggested that the U.S. and Israel might anticipate internal instability as a strategic opportunity but a large-scale war is unlikely. Nonetheless, if negotiations fail a limited strike remains a possibility, Mr. Rana concluded.

NPO to organize webinar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a webinar on “Process Capability for Normal Data” on February 16 (Monday). The course focuses on practical applications for quality improvement, defect reduction, and data-driven decision making in manufacturing and service processes, said NPO document shared here on Friday. The workshop will provide information about process capabilities, understanding capability indices such as Cp and Cpk, data normality and validation, calculating and interpreting process capability, and improving process capability. The participants will learn to calculate and interpret key capability indices including Cp, Cpk, Pp, and Ppk, analyze process variation, and assess process performance using control charts and histograms.

Solar policy shift puts 45,000 jobs, billions at risk

NEPRA's plan to cut solar buyback rate in half criticized

ISLAMABAD: Shahid Rasheed Butt, a noted business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, said on Friday that the Prosumer Regulations 2025, which cut solar buyback rates from about Rs 26 per unit to Rs 13 per unit and limit system capacity to the approved load, could hurt Pakistan's shift to renewable energy and affect its climate commitments under international agreements. The revised regulations would reduce the maximum permitted solar system size from 150 percent to 100 percent of the approved load, shorten contract durations from seven to five years, and replace net metering with net billing. These measures are fundamentally inequitable, as distribution companies are permitted to sell electricity at rates as high as Rs 60 per unit while purchasing solar-generated power at a fraction of that price. Shahid Rasheed Butt said these changes would effectively double the payback period for a standard 10-kilowatt solar installation, extending it well beyond the global benchmark of five years. Such a shift could result in the loss of over 45,000 jobs across installation, maintenance, and manufacturing. The move is designed to protect the revenues of power utilities now facing reduced demand as on-grid solar capacity has surpassed 6,000 megawatts. The business leader further argued that the shift to net billing introduces a pronounced disparity between the compensation offered for solar power and the rates charged to consumers, effectively imposing a solar tax. He criticized the policy as lacking foresight, warning that it could keep Pakistan dependent on costly, long-term, and polluting energy sources. He also highlighted that the expansion of solar energy has already reduced the nation's annual fuel import bill. According to World Bank projections, the sector could create over 200,000 jobs by 2030.—DNA

Low crop productivity linked to weak research

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Mukhtar Ahmad Malik on Friday informed the Senate that low agricultural productivity was the result of decades of insufficient research, outdated harvesting methods and poor water management, alongside demand-and-supply driven pricing issues. Replying to various questions during Question Hour, the minister acknowledged that Pakistan was a developing country and that critical research—particularly in agriculture and seeds—had not been carried out over a sustained period. He said this gap had directly contributed to low yields and recurring challenges faced by farmers. He said that pricing remained a key factor in agricultural markets, as prices were largely determined by demand and supply across commodities. Referring to wheat, he said farmers had faced hardship due to a sharp decline in prices, although the reduced wheat prices had helped stabilise flour prices and provided relief to consumers. The minister pointed out that agriculture accounted for around 58 percent of Pakistan's economy, making farmer welfare and productivity improvements critical for overall economic stability. He said Pakistan continued to rely on outdated harvesting techniques, resulting in losses and inefficiencies. In this regard, he noted that the Punjab government had introduced modern agricultural technologies through its agriculture department to support farmers. Mukhtar Malik said that the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) and the National Agricultural Research Centre were working in collaboration with China on cotton seed development and other crops. He expressed optimism that the introduction of new seed varieties and modern technologies would significantly improve yields in the coming years. Highlighting Pakistan's status as a water-scarce country, the minister stressed the need for better water utilisation. He said parallel efforts were under way to adopt techniques that would enable higher crop output with less water. In reply to another question by Senator Rubina Naz, the minister said green areas had been legally protected and “locked,” clarifying that no housing societies or commercial activities were allowed in designated green zones. He urged provincial governments, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, to follow similar measures to curb unchecked urban sprawl and housing development. The minister said controlling unplanned growth of housing societies was essential to protect agricultural land and ensure sustainable development across the country.—DNA

Senate unanimously passes resolution

ISLAMABAD :The Senate on Friday unanimously passed a resolution reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering moral, political and diplomatic support for the just struggle of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) for the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination. The resolution was moved by Minister for Kashmir Affairs Gilgit-Baltistan and Frontier Regions Engineer Amir Muqam in the House. The House strongly condemned India's illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, while paying rich tribute to the courage, resilience and sacrifices of the Kashmiri people. It expressed grave concern over India's continued efforts to consolidate its illegal occupation of IIOJK and undermine its internationally recognised disputed status following the unilateral and unlawful

actions of August 5, 2019. The House emphasised that the illegal and unilateral changes to the constitutional and disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir cannot serve as a substitute for the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. It further stressed that a just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, is essential for lasting peace in South Asia. The Senate urged India to implement the relevant UN Security Council resolutions to enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to determine their future through a free, fair and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations.—APP

NA session adjourned till Monday

ISLAMABAD :The lack of quorum on Friday forced Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Ghulam Mustafa Shah to adjourn the House proceedings until Monday. Member of National Assembly (MNA) Aliya Kamran pointed out the quorum. Earlier, the deputy speaker ordered a count and found that the House was not in order, after which he announced a short break. Following the break, another count was conducted on the direction of Deputy Speaker, but the quorum was still incomplete. The deputy speaker then adjourned the proceedings until Monday.

NA passes APP Amendment Bill

ISLAMABAD :The National Assembly on Friday passed the Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2025, introducing amendments to the Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation Ordinance, 2002 (LXXX of 2002). The bill was moved in the lower house by Federal Minister for the Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh. It will now be laid before the Senate for consideration. According to the statement of objects and reasons, the Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation (APPC) operates under the administrative control of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and functions as the state news agency under the APP Ordinance, 2002. The amendments follow the Supreme Court's ruling in the Mustafa Impex case, after which the federal cabinet directed ministries and divisions to amend relevant laws, rules and ordinances in consultation with the Law and Justice Division to replace references to the “Federal Government” with the appropriate authorities. The cabinet reiterated these directives in subsequent decisions in 2018 and 2022 to reduce its burden of routine administrative matters. In line with further cabinet directions issued in July 2025, the process to amend the APP Ordinance was re-initiated. The draft amendment bill was subsequently approved by the Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases (CCLC) and later ratified by the federal cabinet before being presented to parliament.—APP

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Rare Earths: The War America Wasn't Prepared to Fight

QAMAR BASHIR

ON February 2, 2026, President Donald Trump authorized the creation of a \$12 billion strategic fund to establish a national reserve of rare earth minerals and rare earth magnets and to rebuild the domestic supply chain from the ground up. The initiative was designed to restore American control over materials essential to defense systems, energy infrastructure, and high-technology manufacturing. It marked the first serious attempt in decades to reverse the erosion of the United States strategic autonomy—and, in doing so, quietly acknowledged how dangerously exposed the nation had become. That exposure did not occur overnight. It was the cumulative result of decades of policy failure under successive administrations, across party lines, that systematically dismantled America's rare earth ecosystem. Mining capacity was neglected, refining and separation facilities were allowed to disappear, magnet manufacturing was abandoned, and strategic planning was replaced with short-term cost calculations. Even more alarming, foreign—primarily Chinese—companies were permitted to operate rare earth mines on U.S. soil, export raw material abroad for processing, and then sell finished products back to American industry. By the time Washington acted, control had already been surrendered. The trigger that finally brought this negligence into the open was the tariff regime introduced after President Trump took office on January 20, 2025. Intended to correct trade imbalances and assert economic leverage against China, the tariffs instead exposed the fragile foundations of the American industrial system. China's response was not confined to reciprocal tariffs. It deployed a far more potent tool: control over the export of rare earth minerals and, more critically, rare earth magnets. Rare earth elements consist of seventeen minerals, including neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium, and terbium. These elements are not rare in a geological sense; the United States itself holds substantial reserves. What makes them strategically rare is the difficulty of extracting, separating, and refining them into usable industrial forms. This process is capital-intensive, environmentally complex, and technologically demanding. While the United States gradually exited this space, China invested patiently, mastering every stage of the value chain. Rare earth magnets represent the point where strategic value becomes decisive. Neodymium-iron-boron magnets are exponentially stronger and more efficient than conventional magnets, enabling compact, high-performance systems that modern technology depends upon. Electric vehicles rely on them for efficient motors. Wind turbines depend on them for power generation. Smartphones, computers, robotics, and medical imaging equipment

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cannot function without them. Most critically, advanced weapons systems—fighter aircraft, submarines, missile guidance platforms, radar arrays, satellites, and space systems—are built around rare earth magnet technology. In modern warfare and high-tech industry alike, these magnets are more essential than oil, gas, or even nuclear fuel. When China signaled restrictions on the free flow of these materials in response to trade pressure, the impact on the United States was immediate. Defense contractors warned of supply disruptions. Electric vehicle manufacturers faced production uncertainty. Semiconductor, robotics, and aerospace industries confronted bottlenecks that threatened to halt assembly lines. The message was unmistakable: without access to Chinese-controlled supply chains, large segments of the American economy could not function. Manufacturing leaders rushed to Washington with stark warnings. Defense suppliers and technology firms made clear that prolonged disruption would cripple production and weaken national security. Temporary diplomatic adjustments followed, easing immediate pressure, but the strategic lesson could no longer be ignored. The United States had allowed a single external power to dominate the most critical inputs of the modern economy. It was this realization that culminated in the February 2026 decision to create a strategic reserve and rebuild domestic capacity. Yet the very scale of the initiative underscored the depth of the problem. Constructing mines, refineries, separation plants, alloy facilities, and magnet factories is not a short-term exercise. Rebuilding expertise, securing environmental approvals, training skilled labor, and establishing industrial scale will take a decade or more. Until then, American industries remain exposed, and defense stockpiles continue to thin. Despite political rhetoric, many firms will remain dependent on Chinese supply—on Chinese terms.

The rare earth crisis also exposed a second, even more consequential failure: the hollowing out of America's manufacturing base. Over the past four decades, production was systematically outsourced to Asia and other regions. The United States retained innovation, design, finance, and branding, while physical manufacturing migrated abroad. This model delivered profits during periods of stability, but under stress it proved dangerously fragile.

By the mid-2020s, manufacturing employment represented only a fraction of the U.S. workforce compared to its historical peak. The tariff shock revealed a hard truth: innovation without manufacturing depth is not power; it is dependence. Ideas alone cannot build vehicles, weapons, energy systems, or infrastructure when supply chains fracture. The domestic consequences are increasingly visible. Job insecurity has risen, real wage growth has lagged, and many households rely on savings or government support to maintain stability. A nation that once projected industrial confidence now faces growing public anxiety about economic security and employment resilience. Geopolitically, the tariff era produced an outcome few anticipated. Rather than isolating China, it accelerated China's centrality. Allies and competitors alike were penalized, prompting many to seek stability by deepening engagement with Beijing. Across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, countries moved pragmatically toward China—not out of ideology, but necessity. China's strength at this moment lies not in coercion, but in integration. It controls critical processing chokepoints, maintains manufacturing scale, and sustains trade relationships across political systems. While the United States pushed partners away through pressure, China welcomed them through industrial cooperation and long-term planning.

America and the Future of Artificial Intelligence

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The first dimension AI progress spans a spectrum from superintelligence to bounded and jagged advancement.

Superintelligent AI, capable of recursive self-improvement, would be a transformative force with far-reaching consequences for economics, science and military power. Even a narrow lead could prove decisive, justifying substantial investments in frontier research.

In contrast, bounded and uneven AI delivers significant capabilities in areas such as mathematics, coding and logistics, yet remains constrained in creativity, judgment and physical application

EVERYONE seems to have a theory about artificial intelligence. Some imagine a future dominated by super intelligent machines, capable of transforming societies in ways unprecedented in history. Others envision a more incremental trajectory, where AI enhances productivity, accelerates scientific discovery and gradually reshapes economic and military landscapes without a sudden leap. The divergence in these expectations underscores the difficulty policymakers face: how does one prepare for a technology whose pace, impact and diffusion remain uncertain? Central to any discussion of AI strategy are assumptions about the replicability of breakthroughs. Some analysts expect rapid imitation: rivals could soon catch up through reverse engineering, access to leaked models, or innovative use of existing infrastructure. Others argue that the complexity of AI, particularly its reliance on proprietary hardware, vast datasets and specialised expertise, creates durable advantages for those who reach the frontier first. Similar disagreements surround China's ambitions. Some contend Beijing is determined to surpass the United States in frontier innovation, while others suggest it prioritises deploying existing technologies and adapting American breakthroughs once they appear.

The stakes are high. Strategies built on incorrect assumptions risk wasting resources and losing technological leadership. For Washington, the challenge is not predicting a single future but building resilience across multiple possibilities. AI strategy must ensure that national security, economic competitiveness and democratic values are strengthened, even as the shape of the AI era remains uncertain. A useful framework for understanding the challenge involves three central questions: first, will AI progress accelerate toward superintelligence, or will it plateau in uneven and bounded ways? Second, will breakthroughs be easy to replicate, or will catching up remain difficult and costly? Third, is China racing aggressively toward frontier AI, or is it prioritising diffusion and adaptation? Each question has two plausible answers, yielding a three-dimensional matrix with eight potential scenarios, each with distinct strategic implications.

The first dimension AI progress spans a spectrum from superintelligence to bounded and jagged advancement. Superintelligent AI, capable of recursive self-improvement, would be a transformative force with far-reaching consequences for economics, science and military power. Even a narrow lead could prove decisive, justifying substantial investments in frontier research. In contrast, bounded and uneven AI delivers significant capabilities in areas such as mathematics, coding and logistics, yet remains constrained in creativity, judgment and physical application. In such a world, prioritising broad deployment and diffusion may be more effective than concentrating resources on a few moonshot projects. The second axis considers the ease of replication. In a world where catching up is straightforward, technological advantages are fleeting and strategy centres on rapid adoption and embedding systems across allied networks.

Conversely, if replication is difficult, the focus shifts to safeguarding critical infrastructure, datasets and human capital. Here, the first mover retains a lasting edge and the ability to compound advances over time becomes a central concern. Strategy must then balance diffusion with the protection of core capabilities.

The third axis focuses on China's intentions. At one extreme, Beijing races aggressively toward frontier innovation, funding major training runs and competing laboratories. At the other, it emphasises adoption and diffusion, occasionally producing frontier-scale models to signal capability but relying on replication and adaptation of foreign breakthroughs. While China's internal strategy may vary across institutions, its overall behaviour determines whether Washington must prepare for direct competition at the frontier or a focus on global diffusion. Across these dimensions, eight worlds emerge, each demanding tailored policy responses. In the most extreme scenario—superintelligence, difficult replication and an aggressive China—the United States could face a contest akin to a technological arms race. Here, securing frontier breakthroughs becomes a matter of national survival. Policymakers may need to mobilise extraordinary resources, coordinate government and private sector efforts and strengthen security across the semiconductor supply chain, training infrastructure and model data. International risk management would be crucial, including potential restraint agreements with China to avoid unintended escalation and maintain human oversight of autonomous systems.

In a variation where superintelligence is achievable and replication remains difficult, but China does not race aggressively, the United States might enjoy a unipolar moment. The challenge here is less about competition and more about the responsible use of transformative capabilities. Securing critical infrastructure and talent, safeguarding intellectual property and pacing development to ensure safety would be priorities. Diffusion of technology would be selective, extending access to trusted allies and partners, while domestic policy could focus on harnessing productivity gains for broad-based prosperity and social resilience. If breakthroughs are easily copied, the race shifts from frontier research to global diffusion. Here, the advantage lies in who deploys systems fastest, shapes standards and integrates technology into domestic and allied industries. In such a world, export controls and secrecy have limited effect; strategy must emphasise deployment, adoption and embedding systems aligned with democratic values. Cooperation with allies becomes indispensable, not only to extend technological influence but also to manage security risks arising from rapid proliferation.

Even if superintelligence remains out of reach, frontier competition remains significant. A scenario where replication is hard and China races toward the frontier presents a protracted innovation contest. The United States must sustain research and development, invest in industrial capacity and ensure early deployment of capable systems. Diffusion remains important, but the emphasis

shifts toward building a durable advantage over time, rather than achieving immediate global dominance.

Across all scenarios, certain constants emerge. Computing power underpins AI capability. Control over chips, data centres and energy resources determines who can train and deploy advanced systems. Robotics and advanced manufacturing translate digital intelligence into tangible economic and military capacity. A strong industrial-scientific base, a robust talent pool and resilient infrastructure remain essential. Risk management—often seen as a constraint—is equally a source of stability, ensuring that technological progress does not outpace safety, oversight, or societal readiness. Policymakers also shape the trajectory of AI indirectly. Through incentives, regulations, research funding, export controls and strategic signalling, Washington can influence where investment flows, which capabilities mature and how systems diffuse globally. Engaging with allies to offer trusted alternatives to Chinese technology and embedding safe and open systems abroad strengthens both security and global influence. Yet the private sector remains central and its priorities do not always align with national objectives. Managing this tension balancing frontier innovation, deployment and risk is among the United States' greatest challenges.

The eight-world framework serves not to forecast a single outcome but to discipline thinking, expose hidden assumptions and test strategies against a range of possibilities. Policymakers must select a base case, hedge against adverse outcomes and identify policies resilient across multiple scenarios. Intelligence and national security agencies should monitor signals along each axis, updating strategic assumptions as evidence accumulates. This probabilistic approach allows for flexibility, adaptability and informed decision-making in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Finally, this framework is instructive beyond the government. Debate over AI often degenerates into advocacy for opposing visions. By clarifying assumptions whether about the pace of progress, replicability of breakthroughs, or China's intentions participants can engage more productively, distinguishing between differences in assumptions and differences in strategy. Geopolitics in the AI era will not be simple. Yet, without a disciplined framework, hidden assumptions and untested narratives risk guiding policy, squandering advantage and undermining security. Mapping possible worlds and the decisions they entail enables both policymakers and citizens to navigate uncertainty. The task for the United States is clear: treat AI not as a single story but as a shifting landscape. Success will go to those who understand the multiplicity of futures and act strategically, rather than reacting to the illusion of certainty. In an era defined by uncertainty, clarity comes not from predicting a single outcome but from preparing for all plausible ones. The AI age is already upon us and the choices made today will define the balance of technological power, economic influence and national security for decades to come.

The Vision Gap in Pakistan's Classrooms

Nadia Mustafa Thalho



This gap becomes particularly visible when one looks closely at Pakistan Studies, a subject that should lie at the heart of civic education. Instead of helping young people understand society, power, rights and responsibilities, the subject increasingly functions as an exercise in recalling approved facts. A review of the Sindh Curriculum (revised 2020)...

PAKISTAN'S education policy today suffers from a quiet but troubling contradiction. On paper, official curriculum documents speak confidently of preparing students for the future. They invoke ideas of active citizenship, sustainable development and global awareness, suggesting a system that encourages informed, responsible participation in society. Inside classrooms, however, the reality tells a different story. Teaching remains dominated by rote learning, examinations reward memorisation, and students are rarely encouraged to question, debate or reflect. The result is a widening gap between what education policy promises and what it actually delivers. This gap becomes particularly visible when one looks closely at Pakistan Studies, a subject that should lie at the heart of civic education. Instead of helping young people understand society, power, rights and responsibilities, the subject increasingly functions as an exercise in recalling approved facts. A review of the Sindh Curriculum (revised 2020) and the National Curriculum of Pakistan (2023) reveals that despite differences in structure and presentation, both documents fall short of their stated ambitions. The true priorities of any curriculum are not found in its opening statements or guiding principles. They are embedded in Student Learning Outcomes, which determine what teachers teach, what textbooks include and what examiners test. In Sindh's secondary-level Pakistan Studies curriculum for Grades IX and X, a majority of learning outcomes ask students to define terms, list events or describe developments. These tasks may be easy to measure, but they demand little intellectual engagement. They do not ask students to weigh evidence, make judgments or connect historical knowledge to present realities.

The national curriculum, introduced as part of a broader effort to promote conceptual learning, appears more progressive in language but not substantially different in substance. While it refers to themes and competencies, many of its learning outcomes still stop short of encouraging deeper thinking. Students are told what conclusions to reach rather than being guided through the process of reaching them. Knowledge flows in one direction, from textbook to student, leaving little space for inquiry or interpretation.

This reflects a deeper structural problem. Provincial and federal authorities may use different frameworks, one emphasising historical progression and the other thematic organisation, but both ultimately reproduce the same classroom culture. Textbooks remain predictable, teachers feel constrained by examination demands, and students learn quickly that success depends on reproducing authorised answers. Reform, in this sense, becomes more about relabelling than transformation.

The treatment of global citizenship and sustainable development offers a clear example. In the Sindh curriculum, students are typically asked to identify environmental problems or name their effects. The national curriculum sometimes goes a step further, asking for general solutions. Yet international educational standards expect students to analyse underlying causes, consider competing priorities and propose realistic interventions within their own communities. The difference is not merely technical. One approach trains students to repeat information; the other prepares them to engage with real-world challenges. Equally concerning are the silences within these curricula. Digital citizenship, online rights, ethical use of technology and basic economic or entrepreneurial skills receive little attention. Students are required to memorise long historical timelines, often inherited from colonial-era frameworks, but are given minimal guidance on how to navigate the political, social and economic pressures of contemporary life. In a society where public debate, activism and even livelihoods increasingly unfold online, this omission carries serious consequences. The problem is not simply that content is outdated, but that complex ideas are reduced to checklists. Values such as patriotism, civic responsibility and empathy are presented as fixed statements rather than explored as lived experiences shaped by social context. Learning outcomes overlap excessively, creating crowded textbooks that prioritise quantity over coherence. In some grades, important conceptual threads disappear altogether, leaving gaps that teachers are ill-equipped to address. Assessment practices reinforce these weaknesses. When examination questions

repeatedly ask students to "state", "describe" or "discuss", textbooks respond by offering ready-made paragraphs. Students quickly learn that questioning the material is risky, while reproducing it is safe. Critical engagement becomes not a skill to be rewarded, but a liability to be avoided. Closing this vision gap requires more than cosmetic changes. Reprinting textbooks, adjusting headings or introducing new terminology will not be enough. What is needed is a shift in how learning outcomes are framed and how learning is assessed. The language of instruction must move beyond recall. Students should be asked to analyse policies, evaluate historical decisions and propose solutions to contemporary social problems. Such changes would naturally push classrooms away from memorisation and towards meaningful engagement. Citizenship education must also reflect the realities students already inhabit. Discussions of rights and responsibilities cannot remain confined to abstract constitutional ideals. They must include digital spaces, online behaviour, access to information and economic participation. Civic identity today is shaped as much by screens as by streets, and education must acknowledge that fact.

Similarly, global development goals should be linked to action rather than slogans. Instead of merely identifying problems, students should be encouraged to design small, practical initiatives within their communities. Even limited projects can teach responsibility, cooperation and problem-solving more effectively than abstract definitions. Assessment reform is equally critical. Examinations should test how democratic principles, social responsibilities and legal frameworks apply to current challenges, such as environmental stress, inequality and governance failures. This would signal to teachers and students alike that understanding matters more than memorisation. Education does more than prepare individuals for employment; it shapes citizens. If Pakistan's curricula continue to speak the language of the future while teaching the habits of the past, the gap between policy ambition and social reality will continue to widen. Bridging this gap is not merely a technical task. It is a political and moral choice about the kind of society Pakistan hopes to become.

Briefs

32 martyred
as bomber
targets
imambargah

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Due to the pressure on facilities in the capital, the injured are also being shifted to hospitals in other parts of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Islamabad Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon said that an emergency has been imposed at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), Polyclinic Hospital and the Capital Development Authority (CDA) hospital. The statement added that assistant commissioners have been deployed at various hospitals to supervise the treatment and medical care of the injured. The Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) administration said that at least 18 bodies were brought to the hospital, while more than 78 injured were also received. Authorities at Rawalpindi's Benazir Bhutto Hospital said four injured were brought to the hospital, where one of them later died during treatment.

Japan,
Pakistan
celebrate...

FROM PAGE 01

people-to-people exchanges, the Ambassador said that Pakistani youth is taking immense interest in Japan and noted that the number of young Pakistanis studying Japanese language has been increasing sharply, with over 1,000 candidates recently sat for every Japanese Language Proficiency Test. The Ambassador highlighted economic synergy in AI and IT, noting Pakistan's rapidly growing IT sector and Japanese companies' efforts to connect with skilled professionals. Currently, nearly 80 Japanese firms operate in Pakistan, employing for more than 100,000 people.

Attack on
polio team
leaves...

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terrorism, looting, robbery, and extortion surrendered before the State of Pakistan. The group was led by Mirak Khan Chakrani, who laid down arms along with 25 of his associates. During the surrender, the militants handed over a large cache of weapons and ammunition to the authorities, further reinforcing their commitment to abandoning violence. Mirak Khan Chakrani also announced his decision to join the "Chakrani Peace Force," pledging support for efforts to counter extremist elements and maintain peace in the area. Officials believe that the effective strategy adopted under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna will encourage other militant and criminal elements in Balochistan to surrender before the state in the near future, strengthening long-term peace and security.

Pakistan,
Uzbekistan
relations...

FROM PAGE 01

He also acknowledged President Mirziyoyev's personal role in bringing Pakistan and Uzbekistan closer. President Zardari said that Pakistan and Uzbekistan are natural partners with intertwined futures and expressed satisfaction over the positive trajectory of bilateral relations. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working closely with Uzbekistan to further strengthen cooperation in trade, connectivity, defence, security, culture and heritage. He noted that direct air links between the two countries have brought their peoples closer and underscored the importance of regional connectivity initiatives, including the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Railway Project, while highlighting the need to address remaining challenges through collective efforts. The President highlighted the steady growth in bilateral trade in recent years and underscored the need to realise the true economic potential of the relationship, with the shared objective of expanding trade to USD 2 billion as agreed by the two sides.

Pakistan set for first-ever
FIFAE esports campaign

"We are committed to making the most of this opportunity," said Mohsen Gilani. "It will provide a significant boost to esports talent in Pakistan, particularly those passionate about football gaming"

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a historic move, Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) President Syed Mohsen Gilani has confirmed Pakistan's participation in the FIFAE 2026 Season, marking the country's first-ever entry into the global FIFA esports arena. The announcement reflects the PFF's continued efforts to ensure Pakistan's

representation on the international stage across multiple platforms, including esports. "We are committed to making the most of this opportunity," said Mohsen Gilani. "It will provide a significant boost to esports talent in Pakistan, particularly those passionate about football gaming." Pakistan will compete in the eFootball™ Console category, one of the three official titles featured in the FIFAE competition. Gilani stated that the PFF is

seeking top gaming talent through a nationwide activation and trials process. "For the upcoming phases, the PFF will also be seeking a national partner," he added. Prospective partners will be invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) along with a comprehensive partnership plan. According to the eligibility criteria, interested participants must be at least 16 years of age at the time of registration, possess a valid and reg-

istered FIFAE Player Account on FIFA.GG, and must not be subject to any active sanctions under the Rocket League Championship Series (RLCS), any KONAMI-sanctioned tournaments, or any FIFAE competitions. The trials will pave the way for the selection of players who will go on to represent Pakistan in the 2026 FIFAE Season, which will culminate in the FIFAE World Cup 2026, scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia later in the year.

Police vital to peacekeeping
success, senior UN officials

UNITED NATIONS: Against the backdrop of budget cuts and a severe liquidity crisis, United Nations peace operations and their police contingents are making hard choices – often in very difficult conditions – to deliver on their mandates, the UN Security Council was told by senior officers on Thursday. The occasion was the annual briefing to the Council members from the heads of police components of United Nations peace operations. Briefing the 15-member Council, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix stressed that, while "efficiency is essential", it "cannot replace predictable and sustainable financing". He called for greater support for international police officers deployed to field missions at a time when financial resources are dwindling and multilateralism is waning. "Despite severe constraints, our police personnel continue to serve with dedication, professionalism and courage," he said. "They operate in environments of persistent insecurity,

political volatility, and growing operational risks." Peace operations depend on UN Police (UNPOL) for community engagement, institutional reform, and prevention of criminal and inter-communal violence. Officers also address challenges that require a policing response, including in environments with high-density populations such as displacement camps, among other duties. "United Nations Police remain a key component of UN peacekeeping and play an indispensable role in fulfilling our mandates," Lacroix said. He stressed that Member States, host countries, uniformed and civilian personnel all share responsibility for ensuring the success of peacekeeping. Faisal Shahkar, Police Adviser and Director of the Police Division, said that continued political and financial engagement of Member States was "critical" to ensuring that the United Nations Police remains fit for purpose and responsive to the evolving challenges of today's complex security environment. "This year's Police Week

takes place at a moment of reflection and transition," said Shahkar, a Pakistani national, citing strained multilateralism, fragile geopolitics and persistent conflict. "Yet, United Nations police remain a cornerstone" in supporting peace, protecting civilians and building accountable institutions, he said, warning of tougher security environments, organized crime, disinformation and resource constraints. Despite challenges, he cited successes in the Central African Republic and Abyei, urging Member States to sustain momentum so gains "are preserved". "Your continued support remains critical in ensuring that the United Nations Police can fulfill our mandated tasks and remain a vital tool for peace and security," Shahkar told member states. Meinolf Schlotmann, Police Commissioner of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), said the country's vast size and poor access mean the Mission cannot "be everywhere at once", requiring prioritization of high-risk areas and long-range patrols.

UN police, he said, aims to "protect today" while helping build a police service that can protect tomorrow, through mobile, rapidly deployable patrols and support to humanitarian corridors. But, liquidity-driven cuts – including a 15 per cent budget reduction – have sharply reduced personnel and mobility, even as teams "continue to deliver" by adapting their approach. Mamouna Ouedraogo, Head of the Police Component of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), said officers work in "one of the world's most challenging security environments", with efforts shifting "decisively towards prevention and protection". She noted liquidity measures have cut police deployments to about half strength, prioritizing displacement-affected areas and protection of women and children. "Effective policing is not peripheral," she said. "It is foundational" to civilian protection, accountability and sustainable stabilization. – APP

'I wanted to die':
survivors recount
Mozambique
flood terror

MANHIÇA: Erica Raimundo Mimbir delivered her first baby on a school desk, the only dry place she found after days marooned in her flooded home in southern Mozambique. "I wanted to die because of the labour pains and the conditions," the 17-year-old told AFP in a village in the province of Maputo. Evacuated by boat the next day, Mimbir took shelter with relatives, among some 650,000 Mozambicans the United Nations says have been affected by torrential rains since December. "I don't think I'll return home because I've never experienced anything like this," Mimbir said, recounting that the high waters meant she could not sleep lying down but leaning against a wall. "It was very painful," she said, holding her baby, Rosita, who was born on January 19 premature and weighing 1.5 kilogrammes (3.3 pounds). The child was named after Rosita Salvador, whose mother gave birth in a tree that she climbed to escape devastating flooding in Mozambique in 2000. Salvador, who died this month after a long illness, became a symbol of resilience in a disaster that killed 800 people. The southern African country's latest bout of flooding has claimed nearly 140 lives since October 1, according to the National Disasters Management Institute. Around 100,000 people are sheltering in one of 99 temporary accommodation centres, says the UN's humanitarian coordination office (OCHA). In the province's 3 de Fevereiro village in Manhica district, a low-slung school has been turned into one such emergency shelter. About 500 people sleep on mats in its 11 classrooms, their clothes draped over blackboards and window bars as they take stock of what the floods swept away and how close many came to losing their lives. Among them is Elsa Paulino, a 36-year-old mother of five who became cut off from her home after taking her two youngest children to a funeral outside her village. By the time she returned, the road had vanished under rising water. – Agencies

Australia drug
kingpin walks
free after police
informant scandal

SYDNEY: One of Australia's most famous gangsters walked free on Friday after prosecutors said they would drop a planned retrial on drug trafficking charges. Sixty-year-old Tony Mokbel – a key figure in Melbourne's years-long gangland war – was jailed for 30 years in 2012 after pleading guilty to masterminding an elaborate drug syndicate. But his case fell apart after it was revealed that his high-profile lawyer at the time, Nicola Gobbo, was feeding information to police while supposedly defending her clients. Mokbel spent about 18 years behind bars but was released on bail last April after a court ruled he had a strong chance of overturning the criminal convictions. A court subsequently acquitted him of one charge and ordered a possible retrial over allegations he tried to import a commercial quantity of synthetic drug MDMA in 2005. On Friday, prosecutors in the state of Victoria said they had decided not to pursue that planned retrial. "This decision was reached after careful consideration of all aspects of the matter relevant to the prospects of conviction and the public interest in a retrial," the Victoria Office of Public Prosecutions said in a statement. Prosecutors said they took into account Mokbel's age and health as well as time already spent behind bars. "It feels really nice, and life goes on," the ageing mobster told local media outside a Melbourne courthouse. And he said he was keen to go abroad, something he said he had dreamed about while in prison. "It'd be great to get on a nice plane," he said. Asked if he regretted drug trafficking, he answered: "I do not regret anything". Violence linked to Mokbel's group, known as "The Company", claimed dozens of lives and was later immortalised in the hugely popular Australian TV series "Underbelly". Gobbo – also referred to as Lawyer X and Informer 3838 – claims that over 300 people were arrested and charged based on the information she provided. – Agencies

Giannis stays
with Bucks
as NBA trade
deadline
passes

NEW YORK: Giannis Antetokounmpo remained with the Milwaukee Bucks as the NBA trade deadline passed on Thursday, the team delaying any move until after the season ends. The 31-year-old Greek forward, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player who helped Milwaukee win the 2021 league title, is a 10-time All-Star who is in his 13th NBA season, all with the Bucks, but attracted trade interest with Milwaukee at 20-29 this season. Antetokounmpo, 31, is averaging 28.0 points, 10.0 rebounds and 5.6 assists a game this season but is out with a calf injury. "Legends don't chase. They attract," Antetokounmpo posted on X after the deadline with a meme from "The Wolf of Wall Street" of Leonardo DiCaprio yelling about not leaving – a message quickly reposted by the Bucks. Milwaukee likely can make a better deal after the season for Antetokounmpo, who has an option year on his contract after next season. – Agencies

Five Teams to Feature in
EcoStar Aibak Polo Cup

DWP EcoStar Director Taha Muhammad Naseem said it was an honor to support the historic Lahore Polo Club, which has long played a key role in promoting polo as a prestigious and positive sport

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a major boost to Pakistan's polo calendar, the Lahore Polo Club has announced the EcoStar 49th Aibak Polo Cup 2026, a prestigious annual tournament held in honor of Sultan Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, promising top-class action and fierce competition. The announcement was made during a press conference jointly addressed by Lahore Polo Club President Malik Azam Hayat Noon and DWP Group Director Taha Muhammad Naseem, who shared key details of the tournament. The press conference was attended by several distinguished personalities, including Lahore Polo Club Executive Committee members Feroz Gulzar and Saqib Khan Khakwani, Club Secretary Maj Amjad Ghafoor, DWP EcoStar Marketing Head Shoaib Younus, club member Faisal Khan, international players Marcos Rivarola, Lao Abelenda, and Amirreza Behboudi, Master Paints Director Sufi Muhammad Haroon, along with umpires, officials, and a large number of polo enthusiasts. Speaking on the occasion, Lahore Polo Club President Malik Azam Hayat Noon highlighted the historical significance of the tournament, stating that the Aibak Cup is held annually in honor of Sultan Qutb-ud-Din Aibak. He added that the 49th edition will be played as a 10-goal event, featuring five competitive teams: Master Paints, Diamond Paints, BN Polo, FG Polo, and SQ Seagold. Malik Noon further said that each participating team includes international players, while foreign umpires and commentators have also been invited to ensure high professional standards throughout the tournament. DWP EcoStar Director Taha Muhammad Naseem said it was an honor to support the historic Lahore Polo Club, which has long played a key role in promoting polo as a prestigious and positive sport. He emphasised that EcoStar strongly believes in the power of sports to promote positivity and healthy community engagement. Iranian player Amirreza Behboudi said that the Aibak Cup marks the beginning of the high-goal polo season and described the Lahore Polo Club as a historic venue renowned for maintaining high standards of the game.

Spin woes, injury and poor form dog
Australia for T20 World Cup

They will have a spin-heavy squad at the World Cup, with left-armers Matt Kuhnemann and Cooper Connolly complementing Zampa, should he be fit, and part-timer Maxwell

SYDNEY: Captain Mitchell Marsh insists Australia can put their spin woes behind them at the T20 Cricket World Cup after a morale-sapping series defeat to Pakistan left their preparations in tatters. The 2021 champions are title contenders at the tournament in India and Sri Lanka beginning on Saturday, but it has been a horror build-up. They capitulated to Pakistan in Lahore by 22 runs, then 90 and lastly by a crushing 111 – their heaviest-ever T20 defeat. Outplayed with bat and ball, they were strangled by Pakistan's spinners. Marsh defended the team's record in the spin-friendly conditions they will encounter, insisting they learned some lessons from their Pakistan thrashing. "In isolation, purely in this series, we struggled," he said. "But over the last 18 months I think as a team we've been one

of the best teams in the world, and we've played spin really well. "We'll take the learnings, we'll move on to the World Cup and we know we're a very good side in all conditions." They were without big-hitters Tim David and Glenn Maxwell in Pakistan, both of whom have proven records against spin. Their return will be a welcome boost. "We know that conditions can spin in Sri Lanka and we'll assess that when we get there," added Marsh, who will open with Travis Head. "We've got some extremely good players of spin coming back and experience coming back." Adding to their problems, Australia are missing star pacemen Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood for the whole tournament. Cummins is still recovering from a lower back issue while the injury-prone Hazlewood has hamstring and Achilles problems.

Fellow speedster Nathan Ellis is also making his return from injury, while spinner Adam Zampa reportedly has a groin complaint. Australia open their title bid against Ireland in Colombo on Wednesday. They will have a spin-heavy squad at the World Cup, with left-armers Matt Kuhnemann and Cooper Connolly complementing Zampa, should he be fit, and part-timer Maxwell. Ellis, Xavier Bartlett and Ben Dwarshuis, a last-minute replacement for Cummins, provide the seam options, with Sean Abbott cover. The batting will be spearheaded by Marsh, Head, David, Maxwell, Marcus Stoinis and Cameron Green, although none of them have fired in the game's shortest format in recent months. Controversially, one of Australia's best batters against spin, and a form player, will not be there. Steve Smith was overlooked de-

spite his blistering Big Bash League form as an opener. Selectors said there was no room for him given Marsh and Head occupy the top of the order. "If a replacement is required, Steve is very much in contention and this has been communicated with him," said national selector Tony Dodemaide. Calls have been building to parachute him in given the side's Pakistan struggles. "It really does defy logic that Steve Smith is not in the World Cup squad," tweeted former great Mark Waugh. Ex-Test wicketkeeper Ian Healy added: "I'd have him in the team." After meeting Ireland, Australia will play 12th-ranked Zimbabwe, 20th-ranked Oman and co-hosts Sri Lanka with the top two progressing to the Super Eights. "We're going to the World Cup to try and win it, and we're solely focused on that," said a defiant Marsh. – APP

Australian
HC shocked
over blast

FROM PAGE 01
mourns with Pakistan at this difficult time." The attack, which occurred during Friday prayer, has resulted in numerous casualties and has sent shockwaves through the capital city. Local authorities have secured the area and are conducting a full investigation. Emergency services are responding to treat the wounded.

President
confers
highest...

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan and Uzbekistan. The ceremony underscored the commitment of both nations to enhance cooperation across multiple sectors, including trade, connectivity, security, and cultural exchange. Following the award presentation, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, presented a photo album to the Uzbek President, capturing moments from his visit and symbolizing the growing partnership.

PM invites
Uzbek firms
to invest...

FROM PAGE 01
program already drafted and established. "I am here, of course, as Prime Minister of Pakistan, but for this forum as the CEO of Pakistan. I am just a telephone call away. My colleagues are just a telephone call away. We will remove any bottleneck or impediment on the way. And I would like to assure you that bureaucracy and red tapism will not create any kind of hurdle in your business proposals," Prime Minister Shehbaz committed. Recalling his participation in a similar business forum last year in Tashkent, he said the deliberations there had led the bilateral trade to \$450 million during the last year, which was still far below the potential. He expressed the hope that President Mirziyoyev's visit would go a long way to strengthen bilateral relations and convert them into a level of unprecedented economic cooperation. Referring to the signing of \$2 billion trade protocol, he said that Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations would now be measured by trade flows, investment projects, industrial partnerships and people-to-people exchanges. He said both countries would form a working group to come up with a roadmap of five years to promote trade, investment portfolio, and joint collaborations in research and development, IT, and agriculture. Highlighting his government's achievements on the economic front, he said the country had transitioned from a period of severe physical turbulence in 2023 to an improved economic conditions with the inflation rate down from over 30% to a single digit, banking policy rate from 22.5% to 10.5%, and IT sector exports are touching \$3.8 billion exports.

18 killed
in Indian
mine blast

FROM PAGE 01
Rat-hole mining has continued in the state despite a blanket ban in place, activists say. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced financial assistance of 200,000 rupees (\$2,215, £1,636) for the deceased and 50,000 rupees for the injured. The blast – which happened inside the mine – was suspected to be caused by dynamite, police say. The mine was located in a forested area 72km (45 miles) away from state capital Shillong. Kumar says 18 bodies have been recovered so far and one person with severe burn injuries has been admitted to a hospital in Shillong. He, however, says it is not yet clear how many more workers might be trapped underground.

Briefs

Amazon shares dive as costs climb along with revenue

SAN FRANCISCO, UNITED STATES :Amazon shares dove more than 8 percent on Thursday as the computing and retail titan reported strong sales but raised spending estimates.

Amazon reported a profit of \$21.2 billion on net sales of \$213.4 billion in the recently ended quarter as its AWS cloud computing, retail, advertising, and chips businesses thrived. "With such strong demand for our existing offerings and seminal opportunities like AI, chips, robotics, and low-earth orbit satellites, we expect to invest about \$200 billion in capital expenditures across Amazon in 2026," said Amazon chief executive Andy Jassy. Market analysts had forecast that Amazon capital expenditures would reach about \$147 billion this year, mostly due to AI spending initiatives. Amazon Web Services (AWS) unit sales in the quarter tallied \$35.6 billion, a 24 percent jump from the same period a year earlier, according to earnings figures. Like other tech giants, Amazon is making massive investments to grab a slice of the AI revolution pie. It is particularly banking on the performance of AWS, the world's leading cloud provider, which is engaged in a race against its fast-growing rivals, Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud.—APP

Cuba says willing to talk to US, 'without pressure'

HAVANA: Cuba is prepared to hold dialogue with the United States but not under pressure, President Miguel Diaz-Canel insisted Thursday after months of threats from US President Donald Trump. Trump has vowed to cut off Cuba's access to oil and stated the communist island was "ready to fail" as he warned it to "make a deal" with Washington "BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE." The Republican did not say what kind of a deal he was after, but he has repeatedly stated the two countries were in negotiations, which Havana has denied. "Cuba is willing to engage in dialogue with the United States, a dialogue on any topic... but without pressure or preconditions," Diaz-Canel said on state TV and radio. He said any talks must take place "from a position of equals, with respect for our sovereignty, our independence and our self-determination" and without "interference in our internal affairs." Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the Miami-born son of Cuban immigrants, have made no secret of their desire to bring about regime change in Havana. White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told reporters Thursday: "I think the fact that the Cuban government is on its last leg and its country is about to collapse, they should be wise in their statements directed towards the president of the United States." Asked about Cuba's denial of the existence of negotiations, she said her boss was "always willing to engage in diplomacy and I believe that is something that is taking place, in fact, with the Cuban government.—APP

Leghari for ensuring access to energy sector data

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for the Power Division, Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari, has taken a significant step towards promoting transparency and informed policymaking by directing that energy sector data be made accessible to the public, researchers, energy experts, and students. According to the Federal Minister's official statement, the minister emphasized that open access to reliable and accurate data would enable stakeholders to provide constructive and meaningful recommendations for the improvement of the power sector. He underscored the importance of data transparency for evidence-based discussions and effective reforms. He noted that making data easily available to all would enhance accountability and strengthen public trust in the power sector.—

Pakistan's strategic moment: stability, strength, and a recalibrated region

SENATOR MANZOOR AHMAD KHAN KAKAR



The events that followed the Pakistan-India War in 2025 significantly altered the strategic discourse in South Asia. Beyond the immediate military and diplomatic repercussions, the post-conflict phase has exposed a more profound reality: Pakistan is now more globally engaged, strategically mature, and geopolitically relevant than it has been in

recent decades.

Wars alter perceptions rather than just redrawing lines on maps. Following the war with India in 2025, Pakistan showed institutional strength where uncertainty had previously existed, coherence where chaos was anticipated, and restraint where escalation was anticipated. Due to this combination, Pakistan is now seen by the international community as a central state influencing events rather than as a peripheral actor responding to them. Pakistan's ongoing geostrategic significance is at the centre of this change. Pakistan is not just a geographical bridge but also a strategic link because of its location at the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and China. Pakistan's sphere of influence invariably crosses trade corridors, energy routes, counterterrorism frameworks, and regional stability initiatives. When combined with state capacity, geography becomes power in a world increasingly characterised by competition and connectivity. The military of Pakistan should be commended for upholding credible deterrence without needless escalation.

Both allies and adversaries were reassured that Pakistan is still a responsible nuclear state, fully aware of the serious responsibilities such a capability entails, by the professionalism, readiness, and discipline shown both during and after the conflict. It takes decades of institutional learning and strategic clarity to achieve this balance between strength and restraint. The role of diplomatic organisations and civilian leadership in guiding Pakistan through a challenging post-war environment has been equally significant. Today, the ability to convert security into stability and stability into opportunity is a better indicator of strategic maturity than military prowess alone. Since 2025, Pakistan has engaged with regional neighbours, major international powers, and multilateral forums, demonstrating a resurgence of diplomatic confidence that is based on confidence rather than defensiveness. The reaction around the world has been instructive. Pakistan's importance to regional connectivity, counterterrorism cooperation, maritime security in the Arabian Sea, and peace efforts in Afghanistan has once again come to light.

The expansion of economic diplomacy, defence alliances, and strategic discussions is due to the growing need for global stability rather than Pakistan's demands. Crucially, internal consolidation also influences Pakistan's post-conflict course. Today, social cohesiveness, technical advancement, and economic resilience are inextricably linked to national security. The realisation that strategic power must be supported by domestic strength is seen in the increasing focus on economic reform, digital governance, energy security, and regional development. Long seen through a narrow security lens, Balochistan is now becoming recognised as a strategic asset in and of itself, essential to regional trade, mineral development, and connectivity. It is not only morally required but also strategically necessary to incorporate historically underprivileged areas into the national development framework. Pakistan is stronger when it is inclusive and stable. It's also critical to understand that Pakistan's enhanced international status is a result of its assertion of sovereign equality rather than conflict with India. Realism, communication,

and respect for one another will bring to lasting peace in South Asia rather than supremacy or denial. Pakistan is positioned as a responsible participant in regional peace due to its persistent appeal for engagement, which is based on dignity rather than desperation. Pakistan is in a unique geopolitical position as traditional alliances change and global power movements quicken. The current task is to turn credibility into long-term influence rather than to demonstrate strength. This calls for institutional transparency, civil-military cooperation, policy consistency, and most importantly, national unity. Pakistan has a chance to remake itself in the post-2025 environment, not just as a frontline state or security actor, but as a self-assured, productive, and influential country on the international scene. Pakistan's current moment of global importance can develop into long-lasting strategic leadership if it continues to be disciplined in strategy, inclusive in development, and principled in diplomacy.—The writer is currently Member and the Parliamentary Leader of the Balochistan Awami Party in Senate of Pakistan.

Digital trucks on New York streets flash messages about Kashmir

UNITED NATIONS: Digital advertising trucks bearing the message "Kashmir Is Not Forgotten: February 5th – Day of Solidarity" rolled through the most of New York City's key locations, including the United Nations headquarters, Times Square, Freedom Tower, CenturyTel Park, and areas surrounding foreign missions to the UN. Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman, World Forum for Peace & Justice said that the mobile trucks—an innovative form of outreach equipped with high-resolution digital screens—deliver messages to an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 people per day, including diplomats, tourists, observers, and ordinary Americans. Their presence sent a clear and unambiguous message: Kashmiris are not alone. The global Kashmiri diaspora stands shoulder to shoulder with the people of Kashmir. "The continued silence of the international community on this long-standing dispute is deeply troubling," DR. Fai said. "It appears that India is being given a free hand to inflict grave human rights violations on the people of Kashmir. A conflict with clear potential to escalate into a nuclear confrontation is receiving far less attention than its gravity demands. The consequences of such neglect could be catastrophic—not only for the region, but for global peace and security." Rented by the Washington-based World Kashmir Awareness Forum (WKAF), the digital trucks also displayed messages calling for accountability and international responsibility, including: "India Involved in Genocide: Kashmiris Demand Plebiscite"; "Freedom for all: Freedom for Kashmir"; "India Criminalizes Press Freedom in Kashmir"; "Indian Forces on Killing Spree: Kashmir Need to Be Set Free"; "Kashmir Facing Existential Threat: United States Needs to Act"; "Kashmiris Reject Indian Occupation: UN Resolution only Solution"; Modi Guilty of Crimes Against Humanity in Kashmir." Dr. Ghulam N. Mir, President, World Kashmir Awareness Forum said that although first proposed by late Jamaat leader Qazi Hussain Ahmad in 1990, Kashmir Solidarity Day has come to be memorialized by Kashmiri and Pakistani people of all political and religious persuasions ever since. "It is one of many such days we Kashmiris have etched in our memories ever since thousands of Indians invaded, plundered, burnt down and set up shop to steal whatever they wished for the ensuing 79 years," he said. Dr. Intiaz Khan, Kashmiri American scholar said that land seizures by occupation forces continue at a disturbing pace. Thousands of acres have reportedly been taken over, depriving Kashmiris of their property while armed Hindu militias are settled on confiscated lands. These actions threaten the social fabric of the region and further entrench instability. Dr. Khan added that the time for empty statements has passed. India has consistently refused to honor its commitments or engage meaningfully toward a just resolution. The international community must move beyond rhetoric and consider concrete measures, including censure and sanctions, to uphold international law. Failure to act risks allowing this protracted conflict to spiral into a major conflagration with global repercussions. Raja Mukhtar, Chief spokesman, of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), North America, said that a durable and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute—in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir—is essential for lasting peace in South Asia. Such a settlement would significantly enhance international peace and security.—DNA

Animated films lead China's cinema boom in 2025

ISLAMABAD: China's film industry saw animated features deliver exceptional results in 2025, with nationwide box office revenue reached 51.832 billion yuan (about \$7.37 billion). Animation alone contributed over 25 billion yuan—nearly half of the market—signaling a major industry shift. People's Daily reported on Friday. Ne Zha 2, a fantasy adventure film based on the Chinese mythological character Ne Zha, stood out in particular. With a global box office of nearly 15.95 billion yuan, it became the highest-grossing animated film in global cinema history. It also marked the first Asian film ever to enter the global top 10 in box-office rankings, placing fifth on the all-time global box-office list. Her animated titles also resonated strongly with Chinese audiences. Domestic productions like Nobody and international releases such as Zootopia 2 achieved significant commercial success. Yu Zhou, president of Light Chaser Animation, a Beijing-based producer of animated films, noted that in China's domestic animation market in 2025, blockbusters and top-tier titles played an especially pronounced role in driving overall performance. Early in the year, Ne Zha 2 attracted 324 million cinema visits. Many viewers watched the film multiple times, while a significant number were "new audiences" who had not visited movie theaters for years.—DNA

Speakers highlighted people's suffering under occupation

UNITED NATIONS: With a focus on the plight of people living under brutal occupation in Kashmir and Palestine, distinguished speakers told a Pakistan-sponsored event Thursday that for millions of people from Africa to Asia and from the Middle East to Latin America, meaningful social development is impossible under occupation. They said that the reality of living under the shadow of conflict, occupation, and instability was a reminder that a conflict not only results in humanitarian crisis; it also poses one of the most profound structural barriers to social development and social justice. These views were expressed by a panel of diplomats, academics and civil society representatives at a side-event, convened jointly by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN and Consulate General of Pakistan in New York, to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day, according to a press release of the Pakistani Mission. It was titled "Leaving No One Behind: Social Development Challenges in Conflict-Affect and Occupied Territories", held at the UN headquarters on the margins of the 64th Session of the Commission for Social Development. Those who spoke on the occasion included, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, Ambassador Ahmet Yildiz, Permanent Representative of Türkiye and Chair of OIC-CFM (Council of Foreign Ministers), Ambassador Hameed Ajibaiye Opeleyeru, Permanent Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the UN, Abdulhamid Siyam, a Palestinian journalist and writer, Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman of the World Forum for Peace & Justice, and Ambassador Tofig Musayev, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the UN. Aamer Ahmad Atozai, Consul General of Pakistan in New York, delivered the concluding remarks on the occasion. Opening the discussion, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, who also presided over the event, said that for the people of the Indian-occupied Kashmir, occupation is a permanent condition spanning over more than seven decades, which has affected every facet of their daily lives: from education to employment, to mobility, to freedom of expression, and even to hope itself. Describing Kashmiris' suffering under the shadow of 900,000 Indian occupation forces as one of interrupted childhoods, constrained aspirations, and a future held hostage by uncertainty, he said that when dignity is denied and voices silenced, development becomes an illusion rather than a promise. Ambassador Asim Ahmad said that civilian life in Jammu and Kashmir has been subjected to extraordinary militarization. "Enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and pervasive impunity have left families fractured and communities traumatized. These practices have inflicted deep psychological scars, eroded trust, and damaged the social fabric of the Kashmiri society," he stated. The Pakistani envoy referred to the people of Palestine and said that—like Kashmiris—they also continue to endure similar, grave social and humanitarian consequences arising from prolonged occupation, recurrent violence, displacement, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. The denial of education, healthcare, housing, and livelihoods has entrenched cycles of vulnerability and despair, with women and children bearing the heaviest costs.—APP

Pakistan mission in Canada hosts Kashmir solidarity day interaction

DNA

OTTAWA: Pakistan High Commission in Ottawa and the three Consulates General in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver observed the Kashmir Solidarity Day to express solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K) in their just struggle for exercising the right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions. The event was attended by members of the Pakistani community and friends of Pakistan and the Kashmir cause. Special Messages of the President, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Pakistan on the occasion were also read out to the audience. Moreover, documentaries on Kashmiris' struggle were screened and broadcast on social and local electronic and ethnic media. Informational material highlighting the plight of the Kashmiri people in IIOJ&K was also distributed. A series of programmes were arranged including pictorial exhibition and media interaction to highlight the human rights violations in the IIOJ&K and to express solidarity with Kashmiris facing the worst kind of oppression under illegal Indian occupation. Speaking on the occasion, High Commissioner Muhammad Saleem reiterated that the Kashmiris in IIOJ&K have endured relentless repression including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, communication blackouts and forced demographic changes. He paid tribute to the resilience and courage of the Kashmiri people in IIOJ&K in the face of prolonged hardships. He reiterated Pakistan's principled position that a peaceful and lasting resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute can only be achieved through implement-

ation of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and in line with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people in IIOJ&K through holding free and fair plebiscite.

The High Commissioner stressed the urgent need for the international community to play its due role in ensuring justice

and accountability. He renewed the call upon the international community to uphold international law, the respect for human rights and securing a just, durable and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute by persuading India to implement the UN Security Council Resolutions.



Across China: Novel coffee experiences brew new, elevated tourism trends in SW China

GUIYANG: Suspended on a cliff face over 200 meters high, a café in the dense forests of Libo County, southwest China's Guizhou Province, serves premium coffee with a dash of vertigo, but only for those brave enough to make the climb. With the forest canopy far below and the metallic clink of carabiners on steel cables ringing in her ears, a coffee enthusiast surnamed Li, from the provincial capital city Guiyang, finally reached the café's wooden platform after a grueling 30-minute via ferrata climb. Sitting with her feet dangling over the edge, she took a sip of her coffee and gazed out at the endless sea of green karst peaks. "I never imagined I'd be sipping coffee in a place like this," said Li, who made a special trip just for this experience. The cliff-side café is the brainchild of Ren Peng, an outdoor sports enthusiast who previously worked in traditional tourism. He launched the project after realizing that travelers today are no longer satisfied with passive sightseeing, but instead crave novel, immersive adventures. "People usually associate coffee with sitting quietly in a cozy room. We wanted to offer something unconventional and turn it into an adventure," Ren explained. The café was designed and built to blend seamlessly into the cliff's natural terrain, ensuring safety while allowing tourists to immerse themselves in nature. Since opening in 2019, the café has evolved from a niche spot for a few climbers to a viral sensation. With upgraded amenities, it can now seat 25 people at a time and serves up to 150 guests daily. During the National Day holiday in 2025, visitor numbers surged 40 percent year on year to more than 800. This cliff-side café is just one example of the "Coffee Plus" trend sweeping across the mountainous province of Guizhou, where local entrepreneurs are turning the province's dramatic landscapes into unique consumption scenarios.—APP

Italy set for 2026 Winter Olympics opening ceremony

MILAN: The Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics officially open with a star-studded opening ceremony at the San Siro Stadium on Friday. The most geographically dispersed Games in history will start in Italy's economic capital at 1900 GMT with a three-hour extravaganza that takes in the three other sites spread across the Alps and the Dolomites. While details of the ceremony remain secret, the theme of harmony runs through it, threading together different elements from the financial hub of Milan to the snow-capped mountains of Cortina d'Ampezzo. And for the first time the 2,900 athletes will parade in the venues closest to where they will compete, in a bid to minimise travel.—APP

Gas cylinder blast kills three in Afghanistan

KABUL: Three people, all women from the same family, were killed and another was injured after a gas cylinder exploded inside a house in eastern Afghanistan's Khost province on Thursday evening, provincial police spokesman Tahir Ehrar said Friday. The ill-fated family was using a gas heater to warm their house in the chilly winter weather, but the cylinder of the heater exploded due to gas leakage, causing the fatalities, the official added. A male member of the affected family who was badly injured has been taken to the hospital, the official added. People in post-war Afghanistan, where there is no modern heating system, often use gas cylinders or wooden stoves to keep their houses warm during freezing winters, but deadly accidents sometimes occur due to gas leakage and explosion. Several weeks ago, a gas cylinder blast left two women dead and injured two children in Spin Ghar district of eastern Nangarhar province.—APP

Thailand votes after three prime ministers in two years

BANGKOK: Thais vote Sunday in an election pitting the popular reformists who won last time against the conservative who ended up as prime minister, with ex-leader Thaksin Shinawatra looming large from his prison cell.

The Southeast Asian nation's next government will need to reckon with a long-standing border dispute with Cambodia that twice erupted into deadly fighting last year, and the multibillion-dollar transnational cyberscam networks based in the region. Economic growth is anaemic, with the tourism sector vital but arrivals yet to return to their pre-Covid highs, and fast-growing Vietnam is now attracting more foreign direct investment. No party is expected to win an outright majority, and analysts say the election could be a repeat of the last poll less than three years ago. —APP

