



Islamabad POST

Thursday, October 29, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 40

President Zardari greets govt and people of Turkey

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Auragnzeb says country moving in right direction

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IT minister says AI know-how is must for all

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ECP orders immediate local body polls in KP

In its order, issued on Wednesday the ECP directed its office to submit the election programme for its approval in respect of districts where the delimitation process had been completed

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday ordered local government (LG) elections to be held immediately in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts where delimitation had been completed, excluding those included in the 12 districts with special emergency measures. A day earlier, the ECP had reserved the verdict after hearing the provincial government's request to defer local government elections, citing law and order, the imposition of emergency and deployment of troops under Article 245. The federal government on Oct 11 imposed emergency in KP and placed the province under governor's rule, taking note of the "provincial government's deliberate disengagement from the fight against terrorism". In its order, issued on Wednesday the ECP directed its office to submit the election programme for its approval in respect of districts where the delimitation process had been completed. The bench headed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja and comprising members Nisar Ahmed Durrani, Shah Muhammad Jatoti, Babar Hassan Bharrwana and retired Justice Ikramullah Khan heard the case. The electoral watchdog issued orders for KP districts, excluding 12 which were deemed to face intense security challenges and an Area Representative and Development Council (ARDC) was formed to oversee them under emergency measures. In its order, the ECP directed its office to "submit the election programme for the commission's approval in respect of districts in which the delimitation process has been completed", excluding Bannu, Mohmand, Orakzai, Lakki Marwat and

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PTI to contest LB polls

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PTI has decided to contest the upcoming local government elections in the capital, with the party's regional leadership directing district and town organisations to file nomination papers in every ward across all union councils between November 2 and 6, it emerged on Wednesday. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has scheduled the polls for December 20. Mughal said that PTI visited areas across the city to get input from the people, claiming that "over 95 per cent of people suggested contesting the elections." "They were of the view that the government can not do more than what it is already doing with the party. So we will contest without going into what kind of election symbols are allotted to our candidates," he said. Replying to a question, Mughal said the commission had already postponed the election four times and feared further postponement again due to PTI's popularity. Meanwhile, in a press release issued on Wednesday, the party said Mughal, Shoaib Shaheen and

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review progress on application of AI and digitization of economy in governance and ongoing collaboration with Alibaba group. — DNA

Fmr Brazilian President lands in US

DNA

WASHINGTON: Brazilian Senator Flavio Bolsonaro and his family arrived in Miami on Wednesday, where the United States government would grant them entry visas after he refused to comply with a Brazilian Supreme Court order to surrender his passports. Bolsonaro, who lost last Sunday's presidential election to leftist incumbent Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, left Brazil under a shroud of secrecy after the court order, which relates to a money-laundering investigation in which he denies wrongdoing. Reuters TV images showed Bolsonaro, his wife and two daughters disembarking from a Gulfstream G400 and heading into Miami's Opa-Locka Executive Airport. Their journey to the United States captured attention across the region. They entered northern Argentina late on Tuesday evening, according to the country's migration department,

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PM Shehbaz says

Secret to country's development lies in AI, digitisation

The prime minister directed that an AI-assisted cancer early-detection system be implemented at the earliest in collaboration with Alibaba

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday stressed that artificial intelligence (AI) and digitalisation could improve Pakistan's trade, exports and other areas of development and called for effective implementation of the government's strategic partnership with global marketing company Alibaba. The premier was chairing a meeting in Islamabad reviewing progress on the use of AI and digitalisation in the economy and governance, as well as cooperation with Alibaba in these areas, according to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). "The secret to Pakistan's development lies in artificial intelligence and

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan bars Taiwan airlines

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has barred Taiwanese airlines from using its airspace in support of Beijing's One-China policy, becoming the first country to take such a step, Bloomberg reported on Wednesday. "The aviation division follows the One China policy — only mainland China is allowed," Defence Minister Khawaja Asif told Bloomberg News. "We have permitted only Chinese airlines to fly over Pakistan," he said.

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Briefs

Zardari greets Turkish leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasised the importance of strengthening Pakistan's historic partnership with Türkiye through closer cooperation in trade, investment, defence, education, culture and other areas of mutual interest. In his letter to the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on the 103rd anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Türkiye, President Zardari highlighted the exceptional bond of brotherhood between the two countries, rooted in common history, faith, shared values and enduring ties between their peoples. He said Türkiye had made significant progress over the past century, strengthening its institutions, advancing its economic development and enhancing its standing and contributions in regional and international affairs.

Iran warns against any new attack

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran on Wednesday warned of a devastating economic impact from any new Israeli-led attack, as the votes were counted in an Israeli election that could determine the future of the regional war. Under Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to topple Iran's government, the two countries have directly fought a war for the first time in their history after decades of enmity. Tuesday's pivotal election gave Israel a chance to offer a verdict on Netanyahu's right-wing government, amid mounting US and Israeli threats of renewed attacks against Iran following their launch of the war in February.

Israeli elections

Netanyahu falls short of majority as Opp wins 67 seats

Netanyahu's bloc remains short of the 61 seats needed for a parliamentary majority in the 120-member Knesset, leaving the formation of the next government dependent on coalition negotiations

NEWS DESK

ERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's bloc secured 53 seats, while the opposition Change bloc won 48 and Arab parties secured 19, after 100 per cent of regular ballots were counted in Israel's general election. The figures, which exclude double envelopes, reflect around 86 per cent of all votes cast in the 2026 election. The final distribution of seats remains subject to the counting of the outstanding ballots. Netanyahu's bloc remains short of the 61 seats needed for a parliamentary majority in the 120-member Knesset, leaving the formation of the next government dependent on coalition negotiations. The election has been closely watched amid public discontent with Netanyahu's far-right govern-

ment and a political landscape marked by repeated electoral deadlock. Exit polls had suggested there was no clear winner, raising the prospect of difficult negotiations over the formation of a government.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who is tasked with determining which candidate to tap to form a government, said on Wednesday that every effort must be made to avoid a new election. "One thing must be clear, and I said this before the elections too: we must do everything we can, certainly after yesterday, to avoid another round of elections," he said. Netanyahu has called for a strong right-wing government and ruled out cooperation with Arab parties, which he has described as anti-Zionist. Centrist former military chief Gadi Eisenkot, whose Yashar party

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Justice Mohsin Akhtar resigns as LHC judge

Justice Kayani, who was transferred to LHC from Islamabad, resigned due to personal reasons, say sources



STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani has stepped down as a judge of the Lahore High Court (LHC), with sources citing personal reasons behind his resignation. Justice Kayani was among the three judges transferred from the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to other high courts in April this year under a proposal initiated by IHC Chief Justice Sardar Sarfraz Dogar. The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP), chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, approved the transfers on April 28 by majority vote.

Under the decision, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani was transferred to the Lahore High Court, Justice Babar Sattar to the Peshawar High Court, and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz to the Sindh High Court.

Justice Kayani had earlier attracted national attention as one of six IHC judges who, in a rare and unprecedented move, wrote a letter to the Supreme Court, alleging interference by intelligence agencies in judicial affairs and seeking guidance on safeguarding judicial independence. The matter was subsequently taken up by a Supreme Court bench headed by then Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa. However, despite hearings on the issue, the proceedings concluded without any definitive outcome or finding on the allegations. The six judges who were signatories to the letter later became the subject of significant administrative changes, with all of them eventually transferred or reassigned to other courts, a development that sparked debate within legal and political circles over its implications for judicial independence.

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MoU to combat antimicrobial resistance in poultry sector

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) and the Denmark-based International Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance Solutions (ICARS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in combating antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in Pakistan's livestock and poultry sectors. Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanweer Hussain attended the virtual signing ceremony, along with senior ministry officials, ICARS representatives and researchers, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

Under the agreement, ICARS will fund a three-year research project worth USD 540,855, led by the University of Agriculture Faisalabad in collaboration with the Poultry Research Institute, Rawalpindi. Addressing the ceremony, Federal Minister Rana Tanweer Hussain said that antimicrobial resistance poses a serious threat to human and animal health, food security and agricultural productivity. He emphasized that responsible antibiotic use and evidence-based interventions were essential for sustainable livestock production. He appreciated ICARS and the Government of Denmark for supporting Pakistan's efforts to address AMR through the One Health approach.

The minister stressed that scientific research must deliver practical benefits to farmers and contribute to Pakistan's National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance. He appreciated Principal Investigator Dr Mashkoor Mohsin Gillani and the research team at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad along with the Ministry's Animal Health Technical Focal Person, Dr Syed Mumazil Hassan Gillani, for their contributions. He also thanked Krump, Executive Director of ICARS, said that the partnership would generate scientific evidence on alternatives to antibiotics and help reduce antimicrobial use and resistance in Pakistan's poultry industry. He emphasized that the Ministry's continued leadership would be essential for expanding successful interventions across the sector. Rodolphe Mader, Senior Science Advisor, Veterinary Sciences, ICARS, explained that the project would test organic acids as a potential alternative to antibiotics through a randomized controlled trial involving 30 poultry farms, with 15 farms receiving the intervention and 15 serving as controls. APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Dr. Rajih bin Taami Al-Baqmi, hosted Ms. Jane Marriot of the High Commissioner of United Kingdom. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. DNA

Varsities must become engines of innovation

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a two-day international conference on higher education and sustainability have called for transforming universities into centres of innovation, policymaking and sustainable development to help societies respond to rapid technological change and emerging global challenges. The conference, titled "Higher Education at the Crossroads: Local Action, Global Sustainability," was organised by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, and Alhamd Islamic University (AIU), in collaboration with the Global Strategic Institute for Sustainable Development (GISID), said a press release issued on Wednesday. It brought together vice-chancellors, academics, researchers, policy experts and students from Pakistan and abroad to explore how higher education institutions can address local challenges while contributing to global sustainability. The deliberations underscored the need to align higher education with national development priorities, strengthen university-industry partnerships, integrate emerging technologies into teaching and research, and equip graduates with the skills required to navigate a rapidly changing world. The inaugural session featured welcome addresses by Prof. Dr. Shakeel Roshan, President of Alhamd Islamic University, and Ambassador Jahar Saleem, President of IRS. Prof. Dr. Amir Zia, Conference Secretary, outlined the conference theme and key areas of discussion. Keynote

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the second day of PODA's 19th Annual Rural Women Leadership Training Conference, the Director General, Gender and Social Inclusion, of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), highlighted persistent disparities in voter turnout, noting that some of the largest gaps exist in major urban centres, including Karachi Central and Faisalabad, while Chakwal has one of the smallest gaps. Addressing around 1,000 rural women leaders representing approximately 120 districts, she commended organizations like PODA for their efforts to promote women's electoral participation. Speakers in the day's two major sessions emphasized the need for coordinated efforts to address the challenges facing women and girls.

Nuzhat Shirin, Former Chairperson Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, MNA Sofia Saeed and Shahnaz Kapadia, President of the Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, appreciated PODA's efforts to provide women and girls with a platform to discuss issues that matter most to them. They recognized the value of translating these discussions into conference resolutions and action plans that participants and partner organizations can pursue throughout the year.

Speaking on the occasion, Mary O'Neill, Ambassador of Ireland to Pakistan, highlighted Ireland's zero-tolerance approach to violence against women, emphasizing prevention, protection, prosecution, and coordination among institutions. Ms. Ina Lapel, Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan, joined in appreciating the efforts of women's rights activists and stressing the importance of safeguarding women's dignity and safety. Both ambassadors acknowledged that domestic violence remains a challenge in their respective countries and underscored the importance of the rule of law, encouraging survivors to report abuse, and strengthening collective efforts to combat gender-based violence.

Under the agreement, ICARS will fund a three-year research project worth USD 540,855, led by the University of Agriculture Faisalabad in collaboration with the Poultry Research Institute, Rawalpindi. Addressing the ceremony, Federal Minister Rana Tanweer Hussain said that antimicrobial resistance poses a serious threat to human and animal health, food security and agricultural productivity. He emphasized that responsible antibiotic use and evidence-based interventions were essential for sustainable livestock production. He appreciated ICARS and the Government of Denmark for supporting Pakistan's efforts to address AMR through the One Health approach.

Kundi calls for more quality institutions

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the education sector, assuring full support to Abbottabad Public School and stressing the need to establish more quality educational institutions across the province. He expressed these views while chairing a meeting of the Board of Governors of Abbottabad Public School at the Governor's House. Adviser to the Governor on Education Dr Amir Abdullah, Secretary Education Inayatullah Waseem, Principal Abbottabad Public School Akhtar Qureshi and other relevant officials attended the meeting. During the meeting, the Secretary Education and the school's principal briefed the Governor on

the institution's history, academic services, achievements, budget and challenges. They informed the meeting that Abbottabad Public School was regarded as one of the finest educational institutions not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also in Pakistan. Appreciating the school's educational services and outstanding performance, Governor Kundi assured the administrators and asked officials to provide him with monthly updates on the institution's performance and progress. Governor Kundi also announced that he would soon visit Abbottabad Public School. On the occasion, Principal Akhtar Qureshi invited the Governor to attend the school's upcoming Parents' Day ceremony.—DNA



The Chairperson said the NCSW was working closely with the Supreme Court of Pakistan to address issues affecting women. She also referred to efforts to seek the permanent removal from social media platforms of individuals found responsible for harassing women and girls or engaging in other forms of online abuse. Emphasizing the importance of engaging men and boys in preventing violence, she observed that educating boys remained a neglected area in society. The Commission was therefore prioritizing awareness sessions in boys' colleges to help them understand their role in preventing violence

against women and girls. She also shared information about helpline available to support survivors. The delegation further highlighted the significant growth in women's representation in the legal profession. In Hyderabad division alone, the number of women lawyers had reportedly increased from approximately 700–800 to more than 7,000 following a decade of sustained efforts. The delegation included lawyers, Afshen Naz Bhutto, Ina'ish Anwer, Samina Umrani, Hasena Kanwal, Seema Khoso, Mehwish Anif, Shazia shamas, Noshaba and Rabia Samma.

Pakistan lost poverty reduction momentum after 2018: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday said Pakistan's poverty reduction momentum had suffered a serious setback after 2018, with the poverty rate rising to 28.9 per cent in 2018-19, amid political instability.

Zong brings regulators, industry, academia together

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's Leading Technology Services Enterprise, brought together regulators, national cyber authorities, academia and telecom operators in Islamabad to strengthen collaboration on securing Pakistan's digital future. The industry session was held as part of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority's (PTA) national Cybersecurity Awareness Week 2026, under the theme "Building a Safe, Secure and Resilient Cyberspace." Dr. Khawar Siddique Khokhar, Member Compliance & Enforcement, PTA, attended as chief guest alongside senior officials from PTA, PKCERT, the Ministry of IT & Telecom, other regulatory bodies, telecom operators and Zong's leadership team. Opening the session, Zong's Chief Technology Officer, Mao Weiliang, emphasized that cybersecurity must be embedded in the foundations of 5G, AI and Pakistan's wider digital transformation. "At Zong, our legacy security infrastructure, robust access controls and AI-enabled 24/7 security operations strengthen our ability to detect, contain and respond to cyber threats.

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- Applicant shall present his/her original documents along with set of attested copies of degree / certificates issued by HEC / recognized Board / Universities / Institutes as well as CNIC and Document Certificate, at the time of interview, in case any information furnished by the applicant is found fake or bogus, his or her candidature shall stand cancelled and legal action shall be taken against such a candidate, during any stage of recruitment, and also after employment.
- Those who are already in Government Service should apply through a proper channel.
- The experience as part-time, honorary, apprentice, and intern will not be considered/counted as experience.
- Selected candidates can be posted anywhere in Pakistan.
- HEC reserves the right to reject any or all applications without assigning any reason, as well as to increase/decrease the number of vacancies as per requirement.
- Last date for submission of online application is November 10, 2026. Incomplete/late applications will not be entertained.
- No TADA will be admissible for appearing in the interview

Assistant Director (HRM)
H-8, Islamabad

(051) 90400000, 051-90401413, 90401425 | sup_careers@hec.gov.pk

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Islamabad POST

METROLITE

Thursday, October 29, 2026

National Days and Armed Forces Days

OCTOBER

Oct 01/China
National Day

Oct 01/Cyprus
National Day

Oct 01/Republic of
Korea
Armed Forces Day

Oct 01/Nigeria
Armed Forces Day

Oct 02/Guinea
National Day

Oct 03/Germany
Unification Day

Oct 03/Republic of
Korea
National Foundation
Day

Oct 05/Indonesia
Armed Forces Day

Oct 06/Egypt
Armed Forces Day

Oct 09/Uganda
Independence Day

Oct 12/Spain
National Day

Oct 23/Hungary
National Day

October 24/United
Nations
United Nations Day

Oct 25/Romania
Armed Forces Day

Oct 26/Austria
National Day

Oct 27/Turkmeni-
stan
Independence Day

Oct 28/Czech
Republic
National Day

Oct 29/Turkey
Republic Day

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Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

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TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad
Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potahar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

CDA chief visits Kashmir Chowk to review progress

Citizens have appreciated CDA's efforts to address persistent traffic congestion in Islamabad through the development of key infrastructure projects, including the Kashmir Chowk Underpass

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Sohail Ashraf visited the Kashmir Chowk Underpass project in Islamabad to review the latest progress of construction activities and assess the pace of ongoing work. During the visit, he directed the concerned officers and project teams to ensure timely completion of the project within the stipulated timeframe, while maintaining the highest standards of engineering, construction quality, durability and safety. During the briefing, Chairman CDA was informed that construction work on the Kashmir Chowk Underpass is progressing at an accelerated pace.

This progress on Kashmir Chowk reflects the commitment of Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi and the focused efforts of CDA, under the leadership of Chairman Sohail Ashraf, to expedite key infrastructure development projects and improve urban management in the federal capital. During the site inspection, Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf reviewed the ongoing civil and structural works and directed the project management and engineering teams to sustain the current pace of construction through effective coordination, efficient utilisation of resources and continuous monitoring. He emphasised that all construction activities must adhere to approved engineering specifications and quality standards, with no compromise on durability, public safety or timely delivery. The groundbreaking ceremony of the Kashmir Chowk Underpass was performed by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Despite rain affecting two working days, the project teams have maintained encouraging momentum, demonstrating their commitment to completing this important infrastructure initiative within the committed timeframe. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf said that the Kashmir Chowk Underpass is a significant public-works project designed to address longstanding

traffic congestion at one of Islamabad's key intersections. He directed the concerned officers to pay particular attention to quality control, construction safety, traffic management during construction and the convenience of commuters, ensuring that development activities cause minimum disruption to the public. Citizens have appreciated CDA's efforts to address persistent traffic congestion in Islamabad through the development of key infrastructure projects, including the Kashmir Chowk Underpass. They have expressed optimism that the project will

facilitate smoother and more continuous traffic flow, reduce traffic bottlenecks and minimise travel time for commuters travelling between Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The initiative is being viewed as a positive step towards improving urban mobility and providing greater convenience to residents and daily road users. Upon completion, the Kashmir Chowk Underpass is expected to improve traffic flow, reduce congestion and travel time, and facilitate smoother movement between Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The project will provide greater convenience to thousands of daily commuters,

improve connectivity across the twin cities and contribute to a more efficient urban transport network. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf reiterated that CDA remains committed to delivering public infrastructure projects efficiently and in accordance with the highest professional standards. He emphasised that the authority will continue to closely monitor construction progress to ensure the timely completion of the Kashmir Chowk Underpass, translating the government's development vision into tangible benefits for the citizens of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.—DNA

FCCP dismisses 1,178 review petitions against Income Support Levy

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court has dismissed 1,178 review petitions challenging the Supreme Court's December 28, 2021, judgment on the constitutional validity of the Income Support Levy Act 2013, upholding the earlier ruling. In a 16-page judgment, Chief Justice of the Federal Constitutional Court Justice Amiruddin Khan held that the power of review could not be equated with that appellate jurisdiction and that settled disputes could not be reopened unless an apparent error on the part of the court met the legal threshold for review. The judgment noted that the constitutional validity of the Income Support Levy Act 2013 had earlier been examined by a two-member Supreme Court bench in Commissioner Inland Revenue v. Muhammad Mustafa. The bench, headed by Justice Qazi Faez Isa, dismissed the petitions against the levy on December 28, 2021.

The court observed that while review petitions against the judgment were pending, a three-member Supreme Court bench allowed an appeal in another case on June 21, 2022, involving a substantially similar legal question. The judgment, authored by Justice Munib Akhtar, raised serious concerns regarding judicial discipline, legal principles and institutional conventions. It held that when a legal question had already been decided and review petitions against that decision remained pending, another bench should respect the earlier ruling. A subsequent decision in a separate case did not automatically alter or nullify the previous judgment. The court stressed that judicial discipline, consistency in judicial decisions and the preservation of the judiciary's institutional framework were essential. The central legal question was whether the Income Support Levy could be enacted as a Money Bill. Referring to Articles 70 and 73 of the Constitution, the court observed that the prescribed legislative procedure was a constitutional requirement rather than a mere formality. It further held that the Sen-

ate, as the representative body of the federating units, could not be excluded from the legislative process where a bill did not fall within the constitutionally limited scope of a Money Bill. Legislation requiring approval by both Houses could not be enacted by bypassing the Senate. The judgment reiterated that review jurisdiction was limited and exceptional, intended to correct an apparent error on the record rather than reconsider a case as if hearing an appeal. It added that a judicial decision remained effective unless it was overturned or corrected by a higher court. The law was amended, repealed or declared unconstitutional. A matter already decided could not be reopened merely because a different view had subsequently been taken in another case. The central legal question was whether the Income Support Levy could be enacted as a Money Bill. Referring to Articles 70 and 73 of the Constitution, the court observed that the prescribed legislative procedure was a constitutional requirement rather than a mere formality. It further held that the Sen-

NTDC directed to review time-scale upgradation cases

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Anthropological Association (PAA) has been formally established as the first-ever national body dedicated to bringing anthropologists together on a common platform and promoting the teaching, research and professional practice of anthropology. More than 60 founding members, including academics, researchers, graduates and practitioners from Pakistan and overseas, have come together to strengthen the discipline and highlight the contribution of anthropological knowledge to the country's social, cultural and development priorities. Addressing the first meeting of the PAA Executive Council held here, Association President Dr. Syed Ahsan Iqbal described the establishment as a major milestone in the development of anthropology in Pakistan. He said Pakistan's remarkable cultural, linguistic, ethnic and regional diversity makes anthropology particularly relevant to understanding society and addressing the country's evolving challenges.—APP

Pak-China Friendship Hospital ready to begin healthcare services

ISLAMABAD: The 250-bed Pak-China Friendship Hospital in Chak Shahzad is ready to receive patients, marking a new phase in the utilization of a healthcare facility built with Chinese assistance to improve access to medical services in Islamabad and surrounding areas. According to official sources, the hospital has been renamed Pak-China Friendship Hospital in recognition of China's financial contribution to its construction. The facility was previously named Margalla Hospital by its new management. Originally established as the Isolation Hospital and Infectious Treatment Centre (IHITC) during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the hospital was constructed by the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the National Institute of Health (NIH), in just 40 days. As per sources China provided a grant of US\$ four million for the project, while the total construction cost was estimated at around Rs 980 million. The facility was inaugurated in July 2020 to provide isolation and treatment services for patients suffering from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Located near the National Institute of Health (NIH), the hospital, approximately 40 kanals and comprises patient wards, laboratories, administrative offices and other essential infrastructure. However, it remained underutilized for a considerable period after the COVID-19 emergency subsided, amid operational challenges and shortages of medical staff. To make the facility fully functional, the federal government adopted a public-private partnership model and selected the Indo-US Hospital and Health Network (IHHN) to manage and operate the hospital. On July 31, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination signed agreements with the IHHN for the management and operation of the hospital and the Regional Blood Centre in Islamabad, following approval of the arrangement by the federal cabinet. The partnership aims to improve healthcare delivery,

ensure effective utilization of the facility and reduce the burden on other public hospitals in the federal capital. The IHHN is a non-profit

healthcare organisation that operates hospitals and medical facilities across Pakistan and provides treatment to patients without charge.—DNA

Briefs

Secure sea routes vital to eco stability, says Junaid

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Wednesday said secure sea routes were vital to economic stability amid rising regional tensions.

He was addressing a symposium titled "Pakistan's Maritime Future: Maritime Security, Ocean Governance and Blue Economy", organised by the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) at Bahria University.

The symposium brought together policymakers, academics and maritime officials to examine regional challenges facing the evolving maritime sector, emerging technologies, ocean governance and opportunities for ports and the shipping sector to contribute to national security and economic growth.

Junaid Chaudhry said the Ministry of Maritime Affairs was working to improve port efficiency, expand the national merchant fleet, facilitate trade and attract investment.

The Karachi Port Trust (KPT) had handled more than 2,000 ship movements, while the ministry had introduced reforms in port charges and auction procedures and taken measures to facilitate refrigerated cargo and expedite clearance, he said.

He said Pakistan's removal from the Joint War Committee's list could help reduce additional insurance costs for maritime trade. The move was expected to benefit commercial activity worth around \$3 billion, he added.

The minister also highlighted proposed investments, including a steel project worth around \$680 million at Port Qasim, an integrated maritime industrial complex valued at more than \$1.4 billion and a multipurpose terminal project estimated at around \$350 million. He said the government was also working to expand the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation's fleet, promote shrimp farming and strengthen the fisheries value chain.

A sub-committee formed on the prime minister's instructions was developing a plan to promote aquaculture and expand shrimp production, he added.

Earlier, Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan delivered the keynote address on great-power contestation and the evolving dynamics of the maritime domain.—APP

MoU inked for residential development

ISLAMABAD: Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) and Smart City Housing Lahore have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the development of a residential project in Lahore.

The presence of Director General FGEHA, Captain (Retd.) Zafar Iqbal, On behalf of FGEHA, the MoU was signed by Faiz Umar, Director Joint Venture, while Sardar Adil Umar signed on behalf of Smart City Housing Lahore. Director Administration Tanweer Haider Khokhar, Chief Engineer, Director IT, Director Finance, and other senior officials of FGEHA were also present on the occasion.

The proposed residential project comprises approximately 750 lands of land located on Multan Road, Lahore. The project will be developed under an End-Product/Turnkey Model. Smart City Housing Lahore is an LDA-approved project situated near Bahria Enclave on Multan Road, Lahore. Its location and relevant approvals make it a significant opportunity for the development of residential facilities in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General FGEHA, Captain (Retd.) Zafar Iqbal, stated that Smart City Housing Lahore had initially submitted a proposal for the residential project and has now become a business partner of FGEHA. He explained that, under the FGEHA Act, the Authority is empowered to acquire land and initiate residential projects across the country. He further stated that the primary objective of the MoU is to establish a mutually beneficial partnership that creates a win-win situation for both parties. He expressed confidence that the project would mark an important step towards providing residential opportunities to federal government employees residing in Lahore and would help address their housing needs.—APP

TWIN CITIES

UK backs Pakistani climate businesses in bid for \$51m investment

The ten businesses collectively represent a three-year investment pipeline worth US\$120 million and operate across five sectors: agriculture and land use, waste and circular economy, clean energy, building and construction, and e-mobility

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ten Pakistani climate-focused businesses are seeking a combined US\$51 million in investment over the next 12 months to expand innovative solutions in clean energy, sustainable transport, construction, agriculture, and waste management. The initiative follows specialized support provided through the UK Government-funded Climate Finance Accelerator (CFA) Pakistan programme.

With technical, financial, and social inclusion support from CFA Pakistan, implemented by DAI on behalf of the UK Government, participating companies enhanced their investment readiness and presented their business cases directly to investors, banks, and development finance institutions during the Climate Finance Accelerator Pakistan Investor Roadshow held in Karachi on 27-28 October.

The ten businesses collectively represent a three-year investment pipeline worth US\$120 million and operate across five sectors: agriculture and land use, waste and circular economy, clean energy, building and construction, and e-mobility. Since 2022, the UK-funded programme has supported 22 climate projects in Pakistan, helping mobilize US\$40 million in climate investment between 2022 and 2024.

Alison Blackburne, British Deputy High Commissioner Karachi, highlighted the



growing UK-Pakistan climate partnership, emphasizing efforts to mobilize climate finance, strengthen resilience and adaptation, and support policy and institutional systems necessary for climate implementation. She noted that the UK-Pakistan Green Compact, signed in December last

year, provides a framework for cooperation in climate action, clean energy, finance, private investment, green skills, and policy dialogue. Representing the Government of Sindh, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Minister for Local Government and Housing Town Planning, stressed that climate change is

not only an environmental issue but also an economic and development challenge affecting infrastructure, agriculture, cities, energy systems, and livelihoods. He said governments must create conditions that enable private capital to invest confidently in climate solutions.

Polyclinic seminar highlights breast cancer early detection

ISLAMABAD: Health experts have stressed the importance of early screening, risk assessment and modern diagnostic techniques to improve breast cancer detection and treatment. They were addressing a breast cancer awareness seminar held at Federal Government Polyclinic (RGPC) Hospital, titled "Beyond the Pink Ribbon: Innovation in Diagnosis and Advances in Treatment," focused on raising public awareness, identifying women at increased risk and improving access to screening and diagnostic facilities. Experts recommended assessing breast cancer risk among women to identify high-risk groups and ensure timely medical evaluation. They emphasized the need to educate women about early warning signs and encourage them to seek medical advice if they notice any unusual changes in their breasts. The participants highlighted the importance of clinical breast examinations during routine healthcare visits and recommended mammography screening for women aged 40 to 74, in line with individual risk profiles and applicable clinical guidelines. Special attention was drawn to women with a strong family history of breast cancer and hereditary risk factors, who may require earlier and more frequent screening than women at average risk. Experts also discussed the role of breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) as an additional screening tool for women at high risk, while ultrasound can help assess breast abnormalities, particularly in women with dense breast tissue. The seminar underscored the importance of modern diagnostic facilities and evidence-based approaches to detecting breast cancer at an early stage, when treatment is generally more effective. Participants stressed that greater public awareness of breast cancer symptoms and risk factors, coupled with improved access to screening services, could help reduce delays in diagnosis and treatment.—APP

peritise through joint research and capacity-building initiatives. Speaking on the occasion, the DG CCRA said the collaboration marked an important convergence of regulatory oversight, scientific advancement and technological innovation, ensuring transparency. He also appreciated the efforts of the Director Operations and Vigilance for achieving landmark milestones for the Authority in a short period. Vice Chancellor said the partnership between CCRA and the National Centre of Industrial Biotechnology (NCIB) would lay the foundation for a safe, standardised and technologically advanced industrial sector in Pakistan. He said combining NCIB's scientific capabilities with CCRA's regulatory oversight would help ensure that the sector developed safely, transparently and in accordance with international standards. He also thanked the CCRA team for its successful collaboration. The MoU was signed on behalf of CCRA by Director (Operations/Licensing/Vigilance) Asif Haroon and on behalf of PMAS-AAUR by NCIB Project Director Professor Dr. Abida Raza. Senior officials attending the ceremony included Dr. Saqib Majeed, Director External Linkages, AAUR; Mustafa, PRO to the Vice Chancellor, Zafar Iqbal, Chairman (Industrial Development), CCRA; Zil-e-Huma, Research Officer/Coordinator, CCRA; and Ifkhar Abbas, Consultant (Finance), CCRA. The agreement is part of CCRA's broader initiative to establish an advanced regulatory ecosystem covering cannabis extraction, testing, biology, biotechnology and bioactive compounds, alongside the establishment of a National Cannabis Laboratory and Research Centre.—DNA

CCRA, PMAS-AAUR sign MoU for cannabis research

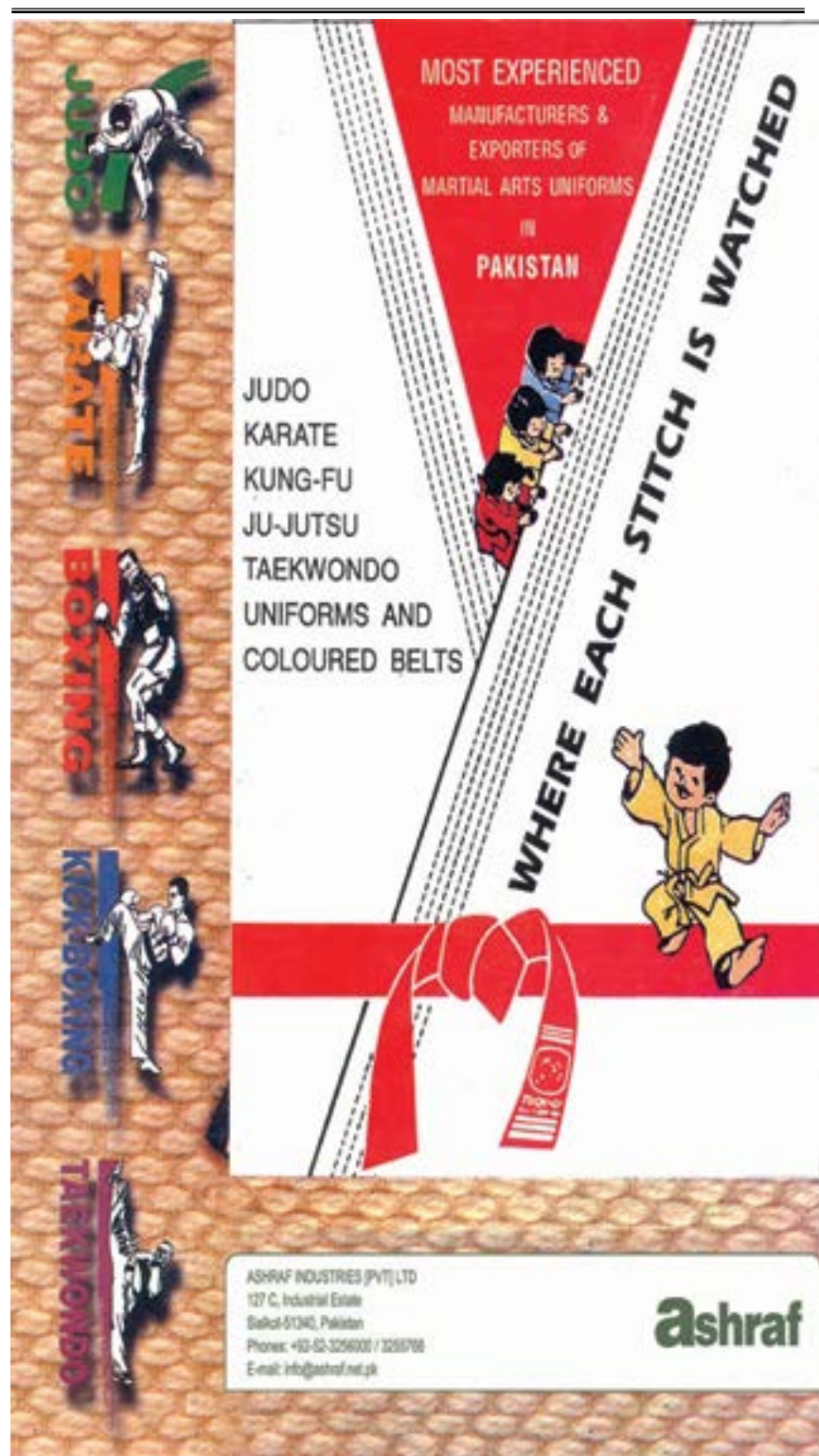
ISLAMABAD: Cannabis Control and Regulatory Authority (CCRA) and the Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote scientific research, cannabis testing, biotechnology and capacity building for Pakistan's emerging cannabis and industrial hemp sector. The MoU was signed at CCRA Headquarters, Islamabad, in a ceremony led by Director General CCRA, Major General (Retd.) Zafar Iqbal Khan, (HQM), and PMAS-AAUR Vice Chancellor Prof Qamar Uz Zaman. Under the agreement, both institutions will collaborate on cannabis, testing, screening and analytical evaluation of cannabis and cannabis-derived materials, including the separation of CBD, THC and other cannabinoids, potency testing, quality assurance and scientific innovation. The MoU also aims to strengthen regulatory functions and develop technical ex-

CDA clears encroached land in sector 1-15

ISLAMABAD: Under the leadership of Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has taken a significant step towards resolving a longstanding issue in 15 by clearing the encroached land in Sub-Sector 1. This has paved the way for the planned development of approximately 500 plots for lawful allottees whose investments have remained tied up since the launch of the sector in 2005. Citizens were appreciative of the CDA's excellent performance in re-orienting the plan for the planned development of the sector. They have termed the initiative an important step towards accelerating development activities in Sector 1-15 and facilitating the eventual handover of possession to lawful allottees. The encroached village of Sheikhpur has been successfully vacated under the supervision of Dr. Anam Fatima, Deputy Director General (Enforcement), CDA, following nearly two months of sustained enforcement efforts. During the operation, more than 300 houses, barns and havelis were vacated, removing longstanding encroachments that had obstructed the planned development of the sector. As a result, approximately 36.5 acres of built-up land have been cleared, representing nearly one-quarter of the sector. This achievement marks an important milestone towards facilitating the planned development of 1-15 and enabling lawful allottees to obtain possession of

their plots after nearly two decades.

A significant number of the affected allottees are retired government servants whose investments have remained tied up for years. The clearance of the encroached land is expected to help address their longstanding concerns and pave the way for progress towards the eventual handover of possession. In addition to residential plots, Markaz plots previously under encroachment have also been retrieved, creating further opportunities for the planned development of the sector. The matter was brought to the attention of the Honourable Chairman CDA, Sohail Ashraf, during a CDA Khuli Kachert. Acting on his directions, the Enforcement Directorate undertook sustained efforts to remove encroachments and retrieve the land. The CDA Planning Wing has been directed to take up the planning and development of the cleared area on an urgent basis so that the necessary formalities can be completed and possession of plots handed over to lawful allottees at the earliest. The retrieval of land is an important step towards this objective; the actual handover of possession will follow the completion of the required planning and development formalities. Under the leadership of Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf, the CDA remains committed to protecting the rights of lawful allottees, retrieving encroached public land.—DNA



Thursday, October 29, 2026

NCCIA conducts cyber awareness sessions

ISLAMABAD: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) has launched a nationwide cyber awareness campaign, organising educational sessions in Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Gilgit and Sahiwal, besides an awareness session and walk in Abbottabad, to educate citizens about online fraud, cyber harassment and safe internet use.

According to an NCCIA official, the campaign was launched on the directions of Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqi under the supervision of Director General NCCIA Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi. He said the Faisalabad Circle organised an awareness session for students at Government Higher Secondary School and College, Manawala, while the Rawalpindi Circle conducted a special session for the minority community at the Seventy-day Adventist Church. Similarly, the NCCIA circles in Gujranwala, Peshawar, Lahore, Gilgit and Sahiwal arranged awareness sessions at different schools and colleges for students and teachers.

Abbottabad Circle organised a cyber awareness session at the Press Club, followed by an awareness walk attended by journalists, students, civil society members and NCCIA officers. During the sessions, participants were briefed on safe internet use, responsible social media practices, online financial fraud, cyber harassment, protection of personal information and digital identities, and measures to prevent cybercrime. NCCIA officers explained how cybercriminals use fake links, fraudulent social media profiles, misleading messages, fake calls and online harassment to target unsuspecting citizens.

They advised participants to avoid clicking unknown links, use strong and unique passwords, enable two-factor authentication and refrain from sharing personal information or photographs with unknown individuals. The participants were also informed about the procedure for reporting suspicious online activities, harassment and financial fraud through the NCCIA helpline 1799.

The official said students, teachers, journalists and members of the minority community appreciated the awareness initiative and expressed interest in the continuation of such sessions.

Director General NCCIA Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi said raising awareness among all sections of society was essential for building a safe Digital Pakistan.—APP

The shifting spectrum of truth

KHALID ABDULLA-JANAH

IN the words of Christiane Amanpour, one of the most respected journalists of our time: "Be truthful, not neutral." I have always admired the principle behind these words. But looking at political developments around the world today, I find myself wondering what we actually mean when we talk about truthfulness. Are we talking about the whole truth? Or have we reached a point where certain truths are given prominence while others, equally relevant, are conveniently left out? With elections in Israel and the American midterms taking place within days of each other, perhaps this is a good moment to ask some difficult questions. Questions that should be obvious to anyone who believes in intellectual honesty, yet somehow seem to have disappeared from much of our public debate. I was watching CNN's "State of the Union," with Dana Bash interviewing Republican Senate candidate Mike Rogers about his Democratic opponent in Michigan, Abdul El-Sayed. The discussion concerned allegations associating El-Sayed with the Muslim Brotherhood. Bash challenged Rogers and pointed out that El-Sayed had disavowed the organization. But I found myself asking why we had arrived at this discussion in the first place.

Words shape public perceptions long before people have an opportunity to examine the underlying facts. Here is an American citizen, a physician and a candidate for the US Senate, being forced to answer questions about his religion and alleged associations for which no credible evidence has been presented. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump has described El-Sayed as a "jihadi." Why is this not receiving the same level of serious examination? What has happened to the responsibility that comes with the office of the president? In Minnesota, we see similar attacks directed at Rep. Ilhan Omar. One can disagree strongly with her political positions but surely that disagreement should not open the door to questioning her belonging in the country she represents. I wonder whether the same standards would apply if these politicians came from a different religious background. These are not small issues. They concern the way political narratives are constructed and the responsibility of journalists in deciding what deserves to be challenged. The same questions become even more uncomfortable when we turn to the Middle East. For years, Palestinian representatives appearing on international television have been expected to begin by condemning the Palestinians and the future direction of Israeli foreign policy. These attacks must be condemned. But I struggle to understand why Israeli officials are not asked with similar regularity to condemn the actions of the Israeli military in Gaza, the killing of civilians and the violence carried out by settlers in the West Bank. Surely, if we are interested in understanding what is happening,

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 07 Issue: 52

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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



Netanyahu's Electoral Setback: Will Israel Choose War or Diplomacy?

Qamar Bashir



Iran represents perhaps the most dangerous dimension of Netanyahu's regional strategy.

His political message has consistently presented Tehran as an existential security threat, requiring military preparedness and, when deemed necessary, offensive action. His critics contend that an escalating confrontation risks drawing the United States into an increasingly costly regional conflict while destabilizing neighboring countries and threatening international energy supplies. An Eisenkot-led administration could alter the methods through which Israel pursues its security...

Israeli Democracy under the Shadow of War

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Israel has no single written constitution. Instead, its constitutional framework rests on a series of Basic Laws. The Israel Democracy Institute has criticised the ease with which these laws can be amended by a simple majority of 61 members of the Knesset, arguing that such arrangements lack a parallel among democratic states

ISRAEL'S October 27 general election has delivered a significant political setback to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose campaign emphasized military strength, national security and confrontation with Iran. Yet the voters have not handed his principal opponent, former military chief Gadi Eisenkot, an unambiguous mandate either. Instead, Israel faces a fragmented parliament, difficult coalition negotiations and potentially prolonged political uncertainty, with consequences extending far beyond its borders. The initial exit polls projected approximately 50 seats for Netanyahu's bloc, 52-53 for Eisenkot's opposition alliance and 17-18 for Arab parties. Updated projections narrowed the contest further, placing the two principal blocs at approximately 51 seats each. Neither approach the 61 seats required for a majority in the 120-member Knesset. These remain provisional projections, not final election results.

The election represents more than a contest between two political personalities. It is a referendum on Netanyahu's wartime leadership, Israel's democratic institutions, the October 7 intelligence failures, military conscription, relations with Palestinians and the future direction of Israeli foreign policy. High voter participation, particularly among Arab citizens, suggests that substantial sections of Israeli society want their voices heard in determining that direction. Netanyahu's political predicament is particularly complicated because his traditionalist, conservative and religious parties whose positions on Palestinian territory, settlement expansion and military operations are frequently more uncompromising than those of the broader Israeli electorate. Parties associated with Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich have advocated extensive Israeli control over Palestinian territories, while ultra-Orthodox parties oppose the region. Coalition negotiations and military-service exemptions. These factions should not be treated as ideologically identical. Nevertheless, another Netanyahu-led government dependent on their parliamentary support could face intensified demands for settlement expansion, restrictions on Palestinian sovereignty and continued military pressure across the region. Coalition negotiations might therefore reinforce rather than moderate some of the policies that have generated international criticism.

The consequences would extend to Gaza, where Israel's military campaign has caused enormous civilian suffering, destruction and displacement. International institutions and human-rights organizations have raised grave allegations concerning violations of international humanitarian law. Netanyahu rejects accusations of criminal wrongdoing and maintains that Israel's operations are necessary for national security and the defeat of Hamas. In the occupied West Bank, continued settlement expansion and military settlement have undermined prospects for Palestinian self-determination. In southern Lebanon, Israeli security operations and demands for buffer arrangements have raised serious questions about Lebanese sovereignty. The occupied Syrian Golan Heights remains another longstanding territorial dispute, notwithstanding Israel's annexation claim and

American recognition of Israeli sovereignty there. Iran represents perhaps the most dangerous dimension of Netanyahu's regional strategy. His political message has consistently presented Tehran as an existential security threat, requiring military preparedness and, when deemed necessary, offensive action. His critics contend that an escalating confrontation risks drawing the United States into an increasingly costly regional conflict while destabilizing neighboring countries and threatening international energy supplies. An Eisenkot-led administration could alter the methods through which Israel pursues its security objectives, although it would not necessarily abandon those objectives. Eisenkot, himself a former military chief, also considers Iran a major strategic threat and supports strong Israeli military capabilities. His distinction from Netanyahu lies more in his emphasis on institutional accountability, national cohesion, coordinated security policy and rebuilding international partnerships than in any categorical rejection of military force. His proposed independent state commission of inquiry into the October 7, 2023, attacks could become particularly consequential. Such an investigation would examine the intelligence, military and political failures that allowed Hamas militants to breach Israel's defenses, kill civilians and security personnel, and take hostages.

Serious questions have been raised about whether Israeli authorities adequately assessed warnings preceding the attack, why border defenses proved insufficient and how political and military decision-making contributed to the catastrophe. There have also been investigations and disputes concerning Israeli fire during the fighting. These questions deserve independent examination, with responsibility established through international participation could provide alternatives to indefinite Israeli military administration. Yet Eisenkot's security-centered outlook does not automatically translate into support for full Palestinian sovereignty or immediate Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.

The problem, therefore, comes from two directions. External adversaries may seek to exploit political divisions, while domestic actors can weaken public confidence through misinformation, intimidation and the manipulation of fear. When these pressures operate together, voters find it increasingly difficult to distinguish a genuine warning from a political tactic. Israel's institutions have so far demonstrated an important degree of resilience. Elections are held according to law, political disputes can be taken to court, and the postponement of a national election requires the support of 80 members of the Knesset, a high threshold. However, the Knesset has postponed an election only once, in 1973, during the final days of the Yom Kippur War, when the present 80-vote requirement was not yet in force.

The principle that elections must continue even during a national emergency has a long democratic history. In November 1864, during the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln argued that postponing a national election under pressure from rebellion would amount to accepting defeat. His reasoning remains relevant: a democracy cannot claim to be secure if its constitutional processes can be suspended whenever the country faces a crisis.

therefore become the election's most consequential parliamentary actors. Ra'am, led by Mansour Abbas, has previously demonstrated a willingness to participate in coalition arrangements, while other Arab political factions have generally maintained stronger opposition to Israeli policies toward Palestinians. Their combined representation could be indispensable to preventing Netanyahu's return or sustaining an alternative administration.

Yet Eisenkot's prospects for building a coalition with right-wing politicians who oppose governing alongside Arab parties. This creates a fundamental contradiction: the opposition may possess sufficient combined parliamentary strength to replace Netanyahu, but not the political agreement necessary to exercise that strength. Outside parliamentary support, a minority administration or carefully negotiated confidence arrangements could become possible solutions. Even a successfully constituted government would confront an uphill struggle. A narrow parliamentary base could allow relatively small factions to threaten legislation, budgets and cabinet survival. Disagreements over military conscription, religious privileges, judicial independence and Palestinian policy could destabilize the administration before its regional diplomatic initiatives achieve momentum. Should neither political camp assemble a workable governing arrangement, Israel could enter an election deadlock, with voters being asked to choose between potentially fierce elections. Under Israel's parliamentary system and Basic Laws, the outgoing government generally continues in a caretaker capacity until a replacement takes office. Netanyahu could therefore remain prime minister despite losing his existing parliamentary majority.

Yet Eisenkot's prospects for building a coalition with European capitals, Tehran, Beirut, Damascus and the Palestinian territories. Governments would struggle to determine whether Israeli military commitments, diplomatic assurances and regional policies represented temporary political calculations or the enduring direction of the state. Ultimately, the election would expose the limitations of relying exclusively on military power to address deeply rooted political disputes. Israel's security concerns are real, as are Palestinian demands for freedom, dignity and statehood and neighboring countries' rights to sovereignty and territorial integrity. None can be permanently resolved through force alone. Israel's electoral verdict remains incomplete, but its message is unmistakably clear: political power is fragmented, public confidence is contested, and the choice between continued confrontation and meaningful diplomacy remains unresolved. The Middle East now awaits not merely the formation of another Israeli government, but a decision on whether that government can open a credible path toward peace.

Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)

Former Press Minister,

Embassy of Pakistan to France

Former Press Attaché to Malaysia

Former MD, SRBC | Michigan, USA

Yet holding elections on time is not, by itself, proof of democratic health. The quality of democracy also depends on constitutional safeguards, institutional independence and the willingness of those in power to accept limits on their authority. Israel has no single written constitution. Instead, its constitutional framework rests on a series of Basic Laws. The Israel Democracy Institute has criticised the ease with which these laws can be amended by a simple majority of 61 members of the Knesset, arguing that such arrangements lack a parallel among democratic states. This weakness has become increasingly consequential. The governing majority has pursued changes affecting judicial appointments, the legal status of religious study and the Supreme Court's powers of review. Some of these measures have produced intense public opposition and legal challenges. The Supreme Court struck down the 2023 amendment restricting its use of the reasonableness standard, illustrating the continuing struggle between parliamentary authority and judicial independence. The central issue is not whether Israel should take threats from Iran seriously. It must. The issue is whether the language of national survival can be used to shield political leaders from scrutiny and weaken the institutions that hold them accountable. Democracy is tested not only when a country is at peace, but also when fear is widespread and the temptation to concentrate power is strongest. Political leaders have a duty to distinguish genuine security warnings from campaign rhetoric. Opposition parties must be able to compete without intimidation, and voters must have access to credible information. Israel's democratic future will depend on more than the outcome of a single election. It will depend on whether its institutions can withstand the combined pressures of war, political polarisation and constitutional conflict. A country cannot protect its democracy merely by warning that it is under threat. It must also preserve the rules, freedoms and institutional checks that make democratic government worth defending.

The writer is Assistant Professor Pakistan Studies

Imperial College of Business Studies Lahore

muhammad.akram@imperial.edu.pk

Briefs

ECP orders immediate...

FROM PAGE 01

North Waziristan specified in the federal government's order dated Oct. 11. The ECP also sought the issuance of the delimitation schedules for the remaining districts, excluding Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Lower South Waziristan and Upper South Waziristan. It issued the directives under Articles 218(3) (Election Commission), 140A(2) (local government), 219(4) (during new avenues for cross-border economic and people-to-people exchanges. The four-day visit includes three days in Hunza and one day in Gilgit. According to the Deputy Commissioner of Hunza, the twin-city agreement between Hunza and Tashkurgan was signed in 2023.

HUNZA: A high-level Chinese delegation from Tashkurgan County has arrived in Hunza to strengthen cooperation in tourism, trade and culture, opening new avenues for cross-border economic and people-to-people exchanges. The four-day visit includes three days in Hunza and one day in Gilgit. According to the Deputy Commissioner of Hunza, the twin-city agreement between Hunza and Tashkurgan was signed in 2023. The visit aims to build on the existing agreement by exploring practical opportunities for cooperation between the two regions. Gwadar Pro reported. The delegation was warmly received at the Pakistan-China Khunjerab Border by representatives of the Hunza District Administration, the Hunza Chamber of Commerce and Industry, KVO and other local officials. The chamber's acting president and founding members welcomed the visitors, highlighting the importance of closer institutional and business ties. The delegation includes Tashkurgan County government officials responsible for administration, commerce, industry, tourism and foreign affairs, alongside representatives from tourism, technology and logistics companies, including Xinjiang Batie International Travel Agency, Xinjiang Guibei Technology Group and Xinjiang Lufan International Freight Co. - APP

Netanyahu falls short...

FROM PAGE 01

secured 21 seats, has expressed conditional openness to working with Arab-led parties, although such an arrangement remains politically sensitive. Likud won 26 seats, while the Joint List and Together secured 12 seats each. The Democrats won eight seats, while Yisrael Beiteinu, Ra'am, United Torah Judaism, Otzma Yehudit and Shas each secured seven seats. Religious Zionism and Identity won six seats. The results leave Netanyahu facing the challenge of securing enough support to form a government, while opposition parties also need to overcome political differences to assemble an alternative coalition.

Secret to country's...

FROM PAGE 01

digitalisation. PMO quoted him as saying, "During the meeting, he said the effective use of digitalisation, AI and modern technology could play a 'vital role' in improving trade, exports, agricultural productivity, ease of doing business and the quality of public services in Pakistan", PMO said. PM Sheikh Rasheed Ali Shah's cooperation in facilitating Pakistani agricultural exports to Chinese markets, highlighting that modernising the agricultural sector was essential for national development. He also welcomed cooperation with Alibaba on automation in agriculture. The prime minister directed that an AI-assisted cancer early detection system be implemented at the earliest in collaboration with Alibaba. He also directed that a 15-day AI training programme for IT graduates be launched soon under the IT ministry's Ignite programme, in collaboration with Alibaba.

Justice Mohsin...

FROM PAGE 01

Justice Kayan's resignation comes months after his transfer to the LHC and is likely to reignite discussion surrounding the episode that exposed tensions between the judiciary and state institutions. No official statement has yet been issued detailing the specific reasons for his departure.

First Chinese delegation from Tashkurgan visits Hunza

The four-day visit includes three days in Hunza and one day in Gilgit. According to the Deputy Commissioner of Hunza, the twin-city agreement between Hunza and Tashkurgan was signed in 2023.



Arteta despair as Arsenal stunned by Fleetwood

DN

FLEETWOOD: Mikel Arteta said Arsenal's stunning League Cup defeat by fourth-tier Fleetwood was "a very sad day" as the Premier League champions suffered one of the most embarrassing results in their history. Arsenal's side crashed out 5-3 on penalties in an incredible fourth round upset after the tie finished 1-1 in normal time. Arsenal's Bruno Guimaraes had his penalty saved by Jay Lynch in the shoot-out and Conor Hazard scored Fleetwood's winner. Aaron Loupal-Bi's first-half goal had put Fleetwood ahead before Viktor Gyokor equalized after the interval. Arsenal's 16-year-old rising star Max Dowman was sent off for violent conduct in the closing stages. Arteta paid the price for prioritising Sunday's Premier League trip to Liverpool as

his decision to make nine changes backfired spectacularly. The Gunners boss conceded Arsenal could have no complaints, admitting it was a painful moment in his reign. "First of all, congratulations to Fleetwood for going through the next round. The manner that they have done it, and for us a very sad day," Arteta said. "There is nothing to criticize in the players for their attitude, their application. The determination, you could see that was there from the start, even with 10 men. But we conceded a really poor goal to start with that gave them some momentum." "Obviously we have so much of the ball, so many chances, so many shots, and if you want the margins to be bigger than going to the penalties, you need to capitalize on that. And we didn't. It's football, that's the beauty of this competition. It's a very sad day." Arsenal had moved level on points

with Premier League leaders Manchester City after a 2-0 victory over Everton on Saturday. But instead of extending their run of 11 wins from their 13 previous games, Arteta's team returned to north London red-faced after a loss that ranks among the darkest days in the club's glittering history. "Zero problem at all. Otherwise, I would be here absolutely fuming. I'm sad, I think we are all sad. We have a massive responsibility to carry this badge in the best possible way," Arteta said. "You don't capitulate, then you cannot go through to the next round. Unfortunately, we are out." "I just can't believe it! Although it looked a harsh decision to send off Dowman for sinning, a kick toward Harrison Neal, Arteta was unimpressed with the 16-year-old, giving him a stern word as the midfielder trudged off. "Something that we dis-

Pakistani expert highlights Global South's role in governance reform

BEIJING: Pakistan's engagement in international policy discussions is important as the Global South seeks a greater role in shaping good governance. This was stated by Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF), while participating in the Global Governance Forum (Xiong'an) 2026 in China, Gwadar Pro reported. He discussed the significance of the forum, held from October 23 to 25 in Xiong'an New Area, Hebei Province, which brought together government officials, scholars, business leaders, diplomats and representatives of international organizations to discuss global governance reform and international cooperation. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, Party of China Central Committee, attended the opening ceremony and delivered a keynote address emphasizing multilateralism and international cooperation. The discussions examined reform of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and international financial arrangements, with particular attention to increasing the participation of developing countries in global decision-making.

North Punjab Clinches National Mas-Wrestling Title

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: North Punjab emerged champions of the 9th National Mas-Wrestling Championship 2026, securing the top position with 88 points after thrilling contests among 16 teams from across Pakistan at Hamid Hall, Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad. Islamabad finished runners-up with 86 points, while South Punjab secured third position with 57 points in the championship organised by the Pakistan Mas-Wrestling Federation (PMWF). The event featured competitions in 15 weight categories, comprising eight men's and seven women's events, showcasing the strength, skill and competitive spirit of the country's emerging athletes. The closing ceremony was attended by Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Chairman of the Kashmir Committee Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon, Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination Moheyudin Wani, Pakistan Mas-Wrestling Federation Chairman Nawab Furqan Khan, Olympian Sadaf Siddiqui, Pakistan Sports Board Deputy Director General Muhammad Saeed, Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Pakistan Aybek along with other dignitaries and sports personalities. In the women's competitions, Toyaba Zubair from Wapda claimed the 53kg title. Islamabad's Khadija secured gold in the 60kg category, Mariam Sharif in the 65kg event, Saiga Riasat in the 70kg category and Aysha Dildash in the 75kg event. Iqra Naseeb of Islamabad won the 75kg-plus title after defeating Ayesha Khan of Balochistan in the final. In the men's events, North

Fmr Brazilian President lands in US

FROM PAGE 01

and then took a private jet to the Ecuadorian city of Guayaquil. From there, they flew to Miami. Neither Argentina's presidency, Ecuadorian ministries nor Baines Fly, the operator of the private jet, responded to requests for comment.

PTI to contest LB polls

FROM PAGE 01

Malik Amir had held more than 25 meetings across the three electoral constituencies over the past three days. It was the decision to participate in the elections was taken after a series of online consultations with around 400 office-bearers representing the regional and district organisations, eight town organisations, all 125 union councils, and various party wings and committees, including the labour wing, Inuit Studies, Education, youth, traders and women's wings, the advisory council, working committee and core committee. According to the statement, 95pc of the office-bearers consulted supported contesting the elections.

Pakistan bars Taiwan airlines

FROM PAGE 01

Taiwanese carriers began rerouting flights over the weekend, with China Airway's and Eva Airways' flights being rerouted to Pakistan since the morning of Oct 25, according to flight-tracking data cited by the report. At least a dozen flights operated by the two airlines between Asia and Europe have flown over Russia since Sunday, according to FlightRadar24 data. China Airlines and Eva Airways declined to comment, while Taiwan's Civil Aviation Administration did not comment on the rerouting. It said, however, that it had never banned carriers from flying over Russia. Pakistan's restrictions are stricter than those imposed by mainland China, which allows Taiwanese airlines to fly over its territory, the public relations officer considers Taiwan part of its territory. Pakistan severed official relations with Taiwan in 1951 in favour of closer ties with China. It renews its stance that what Pakistan's decision. Airspace restrictions, however, can intensify during periods of heightened geopolitical tensions, the report said.

Gold prices rise by Rs3,500 per tola

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices witnessed an increase in the domestic market on Wednesday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola rising by Rs3,500 to Rs425,636, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs3,001 to Rs364,914, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs2,751 to Rs334,516. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$55 to \$4,031 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola rose by Rs61 to Rs5,854, while the price of 10 grams of 24-karat silver increased by Rs52 to Rs5,018. The price of silver in the international market also registered an increase, rising by \$0.61 to \$53.76 per APP.

Al-Hilal crushed by Al-Shamal

DN

ALKHOBAR: "Everyone will get their chance to participate and add value to the team," said Simone Inzaghi in the match press conference for Al-Hilal's AFC Champions League Elite Matchday 3 clash against Al-Shamal on Monday. Indeed, Inzaghi brought in a host of players in a changed lineup after Al-Hilal's hard-fought victory over Al-Qadisiyah in the Saudi Pro League last Friday, but it resulted in their first-ever league stage defeat since the Elite edition launched in 2024/25. In goal, Gulf Cup star Mohammed Al-Owais replaced Yassin Boumou, while the defense reverted to a back three including Ali Lajami, Yusuf Akkiccek and Motab Al-Harbi. In midfield, Murad Hawsawi joined Mohammed Kanu, while Theo Hernandez at left wing-back had the young Sabri Dahal at right wing-back. Up top played Mohamed Karim Meite, who was flanked by the returning potential health concerns earlier. One of the projects is the AI Diagnostics Vital Chair, which aims to optimize the triage process in hospitals. "Using AI technology, cameras, and sensors, the chair can measure a patient's weight, height, blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate and skin temperature, then connect the information directly to the doctor. Our aim is to make the process faster while maintaining accuracy," explained Lootah. APP

Briefs

PSX stays bullish, gains over 1,269 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish momentum on Wednesday, gaining 1,269.55 points, a positive change of 0.77 percent, to close at 165,736.76 points against 164,467.20 points recorded in the previous trading session. The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 578.124 million shares, compared to 401.969 million shares traded in the previous session, while the traded value increased to Rs 26,203 billion from Rs 18,069 billion. Market capitalisation increased to Rs 18,329 billion from Rs 18,214 billion recorded a day earlier. Out of 496 companies that traded in the ready market, 269 posted gains, 180 suffered losses, while 47 remained unchanged. Pervez Ahmed Co led the volume chart with 58,321 million shares, followed by TPL Properties with 38,349 million shares and Caeem with 30 PK with 34,763 million shares. Among the top gainers, Ghandhara Industries Limited surged by Rs 106.12 to close at Rs 1,167.28, while Rafian Maize Products Company Limited advanced by Rs 70.86 to settle at Rs 8,408.05. On the losing side, PIA Holding Company LimitedB declined by Rs 448.49 to close at Rs 13,551.50, while Khairpur Sugar Mills Limited fell by Rs 125.98 to Rs 1,133.86. In the futures (DFC) market, turnover stood at 422.813 million shares with a traded value of Rs 17,391 billion, compared with 455.777 million shares worth Rs 14,653 billion in the previous session. Of 315 companies traded in the DFC market, 209 advanced, 105 declined and 1 remained unchanged. APP

Zikria stresses data-driven economic planning

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Mohammad Zikria Akbar Zia, has proposed the development of an Islamabad City Economic Competitiveness Index to assess the federal capital's economic strengths, investment potential, infrastructure efficiency and overall business environment. Talking to different visiting delegation of business leaders on Wednesday, he said that Islamabad must move beyond conventional development and adopt a more data-driven economic framework to strengthen its position as a competitive investment destination. He emphasized that the economic success of a city should be measured not merely by its physical infrastructure but by its ability to attract productive investment, promote industrial and commercial activities, create employment opportunities and facilitate sustainable business growth. He suggested that the proposed index should evaluate key indicators, including ease of doing business, regulatory efficiency, investment facilitation, digital connectivity, transport and logistics, access to finance, skilled human resources and entrepreneurship. Such an initiative, he observed, could provide valuable guidance to policymakers and investors while helping Islamabad realize its untapped economic potential. Senior Vice President ICCI, Mohammad Ashfaq Hussain Chahla proposed that the Islamabad City Economic Competitiveness Index should serve as a practical tool for identifying major challenges and recommending measurable solutions. He emphasized the importance of closer coordination among the Capital Development Authority, relevant government departments, regulatory institutions and business stakeholders to ensure timely facilitation of investors and entrepreneurs. Vice President ICCI, Mohammad Waqas Khan Swati said that the federal capital possessed considerable potential to emerge as a centre for technology-driven enterprises, professional services, startups and knowledge-based economic activities. He stressed that visiting foreign business delegations should be provided with reliable information about investment opportunities and suitable local business partners to encourage meaningful commercial cooperation and technology transfer. The visiting business leaders appreciated the importance of evidence-based economic planning and discussed opportunities for strengthening business-to-business engagement, investment facilitation and institutional cooperation. -DNA

Dubai varsity develops AI tools to accelerate hospital triage

DUBAI: Dubai Medical University is developing artificial intelligence systems to speed up hospital triage, guide first aid in remote locations and flag potential illnesses among students, as it expands its healthcare innovation program. Hessa Yahya Lootah, head of AI and innovation at Dubai Medical University, told Arab News the university is working to develop practical applications of AI that could support healthcare professionals, improve emergency response and help identify potential health concerns earlier. One of the projects is the AI Diagnostics Vital Chair, which aims to optimize the triage process in hospitals. "Using AI technology, cameras, and sensors, the chair can measure a patient's weight, height, blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate and skin temperature, then connect the information directly to the doctor. Our aim is to make the process faster while maintaining accuracy," explained Lootah. APP

Agri credit hits PKR 1.329t with 3.5m borrowers

Steering Committee Access to Finance reviews progress across priority sectors

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chaired the sixth meeting of the Access to Finance (AF2) Steering Committee at the Finance Division today to review progress on expanding affordable and inclusive financing across priority sectors, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), agriculture, exports, housing, and the Prime Minister's flagship schemes including Apna Ghar, Zarkeze-e and the Pakistan Accelerated Vehicle Electrification (PAVE) Scheme. The Committee underscored the importance of access to finance in supporting economic inclusion, entrepreneurship, job creation and poverty reduction. It reviewed progress on previously agreed actions and received updates from sectoral and functional sub-committees, focusing on implementation and remaining bottlenecks.

On SME financing, the Committee noted that outstanding financing had reached PKR 1.148 trillion, including PKR 538 billion for small enterprises, as of October 23, 2024. The Committee also reviewed the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority's (SMEDA) capacity-building roadmap, emphasizing financial literacy, improved documentation, accounting support and digital tools to enhance SME readiness for formal financing. SMEDA was encouraged to work closely with lenders and regulators to provide coordinated support to SMEs. The Committee reviewed agriculture financing, with outstanding credit reaching PKR 1,329 trillion and the number of borrowers standing at approximately 3.5 million. Under the Prime Minister's

Zarkeze-e: Asaan Zarai Qarza Scheme, 20,176 loan applications amounting to PKR 8,674 billion had been approved, while 6,132 collateral-free loans worth approximately PKR 2.34 billion had been disbursed to smallholder farmers. Discussions also covered measures to strengthen livestock and dairy financing and expand private-sector participation across agricultural value chains. On housing finance, the Committee noted that outstanding financing had reached PKR 455 billion, serving 241,500 borrowers. Under the Prime Minister's Apna Ghar Program, 86,896 applications involving PKR 511 billion in financing had been approved, while 15,584 loans worth

approximately PKR 91 billion had been disbursed. The Committee discussed measures to accelerate disbursements and address housing supply constraints, including financing for builders, developers and under-construction projects. The Committee also reviewed implementation of the Pakistan Accelerated Vehicle Electrification (PAVE) Scheme, aimed at promoting affordable electric two- and three-wheeler mobility. Under the scheme, 21,918 applications involving approximately PKR 3.06 billion in financing had been approved. A total of 5,506 loans worth PKR 1,093 billion had been disbursed, while 3,263 electric vehicles had been delivered

Food, household brands warn of more price hikes

LONDON: The world's top consumer goods and food companies, from Coca-Cola and Procter & Gamble to Nestle and Reckitt, have warned of further price hikes next year to cover rising costs even as shoppers remain reluctant to splurge on groceries. Higher energy, raw material and freight costs as a result of the US war on Iran mean that the companies making everything from laundry detergent to soda and snacks face a balancing act to protect profit margins. Even higher prices on everyday items will fuel concerns that inflation will persist into next year. High gas and grocery bills are a big factor in next week's US midterm elections. Soaring costs related to the war are the latest headache for consumer goods, food and drink companies, which have struggled with last-ditch sales since the pandemic, as shoppers have balked at increasingly expensive name-brand packaged food. Last year, they had to contend with tariffs on imported goods imposed by US President Donald Trump. "Pricing is the last lever these companies have left, and they're pulling it into a consumer who's already tapped out on paying more," said David Wagner, head of equity and portfolio manager at PepsiCo investment Aptus Capital Advisors. On Tuesday, Coca-Cola CEO Henrique Braun said pressure on consumers could extend into 2027. "We are seeing elevated cost pressures driven by increased logistics and transportation costs," he said as the company raised its annual profit forecast. Consumers in Europe and North America are particularly squeezed, said Reckitt CEO Kris Licht. He said companies must decide how much of the cost increase to pass on through pricing and how much to offset with more promotional spending. "We will probably have to price more at this level of commodity costs and input costs," Licht said after the company's earnings report. Revenue forecast, sending its shares down about 5 percent on Tuesday. -APP

Climate change must be declared 'global health emergency'

. Romanello said this year for the first time the researchers' work was complicated by the disappearance of certain data sources, particularly from the United States, such as fossil fuel subsidies, which have not been made public by the US authorities

PARIS, France: Climate change must be declared a "global health emergency" to shape governments' policies after heat caused three million deaths between 2016 and 2023, a report in The Lancet said Wednesday. Published by the British medical journal ahead of the COP 31 climate summit in November, the 10th edition of the report brought together 146 researchers from 30 countries to assess the impact of climate change on the health of the world's population. It said there were a record 710,000 heat-related deaths in 2023 with more than 20 percent of that toll linked to human-caused climate change. Marina Romanello, the executive director of the health and climate research project Lancet Countdown, said there were "three million heat-related deaths globally in an eight-year span since the Paris Agreement" of 2015. "That's roughly equivalent to the entire population of Wales being wiped out in the space of eight years due to heat," she told a news conference. And "68 percent of those deaths are directly attributable to climate change." The legally binding international climate treaty adopted in the French capital aimed to limit global warming to well below 2C and pursue efforts to keep it to 1.5C compared to pre-industrial levels. Romanello said the global health emergency due to climate change should have "an integrated approach so that we're not responding to emergency after emergency." Instead she called for "a cohesive long-term response that builds resilience, builds capacities, and builds the possibilities of countries to avoid further emergencies moving forward." To determine the share of deaths attributable to warming caused by human activity, the researchers compiled the number of heat-related deaths recorded by states, then subtracted those that would have occurred in the absence of climate change, said Professor Ollie Jay of the University of Sydney, Jay said the intensity and frequency of periods of intense heat were amplified by climate change, pointing out that last year an extreme drought affected more than half of the world's land surface for at least one month. By reducing worker productivity, warming has cost the global economy more than one trillion dollars per year over the past three years, the researchers said. Southeast Asia and Africa, the hardest-hit regions, are estimated to have lost the equivalent of 3.9 percent and 3.2 percent of their GDP, compared with 0.2 percent for Europe and 1.5 percent for the Americas. However there has been concrete progress in some areas. Since 2016, 56 of the WHO's 194 member states have adapted their health and early-warning systems to anticipate extreme events. Investment in clean energy reached \$2.1 trillion in 2025 - double that of the amount invested in fossil fuels, which cause climate change. However fossil fuels still account for 80 percent of global energy, causing air pollution that results in 2.73 million deaths per year, the study said. Meanwhile, roughly 323,000 deaths have been avoided in "at least" 77 countries where air pollution from fossil fuels has fallen since 2016, according to the report. Although funding for climate-related medical research has increased sevenfold to reach \$316 million in 2024, 84 percent of these funds go to researchers in wealthy countries, even though the least developed nations are the most affected by the growing climate-related health threats. Romanello said this year for the first time the researchers' work was complicated by the disappearance of certain data sources, particularly from the United States, such as fossil fuel subsidies, which have not been made public by the US authorities. And for the past two years, global geopolitical instability has pushed global warming and its health impact into the background, she said, stressing that inaction was exacerbating the situation. -DNA

Shaza for collaborative efforts to ensure kids' online safety

Shaza Fatima Khawaja said responsibility for children's online safety could not rest solely with the government, technology platforms or parents, but required coordinated efforts involving policymakers, the private sector, international partners, civil society, educators and young people



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday called for coordinated efforts by the government, technology companies, parents and civil society to ensure a safe digital environment for children and young people. Addressing the Digital Tahaafuz Summit, she said the growing role of digital platforms in communication, education, healthcare, entertainment and access to information had made it imperative to protect children from online harms. She said the online safety of children in Pakistan was a matter of serious concern and stressed the need to strike a balance between protecting young users and ensuring their access to emerging technologies. The minister said an outright ban on social media for children could push them towards alternative means of accessing such platforms. She emphasised the need for effective age-assurance mechanisms in collaboration with social media companies, saying these could strengthen

the implementation of existing safeguards for children and teenagers. Shaza Fatima Khawaja said responsibility for children's online safety could not rest solely with the government, technology platforms or parents, but required coordinated efforts involving policymakers, the private sector, international partners, civil society, educators and young people. She appreciated Meta's engagement and responsiveness, saying continued dialogue with technology companies that took their policy guidelines and local compliance obligations seriously was essential to maintaining constructive relationships. The minister said online safety should be built into technology platforms from the outset rather

than treated as an afterthought or addressed only after concerns arose. She also urged greater awareness of online risks, particularly in areas beyond major urban centres, and urged technology companies with extensive reach, including Meta, to take proactive measures to educate children and parents about online safety. Acknowledging awareness campaigns conducted by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), she said social media campaigns alone had limitations in reaching all sections of society. She stressed that awareness initiatives should reach communities across the country and help parents and children understand the safeguards available to them and how to use them effectively. -DNA

Syria, Iraq pledge stronger security coop

DUBAI: Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Faleh Al-Zaidi was received by Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa at Damascus International Airport on Wednesday, as the two countries seek to strengthen political, economic and security cooperation. Al-Sharaa said Syria was committed to achieving the highest levels of cooperation with Iraq, while Al-Zaidi said the two countries were working to strengthen security cooperation, coordinate regional positions and develop their partnership across various fields. The two leaders are holding talks on bilateral relations and ways to expand cooperation, followed by an expanded meeting of their delegations to coordinate initiatives and ensure the shared interests of both countries and their peoples. Ahead of the visit, Al-Sharaa said Syria and Iraq had a historic opportunity to deepen ties, as the two states insist on peace and build strong economies capable of protecting their shared interests. In an interview with Iraq's Di-Jah TV on Tuesday, Al-Sharaa highlighted opportunities to expand cooperation in trade, energy, agriculture, water and transport, describing Syria as a strategic gateway for Iraq to the Mediterranean and Western markets. He called for linking Iraq's Grand Faw Port to Syria's Tartus Port and improving land transport routes connecting the two countries with regional markets. Trade and transport between Syria and Iraq have grown rapidly over the past six to seven months, with more than 100,000 transit trucks and 40,000 import and export trucks crossing between the countries, he said. Al-Sharaa also highlighted plans to expand energy cooperation, including oil pipeline projects, refinery development and the rehabilitation of related infrastructure. He said rebuilding pipelines to Syria's Banyas port would benefit both countries, adding that Iraq invests in Syria but already began in sectors including cement. On political and security issues, Al-Sharaa urged support for Al-Zaidi's efforts to combat corruption and ensure that weapons remain under state control. -APP

Briefs

US costs of
Iran war rise
to over
\$47 billion

WASHINGTON: The US military has spent over \$47 billion so far to prosecute the war in Iran, more than 25 percent higher than the Defense Department's estimate in July, according to Pentagon data obtained by Reuters. The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment on its estimate, which has not been shared publicly. The disclosure about the rising cost of the Iran war comes as Republicans wrestle with the political fallout of the unpopular conflict ahead of the November 3 election that will determine control of Congress for the next two years. The war's impact on global energy costs has weighed on support for Republican candidates and hurt President Donald Trump's approval ratings. Trump's Republican Party holds a narrow majority in both chambers of Congress. The Pentagon's latest estimate was tied to the operational costs of carrying out the war, with a projected cost of more than \$29 billion to replace expended munitions used in the conflict. More than \$6 billion would be needed to replace military equipment and so-called "platform losses," which include the loss of aircraft including many drones lost during the war. Trump launched the Iran war jointly with Israel in February, predicting that the conflict would last a short time. Trump's initial strategy in the Iran war focused on first using expensive, high-end precision missiles to bomb Iran's defenses so it could later use less expensive munitions, including gravity bombs like the air-launched JDAMs, which are plentiful. – APP

Centre
plans \$18bn
investment for
strategic water
infrastructure

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan plans to increase water-use efficiency from the current 40% to 70% and raise water availability at farm gates from 58.3 million acre-feet (MAF) to 79 MAF by 2029, requiring an estimated \$18 billion in federal financing over the next decade for strategic water infrastructure, according to a Planning Commission report. The National Water Security framework under URAAN Pakistan envisages major reforms in irrigation management, reservoir development, flood protection and groundwater regulation to address the country's worsening water scarcity. The report sets a target of increasing water storage capacity from the existing 15,318 MAF to 23.54 MAF by 2029.

Iran reviewing Qatari
proposal to end conflict

Sources close to the talks said the latest proposal comes at a particularly sensitive moment, amid growing concerns that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could authorize renewed military action against Iran in the coming days

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran is reviewing a new draft agreement presented by Qatari mediators aimed at ending the ongoing confrontation involving the United States and Israel, with a response from Tehran expected by the end of the week, according to an official familiar with the negotiations. The proposal was delivered to Iranian authorities on Sunday as diplomatic efforts accelerated to prevent a further escalation of tensions in the region. Qatar has been playing a key mediating role between the parties, seeking to establish a framework that could halt hostilities and pave the way for broader discussions on regional security and stability. Sources close to the talks said the latest proposal comes at a particularly sensitive

moment, amid growing concerns that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could authorize renewed military action against Iran in the coming days. The possibility of another round of attacks has heightened anxiety among regional governments and international stakeholders who fear that a wider conflict could destabilize the Middle East and disrupt global energy markets. The official briefed on the negotiations said the draft agreement contains several proposals designed to reduce tensions, although specific details have not been publicly disclosed. Iranian officials are reportedly examining the terms carefully before providing a formal response. Diplomatic sources indicated that Qatar has maintained continuous communication with both Western and regional actors in an effort to bridge differences

and secure commitments that could lead to a durable ceasefire. The Gulf state has previously served as a mediator in several regional disputes and is viewed as one of the few actors with open channels of communication across competing sides. Analysts say Tehran's response will be closely watched by Washington, Tel Aviv, and other regional capitals. Any indication that Iran is prepared to engage with the proposal could create momentum for further negotiations, while a rejection may increase fears of renewed military confrontation. The diplomatic push comes after months of heightened tensions that have fueled concerns over regional security and the risk of miscalculation by rival parties. International observers have repeatedly called for restraint, warning that further escalation

could have far-reaching consequences beyond the immediate conflict zone. For now, attention remains focused on Tehran, where officials are expected to finalize their position on the proposal within days. The outcome of Iran's deliberations may prove decisive in determining whether diplomacy can avert another dangerous phase in the crisis or whether the region faces the prospect of renewed conflict. Meanwhile, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said on Wednesday that he held discussions on the phone recently with his Saudi Arabia counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan on developments in the region and efforts to deescalate tensions. On his X account, he said they spoke about "efforts to contain the current crisis and prevent escalation," and "continue close consultation and coordination."

Turkey hosts
Libya talks

ISTANBUL: Türkiye hosted talks between Libya's eastern and western administrations last week with an ultimate goal of reunifying them, but no agreement has emerged, a senior Turkish official familiar with the talks told Wednesday. "Discussions have so far focused primarily on military unification, while political unity is expected to be addressed at a later stage," the official said. The talks, which took place in the capital Ankara, were attended by military officials from Libya's eastern and western administrations as well as diplomats, the source said, adding that Türkiye was acting as a mediator between the two sides. Beset by instability since the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi, Libya is divided between a UN-recognized government in Tripoli and a rival administration in the east backed by military commander Khalifa Haftar. Türkiye strongly backed the Tripoli-based government during Libya's years of conflict, but ties with eastern authorities have warmed significantly in recent years after a long period of hostility. Ankara is one of the rare countries involved in Libya that maintains ties with both sides. – APP

Afghan Taliban
mortar fire
kills 1 civilian

ISLAMABAD: Afghan Taliban forces fired mortars into a former Pakistani Taliban stronghold in restive north-western Pakistan, killing a civilian and wounding five others, a Pakistani government official said early Wednesday. The shelling damaged shops in a bazaar in South Waziristan, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province along the Afghan border, a local government administrator said on X. He said Pakistani forces along the border were responding "effectively and heavily." There was no immediate comment from Kabul, and it was unclear what triggered the exchange of fire. The clash came days after Islamabad urged Kabul to take verifiable action against militants it accuses of using Afghan territory to launch attacks inside Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Gov. Faisal Karim Kundi condemned what he described as unprovoked Afghan Taliban aggression against civilian homes and the Angoor Adda bazaar in Lower South Waziristan. – Agencies

Security forces kill nine
India-sponsored terrorists
in Balochistan IBOs

Seven terrorists killed in Kachhi, two in Wadh during intelligence-based operations, says military's media wing

QUETTA: Security forces killed nine terrorists in two intelligence-based operations in Balochistan's Kachhi and Wadh districts, the military's media wing said on Wednesday. The operations were conducted on October 26 following reports of the presence of terrorists belonging to the Indian proxy, Fitna al-Hindustan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. In the first operation in Kachhi district, security forces busted a terrorist hideout following an exchange of fire, killing seven India-sponsored terrorists, according to the ISPR. In a separate operation in Wadh district, security forces tracked and intercepted the movement of terrorists. An intense exchange of fire resulted in the killing of two more India-backed terrorists, the statement said. Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the terrorists killed in both operations, the military's media wing added. The ISPR said sanitisation operations were

underway to eliminate any other terrorists found in the areas.

It added that the relentless counterterrorism campaign under the vision of Azme-e-Istehkam, approved by the Federal Apex Committee on the National Action Plan, would continue at full pace. The campaign aims to eliminate the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country, the statement said. Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in cross-border terrorist incidents, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021. Pakistan recorded its highest monthly number of militant attacks in 12 years during September 2026. Islamabad has repeatedly urged Kabul to prevent its territory from being used by militant organisations to carry out attacks inside Pakistan. Pakistan maintains that the Afghan Taliban regime has failed to take effective action against groups responsible for attacks on Pakistani security forces and civilians. – APP

Lahore again ranks world's
most polluted major city

LAHORE: Lahore was ranked the world's most polluted major city on Wednesday morning as smog thickened over the city with the onset of colder weather. In the past few years, air pollution has become one of the most pressing public health and environmental crises facing Pakistan. Various cities of the country, most notably Lahore, deal with smog, especially in the winter months. The phenomenon is attributed mainly to industrial emissions, vehicular pollution, stubble burning and air movement. According to the live air quality ranking published by Swiss air quality monitoring platform IQAir, Lahore recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 296 at 10am on October 28, placing it at the top of the list of the world's major cities. – APP

At least 64 people killed
in Spain as two high-
speed trains collide

"Traffic on the Madrid-Andalusia high-speed rail line has been suspended following a rear-end collision between two trains," rail operator Adif said in a message posted on X on Wednesday.

DNA

MADRID: Rescue workers in Spain on Wednesday were scouring the wreckage for more bodies at the crash scene where at least 64 people were killed when two high-speed trains collided, in the second deadly railway accident in the country this year. "We are speaking of approximately 64 (dead), but this is probably going to grow even more," the leader of the central region of Castilla-La Mancha, Emiliano García-Pagés, told reporters at the scene, raising a previous toll of 31. Evacuated passengers streamed along a road near the scene, some splattered with blood or with their wounds bandaged, others wheeling suitcases and being given water by volunteers who said it had been donated from neighbouring towns. Hundreds of ambulances, funeral home

vans and helicopters were parked next to a train with several carriages sitting on an elevated section of track while twisted metal, broken panels and wreckage could be seen strewn across an embankment beneath the line where at least three carriages had plunged. The accident comes after a collision between two high-speed trains in southern Spain in January resulted in the deaths of 46 people. That crash in January, which occurred after a train derailed and smashed into an oncoming train near Adamuz, in Córdoba province, triggered a debate about the level of investment in railway maintenance in recent years. A Renfe and an Iryo train crashed just after 9am (1pm PKT), causing two Iryo wagons to derail, a government spokesperson for the Castilla La Mancha region said, adding that the cause and number of injuries were still being determined.

Chief of Kuwait naval force
meets Pakistan Navy chief

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Major General (Navy) Saif Abdulhadi Al-hamlan, Commander Kuwait Naval Force, called on Admiral Naveed Ashraf, NI, NI (M), T Bt, Chief of the Naval Staff, at Naval Headquarters (NHQ), Islamabad. Upon arrival at NHQ, the visiting dignitary was

presented Guard of Honour by a smartly turned-out contingent of Pakistan Navy. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional maritime security environment and avenues for strengthening bilateral naval cooperation were discussed. The visit underscores the longstanding brotherly ties between Pakistan and Kuwait and shared commitment to regional maritime peace and stability.

