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MBS puts faith in Makkah pact for regional security

Detailed News On Page-08

Mushahid says regions needs a terror strategy

Detailed News On Page-04



Donald Trump says US has enough weapons

Detailed News On Page-08



Tit-for-tat

Pak strikes kill over 22 militants in Afghanistan

Airstrikes targeted terrorist camps and hideouts at two locations in Afghanistan, says information ministry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan conducted "well-planned and calibrated" aerial strikes on terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan, killing multiple militants belonging to Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna al-Hindustan, the Ministry of Information said on Thursday. The strikes were carried out as part of Operation Ghazab lil-Haq and Pakistan's resolve to eliminate terrorists, their networks and supporters, the ministry said in a statement. It said the strikes were based on credible intelligence and targeted terrorist camps and hideouts at two locations belonging to Fitna al-Khawarij, Fitna al-Hindustan and their affiliates. "Targets were destroyed with precision," the ministry said, adding that initial reports suggested 22 terrorists had been killed. Large quantities of weapons and ammunition stored at the hideouts were also destroyed, according to the statement. "Pakistan has always strived for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. However, the safety and security of our citizens remains our foremost priority," the ministry said. It expressed concern that Afghanistan continued to remain a hub of terrorism, adding that the threat to Pakistan emanated from Afghanistan. "In this context, our action precisely targeted the terrorist hubs," the ministry said, adding that maximum precautions were taken to ensure there was no collateral damage. The ministry said the country's counterterrorism campaign, Ghazab lil-Haq, being conducted under the vision of Azm-e-Istehkam by the security forces and law enforcement agencies, would continue at full pace. It said the campaign would continue to "wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism" from the country. The latest strikes come a week after Pakistan carried out precision aerial and drone strikes on 10 locations in

Continued on Page 06

Forces kill six terrorists

DNA

QUETTA: Security forces killed six terrorists in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Balochistan's Kachhi district, security sources said on Thursday, according to state-run Radio Pakistan. According to security sources, terrorists affiliated with Fitna al-Hindustan were successfully targeted using quadcopters in Kachhi's Sanni area. The state refers to designated Balochistan-based groups as Fitna al-Hindustan to highlight India's role in terrorism and destabilisation across Pakistan. Radio Pakistan reported that a large quantity of arms and ammunition was recovered from the terrorists. Balochistan has witnessed an increase in terrorist attacks in recent weeks, prompting security forces to intensify counter-terrorism operations. On Tuesday, security forces killed two terrorists in Balochistan's Chagai. The military's media affairs wing said on Sept 27 that more than 71 terrorists had been killed in Shaban and other areas of Balochistan in the previous 96 hours. On Sept 17, three terrorists were eliminated in an IBO in Balochistan's Awaran district's Badrang area. Another three were killed in Mastung on Sept 14. Earlier in September, 21 terrorists were killed in separate engagements in Nokcha, Chagai, Ziarat Cross, and Pishin.

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ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, along with members of the federal and provincial cabinets and parliament, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Both leaders discussed PTI long march and possible emergency or Governor Rule in KP province. – DNA

MT tragedy Bodies of Pak nationals to be repatriated: FO

Injured Pakistani crew members receiving treatment

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Thursday said the bodies of three Pakistani crew members killed during the recovery operation of hijacked MT Honour 25 would be repatriated at the earliest. "Pakistan is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of five crew members during the recovery operation of the hijacked vessel MT Honour 25 off the coast of Somalia," FO spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said during his weekly briefing. He identified the three deceased Pakistanis as Rafi Ullah Khan,

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Oil prices rise \$3 as China suspends fuel exports

DNA

LONDON: Brent benchmark oil prices have risen by \$3 after China suspended oil products exports, potentially tightening fuel markets already coping with supply shortages globally, while investors continue to assess diplomatic efforts to end the US-Israeli war on Iran, Reuters reports. The new front-month December Brent crude futures contract has traded at \$101.06 per barrel at 1452 GMT (7:52pm PKT), up three per cent, or \$3.02, from Wednesday's close.

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Shehbaz calls for export-led robust growth

He particularly thanked the finance minister, cabinet members, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), and federal secretaries for establishing a replicable model of teamwork to achieve macroeconomic stability that has brought Pakistan back onto the path of sustainable development.

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday stressed the need to focus on sustainable economic growth, job creation, and export promotion, as the country has successfully restored macroeconomic stability through a collaborative team effort. The prime minister, in his virtual address at the Gong Ceremony to celebrate the listing of the Naya Nazimabad Apartment REIT scheme, lauded the joint efforts of the federal and provincial governments and financial institutions in steering the national economy out of severe challenges. The prime minister was accompanied by federal ministers Attaullah Tarar, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Dr Musadik Malik, and others. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the governor of the State Bank of

Continued on Page 06

Army debunks Delhi's claim

'Killed' by India, alive in Pakistan

India claimed retired Pakistani SSG soldier was senior LeT commander killed in IIOJK

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director-General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Thursday exposed another Indian false-flag operation, producing before the media Havildar Muhammad Asif – a retired Pakistani Army soldier whom India had falsely claimed to have

Continued on Page 06

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said the country's economy is moving in the right direction as "foreign investors are expressing interest" in investing in Pakistan. "PIA privatisation hit a lot of boxes," the finance czar said while addressing the media at the Overseas Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Karachi on Thursday.

Briefs

We have a lot of weapons says Trump

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: 'We have a lot of weapons': Trump rejects reported US munition shortage in interview President Donald Trump has rejected reports of low US munition stockpiles in an interview with Time magazine, saying that Washington has "a lot of weapons", and that a report from the Department of War claiming shortages was "mostly fake news". "You know, we've been stocking up for the last six months," he says, adding that the country is in "great shape" despite his predecessor Joe Biden sending munitions to Ukraine. "We're also now stocking up big and making [munitions] – and we're keeping it. You know, we'll get it out to others, you know, our allies," Trump adds.

Pakistan says will adhere to sanctions regimes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Asked about Pakistan's views on US sanctions on Iran, Foreign Office Spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan replied that as a responsible member of the international community, the country will adhere to "all applicable sanctions regimes in accordance with international law, and we remain in constant and constructive communication with all relevant stakeholders," he tells a press briefing. Khan adds that while Islamabad highly values its strategic partnership with Washington and remains fully committed to further strengthening long-standing ties.

Breakthrough? PTI 'accepts' govt invitation for talks ahead of long march

Barrister Gohar says govt, opposition to meet today at National Assembly speaker's office

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said on Thursday that his party had accepted the government's offer for talks ahead of its proposed long march on October 4. In a statement, Gohar said the government's message regarding the meeting had been received on Friday and was accepted in light of decisions taken during an opposition leaders' meeting earlier in the day. He said representatives of the government and opposition would meet at 12pm tomorrow in the office of the National Assembly speaker.

Continued on Page 06

JI says it may resume long march

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) on Thursday warned that it would resume its long march to Islamabad with greater force if the government failed to abolish the petroleum levy, saying that the party was not bound by any commitment to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The government is collecting Rs114 per litre in taxes and duties on petrol and Rs100 per litre on diesel. The JI had postponed

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Russia wants a political solution of Ukraine issue

Ambassador Khorev argued that the crisis extends beyond a bilateral dispute between Russia and Ukraine, portraying it instead as a wider confrontation between Russia and Western powers

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Albert P. Khorev addressed a gathering on the evolving situation in and around Ukraine, presenting Russia's perspective on the military, political, economic, and legal aspects of the ongoing conflict. The briefing began on a solemn note as participants observed a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the Siege of Leningrad, marking the 85th anniversary of one of the most tragic episodes of World War II. The Ambassador opened his remarks by discussing Russia's recent parliamentary elections, describing them as a significant democratic exercise that witnessed a record voter turnout. According to him, the elections were conducted successfully despite what he characterized as external pressure and attempts to disrupt the process through drone attacks on Russian cities. He emphasized that the high level of public participation demonstrated confidence in Russia's political system and institutions. A major portion of the briefing focused on the broader geopolitical dimensions

of the Ukraine conflict. Ambassador Khorev argued that the crisis extends beyond a bilateral dispute between Russia and Ukraine, portraying it instead as a wider confrontation between Russia and Western powers. In his view, Ukraine has become the focal point of a geopolitical struggle in which Moscow faces sustained political, economic, and military pressure from the collective West. Addressing economic issues, the Ambassador maintained that Western sanctions have not succeeded in achieving their main objective of weakening the Russian economy. He contended that instead of causing economic collapse, the restrictions have accelerated economic adjustments within Russia while imposing substantial costs on countries that introduced the sanctions. He highlighted the growing importance of alternative financial systems and settlements in national currencies, particularly within regional and international organizations such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and ASEAN. According to his assessment, these developments are contributing to the gradual emergence of a more diversified global economic order. Maritime security and international navigation



gation were also key topics of discussion. Ambassador Khorev criticized actions taken against vessels allegedly associated with Russia, describing such measures as politically motivated and contrary to international norms. He also expressed concern over increasing attacks on civilian shipping in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, warning that any escalation could threaten regional stability and disrupt international trade routes. Food security was presented as another

important area affected by the conflict. Comparing the positions of Russia and Ukraine in global wheat exports, the Ambassador stressed Russia's significant contribution to international grain supplies. He argued that restrictions affecting Russian agricultural exports could have negative consequences for global food markets and may place additional pressure on countries heavily dependent on imported food commodities. The briefing also examined legal dimensions of the conflict. Ambassador Khorev reiterated Russia's opposition to international mechanisms established by Western countries to pursue compensation claims related to the war. He stated that Moscow does not recognize such frameworks and therefore does not consider itself bound by their decisions. At the same time, he highlighted a ruling issued by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which he described as an important development in the legal dispute between Russia and Ukraine. In addition, the Ambassador touched upon humanitarian and religious concerns. He referred to issues involving Ukrainian children affected by the conflict and ex-

pressed concern regarding the situation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. According to his remarks, religious institutions and believers linked to the Church continue to face significant challenges amid the ongoing political tensions. Concluding his presentation, Ambassador Khorev reaffirmed Russia's commitment to a political and diplomatic resolution of the conflict. He stated that negotiations remain the preferred path toward a lasting settlement and emphasized that any future dialogue must take Russia's national interests into consideration. He also rejected suggestions that Russia is preparing military action against European or NATO member states, asserting that Moscow has neither plans nor reasons to pursue such a course. Following the briefing, guests viewed an exhibition titled "Crimean Gold: Civilized Europe Plunders Russian Treasures," showcasing archaeological artifacts from Crimea. The exhibition highlighted Russia's position regarding the ownership and future return of these historical treasures, adding a cultural dimension to a discussion otherwise dominated by contemporary geopolitical issues.

Sindh CM pledges full support for industrial growth

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that industrial development, investment and expansion of business activities can strengthen the economy, create new employment opportunities and help reduce unemployment. The Sindh government will continue to extend full support to the industrial sector and make every possible effort to resolve the issues faced by the business and industrial community.

He was speaking to industrialists and members of the business community at the annual dinner of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI).

The event was attended by outgoing KATI President Muhammad Ikram Rajput, Acting Patron-in-Chief Zubair Chhaya, KAIT Chairman Zahid Saeed, CEO Saleem-uz-Zaman, Sindh Ministers Jam Ikram Dharejo and Saeed Ghani, Sindh Inspector General of Police Javed Alam Odho, Member National Assembly and businessman Dr Iqbal Baig, Zubair Tufail, Khalid Tawab, Senior Vice President Zahid Hameed, Vice President Syed Talha Ali, Dr Abdul Bari, foreign diplomats, bureaucrats, newly elected KATI President Sheikh Umer Rehan, former chairmen and presidents of KATI, representatives of various institutions and a large number of business community members.

Responding to a request from KATI industrialists, the chief minister announced that an emergency snorkel would be provided to help deal with emergencies in the industrial area.

Addressing concerns raised by industrialists over the Yellow Line project, Syed Murad Ali Shah assured them that their reservations would be addressed. He said industries could not afford to remain closed even for two hours and that industrial activities must not be disrupted during execution of the project. A mechanism would be worked out in consultation with industrialists to ensure continuity of industrial operations. He stressed that a stable industrial sector was essential for a strong economy. "If Karachi is strong, Sindh will be strong, and if Sindh is strong, Pakistan will be strong," he said. The chief minister said the Sindh government had approved Rs9.282 billion for the rehabilitation and improvement of infrastructure in Karachi's industrial areas. Murad Shah said the establishment of a task force had produced positive results, while the law and order situation in the province had also improved during the past few months. He said dacoits in the riverine areas had surrendered before the law. He announced that a meeting with KATI industrialists would be held soon to discuss industrial infrastructure, transportation, energy, law and order and other issues and formulate a practical strategy for their resolution.—APP

Hybrid warfare shrinking crisis response window

Roundtable discussion held on Hybrid Warfare and Pakistan's National Security: Navigating the Cyber, Information and Diplomatic Nexus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In contemporary world, hybrid methods of warfare have evolved in sophistication, scale and speed especially with advancement in technology and digital connectivity. For Pakistan, these developments present complex challenges to national security, decision making, societal resilience and broader strategic environment. In order to examine the evolving dimensions of hybrid warfare, with particular focus on strategic stability, emerging technologies, information operations, and measures to enhance national preparedness and resilience, the Arms and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a roundtable discussion titled "Hybrid Warfare and Pakistan's National Security: Navigating the Cyber, Information and Diplomatic Nexus." The event was attended by prominent strategic experts and academicians.

Implications of evolving hybrid warfare techniques for strategic stability and deterrence in South Asia: Air Commodore (Retd.) Khalid Banuri, Senior Advisor, JCCL, noted that hybrid warfare has compressed decision-making timelines and reduced the space available for crisis management and diplomacy. He emphasized that cyber and information operations can now intersect with strategic stability, creating new complexities for crisis management in South Asia. He stressed the need for stronger communication mechanisms, verification of information before escalation, and proactive measures to maintain stability in an increasingly complex security environment.

Impact of emerging technologies on the sophistication of cyber operations: Ms. Adeela Waqar, Director Labs, PKCERT focused on critical infrastructure, its functioning, and vulnerabilities in the context of hybrid warfare. She noted that increasing dependence on data, third-party services,

and interconnected digital systems has created new risks, underscoring the need to integrate digitalization with resilience planning to ensure the continuity of essential systems during disruptions.

Role of AI in shaping influence operations and information environments: Dr. Sumaira Kausar, Director CoE-AI, Bahria University, noted that AI can accelerate the creation and spread of both authentic and manipulated content. She highlighted that such content can rapidly gain public and media attention, trigger diplomatic reactions, and influence strategic decision-making. She emphasized that AI-driven operations can significantly compress the decision-making window, leaving limited time for verification, assessment, and response.

Role of diplomacy and strategic communication in countering hybrid warfare challenges: Dr. Zahir Kazmi, Advisor SPD, highlighted that these efforts alone cannot address such threats and must be supported by resilience, credible capabilities, and effective crisis management. He emphasized that disruptions gain strategic significance when exploited as leverage against national interests, stressing the need for stronger coordination, verification mechanisms, and preparedness through regular exercises and pre-established communication channels. Highlighting the evolving role of strategic communication in shaping domestic and international perceptions, Dr. Zafar Ali, Director Research, SVI, and Dr. Bilal Zubair, Director Research, CISS, underscored the relevance of the discussion in the context of the upcoming National Security Policy. They noted that citizens have become part of the hybrid battlefield, requiring an audience-centric approach to security. They stressed that addressing such threats requires resilient institutions, effective narratives, and stronger economic, political, and social foundations alongside greater public awareness.

The roundtable provided a platform for experts to exchange perspectives on emerging security dynamics and explore approaches to strengthen national preparedness.

Better medical facilities topmost priority: CM Bugti

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Thursday said that providing quality medical facilities to the people of Balochistan is among the government's top priorities. He said that positive results from ongoing health sector reforms and improvements in medical facilities at government hospitals in Balochistan are becoming evident, ordinary citizens and Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) alike are now seeking treatment at these public hospitals.

A successful angioplasty was performed on Mir Rahmat Saleh Baloch—an MPA and former Provincial Health Minister at the Cardiology Department of Civil Sandeman Provincial Hospital, Quetta.

Expressing satisfaction with the medical facilities provided at the hospital, Mir Rahmat Saleh Baloch noted that the availability of quality healthcare is sparing the people of Balochistan the hardship and extra expense of traveling to other cities for treatment.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, accompanied by National Party chief Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch visited Civil Sandeman Provincial Hospital to inquire after the health of the hospitalized MPA, Mir Rahmat Saleh Baloch.

The Chief Minister also consulted the doctors regarding Mir Rahmat Saleh Baloch's condition.

On this occasion, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti stated that providing quality medical facilities to the people of Balochistan is among the government's top priorities. Writing on the social media platform X, the Chief Minister said that the primary objective of the ongoing health sector reforms is to relieve the province's residents of the need to travel to other cities for medical treatment. He added that practical measures are underway to provide modern medical facilities and improve the standard of treatment in government hospitals. He said that the government is striving to ensure that major hospitals in the province are equipped with medical centers and facilities capable of treating complex ailments locally. Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the government is taking measures to restore public confidence in government hospitals through reforms in the health sector. He mentioned that the government aims for every citizen of Balochistan to benefit from timely and quality medical treatment within the province, eliminating the need to travel to Quetta or outside the province for care.—APP



FAISALABAD: Women participate in a road safety awareness scooter rally organized by the Road Safety Club at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad in collaboration with City Traffic Police.

Punjab launches Rs 5b Pink Salt financing scheme

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Thursday launched the province's first Pink Salt Value Addition Financing Scheme and distributed cheques among 10 businesspersons who secured interest-free loans under the initiative. The scheme has an allocation of Rs5 billion in interest-free loans, with individual businesses eligible for financing of up to Rs50 million. The Punjab government will bear Rs1.456 billion in interest costs under the scheme.

According to a briefing by Provincial Mines and Minerals Minister Sher Ali Gorchani and Secretary Minerals Parvez Butt, a specialised 110-acre Pink Salt Processing Unit has been established in Quaidabad. The Pink Salt Mineral Processing Zone is planned to house 200 value-addition units and create employment opportunities for more than 10,000 people. The chief minister interacted with the beneficiaries and stressed the need to introduce value-added pink salt products in international markets under the Pakistani brand. "Pink salt is Pakistan's uniqueness," she said, adding that the country's salt and labour are being used while other countries reaped the benefits. CM Maryam Nawaz said pink salt is a national mineral asset

and called for the development of value-added products for global markets. She said the government would support young entrepreneurs and startups under the financing scheme and facilitate their access to international markets.

Officials said value addition, branding and development of pink salt products could help increase annual exports by up to \$300 million. A model retail outlet has also been established to promote pink salt branding, packaging, marketing and processing. The chief minister said resources of Punjab should benefit the people of the province and recalled that contracts in the past had allegedly been awarded to benefit political individuals, causing losses to the national exchequer. The businesspersons receiving the loans thanked the chief minister and termed the financing scheme a significant initiative of the Punjab government. Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif in her message on the International Day of the Elderly paid great tribute to the elderly and prayed for their health, safety and prosperity. Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that elders are the reflection of our past, the light of the present and a lesson for the future. Seniors are the lamps in whose light generations grow, seniors made our bright today possible by giving their youthful energies, experiences and sacrifices.

The Chief Minister said that respect for the elderly is a part of our beliefs and culture, while their life experiences and observations are like precious treasures, it is our duty to protect the rights of the elderly and serve them, they should never be forgotten but should be given the respect and status they deserve. Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that the Punjab government is taking steps for the honor, welfare and convenience of the elderly citizens, the government is improving the old homes for the elderly citizens, while the elderly men and women living in the old homes have also achieved the blessing of Hajj.—APP

Kundi, Italian delegation discuss regional air connectivity

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday held a meeting with a delegation led by Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Italy's FRI-EL Group, Josef Gostner, to discuss promotion of regional air connectivity and cooperation in the aviation sector.

The delegation included SkyAlps Chief Executive Officer Alex Spinato, Chairman South Air Pakistan Kanwar Muhammad Tariq, Senior Group Advisor of SOS Group Sohail Ali Khan and South Air Chief Executive Officer Nishat Fatima. During the meeting, the participants discussed opportunities to strengthen regional air connectivity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and expand cooperation in the aviation sector. They also discussed the possibility of launching an air ambulance service in the province to provide timely emergency medical transportation to remote and underserved areas. Governor Kundi welcomed the visiting delegation and appreciated the interest of FRI-EL Group, SkyAlps and South Air in supporting aviation development and improving regional connectivity in the province.

He reaffirmed his support for initiatives aimed at enhancing connectivity, promoting economic activity and improving access to essential services across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Later, Governor Kundi hosted a dinner in honour of the distinguished guests. Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday held separate meetings with Awami National Party (ANP) leader and former provincial minister Sardar Hussain Babak and Pakistan Muslim League provincial lawmaker Malik Tariq Awan to discuss the prevailing political situation in the province.

During the meeting with Sardar Hussain Babak at the Governor House, Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentary (PPP) Leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Ahmad Kundi was also present. The participants discussed the overall political situation in the province and the concerns expressed by the Awami National Party (ANP) regarding the prevailing circumstances.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi said all political parties were united in their view that the provincial government had failed to deliver and that its poor governance had pushed the province into serious difficulties. He stressed that political parties should rise above political differences and play a constructive role in addressing the challenges facing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.—DNA

Noshervan sworn in as RCCI President

Speaking on the occasion, Newly elected President RCCI Noshervan Khalil Khan reaffirmed his commitment to addressing the key challenges confronting the business community and ensuring that their concerns remain a priority for the Chamber



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Noshervan Khalil Khan was sworn in as President RCCI, while Waseem Aslam assumed charge as Senior Vice President and Ikram ur Rehman Abbasi as Vice President. The oath was administered by Mr. Sohail Altaf, Group Leader RCCI and former President, who congratulated the newly elected office bearers and Executive Members on their election. The Oath-Taking Ceremony of the newly elected Office Bearers and Executive Body of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) for the term 2026–2028 was held at a local hall in Rawalpindi. Addressing the ceremony, Sohail Altaf appreciated the commendable efforts and services of the outgoing team and welcomed the newly elected leadership. He highlighted the important role of RCCI in representing the interests of the business community and expressed confidence that the new leadership would continue to strengthen the Chamber's role as an effective platform for promoting business and economic development.

Speaking on the occasion, Newly elected President RCCI Noshervan Khalil Khan reaffirmed his commitment to ad-

ressing the key challenges confronting the business community and ensuring that their concerns remain a priority for the Chamber. He identified several important areas requiring focused attention, including the high cost of production, export competitiveness, industrial policy, development of economic and industrial zones along the Rawalpindi Ring Road, taxation issues, and concerns regarding compliance-related practices and alleged harassment by tax authorities and government departments. Noshervan Khalil Khan emphasized the need for constructive engagement between the business community and government institutions to develop practical solutions to these challenges. He said RCCI would continue to advocate for policies that facilitate investment, promote industrial growth, enhance exports and create a more conducive environment for businesses. The newly elected leadership expressed its resolve to work collectively with RCCI members, trade bodies and relevant government institutions to advance the interests of the business community and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

The ceremony was attended by former RCCI presidents, representatives of various trade associations, Executive Members and a large number of Chamber members.

NA body for Rs 5,000 per 40kg wheat support price

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research on Thursday recommended fixing the minimum support price (MSP) of wheat at Rs 5,000 per 40 kg or above, while calling for a uniform subsidy mechanism for farmers across the country. The committee met with Syed Tariq Hussain in chair, and also stressed that the National Wheat Policy 2026–2030 must be finalized and announced before the commencement of the wheat sowing season, observing that decisions taken after sowing would have little practical value for farmers. The committee expressed concern over the major challenges facing the agriculture sector, including rising input costs, inadequate mechanization, poor-quality seeds, insufficient agricultural research, limited subsidies, inadequate storage facilities, weak export performance and the absence of uniform and timely agricultural policies. Discussing the wheat policy, the Minister for National Food Security and Research briefed the Committee on last year's interim wheat policy, the proposed National Wheat Policy 2026–2030 and various subsidy models under consideration.—APP

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Mr. Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, launching the report titled “Weaponization of Water: Historical, Legal & Strategic Dimensions of IWT Suspension” with others at ISSI.

Coordinated response urged to mental health issues

Mustafa Kamal stressed that efforts to promote mental health were required at every level, from counsellors and healthcare professionals to policymakers, with greater emphasis on awareness, prevention and access to support

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal has called for urgent and coordinated action to address Pakistan’s growing mental health issues. Addressing the Global Mental Health Summit 2026, the minister said the situation had become highly concerning and required immediate attention and a comprehensive national response. “Mental health is not only a matter for the Ministry of Health. All ministries have to play their role in addressing this challenge,” he said. Mustafa Kamal stressed that efforts

to promote mental health were required at every level, from counsellors and healthcare professionals to policymakers, with greater emphasis on awareness, prevention and access to support. He said the country needed to focus on creating safe, healthy and liveable environments, adding that ensuring such conditions was a shared responsibility of government institutions and society. The minister said addressing mental health challenges required a broader approach that went beyond treatment and included prevention, early support and great

er public awareness. He also emphasized the importance of strengthening mental health services and ensuring that people had access to appropriate support regardless of where they lived. The minister also launched National Mental Health Policy at the Global Mental Health Summit. The two-day summit brings together policymakers, health professionals, mental health experts and development partners to discuss challenges and strategies for strengthening mental health services and support systems in Pakistan.—DNA

HEC, CERT join hands to strengthen Cybersecurity

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan and The National Cyber, Emergency Response Team (National CERT) of Pakistan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cyber-security co-operation, coordination, and resilience across Pakistan’s higher education sector. The MoU marks a significant step towards strengthening the sector’s capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to emerging cyber threats. A key outcome of the collaboration is the establishment of the Pakistan Education & Research Network (PERN)/Higher Education Commission (HEC) as the Education Sector Computer Emergency Response Team (EduCERT). The initiative will provide a dedicated cybersecurity coordination mechanism

for universities and higher education institutions across Pakistan, enabling coordinated efforts to strengthen cyber preparedness, information sharing, and response to emerging threats. The MoU was signed by Dr. Zia Ul Haq, Executive Director HEC, and Dr. Mehreen Afzal, Director Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC), National CERT, in the presence of Chairman HEC Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, Director General National CERT Dr. Haider Abbas, Advisor IT Engr. Nazeer Hussain, Engr. Naeem Ahmed Director IT, and senior representatives of both organisations. Chairman HEC Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar said that strengthening cybersecurity across higher education institutions is essential to safeguarding digital infrastructure, academic systems, and institutional data.

He emphasised the importance of coordinated efforts, timely information sharing, and enhanced institutional capacity to effectively address evolving cyber threats, adding that EduCERT will provide a structured mechanism for universities to collaborate and strengthen their cybersecurity preparedness. EduCERT thru PERN will serve as a coordinated cybersecurity platform for Pakistan’s higher education sector, supporting cyber threat monitoring, incident coordination, information sharing, security awareness, and institutional cyber resilience. It will facilitate collaboration among universities by enabling the exchange of threat intelligence, cybersecurity knowledge, and best practices, thereby contributing to a stronger and more coordinated national cybersecurity framework. The partnership reflects the shared commitment of HEC and National CERT to fostering a coordinated, resilient, and cybersecurity-conscious higher education ecosystem. It will also contribute to strengthening Pakistan’s sectoral CERT framework and enhancing the higher education sector’s capacity to address evolving cyber threats.—DNA

Mohsen Gilani gets top SAFF role

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) President Syed Mohsen Gilani has been appointed Chairperson of the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Marketing and Communications Committee, marking a significant role for Pakistan in the region’s football administration. Gilani was also co-opted as a member of the SAFF Executive Committee during a virtual meeting held on Thursday, in which the SAFF Executive Committee approved the formation of all standing committees for the 2026-2030 term in accordance with the SAFF statutes 2026.

The meeting was chaired by SAFF President Md. Kazi Salahuddin and attended by members of the Executive Committee. Gilani’s appointment to the Marketing and Communications Committee places Pakistan at the forefront of efforts to strengthen

the promotion, visibility and communication of football across South Asia. Pakistan

been included in the Women’s Ad-hoc Committee. The appointments provide



has secured further representation in SAFF’s key committees, with PFF Chief Operating Officer Shahid Niaz Khokhar appointed a member of the SAFF Competitions Committee, while PFF Women’s Football Director Mejjgaan Orakzai has

Pakistan with representation across important areas of SAFF’s structure, including marketing and communications, competitions and women’s football, reinforcing the PFF’s growing engagement in regional football development.

Asma to present stage play on Amir Khusrau at PNCA

RAWALPINDI :A stage play highlighting the intellectual, literary, artistic and cultural contributions of Hazrat Amir Khusrau will be staged at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) here on October 5 at 7:00 p.m. The play is being specially presented by renowned writer, director and Chief Executive of Dolphin Communication Asma Butt in collaboration with PNCA. Written by playwright Arshad Chehal, the play will feature artists from the twin cities and explore the poetry, music, intellectual thought and cultural influence of Hazrat Amir Khusrau. The production is part of Asma Butt’s continued efforts to bring historical and literary figures to life through theatre and promote awareness of the region’s rich cultural and literary heritage. Under her creative supervision, productions based on Shah Hussain, Madho Lal, Dulla Bhatti, Heer Waris Shah, Saiful-Malook and Mian Muhammad Bakhs have previously been presented. The new production will highlight the lasting contribution of Hazrat Amir Khusrau to poetry, music and the cultural heritage of the subcontinent.—APP

Physical remand of two PTI workers granted

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) has handed over two arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers here to police on an eight-day physical remand in the November 26 protest case. Judge Abul Hasnat Muhammad Zulqarnain issued the order during the previous hearing, where police produced both arrested accused before the court and sought physical remand. The investigation officer told the court that 20 days of physical remand was required for interrogation of the accused. The court approved an eight-day physical remand of the accused. It may be noted that a case against PTI leaders and workers is registered at Khanna Police Station.—APP

Reform unveiled to bring non-formal edu at par with formal system

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training has unveiled major reform to bring non-formal education at par with formal system to activate a structured capacity-building and professional development framework to bring non-formal basic education on par with the formal schooling system across Islamabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). Under this initiative, a third cohort comprising 45 master trainers selected from among 1,400 non-formal education teachers in the federal capital successfully completed an intensive three-day training program. The concluding session of the “Three Days Professional Development Training for BECS Master Trainers,” organized under the aegis of Basic Education Community Schools (BECS), at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) on Thursday. Addressing the ceremony, Federal Secretary for Education and Professional Training Nadeem Mahbub stated that the Ministry had formulated a comprehensive road map a year and a half ago to modernize and streamline the non-formal education sector. He emphasized that the primary focus of this road map is to hone the pedagogical skills and capacity of non-formal teachers serving marginalized segments, ensuring no compromise on the quality of education delivered in underserved communities. Mahbub highlighted that, unlike formal school teachers, non-formal educators historically lacked structured professional development. He noted that under the current initiative, standardized teacher guides were developed, and training sessions were conducted during the summer break. He added that the training umbrella is now being extended beyond Islamabad to AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. Underscoring that proactive teacher engagement is as vital as knowledge delivery, he stressed the need for regular and consistent meetings of the newly notified Community Education Committees. Speaking on the occasion, Director General BECS Hameed Khan Niazi expressed gratitude to Federal Secretary Nadeem Mahbub for his leadership and commitment to advancing the non-formal education reform agenda. He described BECS schools as a beacon of hope for underprivileged children and noted that ministry patronage is turning teacher empowerment into a reality. Niazi also thanked JICA and other development partners for their sustained support in equipping community educators with modern instructional techniques. Director General of the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) Ali Asghar remarked that under the clear directives of the education secretary, teacher training has progressed seamlessly over the past two years, culminating in the graduation of the third batch of 45 master trainers. He commended non-formal teachers for delivering results despite severe resource constraints and challenging operational environments. Reaffirming development co-operation, JICA representative Bilal stated that JICA and international partners remain committed to supporting Pakistan in refining reform frameworks, compiling teacher training manuals, and elevating instructional standards in non-formal education. He lauded the dedication of the graduating master trainers, noting that enhancing teaching capabilities at the grassroots level is essential to securing Pakistan’s educational future.—DNA

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses over 1,332 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Thursday, losing 1,332.47 points, a negative change of 0.78 percent, to close at 168,636.85 points against 169,969.33 points recorded in the previous trading session. The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 548.380 million shares, compared to Rs 17,053 billion from Rs 20.191 billion. Market capitalisation decreased to Rs 18.776 trillion from Rs 18.927 trillion recorded a day earlier. Out of 492 companies that traded in the ready market, 121 posted gains, 323 suffered losses, while 48 remained unchanged. Kohinoor Spinning led the volume chart with 93.751 million shares, followed by F. Nat. Equities with 38.616 million shares and Cnergico PK with 26.026 million shares. Among the top gainers, Sapphire Textile Mills Limited surged by Rs 46.61 to close at Rs 1,567.66, while Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited advanced by Rs 38.40 to settle at Rs 8,841.00. On the losing side, PIA Holding Company Limited B declined by Rs 81.51 to close at Rs 15,181.00, while Nestle Pakistan Limited fell by Rs 48.20 to Rs 7,108.39. In the futures (DFC) market, turnover stood at 135.548 million shares with a traded value of Rs 5.408 billion, compared with 121.265 million shares worth Rs 5.495 billion in the previous session.—APP

National Mental Health Policy launched

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday launched the National Mental Health Policy 2026-2035, aiming to expand mental health services and support for an estimated 32.4 million people in need of care across the country. The policy was launched during the two-day Global Mental Health Summit being held in Islamabad from October 1-2, bringing together around 800 participants, including mental health experts, policymakers, academics and representatives of national and international development partners. The initiative was launched under the leadership of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Global Institute of Human Development (GIHD)—Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University (STMU). According to estimates, around 32.4 million people in Pakistan require mental health care, while only about five percent of the population has access to such services, leaving a treatment gap of around 95 percent.

The shortage of qualified mental health professionals is also a major challenge, with Pakistan having approximately 0.19 psychiatrists per 100,000 population compared with an average of seven per 100,000 in high-income countries. Speaking at the summit, Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal described mental health as an emergency and said it was linked to economy. He called for the involvement of all government ministries and individuals in creating a safe and healthy environment and stressed that the summit should lead to concrete action. Minister of State for Health Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath said the policy represented a shared commitment to bringing mental healthcare closer to families. He said the government would work with provincial authorities to translate the policy into practical measures in schools, primary healthcare facilities and communities. WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said investment in mental health could generate economic and health benefits.—APP

PM&DC clarifies its role in MDCAT 2026

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) has clarified that the MDCAT held on September 20, 2026 was conducted by universities nominated by the respective provincial and regional governments, and not by the Council.

According to the Council’s spokesperson on Thursday, as per law, the universities must ensure the transparent conduct and integrity of the MDCAT examination.

He said that five universities were authorized to conduct the MDCAT-2026 including University of Health Sciences, Lahore (for Punjab Province), Sukkur IBA University, Sukkur (for Sindh Province), Khyber Medical University, Peshawar (for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province), Bolan University of Medical & Health Sciences, Quetta (for Balochistan Province), and Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University, Islamabad (for Islamabad Capital Territory, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia). The paper-setting, printing, storage, transportation of the papers, development of keys, compilation and declaration of the MDCAT results were also the responsibility of the universities, not the PM&DC, he added.

He said that the Council had no direct role in conduct of the MDCAT.

He said, “If any candidate has a complaint or grievance regarding the examination, the concerned university shall be approached directly for appropriate remedial measures, if any, under the law.—APP

Rupee gains 01 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.10 compared to the previous day’s closing of Rs 277.11. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the dollar’s open-market buying and selling rates were Rs 277.95 and Rs 278.15, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 1.80 and closed at Rs 312.83 against the previous day’s closing of Rs 314.63, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs 1.74, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs 1.51 and closed at Rs 366.31 compared to the previous day’s Rs 367.82. The exchange rates of the Emirate Dirham and the Saudi Riyal declined by 01 paise each to close at Rs 75.44 and Rs 73.79, respectively.—APP

Briefs

DIG reviews
police
college
exams

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Law and Order Muhammad Ateeq Tahir on Thursday visited Capital Police College Islamabad and personally reviewed the written examinations of the ongoing Intermediate Course.

An official told media that the DIG Ateeq inspected the examination process and reviewed arrangements made for the written tests. He directed the concerned officers to ensure complete transparency and merit throughout the examination process. Ateeq said examination rules should be strictly followed to ensure a fair and transparent process for all participants.

He also directed the officers supervising the examinations to perform their duties responsibly and ensure that merit was maintained at every stage.—APP

Digital prison
management
system
discussed

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Safe City Operations Shehzad Umar Abbas and SSP Prisons Ali Akbar held a meeting with senior officials to discuss the Prison Management System, aimed at using modern technology to improve prison management and operational work. An official told media on Thursday that Director IT Safe City Atif Abbas, Deputy Director NOC Safe City and PITB representative Shehzad also attended the meeting.

The participants discussed the use of a digital system for prison management, better coordination among concerned departments and ways to make operational work more effective. The meeting also reviewed how modern technology could help improve record management, information sharing and coordination between the concerned departments. The officials stressed the need for close coordination to move the Prison Management System forward and make day-to-day operations easier, faster and more effective.—APP

Pension
reforms for
uncovered
labour force
reviewed

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Pension Reforms for the Uncovered Labour Force was held here on Thursday under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue, Bilal Azhar Kayani, Adviser to the Prime Minister, Haroon Akhtar Khan and relevant officials attended the meeting. The meeting reviewed various models for bringing informal and pension-excluded workers into the pension system. A voluntary pension scheme for domestic workers, agricultural workers, self-employed persons and other informal workers was also discussed. The committee considered options for the participation of employers, employees and self-employed persons, along with digital registration, transparent record-keeping and long-term financial sustainability of the proposed scheme. The use of Employees Old-Age Benefit Institution's (EoBI) digital system as a model for the proposed voluntary pension scheme was also discussed. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar said every worker should have the right to a dignified and secure retirement, and that pension protection should not remain limited to the formal sector. He said bringing domestic workers, agricultural workers, self-employed persons and other informal workers within the social protection framework was an important need. The Federal Minister said the proposed pension system would be designed to be accessible, financially sustainable and long-term, while remaining aligned with international standards and International Labour Organization (ILO) principles.—APP

Mushahid urges regional
anti-terror strategy

Senator Mushahid Hussain said the central conclusion of the Islamabad Conference reflected the vision and philosophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, who in his poems 100 years ago, linked peace in Afghanistan with peace in the region and Asia, while instability in Afghanistan inevitably produced instability and volatility across the region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Said has called for a multi-pronged regional diplomatic approach to tackle terrorism emanating from Afghan soil as this is not merely a bilateral issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan, but a wider regional security challenge requiring a collective response from Afghanistan's neighbours. He made these remarks during his Keynote Concluding session at the two-day "International Conference on Afghan Predicament and Trajectory to Peace", organised by the International Parliamentarians Congress (IPC) in Islamabad. Senator Mushahid Hussain said Pakistan and Afghanistan could no longer afford further conflict, confrontation and instability in the region. He said the International Conference in Islamabad had been a productive, "first-of-its-kind" initiative focusing on Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan and other neighbours to find possible ways forward. He noted that Senator Sitara Ayaz, who, as Secretary General of IPC hosted the conference, had accompanied him to participate twice in a Track 1.5 Dialogue in Istanbul with Afghan counterparts, organised with the facilitation of Turkish friends. "Both sides, including the Afghan side, accepted that the core issue dividing Pakistan and Afghanistan is the



issue of terrorism emanating from Afghan soil, which is destabilising not only Pakistan but other neighbours of Afghanistan as

well," he said. Senator Mushahid Hussain said the central conclusion of the Islamabad Conference reflected the vision and philos-

ophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, who in his poems 100 years ago, linked peace in Afghanistan with peace in the region and Asia, while instability in Afghanistan inevitably produced instability and volatility across the region. "Peace, security and stability are indivisible and inextricably intertwined with the region, especially Pakistan and Afghanistan," he observed. Senator Mushahid emphasised that despite differences with the regime in Kabul, Pakistan's relationship with the people of Afghanistan should remain paramount. Referring to the declaration adopted at the dialogue, he said a people-centric approach should ensure that links involving businessmen, traders, medical tourism and students from Afghanistan were not undermined. He recalled that Pakistan had been a generous host to Afghan refugees for four decades, hosting the largest number of refugees for the longest duration, adding that the historical and people-to-people bonds, particularly trade and education, between the two countries should not be allowed to suffer because of political differences. Senator Mushahid Hussain also referred to recent remarks by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi describing Pakistan and Afghanistan as "inseparable brothers," saying that a similar sentiment had been conveyed by Turkish interlocutors during the Istanbul dialogue.

Dengue
control
measures
in capital
reviewed

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal on Thursday chaired a meeting to review ongoing dengue prevention measures in Islamabad, with officials directed to strengthen surveillance, coordination and public awareness to contain the spread of the disease.

The meeting was attended by Additional Secretary, Director General Health, heads of hospitals, District Health Officer Islamabad, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad and representatives of the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

The District Health Officer Islamabad briefed the meeting on ongoing dengue control activities and the progress made so far.

The meeting was informed that September, October and November were the peak months for dengue transmission, while timely preventive measures had contributed to a decline in reported cases.

The minister directed the relevant departments to maintain effective surveillance and coordinated preventive measures and continue public awareness activities.—APP

Public health
programmes
discussed

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal on Thursday held a meeting with a delegation of the Global Fund, led by Senior Portfolio Manager Ms L. Azascon Gaveria, to review ongoing cooperation and public health programmes in Pakistan.

The meeting discussed the Global Fund's support to Pakistan's health sector, ongoing programmes and various public health initiatives, with particular focus on disease prevention and improving access to healthcare services.

The participants reviewed measures to strengthen the implementation of health programmes, improve treatment facilities and enhance the effectiveness of public health interventions. The meeting also discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation in the health sector and ensure continued support for initiatives aimed at improving healthcare outcomes. Syed Mustafa Kamal emphasized the importance of international partnerships in strengthening Pakistan's healthcare system and said the government was taking measures to provide better and quality health services to the public.—APP

Faad chairs PVMA 350th
executive committee meeting

DNA

Earlier he has held the prestigious post of Senior Vice President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) 2022-2024, Independent Director of the National Productivity Organization (NPO), Government of Pakistan, and currently working as Director Operations & Public Relations at Waheed Group of Companies (WGC). In his maiden speech



Mr. Faad Waheed reiterated the importance of indus-

trial sector in job creation and provision of vegetable Ghee/Cooking oil (a staple food item) to masses at affordable price without any interruption. He also spelled out his plans and seek assistance from leading players and in turn was awarded full support from the house. Talking to the media after assuming charge, Mr. Faad Waheed expressed his sincere gratitude to the honorable senior members

of PVMA for their trust and confidence in his leadership. He expressed his commitment to serving the industry and addressing the challenges faced by the Ghee and Cooking Oil Sector of Pakistan. With his vast experience, leadership capabilities, and deep understanding of industry affairs, he pledged to utilize his expertise for the welfare and sustainable growth of the industry he further added.

IHC unhappy over
delay in citizen's
car registration

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday expressed annoyance over the failure to transfer a citizen's vehicle for several years, remanding the matter back to the Excise and Taxation Office with directions to decide it within one month. Justice Khadim Hussain Somro, hearing the petition filed by citizen Asadullah, directed that an officer who understands the law should handle the matter. During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel, the ETO Excise and Taxation, and other officials appeared before the court. Expressing annoyance over the ETO Excise and Taxation's failure to satisfy the court, Justice Khadim Hussain Somro remarked, "You appear to be a senior citizen. We exercise restraint. When we sit on this chair, we have to exercise a lot of control. A citizen's vehicle issue has been pending for four years." He noted that it was earlier said the vehicle was tampered with. "Do not make us spell out everything. We will decide this case. Laws exist to resolve the problems. Check its registration – you collect taxes. Assign the case to an officer who reads and understands the law," the judge said. "You could not reply, nor could your inspector satisfy the court. Who is above you who can come and satisfy the court?" he asked. Justice Khadim Hussain Somro inquired what the law says when a vehicle's chassis is tampered with. The Excise and Taxation counsel said notices were issued but the parties did not appear. The ETO Excise said the vehicle would remain with the government and cannot even be auctioned. Justice Khadim Hussain Somro observed that the notices issued were not on record in the reply. "When someone buys a vehicle, they do not take a mechanic along to check everything. Either there should be a law, and a mechanic who checks and clears it," he said. Justice Khadim Hussain Somro remanded the matter back, directing the Excise Office to decide it within one month. The court adjourned the hearing with directions.—DNA

Syedaal discusses
media issues

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasar held a meeting with a delegation of senior journalists associated with various television channels, print and electronic media outlets at Parliament House, Islamabad. The meeting provided an opportunity for a detailed exchange of views on issues confronting the journalist community, the prevailing political situation in the country, and the role and responsibilities of the media.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasar said that the government was taking all possible measures to address issues faced by the people, while practical efforts were continuing at various levels to provide relief to the public.

He said efforts were also underway at the government level to address the issues faced by the journalist community. He added that Parliament had also undertaken legislation concerning journalists and media-related matters. The Deputy Chairman emphasized that journalism constitutes an important pillar of the state, while journalists serve as a vital bridge between the people and the government. He said the media plays a significant

role in informing the public about government initiatives, public welfare programmes and measures being undertaken for the country's future. Syedaal Khan Nasar observed that, alongside traditional media, social media had assumed unprecedented importance in the present era. He stressed that all segments of society must play their respective roles for the country's progress, development and prosperity.

The Deputy Chairman urged journalists to ensure the dissemination of verified and fact-based news and to refrain from promoting false propaganda, unverified information or content contrary to facts against any individual or institution.

He said that while social media offered numerous benefits, its irresponsible use could also have negative consequences. Every individual, he added, had a responsibility to avoid sharing or disseminating content that could undermine the dignity, honour or reputation of any person. Syedaal Khan Nasar stressed that responsible journalism, constructive criticism and the promotion of factual information were essential in the broader interest of society and the country.—DNA

Detailed reply on banning
social media use by under 16

The PTA requested the court to dismiss the petition to the extent of relief sought beyond its legal scope. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Commission on the Rights of the Child also submitted their replies before the Islamabad High Court

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has submitted its detailed reply before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in a case regarding a ban on social media use by children under the age of 16.

In its reply, the PTA stated that no law currently exists to ban social media use by children under 16, and that it cannot establish an age-verification system for children beyond the law and its granted powers. It said a new legal and policy framework is necessary to protect children from online threats. The authority submitted that its power to block illegal online content is limited and temporary in nature.

The PTA informed the court that a Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority is being established under the PECA Amendment 2025, and that its creation for complaints regarding illegal content and forgery will be operationalized soon. It stated that action against cybercrime and immoral content is now the mandate of the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA). The PTA informed the court that it has so far reviewed over 1.789 million illegal online links and URLs, and has blocked more than 1.577 million illegal URLs for online violations. According to the reply, the PTA's overall content-blocking rate has been 88.20 percent. It blocked 88.68 percent of links on TikTok, 87.34 percent on YouTube, and 78.57 percent on Facebook. On Instagram,

79.52 percent of links were acted upon, while on X (Twitter), 48.42 percent were blocked. More than 1.066 million websites and links related to immoral content were blocked, over 203,000 links related to anti-Islam material, and more than 46,000 links against national security were blocked, the PTA stated.

The authority submitted that social media companies are neither registered in Pakistan nor bound by local laws, and technical limitations remain an obstacle. It said that due to HTTPS encryption, blocking individual content is impossible, and entire websites have to be shut down. The PTA stated that no response has been received so far from social media companies on its request for local compliance and the appointment of a grievance officer. It said awareness campaigns for child protection are ongoing in collaboration with UNICEF, TikTok, Meta and GSMA. A toll-free helpline, 1121, has been activated for reporting online abuse and exploitation of children, and a safety feature, "Teen Accounts," has been introduced for Pakistani users on Instagram. The PTA requested the court to dismiss the petition to the extent of relief sought beyond its legal scope. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Commission on the Rights of the Child also submitted their replies before the Islamabad High Court. Advocates Muhammad Jalal Haider and Yahya Farid appeared before the court on behalf of the petitioner.

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China's Long Road from Struggle to Strength

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

EVERY year, October 1 carries a special significance for China. It marks the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the beginning of a remarkable chapter in the country's modern history. Seventy-seven years later, China's transformation from a poor and war-ravaged country into one of the world's largest economies and most consequential powers remains one of the defining stories of the modern age. China's rise, however, cannot be explained merely by its vast population, natural resources or geographical size. Behind the skyline of Shanghai, the factories of Shenzhen, the high-speed railways crossing the country and the extraordinary expansion of its technological capacity lies something less visible but equally important; a political and administrative system that has placed considerable emphasis on the selection, training and evaluation of officials.

This raises an intriguing question; how does a person in China progress from being an ordinary political worker to occupying a position of national leadership? The answer is more complicated than the popular story that every aspiring Chinese leader simply passes a "civil service test" and then spends thirty years climbing a predetermined ladder. The reality is a much longer and more intricate process. Entry into the Communist Party has its own formal procedures. Applicants must be recommended, investigated and approved through Party organisations, and those accepted normally undergo a probationary period before becoming full members. The civil-service examination, meanwhile, is a separate mechanism for recruitment into government service.

What distinguishes the Chinese system is therefore not a single examination but the accumulation of experience. Officials may serve at different administrative levels and are assessed on their ability to implement policies, manage institutions and deliver results. Research on China's cadre system has found that economic performance has historically been an important consideration in advancement, while the criteria have increasingly broadened to include social welfare, poverty reduction, environmental protection and other policy objectives. This is an important point. In China, political advancement is not normally the consequence of winning a nationwide popular election. Officials are selected and promoted through a hierarchical Party-state system. Their careers depend upon assessments by higher authorities, organisational requirements, political considerations and demonstrated performance. Academic research also cautions against portraying this system as a perfectly mechanical meritocracy: political loyalty, institutional relationships and factional considerations can also influence promotion. Nevertheless, the emphasis on long-term administrative experience is striking. A cadre may be required to demonstrate competence in one locality before being entrusted with a larger responsibility. Economic

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development, employment, poverty reduction, public administration, social stability and environmental objectives can all enter the assessment. China has also increasingly recognised that rapid economic growth cannot be the sole measure of good governance. The World Bank has documented the expansion of performance criteria to include social, environmental and innovation outcomes. The career of Xi Jinping provides an illuminating example of this gradual ascent. Before reaching the highest office, he served for many years in provincial and local positions, including Fujian and Zhejiang. In 2007, following the removal of Shanghai Party Secretary Chen Liangyu amid a major corruption scandal, Xi was appointed to lead Shanghai. His tenure there was brief, but the assignment placed him directly in one of China's most important political and economic centres. Later that year, he entered the Standing Committee of the Communist Party's Politburo, marking his arrival at the highest level of national leadership. Another significant feature of the Chinese model is continuing education. Senior officials are not simply left to rely upon the experience acquired in provincial offices. The Central Party School of the Communist Party of China, now operating together with the National Academy of Governance, serves as a principal institution for educating and training senior and middle-ranking officials. Its programmes cover political theory, governance, national strategy and professional capabilities. The Chinese government revised the regulations governing Party schools in 2025, reaffirming their role in training Party members and officials. China's achievements, therefore, should not be reduced to the simplistic proposition that it has advanced because it possesses a flawless system of selecting technocrats. The reality is more complex. China's development has resulted from a combination of economic reforms, enormous investment, industrial policy, education, infrastructure, international trade, technological advancement and a highly organised state apparatus. Its cadre-management system has been one important component of that larger transformation.

There are also serious debates about the system. Researchers have documented weaknesses, including the possibility that officials may manipulate performance indicators or concentrate excessively on measurable targets. Environmental objectives, for example, have sometimes competed with the traditional emphasis on economic growth. Yet there is a lesson here that deserves attention beyond political systems and ideological differences. Nations do not become powerful merely because they possess constitutions, institutions or ambitious plans. Institutions become effective when capable people are placed in positions of responsibility, when performance is examined, when experience matters and when public administration is treated as a serious profession.

China's extraordinary journey since 1949 is ultimately a story of sustained national effort. Its experience demonstrates the enormous consequences that can follow when a state builds institutions capable of pursuing long-term objectives and develops a leadership pipeline through years of administrative experience and training. Other countries need not copy China's political model to study this lesson. They can draw their own conclusions from it. The central question for any nation is simple: are positions of authority being treated as rewards for loyalty and connections, or as responsibilities requiring knowledge, experience, integrity and proven performance? China's rise has made that question impossible for the rest of the world to ignore

Quetta's Daughter, Pakistan's Pride

Qamar Bashir



Pakistan owes women like her more than ceremonial praise. They need protection, functioning courts and institutions that respond before desperation forces a hunger strike. Their work reveals both the courage within our society and the distance between constitutional promises and everyday experience. Supporting them would allow more families to recover the ordinary security that violence has stolen. Pakistan is too often viewed through an unfavourable lens in the international media, with few stories allowing its humanity and courage to shine. Finding Jalila Haider's recognition among the day's top ten world news stories filled my heart with pride...

WHILE browsing today's international news, one story stopped me and filled my heart with both pride and anguish: Jalila Haider, a Hazara woman born, raised and educated in my hometown, Quetta, has won the 2026 Right Livelihood Award, announced today, September 30. Presented by the Stockholm-based Right Livelihood Award Foundation, the distinction is widely known as the "Alternative Nobel Prize.". This year, just four recipients—two women and two women-led organizations—were selected from 200 nominations across 72 countries. Haider was recognized for challenging ethnic persecution, state repression and discrimination against women through her legal work and activism. For recipients, such recognition brings international visibility to their struggles and strengthens their ability to rally support; for Pakistan, Haider's achievement highlights the courage and humanity of citizens defending its most vulnerable communities. Amid reports of conflict and suffering, here was a Pakistani woman honored for standing beside people whom violence and indifference had pushed into the shadows. The news brought pride, but also anguish over the injustices that made her work necessary—and memories of a city whose humanity I once knew intimately. Quetta, nestled like a bowl among towering hills, was beautiful for more than its landscape and refreshing weather. During my years of education, from 1970 to 1984, its greatest attraction was the fellowship between its communities. In the Quetta I remember, differences of ethnicity, language and religious tradition did not prevent friendship. We studied, played and visited one another, sharing a city that felt like home to us all. I watched Hazara families advance through education, commerce, public service and sport. Their businesses grew, their young people distinguished themselves, and their contribution became woven into Quetta's everyday life. Their achievements enriched the city. Remembering that shared life makes the subsequent persecution especially painful: people who helped build our hometown were increasingly denied the freedom to live safely within it. I witnessed that atmosphere deteriorate as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 drew our region into confrontation between Moscow and Washington. In my observation, foreign ideological rivalries, money and weapons deepened divisions among people who had lived together. I saw resentment grow around Hazara and Punjabi advancement in commerce and public employment. These memories carry the pain we shared as neighbours: the gradual destruction of trust, followed by violence against familiar families. The consequences were merciless. Hazaras were at-

tacked in markets, on roads and while travelling to worship. Human Rights Watch recorded that two major bombings in Quetta in January and February 2013 killed at least 180 Hazaras. Such figures describe the scale, but cannot convey the anguish within each household. Every victim left relationships, responsibilities and hopes that no compensation or official condolence could restore. For me, this tragedy had a familiar face: Abrar Husain, the celebrated Hazara boxer who trained us during our school and college years. He brought distinction to Pakistan in international competition. When I later served in Quetta as deputy income tax commissioner, I knew him in his sports administration role. In June 2011, he was murdered in the city he had served. A man who strengthened Pakistan's reputation abroad could not be protected at home. Fear drove families away from their neighbourhoods, livelihoods and memories. Some sought safety elsewhere in Pakistan; others rebuilt their lives overseas, including in Australia. Those who remained faced restricted movement and shrinking opportunities. The loss extended beyond households. Quetta itself was diminished whenever a family left because it could no longer trust that its children would return safely from school, work or the market. This was the environment in which Jalila Haider chose to stand her ground. Born in 1984, she lost her father when she was twelve. Her mother raised six children and supported her determination to study law. In 2010, she earned her degree from University Law College, Quetta, becoming the first woman lawyer from Pakistan's Hazara community. Behind that achievement stood a mother's resolve and a daughter's refusal to surrender. Her legal practice, established in 2011, became a refuge for people whose cases others considered dangerous or unwarranted. According to her award biography, her firm has handled more than 7,000 cases and helped restore freedom of movement to more than 600 political activists and human rights defenders. She has represented women seeking divorce, custody and inheritance rights, alongside refugees, transgender people and those facing wrongful accusations. The dangers were personal. She survived the 2016 bombing that devastated Balochistan's legal community. She has endured detention, online harassment and death threats. Nevertheless, she continued appearing for people whose vulnerability often made them easy to abandon. In a setting where professional advancement can reward silence, her willingness to accept difficult cases gave frightened families someone prepared to listen and act. In 2018, she carried that determination into a sev-

en-day hunger strike against the targeted killing of Hazaras. She demanded direct engagement from the army chief, refusing to accept assurances from officials unable to deliver security. The protest brought negotiations between the military leadership and Hazara women. The award foundation credits it with contributing to a sustained decline in attacks, although the community's insecurity and displacement remained unresolved.

Her work also recognises that justice requires the means to survive. Through We the Humans, founded in 2015, she has helped more than 400 widows of terrorism victims gain financial independence. Rug weaving, childcare, education and literacy support connect income with dignity. A widow able to support her children acquires something beyond financial relief: greater freedom to make decisions about her family's future. As a founding member of the Women's Democratic Front, Haider also helped pioneer Balochistan's first Women's March. Her advocacy reaches women facing forced marriage and honour violence, crossing the boundaries of her own community. That breadth matters. Having experienced persecution, she has refused to make another person's ethnicity or identity a condition for receiving help.

Pakistan owes women like her more than ceremonial praise. They need protection, functioning courts and institutions that respond before desperation forces a hunger strike. Their work reveals both the courage within our society and the distance between constitutional promises and everyday experience. Supporting them would allow more families to recover the ordinary security that violence has stolen.

Pakistan is too often viewed through an unfavourable lens in the international media, with few stories allowing its humanity and courage to shine. Finding Jalila Haider's recognition among the day's top ten world news stories filled my heart with pride, even as it revived the agony of everything our Hazara community has endured.

May this honour bring her greater dignity, respect and protection, and inspire many more Jalila Haiders across Pakistan and the world to join the struggle for justice and freedom. May their courage restore hope to those pushed into the shadows and challenge the label of "illegal" imposed on human beings through no fault of their own, but by systems, borders and laws that fail to recognise their humanity.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Michigan, USA

PPP and JUI-F in a Changing Political Equation

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The latest tensions between the PML-N and PTI have emerged against the backdrop of Imran Khan's continuing imprisonment and the PTI's announced protest march towards Islamabad on September 27. The government has expressed concern about possible violence, while PTI leaders have framed the mobilisation around political rights and Khan's release

PAKISTAN'S political crisis is no longer simply a contest between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). The confrontation between the two major political forces has gradually produced a wider struggle over parliamentary authority, political space, institutional legitimacy and the future direction of the democratic process. In this increasingly complicated environment, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) occupy important, though very different, positions. The PML-N leads the federal government and depends on the PPP for parliamentary support. At the same time, the PTI remains the principal opposition force and is preparing another major political mobilisation. The JUI-F, meanwhile, has moved closer to the opposition on several national issues without necessarily becoming a permanent political extension of the PTI. This fluidity illustrates a familiar feature of Pakistani politics: alliances are often shaped by immediate political circumstances rather than permanent ideological divisions. The latest tensions between the PML-N and PTI have emerged against the backdrop of Imran Khan's continuing imprisonment and the PTI's announced protest march towards Islamabad on September 27. The government has expressed concern about possible violence, while PTI leaders have framed the mobilisation around political rights and Khan's release. The arrest of Aleema Khan ahead of the planned protest has added another dimension to the confrontation. Reuters reported that the authorities ordered her detention for 30 days, citing concerns about public safety, while the PTI condemned the action. Such developments demonstrate how quickly political disagreement can turn into a confrontation between the government and opposition. When political competition moves from parliament to streets, the space for negotiation becomes narrower. The danger is not merely that one protest may become disorderly; the larger concern is that repeated confrontation can weaken parliament as the principal arena for setting political disputes. This is where the PPP's position becomes significant. The party is formally supporting the PML-N-led federal gov-

ernment, which has a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly with PPP backing. Yet relations between the coalition partners have recently been strained. The PPP has complained about inflation, petroleum prices, the agricultural crisis, load-shedding and delays in local government elections. The PML-N, in turn, has accused the PPP of behaving more like an opposition party while remaining part of the governing arrangement. The PPP therefore faces a difficult political calculation. Remaining outside the government could deprive it of influence at the federal level, while remaining inside it exposes the party to responsibility for unpopular government decisions. Its recent disagreements with the PML-N suggest that the coalition is based less on political harmony than on the practical necessity of maintaining parliamentary stability. The JUI-F presents a different picture. Maulana Fazlur Rehman has repeatedly criticised government policies while maintaining political independence from both the PML-N and PTI. In August, JUI-F participated in a joint opposition parliamentary meeting, where opposition parties agreed to coordinate on issues including economic difficulties, political restrictions and law and order. More recently, the JUI-F agreed to participate in a multi-party conference being organised by the PTI ahead of its planned long march. The meeting between PTI leaders and Maulana Fazlur Rehman indicated the possibility of cooperation on selected national issues. Yet participation in an opposition conference does not necessarily mean that JUI-F has abandoned its independent political identity. Fazlur Rehman's latest statements underline this distinction. On September 22, he criticised the government's preparations to restrict movement in Islamabad and argued that parliament should be taken into confidence on major national and foreign-policy questions. He also called for an in-camera parliamentary session on the regional security situation. The emerging political landscape is therefore more complicated than a simple government-versus-opposition divide. The PML-N needs the PPP to sustain its parliamentary arrangement. The PTI needs broader political cooperation if it wants its street mobilisation to

acquire a wider parliamentary dimension. The JUI-F can engage with the PTI on selected issues while retaining room to negotiate independently. Meanwhile, the PPP can criticise the government from within the coalition without necessarily abandoning it. This shifting pattern of alliances carries an important lesson. Political parties may disagree strongly on leadership, elections, governance and institutional questions, but democratic politics requires mechanisms through which disagreements can be contained within constitutional institutions. The recent participation of PML-N, PPP, PTI and JUI-F representatives in parliamentary discussions on issues such as provincial restructuring shows that political dialogue remains possible despite deep divisions.

Pakistan does not need another cycle in which political competition produces institutional paralysis, street confrontation and prolonged uncertainty. Nor can political differences be permanently resolved through administrative restrictions or the exclusion of one political force from the political process. The responsibility rests with all major parties. The PML-N must recognise that governing a coalition requires continuous consultation. The PPP must decide how it can support the government while retaining an independent political voice. The PTI must determine how its opposition strategy can be pursued through constitutional and parliamentary channels alongside public mobilisation. And the JUI-F's role will remain important precisely because it has demonstrated an ability to communicate with competing political camps.

The central question for Pakistan is therefore not which party can defeat the other in the next confrontation. It is whether the country's political leadership can transform confrontation into negotiation. Without such a shift, every new disagreement will produce another political crisis. With meaningful parliamentary dialogue, even deep differences between the PML-N, PTI, PPP and JUI-F can remain part of democratic competition rather than becoming another source of instability.

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Briefs

Pak strikes
kill over 22
militants...

FROM PAGE 01

Afghanistan in response to attempted drone attacks launched from Afghan territory. On September 24, Tarar said that the strikes targeted locations used for launching and storing drones, describing the action as a “deliberate, precise, calibrated and proportionate” response. The development followed Pakistan’s interception of eight drones that entered its airspace from Afghanistan. Security sources said four drones were brought down near the Torkham border, while four others were shot down in mountainous areas near Kohat. Pakistan has repeatedly raised concerns with the Taliban regime over the use of Afghan territory for hostile operations and the presence of terrorist networks and sanctuaries there. Separately, security forces killed six militants during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) against Fitna al-Hindustan in Balochistan’s Kachhi district, security sources said today. The militants were successfully targeted using quadcopters in the Sani area of Kachhi district under Operation Radd-ul-Fitan 3, the sources said.

PTI ‘accepts’
govt
invitation...

FROM PAGE 01

The PTI had earlier postponed its planned long march towards the federal capital from September 27 to October 4. The former ruling party has said the protest is aimed at seeking the release of its jailed founding chairman and what it describes as the restoration of constitutional supremacy. The development comes after Gohar had earlier said PTI’s doors remained open for negotiations with the government. He said he had heard that the government wanted to send a delegation for talks and that PTI would welcome any such approach. Gohar said the focus should remain on preventing terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, adding that PTI had consistently maintained that terrorism should not be politicised.

Shehbaz
calls for
export...

FROM PAGE 01

Pakistan (SBP), prominent business leader Arif Habib, and leading corporate figures attended the event held at the Pakistan Stock Exchange in Karachi, which started with a cake-cutting ceremony to celebrate the occasion. Recalling his recent interactions with international bankers and financial leaders in New York and London, including executives from Citibank, JPMorgan, and Barclays and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, the prime minister noted that global financial institutions had commended Pakistan’s implementation of long-overdue structural reforms creating an attractive ecosystem for investment.

Finance czar
says foreign
firms...

FROM PAGE 01

He said two large conglomerates bid for the PIA privatisation and bids of \$1.2 billion were received for the national flag carrier. “Foreign investors come after local investors expressed interest. There was no foreign interest in the PIA privatisation,” the minister added. FinMin Aurangzeb said Saudi and Turkish investors showed interest in privatising the first three discos, state-owned power distribution companies. “Now, the three Turkish firms [are expressing interest in the investment in discos] which have been added to the local investors.” “This is a waterfall that you first bring economic stability, gain confidence of local investors and then the foreign investors come in,” he said.

Shahnaz Kapadia elected
unopposed as IWCCI president

IWCCI elects new leadership at 17th annual general meeting

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Women’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IWCCI) held its 17th Annual General Meeting (AGM), where Shahnaz Kapadia was announced unopposed as President. Kapadia, who has 37 years of business experience, founded ECI (Pvt.) Ltd. and later sold the company before pursuing studies at Harvard University. After returning to Pakistan, she founded Mera Maan (Pvt.) Ltd. Madeeha Erum, CEO of Kostbar (Pvt.) Ltd., was announced as Senior Vice President, while Tuba Sheikh, who runs Stou Developers and Contractors (Pvt.) Ltd., was announced as Vice President. The newly constituted Executive Committee includes Zunaira Omar, Dr. Sonia Saleem, Sehrish Ahsan, Niloufer Khan, Aisha Shehzad, Zumla, Shehla Anwar, Nazia Toheed and Bushra Bhutta as Executive Members. Farah Naz, Parliamentary Secretary and Chief Guest, administered the oath to the newly elected office bearers and Executive Committee members. Former IWCCI Presidents Rizwana Asif, Farida Rashid, Naima Ansari, Aliya Akram and Niloufer Khan also attended the AGM.



Speaking on the occasion, Farah Naz highlighted the growing role of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan’s economy and appreciated women’s chambers for supporting and connecting women in business. Samina Fazil, Founder President of IWCCI, welcomed the continued growth of the

chamber and the participation of established women entrepreneurs in its leadership. She said the development was in line with the mission behind IWCCI’s establishment to empower women and strengthen their participation in trade and industry. The AGM brought together chamber

members, former presidents and businesswomen to mark the leadership transition. The new leadership will focus on expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs, strengthening business networks and promoting greater participation of women in Pakistan’s economy.

Qatar draw with UAE to set up Gulf Cup
semi-final showdown with Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: The final games in Group B of the 27th Arabian Gulf Cup had a lot to live up to on Wednesday after one of the most extraordinary nights in the competition’s history on Tuesday, when a late rally against Kuwait left Oman level with Iraq on points and goals in Group A, but narrowly ahead based on their disciplinary record. With Saudi Arabia already qualified, it seemed this would give Oman the group’s remaining semi-final spot – but then goalscorer Musab Al-Shaqsy removed his shirt in celebration and received a yellow card. This meant Oman and Iraq were impossible to separate using the available metrics and so lots had to be drawn, with the result going in Oman’s favor. And so to Group B, in which the group winners would be rewarded with a semi-final

clash with Oman and the runners-up would face Saudi Arabia. With several new additions to the squad, and the appointment of former Croatia head coach Zlatko Dalic in August, the UAE have been touted by some as favorites for the title, especially after beating Yemen 4-0 and Bahrain 3-0 in the first two group games. On Wednesday, though, they could not find a way past Qatar. Both teams had already qualified, and Dalic’s side needed only a draw to top the group, so when they pulled level at the end of the first half after falling behind there was perhaps little incentive to go full throttle after the break. Qatar took the lead in the 33rd minute despite the UAE’s dominance in possession. Jassem Gaber delivered a curling inswinger from the right flank that was per-

fectly weighted to connect with Almoze Ali, who met it with a sliding toe-poke into the top corner. Ali Saleh’s leveler came 17 minutes later, deep in stoppage time, when an attempt at a headed clearance by substitute Abdulaziz Hatem dropped into his path. The winger controlled the ball and launched a low effort past Mahmoud Abunada in goal. The second half unfolded at a much slower pace, but the introduction of Guilherme Bala in the 58th minute added an extra dimension to the UAE’s attacking threat, and his vertical runs threatened the Qatari defense on more than one occasion. In the end, though, it was enough for victory. Already eliminated Yemen and Bahrain, meanwhile, played out a thrilling seven-goal affair. After securing their first-ever victory in the

competition against Bahrain in 2024, Yemen recorded their second win, defeating the 2025 champions 5-2 on a memorable night. Bahrain opened the scoring through Ali Al-Dosari in the seventh minute, but Yemen responded with no fewer than four goals before half time. Nasser Al-Ghawashi scored Yemen’s first of the tournament in the 18th minute before Abdulwasea Al-Matari added the second in the 31st. Rami Al-Wasmani extended the lead in the 40th minute, then Al-Shabab’s Adel Abbas padded it further four minutes later, taking his total goal contributions to three, having created the two before his own. Ali Madan scored a consolation for Bahrain in the 67th minute to make it 4-2, before Al-Wasmani completed his brace in injury time to make it 5-2. – APP

Pakistan beat India 3-0
to reach Asian Games
volleyball semi-finals

DNA

PAKISTAN’S men’s volleyball team defeated India 3-0 in the Asian Games 2026 quarter-final at Okazaki Chuo Sogo Park Gymnasium on Thursday. The Green Shirts made a dominant start to the blockbuster fixture, clinching the opening set 25-19 in just 23 minutes and asserting early control. India offered significant resistance in the subsequent set, which lasted 34 minutes, but Pakistan held their nerves in the tightly contested duel to eventually prevail 25-23 and move just one away from a high-reward victory. The Green Shirts, fuelled by momentum, completely outclassed India in the third and final set, winning it by 25-18 in just 25 minutes, and rounding up a comprehensive victory.

Leading the way for Pakistan was opposite Murad Khan as he scored 19 points, including 18 successful spikes, followed by Ali Usman Faryad with 13, while Mohammad Hammad chipped in with nine. The Green Shirts also dominated the statistical battle, recording 75 attack points compared to India’s 60, while also leading in blocks 5-4. India, however, held the edge in service points, while also forcing more opponent errors, 20, one more than Pakistan. For the unversed, Pakistan made a dominant start to the Asian Games 2026 men’s volleyball competition as they inflicted a 3-1 defeat on Kazakhstan in their campaign opener. The Green Shirts followed it up with yet another resounding victory, a 3-0 thrashing of Uzbekistan, to seal their place in the knockout stage with a match to spare.

India edge Pak
4-3 in thrilling
Asian Games
hockey
semi-final

DNA

INDIA edged Pakistan 4-3 in a nail-biting Asian Games hockey semi-final on Thursday, scoring the decisive goal in the final minute to secure a place in the gold-medal match. India made an aggressive start, with captain Harmanpreet Singh scoring in the fifth and 13th minutes to give his side a 2-0 lead. Sukhjeet Singh extended India’s advantage in the 23rd minute, putting Pakistan 3-0 down. Pakistan then mounted a strong comeback. Abu Mahmood scored in the 30th minute to reduce the deficit before Hanan Shahid scored a field goal in the 45th minute.

Pakistan beat Bangladesh to set up Asian
Games cricket gold showdown with IndiaIndia ease past Sri Lanka by securing
124-run victory in semi-finals after
Pakistan defeat Bangladesh

PAKISTAN defeated Bangladesh by six wickets in the first semi-final of the Asian Games men’s cricket competition at Korogi Sports Club, Nishin, on Thursday, booking a final clash with arch-rivals India. Set to chase a daunting 112-run target in 13 overs, the Green Shirts comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of four wickets and three balls to spare. The Green Shirts, however, got off to a contrasting start to the pursuit as they lost captain Sahibzada Farhan (one) in the first over with just six runs on the board. His opening partner Maaz Sadaqat, who made a spirited start to his knock, which saw him smash two fours and a six, followed suit in the next over as he fell victim to Nasum Ahmed after scoring a seven-ball 15. Following Sadaqat’s dismissal, Saim Ayub walked out to bat at No.5 and made a similar start to his innings, hitting Mustafizur Rahman for two sixes and a four, but the experienced pacer hit back in the fourth over, sending him back to the pavilion for a 12-ball 21. Usman Khan, who came out at No.3, was then involved in a brief 15-run partnership for the fourth wicket with Hasan Nawaz until getting dismissed by Rishad Hossain on the first delivery of the seventh over, with the scoreboard reading 53/4. His dismissal paved the way for Abdul Samad to walk out at No.6, and the right-handed batter, alongside Nawaz, turned the game on its head with belligerent hitting. The duo outclassed Bangladesh’s bowling attack

and ultimately steered Pakistan over the line with an unbeaten 69-run partnership, which came off just 32 deliveries. Samad, who was the core aggressor of the match-winning stand, top-scored for Pakistan with an unbeaten 30 off 15 deliveries, studded with five fours and a six, while Hassan contributed with 27 not out from 22 balls. For Bangladesh, Mahedi Hasan, Rahman, Hossain and Ahmed could pick up a wicket apiece. In a match reduced to 13 overs per side due to a wet outfield, Pakistan captain Sahibzada Farhan won the toss and elected to field first, and Bangladesh, in response, accumulated 111/7 in their 20 overs. The Tigers got off to a cautious start to their innings with their opening pair of Saif Hassan and Tanzi Hasan Tamim putting together a 17-run partnership until Arafat Minhas drew the first breakthrough for Pakistan by dismissing the latter in the second over, who could make seven off five deliveries. Bangladesh then suffered two more setbacks in quick succession as Saim Ayub cleaned up their captain Litton Das (two), while Minhas sent back middle-order batter Parvez Hossain Emon (one), and consequently slipped down to 21/3. Following the early stutter, Towhid Hridoy joined opener Saif in the middle, and the duo launched Bangladesh’s recovery by putting together a 24-run partnership for the fourth wicket, which culminated with the opener’s dismissal off Sufiyan Muqeem in the seventh over. Hassan remained a notable run-getter for Bangladesh with a 17-ball 19, featuring two sixes and a four. Hridoy then joined forces with Mosaddek Hossain, and the duo ensured the flow of runs for Bangladesh with a quickfire 53-run partnership for the fifth wicket before both fell victim to Muqeem in the penultimate over. The middle-order batter remained the top-scorer for Bangladesh with 42 off just 25 deliveries, studded with four sixes and two fours, while Mosaddek contributed with a 16-ball 11. – APP

Cricket’s increasingly complex merry-go-round as formats overlap

DNA

THERE is always a certain sadness for me when the English and Welsh cricket season ends, which it did on Sept. 27. England battered Sri Lanka into submission in front of a full house at the Kennington Oval in the third of three One Day Internationals, whilst Warwickshire claimed the county championship as their rivals fell away. Decades ago, this would have meant alternative winter occupation for those players not selected for England’s winter tours. These days, there is a full schedule for the national team and franchise leagues around the world for those not selected for national duty. In preparation for the 2027 ODI World Cup, countries are now engaging in ODI matches, a format which is entering endangered species territory. England will travel to Pakistan to play in a tri-series against Pakistan and Sri Lanka between Oct. 18-30. Australia is currently in South Africa and has lost the first two ODIs in a three-match series, which is followed by a three-Test series. In the next cycle of tours program, to run from April 2027 until April 2031, the 12 ICC full members are likely to play more T20Is, with a corresponding reduction in the number of bilateral ODIs played between them. The extent of this change will probably not be known until November, as there are so many variables to consider. One of these is the jockeying for calendar po-

sition by the T20 franchise leagues. The ODI World Cup, which is played every four years, is one of cricket’s showpiece events and is not likely to become extinct in the near future. The ICC needs to find a way to make the format more meaningful, which could lead to more tri-series and quadrangular series. Now that cricket’s fulcrum has shifted away from Europe for the next six months, there is an abundance of cricket to unfold. In the UAE, the Emirates Cricket Board is gearing up for the fifth edition of ILT20, scheduled for Nov. 21 to Dec. 20. The player auction was held on Oct. 1. Each of the six franchises and the tournament organizers were faced with even greater uncertainty surrounding player availability than in 2025. This has led to revised rules relating to squad composition.

In previous editions, ILT20 has overlapped with South Africa’s SA20 and Australia’s Big Bash League, leading to player movement in and out at both ends of the league. In this edition, there is no overlap with SA 20, but there will be with the BBL. The fifth edition also faces an availability issue involving leading UAE players who may be required for the next stage of the 2027 ODI World Cup Qualifier playoffs. The ICC has yet to confirm these dates or the venue but is thought that they will be played in December. If that is the case, then some UAE players will miss a portion of the ILT20 league. Its COO, Mike Fordham, clarified that “other players not selected would remain fully available in this circumstance,

including many of the top performers from the UAE in the league in recent seasons. In anticipation of potential availability issues, ILT20 has restructured the composition requirements for franchise squads, which must contain a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 23 players. At least 11 players must come from ICC full member countries, at least four players from Afghanistan and at least one from Ireland (both ICC full members), at least four from the UAE, at least one from both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and at least one additional player from an ICC Associate nation, excluding the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Over 200 players are set to go under the hammer, including cricketers from all 11 full-member nations, as well as 12 associate-member countries. The players have been divided into three base-price brackets: \$80,000, \$40,000 and \$10,000. The largest cohort of players is from the UAE, with almost 50. England provides the next largest with 40, followed by Afghanistan with 35. The USA provides 15, the West Indies 14 and Ireland 13. Australia has few representatives, as does New Zealand. This distribution will undoubtedly mean that the squads show significant change from the fourth edition. However, there are big names available. One is Babar Azam, who has registered for the tournament for the first time and is placed in the highest price category. As I anticipated last week after watching him in the Caribbean Premier League, Pakistan’s Maaz Sadaqat is available for \$40,000.

Fierce competition should be expected. Another player whose stock has risen is England’s Tom Banton, who has previously played with the Dubai Capitals and MI Emirates in the ILT20. On Sept. 27, against Sri Lanka, he scored his first international century, a timely nudge to the bidders. They may be wary of him being selected for England’s white-ball tour of Australia, which ends on Dec. 2. Prior to the auction, each ILT20 franchise had a window until Aug. 3 to lock in up to four players. This could be achieved by retaining someone from the previous season or by signing a new player. A mix of strategies was adopted, with the Desert Vipers retaining three players, compared with the Sharjah Warriorz, who retained only one. Franchises must spend a minimum of \$1.5m and a maximum of \$2m. Each enters the auction with a purse of \$1.3m in addition to any remaining amount from \$700,000 allocated for pre-signings. They can also sign one wildcard player after the auction for a maximum additional fee of \$250,000. It is clear that a number of factors are combining to reshape T20 franchise league squads’ season upon season. Several national boards have chosen to restrict the number of T20 leagues their players can join, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. At first sight, the ILT20’s decision to mandate four Afghan players and one Irish in each squad looked surprising. In the context of shifting sands of player availability, it is less surprising.

Oil prices
rise \$3
as China
suspends
fuel exports

FROM PAGE 01

The November contract expired on Wednesday, settling at \$103.50 per barrel, marking a monthly gain of around 14pc in September for the front-month contract. Meanwhile, US West Texas Intermediate crude futures are up \$1.67, or 1.9pc, at \$92.09 a barrel, having traded close to \$93 earlier in the session.

Forces kill
six terrorists

FROM PAGE 01

The number of terrorist attacks in the province increased by seven per cent from 83 in July to 89 in August, according to a monthly assessment by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies. As per the report, Balochistan was declared the province “most affected” by terrorism.

JI says it
may resume
long march

FROM PAGE 01

the march, calling for an end to the petroleum levy, just a day after it began on Sept 21 at the PM’s, pending a meeting with him. The prime minister had left for the United Nations General Assembly session soon after the development and returned earlier this week. But no meeting of him with JI leaders has taken place so far. Addressing a press conference at JI’s Mansoorah headquarters in Lahore, party chief Hafiz Naem ur Rehman said: “The prime minister may or may not talk to us. We are only concerned with relief for the people through the withdrawal of around Rs135 per litre petroleum levy and other taxes.”

‘Killed’ by
India, alive
in Pakistan

FROM PAGE 01

Mohammad Asif alias Hashim Moosa had been recovered along with warlike stores in the general area of Palmaidan. Shortly after, Indian news agency ANI published a detailed account claiming Mohammad Asif was born on March 7, 1980, had joined the Pakistan Army in 2000 under service number PA-3106947, retired with the rank of Havildar, was inducted into the Special Services Group in 2005, served with 4 Commando Yalgar Battalion, was posted to Balochistan from 2006 onward, participated in approximately 10 operations against Baloch insurgents, was credited with 13 kills and had served on the VVIP security team of former President Pervez Musharraf between 2006 and 2009. “You might be recalling Uri, Pahalgam and Pulwama – a very interesting story is being cooked, and the story is now complete,” the ISPR DG said, adding that there was a lot of evidence available.

Bodies
of Pak
nationals...

FROM PAGE 01

Syed Kashif Umer and Mahmood Ahmed Ansari. Four other crew members, including three Pakistanis, were injured during the operation and are receiving medical treatment, the spokesperson said. Khan said the surviving crew members were initially brought ashore at Bandar Beyla and had now been safely taken to Garowe, where the injured were being treated. “The Government and people of Pakistan extend their deepest condolences to the bereaved families and pray for the departed souls to rest in peace,” he said. The spokesperson said the government remained in close contact with Somali authorities and other stakeholders to facilitate medical care for the injured, repatriation of the mortal remains and the safe return of surviving Pakistani crew members.

Briefs

Oil dips as recovering Gulf exports ease supply fears

NEW DELHI/TOKYO: Oil prices fell 1 percent on Thursday as recovering crude exports from the Gulf and a surprise rise in US inventories eased supply concerns, while investors weighed renewed US-Iran diplomatic efforts to end their conflict in the Middle East. Brent crude futures fell 1.1 percent to \$96.92 a barrel by 07:20 a.m. Saudi time, and US West Texas Intermediate crude dropped 1.4 percent to \$89.18 a barrel. Both benchmarks rose about \$1 a barrel on Wednesday. Brent recorded a monthly gain of around 14 percent in September, its biggest since July, while WTI increased by about 5 percent on the month.

“Oil’s near-term bias remains negative as recovering shipments from the Gulf region, resumed Saudi exports through Yanbu and a buildup in US inventories ease supply concerns,” said Sugandha Sachdeva, founder of SS WealthStreet, a New Delhi-based research firm. Saudi Arabia resumed oil tanker loadings from Yanbu, Reuters reported on Tuesday, after earlier restarting operations on its East-West Pipeline. Meanwhile, US crude inventories rose by 922,000 barrels to 427.3 million barrels in the week ended Sept. 25, the Energy Information Administration said, compared with expectations in a Reuters poll for a 264,000-barrel draw. “Renewed US-Iran diplomatic engagement could further reduce the geopolitical risk premium, although a breakthrough remains uncertain,” Sachdeva said.

Iran said on Wednesday it had received a US response to its latest proposal to resurrect the collapsed ceasefire in the Gulf.

US President Donald Trump denied reports by Axios and CNN, however, that cited US officials as saying he was willing to give Iran sanctions relief and release frozen Iranian funds in return for “concrete” steps by Tehran on its nuclear program.

Goldman Sachs estimates Gulf oil exports, including “dark exports” involving ships operating with their location transponders turned off, have recovered to 23.3 million barrels per day over the last week, in line with their 2025 average, as exports doubled in September, it said in a note on Tuesday. Also, OPEC+ oil-producing countries are likely to keep their oil production targets steady for November when they meet on Sunday, two people with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.—APP

Egyptian, Abu Dhabi exchanges sign deal to increase integration

RIYADH: The Egyptian and Abu Dhabi stock exchanges have signed a memorandum of understanding to deepen cooperation and strengthen financial services, with the aim of supporting investors and listed companies in both markets. Signed on the sidelines of the annual conference of the Arab Federation of Exchanges in Abu Dhabi, the agreement establishes technical and legislative frameworks to facilitate dual listings of companies and investment instruments in both markets, while expanding the institutional investor base and increasing liquidity for issuers, according to a statement. The agreement covers mechanisms to facilitate cross-border trading by providing investors in both markets with direct market access and exploring the mutual recognition of member brokerage firms. It also includes leveraging advanced digital systems, such as the “Tabadul” platform, to enable remote trading and member onboarding in line with applicable regulatory requirements. The Egyptian Exchange Chairman Omar Radwan said: “This move aims to expand the scope of regional and international cooperation and partnerships, while fostering a business environment that attracts major institutional investments to Egypt.”_APP

ICCI President Zikria pledges to protect business community’s interests

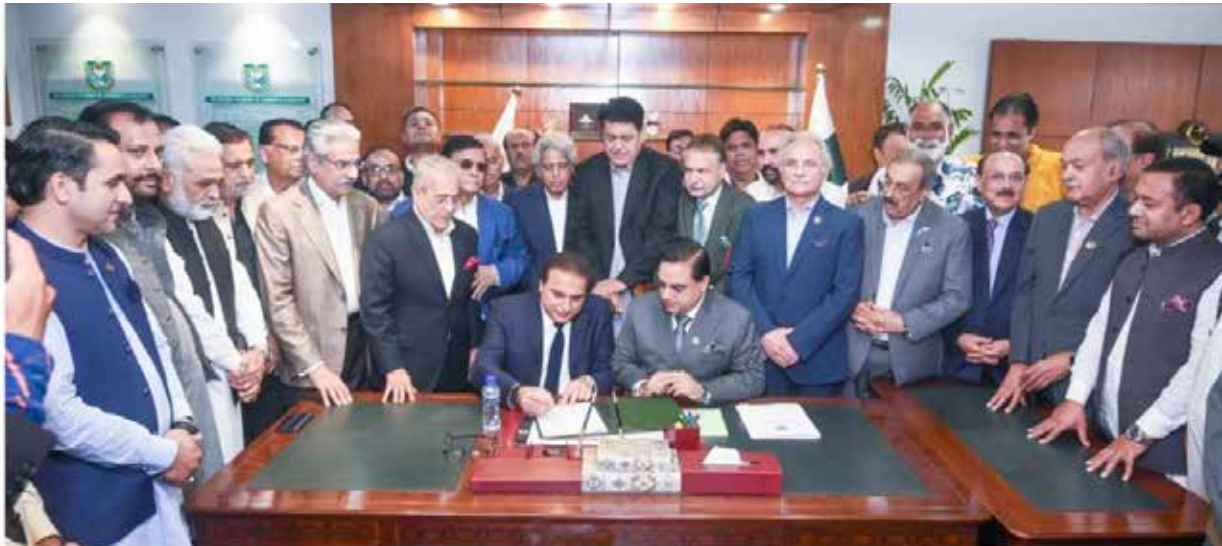
Speaking on the occasion, Zikria Zia said that leading ICCI was a great honour as well as a major responsibility, and pledged to make every effort to protect and promote the interests of the business community

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mohammad Zikria A Zia on Thursday formally assumed charge as President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), along with Mohammad Ashfaq Hussain Chatah as Senior Vice President and Mohammad Waqas Khan as Vice President.

The new office-bearers assumed their responsibilities in the presence of ICCI Founder Group Chairman Sheikh Tariq Sadiq, former Presidents Abdul Rauf Alam, Khalid Javed, Mian Akram Farid, Zafar Bakhtawari, Mian Shaukat Masood, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, Sheikh Amir Waheed, Mehfooz Ellahi, Baser Daud, Shakil Munir, Executive Members, ICCI senior members, President Markazi Tanzeem e Tajran, Pakistan and Pakistan Business Forum Kashif Chaudhry and President All Pakistan Anjuman Tajraan, Ajmal Baloch were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Zikria Zia said that leading ICCI was a great honour as well as a major responsibility, and pledged to make every effort to protect and promote the interests of the business community. He said his focus would re-



main on resolving key business issues, improving the business environment and working for the development of markets, industrial areas and Islamabad as a whole. “We will work collectively and remain accessible to the business community,” he added. Senior Vice President Ashfaq Chatah and Vice President Waqas

Khan assured ICCI members that they would discharge their responsibilities with dedication and work closely with the business community to address their concerns. Sheikh Tariq Sadiq congratulated the new office-bearers and expressed confidence that the new leadership would continue the tradition of serving the business community and

strengthening ICCI. Former President Sardar Tahir Mehmood, Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub and Vice President Mohammad Irfan Chaudhry also congratulated the new leadership and conveyed their best wishes. The outgoing office-bearers were later given a warm send-off in recognition of their services to ICCI and the business community.

Lebanon banks on mass AI training to rebuild its economy

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s economy may be performing far below its potential, but when it comes to artificial intelligence, the country is punching above its weight. So says Kamal Shehadi, the country’s minister of the displaced and minister of state for technology and artificial intelligence, who told Arab News: “Lebanon is fifth in the region in terms of AI adoption at 27 percent of the population, which is a very good number considering all the challenges that the country faces.” But Shehadi, who holds Lebanon’s first government portfolio dedicated to technology and AI, wants to push that figure much further. The first target is 1.1 million people, and Shehadi already has his sights set on a second million.

The push gained momentum last week when the UAE and Lebanon launched the “One Million Lebanese AI Experts” initiative, announced on the sidelines of the

UN General Assembly in New York at a meeting between Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the UAE’s deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, and Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam. Run under the UAE’s Government Experience Exchange Programme, it will give one million Lebanese practical training in generative AI and prompt engineering, so they can use the tools in their work and daily lives.

“It’s not enough to stop at the first 1.1 million people,” Shehadi said. “We want to go beyond that and get to at least 50 percent of the population within a couple of years.” Shehadi knows the payoff will not be immediate. “This is an initiative aimed at mass education and mass training. The return on that is going to be felt over time,” he said. “There is no immediate financial return, but what it does, it helps to transform the economy, to help digitalize the whole economy.—DNA

Work on migrant return hubs ‘progressing well’

BRUSSELS: Work to set up migrant return hubs outside the European Union is progressing “very well”, Denmark said Thursday as the bloc’s home affairs ministers met in Luxembourg to discuss further ways to boost deportations. Denmark — along with Austria, Greece, Germany and the Netherlands — has been exploring options to set up such migrant centers. “When it comes to return hubs it’s progressing very well,” Danish interior minister Morten Bødskov told reporters, arriving at the EU meeting after holding talks with colleagues from the other four nations working on the issue. “We are moving in the right direction,” he said without providing further details.

Germany’s Alexander Dobrindt said there were “preliminary” talks but declined to say which countries were involved. More work was needed to make sure any agreement would withstand possible lawsuits, he said. “These agreements are meant to be sustainable in the long term,” he said, adding that he was nevertheless hopeful that a first deal could be sealed by the end of the year.

The Luxembourg talks come with anti-immigration parties riding high across the bloc, as evidenced by far-right gains in Germany last month. EU ministers gave final approval to tougher new migration rules allowing for the creation of return hubs and granting authorities much broader detention powers. The regulation is to enter into force in the coming weeks, the EU said. The meeting agenda included discussion on using “enhanced cooperation” with “priority” non-EU countries for returns of people with no right to stay in the bloc. EU migration chief Magnus Brunner said the focus was on Pakistan and Bangladesh, which he said were the main starting points for migration routes to Europe.—APP

Syria restores electricity in stages after gas blast

LONDON: Syrian authorities began restoring gas supplies on Thursday to the Deir Ali power plant after an explosion at a pipeline serving the Tishreen thermal plant near Damascus forced several generating stations offline and reduced electricity available on the national grid. Technical crews started gradually repressurizing the Arab Gas Pipeline between Adra and Deir Ali, the Energy Ministry said in a statement, a step intended to allow the Deir Ali plant to resume operations in stages. The pipeline and surrounding area will remain under technical monitoring during the restart. The Deir Ali plant supplies the national grid, supporting electricity provision in Damascus and southern Syria, including Rif Dimashq, Daraa, Quneitra and Suweida. Energy Minister Mohammad Al-Bashir told the state-run agency SANA that the fire at the Tishreen plant had been brought under control. Civil Defense crews were continuing cooling operations, however, before specialists could enter the site to assess the damage and establish what caused the explosion. Authorities have not determined whether the blast was caused by a technical failure, an intentional attack or sabotage, Al-Bashir said. “The relevant spe-

cialized teams will conduct an on-site inspection after cooling operations are completed to determine the causes and circumstances precisely,” he said. The explosion struck a pressure-reduction station at the entrance to the Tishreen power plant and damaged two gas lines serving the facility, according to the Syrian Petroleum Co. The resulting interruption in gas supplies forced Tishreen offline and also shut down the Deir Ali and Nasiriyah plants, cutting available generating capacity on Syria’s electricity grid. Preliminary assessments indicate that damage at Tishreen appears limited to gas lines and some electrical substations or cables, Al-Bashir said. The plant’s turbines and other core equipment have not yet been inspected. Abdul Hamid Salat, director of the Energy Ministry’s media department, said teams also would inspect other power stations affected by the gas interruption. The inspections will examine turbines, generating units and other equipment before plants are returned to service according to their technical readiness. The ministry later confirmed that crews had begun raising pressure on the Adra-Deir Ali section of the Arab Gas Pipeline as part of the phased restoration effort. Meanwhile, electricity began returning gradually to Deir Ezzor province after the loss of generation capacity. The Syrian Electricity Co. in Deir Ezzor said service was being restored in stages based on available supplies. Power allocations to the province will remain temporarily reduced until the generating system stabilizes and the affected plants return to operation, the company said in a Facebook post.

Syria’s electricity system is heavily dependent on gas- and oil-fired power plants, but war damage, fuel shortages, aging equipment and a fragile grid have left it unable to reliably meet demand.

Before the 2011 civil war, Syria had roughly 8.5 gigawatts of installed generation capacity, according to the British-American business law firm Norton Rose Fulbright. Much of that capacity is no longer consistently available. Current estimates vary depending on whether they measure installed, operable or actual output, but recent assessments place available capacity broadly in the 2 to 3 GW range.

fossil fuel systems are no longer reliable. He said Pakistan should highlight at the negotiations its domestic solar uptake as clean electrification, and use coalitions to tap renewable energy funding. Sheraz Ali Shah of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan said Pakistan is not going to COP31 empty-handed, as it has NDC 3.0, and had surpassed its unconditional targets under NDC 2.0. He said Antalya is labelled an implementation COP, about moving “from paper to portfolios”, and that Pakistan needs grant-based adaptation finance. Chairperson of the Pakistan Climate Change Authority (PCCA) Hamza Farrukh said global adaptation funds fall far short of demand: the Adaptation Fund held only \$350 million against applications beyond \$2 billion. He said Pakistan needs to look at mitigation options as well and build a capable carbon market office. He announced that PCCA would launch a portal for fresh updates.

Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Head of the Energy Unit at SDPI, said COP31 would be shaped by geopolitical fragmentation and disruptions to energy supply chains linked to the conflict in the Gulf. He said the UNEP overshoot report suggests the 1.5°C target will be surpassed within a few years despite current measures. Zainab Naeem, Associate Research Fellow and Head of the Ecological Sustainability and Circular Economy Unit at SDPI, gave a technical presentation on key declarations and thematic priorities for COP31. She said finance is the political centre of the conference.—DNA

Car bomb in eastern Syria leaves 2 dead

LONDON: An explosion near a checkpoint of the Syrian Internal Security Forces in eastern Syria injured two people on Thursday, state media reported. The blast struck a vehicle in Jazrat Al-Buhamid in the Deir Ezzor countryside, according to the Syrian Arab News Agency.

A security source told SANA that preliminary findings indicated an explosive device attached to the vehicle caused the explosion. Authorities were collecting evidence and investigating to identify and pursue those responsible, the source said. The attack followed a shooting on a bus in the Syrian Arab Republic’s central province of Homs on Wednesday that killed seven people and wounded four others, SANA reported. Authorities have not yet identified the attackers.

Syria has faced mounting security challenges since the fall of longtime President Bashar Assad’s regime in late 2024. Damascus and surrounding areas have been hit by several attacks, including explosions targeting public infrastructure and security forces. Shortly before the Homs bus attack, state media reported an explosion at a gas pipeline near one of Syria’s main power plants outside Damascus. The incident came two days after the reported sabotage of another pipeline in eastern Syria.—APP

Indonesia courts Saudi support to speed up GCC trade negotiations

JAKARTA: Indonesia is courting support from Saudi Arabia to speed up negotiations for a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, Trade Minister Budi Santoso said on Thursday after talks with the Saudi Minister of Commerce Majid bin Abdullah Al-Kassabi.

Indonesia and the GCC launched talks for the FTA in July 2024, with nearly 90 percent of the agreement completed so far.

Santoso and Al-Kassabi met on Wednesday on the sidelines of the G20 Trade Ministers Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as the US holds this year’s presidency of the forum of the world’s biggest economies.

“(We) discussed renewal of trade cooperation between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, and pushed for the substantive conclusion of negotiations for the Indonesia-GCC (FTA) by the end of 2026,” Santoso said in a video posted on Instagram.

Indonesia’s Ministry of Trade said that the talks were part of “a strategic step to open up more opportunities for Indonesia’s priority products to enter and compete in the Saudi market.”

Al-Kassabi “welcomed the push to speed up (the) conclusion of negotiations” for the Indonesia-GCC FTA, it added.

The Ministry of Trade told Arab News last month that Jakarta was seeking to advance technology transfer, strengthen food security and build supply-chain resilience from the deal with the GCC. Indonesia’s total trade with GCC countries was valued at \$17 billion out of a total \$524 billion in 2025. The Indonesian government is expecting the Indonesia-GCC FTA to increase the country’s total exports by more than 17 percent. The main export commodities to the Gulf region include motor vehicles and automotive components, palm oil, and jewelry.

Jakarta has also been facilitating greater trade flows with the bloc’s members at a bilateral level, especially Saudi Arabia, with which ties have been on the rise in recent years. Last year, Indonesia-Saudi trade was valued at \$6.53 billion. Santoso and Al-Kassabi also discussed closer cooperation in food trade and Indonesia’s participation at Expo 2030 Riyadh during their meeting, according to the ministry. The Indonesian government and businesses have participated in various global events held across the Kingdom in recent years, including at the Gulf region’s biggest fashion exhibition, Saudi Fashiontex Expo, last month. _APP

SDPI, PREC launch four policy papers

ISLAMABAD: Climate and Energy experts, policymakers and development practitioners on Thursday called on Pakistan to go to COP31 with credible data, bankable projects and strong coalitions, rather than relying only on its vulnerability narrative. They were speaking at a Pre-COP Dialogue and Consultation on “Pakistan’s Road to COP31”, organised by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with the Pakistan Renewable Energy Coalition (PREC) at SDPI’s Conference Hall. On the occasion, PREC and SDPI launched three policy papers on themes related to Pakistan’s preparations for COP31, including Climate mitigation, finance, and adaptation. The dialogue brought together government stakeholders, technical experts and civil society to define Pakistan’s core asks, the negotiating streams it should prioritise, and the coalition and evidence base needed to advance them. In his welcome note, SDPI Executive Director, Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said developing countries should press for a tangible framework to deliver the climate finance goals set at Belém. He mentioned that Pakistan has shown remarkable progress through its solar revolution that must be advocated and sustained. He also called for joint glacier management and data sharing among Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) countries, citing glacier warming, landslides, flash floods and glacial lake outburst floods. He urged Pakistan to extend solidarity with Nepal following the recent devastation there at COP31. Dr Suleri said the unilateral revocation of the Indus Waters Treaty by India was creating problems for the entire region.

He added that civil society works with the government, not against it, in the war of nerves at the COP, which is fought over data. Executive Director of the Global Climate Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC) Arif Goheer said the panel agreed that Pakistan should not go to Antalya as a vulnerable nation alone. He identified four priorities: evidence and data (including geospatial mapping and cryosphere studies), investment, coalitions, and federal-provincial implementation of NDCs. Pakistan must check whether it has a say in forums such as the G77 and China, he said, or it will only be supporting others’ agendas. Chief Executive Officer of the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) Aamir Goraya said climate finance is as much a fiscal challenge as an environmental one. He said Pakistan should showcase its institutional capacity on disaster risk reduction and management, and move its narrative “from vulnerability to action”. He noted that parametric earthquake insurance has been extended to over 100 schools in Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. SDPI Deputy Executive Director (Policy) Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmed said the history of follow-up action after COPs is not promising. He stressed that Pakistan’s negotiations should be framed around loss and damage, adaptation and mitigation, and said the country must decide whether to attend merely to announce its vulnerability or to engage in the negotiations. Basit Ghauri, Member of PREC and Manager Special Initiatives and China Program at Renewables First, said the Strait of Hormuz crisis showed that

Briefs

Google restricts access to new AI model over safety concerns

SAN FRANCISCO: United States: Google on Wednesday said it would withhold its most powerful artificial intelligence model from the public for now, releasing Gemini 4 Argon only to a vetted group of cybersecurity experts to avoid misuse by hackers. "Safely releasing frontier capabilities at this level requires a phased approach," wrote Koray Kavukcuoglu, Google's chief AI architect, in a blog post announcing the model. Google said it is voluntarily giving the US government early access to the model and will gather feedback from testers before making it widely available. The cautious rollout mirrors the approach of rival Anthropic, which has kept its most advanced model, Claude Mythos Preview, restricted to a small number of trusted organizations. Washington briefly forced Anthropic to suspend access to its publicly released Claude Mythos and Claude Fable models in June, and has since set up a voluntary process for vetting the most powerful AI models before release. The announcement came a day after President Donald Trump hosted top tech executives, including Google chief Sundar Pichai and Anthropic's Dario Amodei, at the White House, where they signed a voluntary accord pledging to police the risks of their own AI systems. Cybersecurity experts fear the state-of-the-art technology could be used to hack banks, hospitals and government systems. — APP

US did not ask Iranian team to leave

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Iran has denied a report that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio ordered its delegation to the UN General Assembly to leave the US immediately after negotiations on an agreement to end the war reached an impasse. Axios reported that Rubio asked members of the Iranian delegation to leave the country on Monday following the breakdown of negotiations, according to a report cited by Asharq News. Those reportedly asked to depart included Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who arrived in Doha on Tuesday from New York while traveling back to Tehran. Iran's mission to the UN disputed the account, saying the delegation's departure had been planned in advance. The mission said its officials left New York on Monday evening according to a schedule that had already been communicated to the US State Department on Sept. 17. "Having achieved nothing, the State Department resorted to promoting baseless reports," the Iranian mission said.

'Plumber' helped save plunging Flydubai plane

UAE launches investigation into Flydubai flight incident

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he spoke at length with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the dramatic incident aboard a Flydubai flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv, saying the co-pilot may have been a terrorist and recounting an account in which an Israeli plumber helped prevent the aircraft from crashing. Trump said he had heard the account from Netanyahu and others but cautioned that he could not independently confirm it. "This is the story that I heard - I don't know if it's true, but that's the story that I got from Bibi (Netanyahu)," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. According to Trump, the co-pilot was "perhaps a terrorist or perhaps a whack-job" and had stabbed the pilot before the aircraft began plunging. Trump said an Israeli passenger described as a plumber helped subdue the attacker and, despite having no flying experience, helped pull the aircraft out of its dive. Reuters reported that passengers and crew entered the cockpit and overpowered the co-pilot after the attack, enabling a second pair of Flydubai pilots who were aboard the flight to land the aircraft safely in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. The aircraft had dropped nearly 14,000 feet in less than 30 seconds, according to flight-tracking data cited by Reuters.

MBS puts faith in Makkah pact for regional security

KSA will continue supporting Yemen's internationally recognised govt to establish authority across country: MBS

NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia will give a decisive response to any threat or attack against the Kingdom, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said on Wednesday, while stressing that Riyadh would continue efforts to reduce regional tensions and support diplomatic solutions. Addressing the Shura Council, the Crown Prince said the attacks targeting Gulf Cooperation Council countries had demonstrated that "Gulf security and stability are indivisible", according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA). He said Saudi Arabia would continue working with Gulf states on strategic cooperation and economic integration, while stressing the importance of protecting regional security. Prince Mohammed said the Makkah Joint Defence Alliance (MJDA) between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye would contribute to strengthening security and stability in the region and help coordinate efforts to address regional challenges, SPA reported. On Yemen, the Crown Prince said Saudi Arabia would



continue supporting the Yemeni government in establishing its authority across the country and restoring stability. He accused the Houthis of having "chosen chaos and destruction" and threatening Yemen and the region, according to SPA. The Crown Prince also said Saudi Arabia rejected the use of international waterways as a tool of political or economic pressure. He said the Kingdom had launched a multinational maritime defence alliance to strengthen maritime security and protect shared interests in international waterways, SPA reported. Prince Mohammed also praised the Saudi armed forces for their role in confronting threats and reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to reducing regional escalation and supporting diplomatic efforts. The MJDA comes as Saudi Arabia faces increased attacks from Iran-backed Houthi forces in Yemen. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye signed the agreement in August, committing to treat an armed attack on any one of the three as an attack on all. Media reported that the pact was signed amid escalating regional tensions and that subsequent meetings have focused on security coordination and support for Riyadh.

FBR detects Rs9.4bn tax fraud through forged wealth statements

Analysis identifies 85 taxpayers who revised their wealth statements for tax years 2014 to 2019

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has uncovered alleged tax fraud in which some taxpayers illegally revised their old wealth statements to add assets worth Rs9.41 billion in their declared returns, according to the FBR's official announcement, the FBR busted a fraud in which taxpayers illegally revised their old wealth statements to bring unexplained assets worth Rs9.41 billion into their declared wealth. A criminal case under the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010 has been registered and further cases are being processed. The fraud was unearthed by the FBR's Directorate General of Intelligence and Investigation (Inland Revenue) through a detailed analysis of FBR's database, carried out with the support of Pakistan Revenue Automation Limited (PRAL). The analysis identified 85 taxpayers who, between March 2025 and June 2026, revised their wealth statements for tax years 2014 to 2019 and inserted cash, physical gold, prize

bonds, properties and business capital that had never been declared before. The law clearly bars this. Under the explanation to Section 116(3) of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001, a wealth statement cannot be revised after five years from the due date of the original return. Every revision identified was made well beyond this limit. In one case, registered by the Directorate of Intelligence and Investigation (Inland Revenue) Lahore, a taxpayer in Lahore region revised his wealth statement for tax year 2015 in May 2026 and inserted fictitious funds of Rs102.8 million. He then carried this amount forward through his wealth statements up to tax year 2025 and used it to account for seven properties worth Rs64.41 million bought in May and June 2026. When asked, he could not explain the source of the funds. The tax sought to be evaded in this case alone exceeds Rs46 million. Regional Directorates of Intelligence and Investigation (Inland Revenue) have launched 48 criminal inquiries across Pakistan, while proceedings in the remaining cases are under process. The money laundering case has been registered against the taxpayer and any abettors found involved, and further cases are being processed to bring everyone behind the fraud to justice. The FBR has made it clear that no one will be allowed to use the tax system to whitewash unexplained wealth.

Iran guards hail US withdrawal from Iraq

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Thursday welcomed the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq as a "historic victory" and called for American troops to leave the Middle East. The Revolutionary Guards "congratulate the proud nation of Iraq, the united front of the Islamic Resistance, and the revolutionary fighters of the Islamic world on this historic victory," the guards said in a statement carried by their official media. On Wednesday the US-led coalition that deployed to Iraq and Syria in 2014 to fight the Islamic State (IS) group formally concluded its mission and withdrew. IS, which seized large swathes of both countries and committed massacres and atrocities, was defeated in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria in 2019, but coalition forces stayed on to battle the group's remnants.

"The US must leave the region and entrust the management of security to the nations themselves," said the statement by the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's military. "Two decades of occupation demonstrated that the US presence brought no security; rather, it was the very source of insecurity, terrorism, and instability in West Asia," it added. Baghdad and Washington agreed in 2024 to wind down the coalition's mission, and its troops withdrew gradually from bases across the country, restricting their presence to the autonomous northern Kurdistan region. The Iraqi government says the coalition's withdrawal removes the excuse powerful Iran-backed militant factions have used to retain their weapons. On Thursday, Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi announced June 30 as a new deadline for armed factions to turn over their weapons to the state.

Indian media claims about Pak army soldier

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Indian media has claimed that a terrorist killed in an "encounter" in Occupied Kashmir's Korag area was affiliated with the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and was a soldier of the Pakistan military. The claim by India media is attributed to sources and names the individual as Mohammad Asif. "Mohammad Asif alias Hashim Moosa was born on 07 March 1980. He joined the Pakistan Army in 2000 under service number PA-3106947 and retired with the rank of Havildar," claimed India's Asian News International (ANI). Pakistani officials and security forces have not commented on the claim by In-

dian media. "In 2005, Mohammad Asif was inducted into the Special Services Group (SSG). He served with 4 Commando 'Yalgar' Battalion and was posted to Balochistan from 2006 onward. During his deployment in Balochistan, he reportedly participated in approximately 10 operations against Baloch insurgents and is credited with 13 personal kills," the news report claimed further, adding that Asif was also part of the security detail of former president Pervez Musharraf. It was further claimed by ANI that Asif was "wanted in the Pahalgalam terror attack". The claim, without evidence, was also repeated by the Indian Army's Chinara Corps — part of the Northern Command and headquartered in occupied Kashmir. The corps primary area of responsibility is the Kashmir area of operations.

Tennessee woman in hospital after execution 'failed'

WASHINGTON: Tennessee woman Christa Pike was in a hospital Thursday after authorities "failed" to carry out her execution, her lawyers said, with witnesses reporting the convicted murderer was breathing despite the injections intended to kill her. Just hours earlier the US Supreme Court cleared the way for Pike to be the first woman to die by lethal injection in the southern US state of Tennessee in 200 years. Tennessee corrections officials did not publicly

confirm the outcome of the execution, which included two injections of pentobarbital, or respond to an AFP query seeking information. "Tonight the State of Tennessee once again failed to carry out a lawful execution," Pike's attorneys said in a statement. "Christa is being treated at a nearby hospital. We have not been informed as to her condition." Pike was scheduled for execution at 10am (1500 GMT) at the Riverbend Maximum Security Institution, where

witnesses including journalists were present for the administration of the injections. "It appears this did not go how this was supposed to go," said investigative journalist John North of WBIR who was a witness at the execution site, adding "when we left the building, so far as we knew, she was probably still alive." During the livestream, an ambulance with its lights flashing could be seen leaving the site of the execution, it is unclear if it was transporting Pike. — APP



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