



Islamabad POST

Friday, October 16, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 40

Millions can be thrown into poverty, says UN development chief

Detailed News On Page-08

Deputy PM Dar meets with Pak envoy to Russia

Detailed News On Page-08



Aurangzeb takes up climate issue with stakeholders

Detailed News On Page-07



Peshawar tragedy

At least 34 children die in roof collapse

Rescue officials say several children still trapped under rubble after roof collapse

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: At least 34 schoolchildren and one teacher were killed on Thursday morning when the roof of a school collapsed during morning classes in Peshawar, police and rescue officials said, prompting widespread grief across the country. Rescue workers spent hours pulling children from the rubble of the privately run education centre, which is located in a residential area, while panicked parents and relatives gathered outside the building seeking news of their loved ones. Most of the students killed were under 13. At least 45 people suffered major and minor injuries, said Arif Khattak, regional director of the Rescue Department. A higher-floor roof collapsed onto students in classrooms below, crumpling two storeys of the building, a rescue official said. The administration of Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), which initially reported four deaths, later said that 33 bodies were brought to the hospital. Two bodies were shifted to Naseerullah Khan Babar Memorial Hospital in the provincial capital, it added. Among the victims were also 12 girls, according to the LRH administration. The body of a female teacher was also brought to the hospital following the incident, the LRH administration said. Peshawar deputy commissioner said that all people trapped beneath the debris have been rescued. The incident took place at 8:48am local time (0348 GMT) and the rescue operation lasted for four to five hours, Khat-tak said. Resident Sher Ahmed said he blamed "substand-ard construction materials" for the tragedy, and called for a probe. "With profound grief and sorrow, I urge the au-thorities to conduct a thorough investigation and take strict

action against anyone found responsible so that such tra-gedies can be prevented in the future," he said. Distraught relatives accused the school of ignoring concerns about the building's condition and demanded accountability. "Make an example of them, a lesson for all, so that no one dares open a school just to make money without providing facilities," said Mohammad Zaman, who lost two nephews in the collapse. Talking to the media, school owner Khan Muhammad said several days of rainfall were the reason behind the incident, adding that the school was built around one and a half years ago. Muhammad said he had visited the affected classroom himself in the morning before the incident occurred. The owner said he called all teachers and began evacuating children after the incident. He added that around 30 children were present in the affected classroom. According to the school owner, 350 students were enrolled at the school. SSP Operations said that the school roof collapsed while between 110 and 115 children were present inside the building, causing deaths after the structure failed to bear their weight. "The roof is weak, and no one is being allowed inside," he said, while providing details about the construction and circumstances of the collapse. According to the SSP Operations, T-jiron beams and planks had been used in the roof's construction. He said the structure could not withstand the weight and collapsed, trapping children beneath the debris. A police investigation officer said that substandard materials had been used in the school build-ing, adding that the school owner had been arrested over the alleged use of substandard construction materials. KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed sorrow over the incident and sought a report from the relevant authorities.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif shakes hand with Allama Nasir Abbas, Opposition leader in the Senate, while the Opposition leaver Mahmood Khan Achakzai look on. – DNA

France deploys military means in Saudi Arabia

NEWS DESK

FRANCE is starting to put into action op-erational elements of an agreement to help protect Saudi Arabian oil facilities, Foreign Ministry spokes-person Pascal Confavreux said on Thursday. He de-clared to elaborate on what the means were that were sent to Saudi Arabia. French President Emmanuel Macron said last month that France would send troops and defence systems to Sau-di Arabia to help protect the Red Sea port city of Yanbu, which is key for energy trans- port. Meanwhile, A Saudi foreign ministry official on Thursday accused Iran of encouraging the Houthis in the latest escalation of their fight with the kingdom, adding that it continues to arm and train the group.

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Imaan, Hadi to face trial

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: An anti-ter-rorism court on Thursday directed the counsels and witnesses in a case against incarcerated rights activist and lawyer Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her hus-band, Hadi Ali Chattha, to appear at the Adiala jail for the next hearing after police suggested a jail trial citing limitations in trans- porting the accused to the court. The court also direct- ed the Adiala jail superin- tendent to arrange a meet- ing between Imaan and her counsel in accordance with the Pakistan Prison Rules, 1978, after the defence submitted an affidavit de- tailing alleged difficulties faced at a previous meeting.

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KP province

Joint sitting of Parliament endorses governor's rule

The Centre took the measures on Oct 11, citing the provincial government's "deliberate disengagement" from the fight against terrorism

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A joint sitting of the Parli- ament on Thursday gave its approval of the Centre's imposition of emergency and governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa amid a strong protest from the opposi- tion. The joint session of the Parliament had been summoned to discuss separate resolutions on the imposition of emer- gency and governor's rule in KP, where the opposition's PTI was in power. During the session, which was addressed by both members of the treasury and op- position benches, the government justifi- ed its decision while the PTI lambasted the Centre and the allegations levelled against the party. The Centre took the measures on Oct 11, citing the provin- cial government's "deliberate disengage- ment" from the fight against terrorism.

Continued on Page 06

'Governor's rule, emergency tantamount to martial law'

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Senate Opposition Lead- er Allama Raja Nasir Abbas has likened the imposition of emergency and gov- ernor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to martial law, alleging that the Centre has taken the wrong path. Speaking to the media outside Parliament along- side Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Mahmood Khan Achakzai and others, Abbas criticised the federal

Continued on Page 06

US blockade aims to spark protests: Iran

A summit between the European Union and Gulf countries in Riyadh has been postponed, Brussels has said, as Saudi Arabia faces sustained attacks from Yemen's Houthis, media reports

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian says that the country is facing its most intense blockade since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, accusing the United States of seeking to provoke public protests, media reports. "Over the 48 years since the Revolution, we have never faced such an intense blockade, war and difficul-

ties as we are facing now," Pezeshkian said in a speech broadcast by state television. He accused Washington of seeking to make life difficult for Iranians in order to fuel public anger and trigger unrest. Pezeshkian said the US was focusing its efforts on making "the people become up- set and face difficulties, and then for social protests to emerge so that they can achieve their sinister objectives". A summit between the European Union and Gulf countries in Riyadh has been postponed, Brussels has said, as Saudi Arabia faces sustained attacks from Yemen's Houthis, media reports. "The second Summit between the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council,

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Ireland leader sentenced on abuse charges

LONDON: Jeffrey Donald- son, the former leader of Northern Ireland's largest unionist party, was sen- tenced on Thursday to 15 years in prison for the rape and sex abuse of two girls decades ago. The judge said that Donaldson, 63, had ex- pressed no "regret, apology or shame" for crimes that had blighted the victims' lives. Donaldson was one of Northern Ireland's best-known politicians until his arrest stunned his political colleagues and wider society two years ago. He was con- victed in June of one count of rape, four counts of gross indecency and 13 indecent assault charges involving two girls between 1985 and 2008. He had denied the charges. Donaldson led the Democratic Unionist Party, the biggest party in favor of keeping Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom, from 2021 until 2024. – APP

Heavy rain shuts down Istanbul

NEWS DESK

ISTANBUL: A heavy down- pour has shut down Istan- bul, flooded homes and roads and killed at least three people, officials said Thursday, as rescuers worked overnight to save hundreds of people stranded at their workplaces. The downpour Wednesday night flooded homes and busi- nesses and inundated roads and underpasses, stranding vehicles and causing traffic chaos in Turkey's largest city. The Istanbul governor's office on Thursday reported three deaths in the city and said four other people were reported missing. A 14-year-old was electrocuted after stepping in a puddle at a park in the Fatih district, and a 34-year-old slipped on a sidewalk in the Sarier district and hit their head, local media reports said.

Post-emergency scenario

TTAP says 'no talks' with govt until meeting with Khan is arranged

The announcement was made at a leadership meeting held at Achakzai's residence, where the political situation arising from the imposition of governor's rule and an emergency in KP, as well as the situation in the province, was reviewed in detail

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Tehreek-i-Tahaffuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) on Thursday an- nounced that it was suspending all negotia- tions with the government, saying there would be "no talks" until a meeting with PTI founder Imran Khan was arranged and information about his health was provided. The alliance, in a statement, said all negotiating authority would rest solely with its chairman, Mehmood Khan Achakzai. The announcement was made at a leadership meeting held at Achakzai's residence, where the political situation arising from the imposition of governor's rule and

Continued on Page 06

Hammad Azhar remand extended

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday extended the physical remand of PTI leader Hammad Azhar by 12 days in the Jinnah House attack case related to the May 9 riots. Sarwar Road police had booked several PTI leaders and workers on charges of attacking and vandalising Jinnah House during the protests against the

Continued on Page 06

A nation's conscience buried under the rubble

Pakistan does not suffer from a shortage of talent or resources. What it lacks is the collective political will to place public welfare above personal and partisan interests. As the old saying goes, where there is a will, there is a way. The challenge before the nation is not finding the way; it is finding the will

ANALYSIS

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI



ISLAMABAD: The heart- breaking tragedy in Pe- shawar on October 15, 2026, where more than 30 innocent schoolchildren lost their lives after the roof of a school collapsed and dozens of others were injured, is not merely an accident. It is a grim reflection of the state of governance in Pakistan. It is a painful reminder of official negligence, administrative failure, and a system that has long ceased to view the ordinary citizen as its primary responsibility. While rescue workers struggled to save trapped children and parents anxiously waited for news of their loved ones, our political class remained en- gaged in its routine power games. On the very day when the nation should have paused to mourn and focus entirely on relief efforts, parliament contin- ued debating and approving the emergency situa- tion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. At the very least, the proceedings should have been deferred as a mark

of respect and solidarity with the grieving families. Such insensitivity exposes the widening discon- nect between rulers and the people. It raises a troubling question: Do the lives of ordinary Pa- kistanis matter to those who govern them? The tragedy is not confined to Peshawar. It is sym- bolic of a larger national crisis. Across Pakistan, millions of citizens are deprived of basic facilities, including safe schools, quality healthcare, clean drinking water, and reliable infrastructure. Build- ings collapse, roads deteriorate, hospitals lack essential medicines, and educational institutions operate without proper safety standards. Yet po- litical leaders remain preoccupied with elections, alliances, rivalries, and media appearances. The unfortunate reality is that politicians seek votes from these very people, make tall promis- es during election campaigns, and then abandon them once they assume power. Public service has increasingly been replaced by political survival. Governance has become secondary, while power remains the ultimate objective. In this context, Interior Minister Mohsin Naq- vi's observation that "the system has collapsed" deserves serious attention. When such a state- ment comes from a senior government function- ary occupying one of the most important offices in the country, it carries significant weight. It

is not a criticism from the opposition or a com- plaint from civil society. It is an admission from within the corridors of power itself. If the system has indeed collapsed, the ques- tion is: who will rebuild it? No force prevents our leaders from curbing corrup- tion. No one stops them from ensuring transpar- ency and accountability. No one prevents them from introducing merit-based recruitment, strengthening institutions, or delivering good governance. Like- wise, nobody compels them to tolerate nepotism, favoritism, incompetence, and inequality. The obstacles are not external; they lie within the po- litical culture that has dominated Pakistan for de- cades. Every government comes to power promising change. Every administration pledges reforms. Yet the same patterns continue. The culture of pa- tronage remains intact. Merit suffers at the hands of connections. Public resources are wasted while development projects become avenues for political point-scoring rather than public welfare. The victims of this failed system are not the pow- erful. They are the ordinary citizens. They are the farmers, laborers, teachers, shopkeepers, and, most tragically, innocent children sitting in unsafe classrooms. The Peshawar school tragedy should therefore not be viewed merely as a structural failure resulting in the collapse of a building.

It represents the collapse of priorities. A roof fell because responsibility had already collapsed long before the concrete gave way. These children were not statistics. They were dreams waiting to be realized. Among them could have been future doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers, diplo- mats, and leaders. Their deaths are not just a loss for their families; they are a loss for Pakistan's fu- ture. A nation that cannot protect its children can- not claim to be progressing. Economic indicators, political speeches, and development slogans lose their meaning when schoolchildren are unsafe in the very institutions meant to nurture them. Pakistan does not suffer from a shortage of talent or resources. What it lacks is the collective polit- ical will to place public welfare above personal and partisan interests. As the old saying goes, where there is a will, there is a way. The challenge before the nation is not finding the way; it is finding the will. The rubble in Peshawar should not only bury the innocent victims. It should bury complacency, indifference, and the politics of neglect. If this tra- gedy fails to inspire serious reform, then more build- ings may collapse in the future, but what will truly crumble is the public's faith in the state itself. The children of Peshawar deserved better. Pakistan's future deserved better. And the nation must now ask whether its leaders are prepared to do better !!

02

NATIONAL

Use modern media to counter propaganda against KP: Governor

PESHAWAR : Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday chaired a meeting at the Governor House to review the performance of the provincial Information and Public Relations Department and directed officials to strengthen public communication through modern and digital media platforms.

The meeting was attended by Adviser to Governor on Information and Public Relations Samar Haroon Bilour, Secretary Information Dr Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, Director General Information Ansarullah Khilji and other senior officials.

Secretary Information Dr Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan briefed the Governor on the department's administrative structure, human resources, overall performance and the working of its various wings. The briefing also covered the Public Relations, Communication, Press Registrars, FM Radio and Digital Directorate sections. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi said the Information Department should play a key role in projecting a positive image of the province and effectively communicating government initiatives, policies and public welfare programmes to the people.

He said the public-interest measures and development priorities of the Advisory Council should also be disseminated effectively through the department's communication network. The Governor further directed the department to make full use of modern media and digital platforms to counter propaganda against the province and promote a positive narrative. Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday attended the collective funeral prayer of 33 children and a female teacher who lost their lives in the Dir Colony school roof collapse incident and later visited the site of the tragedy, vowing strict action against those found responsible.

Talking to media during his visit, the Governor expressed deep sorrow and grief over the tragic incident, saying that every citizen was saddened by the loss of precious human lives. He termed the deaths of innocent children and the teacher an irreparable loss and assured that no compromise would be made on a transparent investigation.

Innovation to enhance furniture, gemstone export stressed

PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Malik Imran Ishaq stressed applying modern methods to bring diversification, innovation and advancement as well as use of modern methods to enhance the demand and export of the furniture, gemstone and other potential manufacturing products of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the International market. SCCI chief stated furniture is the potential sector of KP, which can play a major role in improving Pakistan's export, but government relevant authorities and stakeholders' patronage are highly crucial in this regard. President, Malik Imran Ishaq was exchanging views during a meeting with various delegations of businessmen attached with furniture, gemstone and other sectors here on Thursday. On the occasion, SCCI senior vice president Naemur Rehman, former president Faiz Muhammad Faizi and member of the chamber's executive committee Asim Shahzad and Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan were also present.—APP

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رَاٰجِعُوْنَ

With profound grief, we inform you of the passing of the beloved

Mother of Naseer Taseer and Aly Taseer.

Mother-in-law of Marriyum Aurangzeb and Yasmin Taseer.

Qul Khawani

Time:
Friday, 16 October 2026
at 4:00 pm

Venue:
25 Aikman Road,
GOR-I, Lahore.

Your presence and prayers for the departed soul will be deeply appreciated.

Contact:

M. Faheed
0313-8801821

Usman Shahzaib
0346-2074078



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Foreign Affairs, ASIM IFTIKHAR AHMAD called on Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at Parliament House.

Handwashing key to preventing infectious diseases

ISLAMABAD: Health experts have stressed the importance of regular handwashing with soap and clean water to prevent the spread of germs and reduce the risk of diarrhoea and other infectious diseases.

On the occasion of Global Handwashing Day, they urged the public to adopt proper hand hygiene practices in daily life. "Handwashing is one of the simplest, most affordable and effective ways to protect individuals and communities from preventable illnesses," Dr. Naem Baig, a medical practitioner said. He added that hands can carry harmful germs after using the toilet, handling waste, touching contaminated surfaces or coming into contact with raw food.

He said without proper handwashing, these germs can enter the body through the mouth, nose and eyes or spread to other people and surfaces. General Physician, Dr. Tahir Khawaja advised the public to wash hands thoroughly with soap and clean water before preparing or eating food, after using the toilet.

Dragon Boat Associations setup in Punjab, KP

PESHAWAR: Dragon Boat Associations have been established in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, marking a step towards organising and promoting the sport across Pakistan. Prominent political and social figure Ameer Bahadur Khan Haji will serve as senior vice president and Naveed Akhtar Malik as treasurer.

At a separate meeting in Peshawar, Javed Marwat, who previously held several senior administrative positions in the province, was unanimously elected president of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa association, while renowned sports organiser Naem Gul was elected secretary general. Shamim Akhtar Jadoon will serve as senior vice president, Junaid Khan vice president and Bilal Aslam as treasurer. Newly elected Muhammad Youssuf was elected secretary general of the Punjab Dragon Boat Association (PDRA), while a notification has been issued confirming the election of former bureaucrat Javed Marwat as president of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dragon Boat Association (KPDBA). At a meeting in Lahore, prominent sports journalist Muhammad Youssuf was elected

Ameer Bahadur Khan Haji said Pakistan's first dragon boat festival and competitions on the Kabul River had opened new avenues for the sport's development. He said the enthusiasm shown by participants and the sport's promising prospects had highlighted the need to establish a Pakistan Dragon Boat Federation to coordinate training, organise competitions and support athletes. Dragon boat associations would be established in all four provinces and the federal capital, Islamabad, before the formal announcement of the national federation, he added. Newly elected Khyber Pakhtunkhwa association president Javed Marwat said efforts would focus on introducing the sport at the provincial level and providing athletes with opportunities to compete nationally and demonstrate their abilities.—APP

CM Bugti chairs review meeting on provincial reforms

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, on Thursday chaired a review meeting, continued for its second consecutive day, to evaluate provincial departments' performance and draft reform proposals.

During the meeting, Chief Secretary of Balochistan, Shaukel Qadir Khan, provided a detailed briefing on the performance, administrative affairs, and operational capacity of various departments. Several proposals aimed at improving departmental functionality and restructuring were also deliberated upon.

The meeting included a comprehensive review of measures to enhance the performance.

MINISTRY OF INTER PROVINCIAL COORDINATION

PAKISTAN SPORTS BOARD

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

Pakistan Sports Board, Islamabad invites applications through EPADS from the Contracting Firms for invitation of bids, registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in relevant codes and categories mentioned below valid upto 30th June, 2027 for the following projects:

Name of Project	PEC Cat.	Earnest money (Million)	Last date for submission of bid	Date & Time for opening of bids	Bidding Method
Design, Financing, Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, Operation & Maintenance Of 1 Mw Solar Photovoltaic Power System With 1 Mwh Battery Energy Storage System (Bess) Using Shed And Carport Structure At Ratio (70:30) At Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad Under 15-Year Fixed-Tariff Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) Model	C-4	Rs.6.000	15.11.2026, 1100 hours	15.11.2026, 1130 hours	Single Stage Two Envelope

A Pre-Bid Meeting will be held on 30-10-2026 at 1100 Hours in Committee Room, Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad. The bidding documents can be downloaded & uploaded from <https://vendors.epads.gov.pk/login> and tender notice is also available on PSB's as well as PPRA website. The applications should be submitted through EPADS alongwith complete information including technical and financial proposals in accordance with the instructions to the bidders. Manual submissions of bids shall not be entertained.

Following are the mandatory conditions:

S#	Term and Condition
1.	The firm should meet the evaluation criteria as mentioned in the bidding documents.
2.	The details / proof of National NTN / and firm on ATL.
3.	Affidavit on judicial stamp paper duly notarized to the affect the firm has not been blacklisted by any government / autonomous body.
4.	The bid security / earnest money shall be submitted in the form of bank draft / pay order / CDR in favour of Director General, Pakistan Sports Board, Islamabad.
5.	One copy of only technical proposal (not financial proposal) in hard form as uploaded on EPADS shall be submitted. In case of difference, the documents / information as envisaged in the downloaded proposals shall prevail.
6.	The scan copy of the bid security shall be uploaded with the Technical Proposal and original must be submitted to undersigned before closing date and time otherwise the bid will consider nonresponsive.
7.	The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids under Rule-33 of the PPRA Rule, 2004.
8.	Bidders are advised to visit the site for a better understanding of the field conditions.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Pakistan Sports Board,
Near Aabpara, Srinagar Highway, Islamabad
Phone # 051-9249027

PID (I) 3502/26

03

Islamabad POST

METROLITE

Friday, October 16, 2026

National Days and Armed Forces Days

- OCTOBER
- Oct 01/China National Day

Oct 01/Cyprus National Day

Oct 01/Republic of Korea Armed Forces Day

Oct 01/Nigeria Armed Forces Day

Oct 02/Guinea National Day

Oct 03/Germany Unification Day

Oct 03/Republic of Korea National Foundation Day

Oct 05/Indonesia Armed Forces Day

Oct 06/Egypt Armed Forces Day

Oct 09/Uganda Independence Day

Oct 12/Spain National Day

Oct 23/Hungary National Day

October 24/United Nations United Nations Day

Oct 25/Romania Armed Forces Day

Oct 26/Austria National Day

Oct 27/Turkmenistan Independence Day

Oct 28/Czech Republic National Day

Oct 29/Turkey Republic Day

Enquiry

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PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange92708315
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....921-5744480

CDA chief reviews market up-gradation, parking issues

The chairman was briefed on the progress of the projects and directed the relevant departments to accelerate work, improve coordination and complete the schemes within their stipulated timelines. improvements in the Diplomatic Enclave

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Sohail Ashraf visited various ongoing development projects in Islamabad, including the National Police Academy, Diplomatic Enclave, Kohsar Market and Jinnah Super Market, F-7 Markaz, to review the pace of work, assess the latest developments and evaluate measures for the beautification, upgradation and improvement of key areas of the federal capital. During the visit, the Chairman CDA reviewed progress on the upgradation of the National Police Academy, improvement initiatives in the Diplomatic Enclave, and beautification and infrastructure enhancement works at Kohsar Market and Jinnah Super Market, F-7 Markaz. He was briefed in detail on the status of ongoing projects, progress achieved so far and measures being undertaken to improve infrastructure, enhance public spaces and provide better facilities to citizens and visitors.

Member Building, Director General Infrastructure, Director General Works, Director General E&M, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, respective Additional Deputy Commissioners (ADCs) and Assistant Commissioners accompanied the Chairman CDA. The concerned officers briefed him on the progress of their respective projects, highlighting ongoing development activities and future implementation plans. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf directed the relevant formations to maintain close coordination, accelerate work where required and ensure the timely completion of all development projects while maintaining high standards of quality and workmanship.

India taking advantage of the dip in Pakistan-Afghanistan ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a roundtable discussion agreed that while India was not the sole cause of deteriorating relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, it was taking full advantage of the rift between the two countries to achieve its long-term strategic aims against Pakistan. The roundtable, titled "India as a Factor in Deteriorating Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations", was organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad. Referring to longstanding historical and cultural affinities, as well as Pakistan's hosting of a large population of Afghan refugees for over four decades, Pakistan's former Ambassador to the US, Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir

Qazi, urged Islamabad to revive friendly relations with Afghanistan. He called on the Government of Pakistan to distinguish between policies affecting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and those affecting its people. While acknowledging the rationale behind kinetic operations inside Afghanistan, Ambassador Qazi urged Pakistani decision-makers to recognize their limitations. He also cautioned that India was taking full advantage of the deteriorating relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and adopting regional and multilateral approaches to addressing the presence of terrorist groups on Afghan soil. Chairman of the PICSS, Maj. Gen. Muhammad Saad Khattak, was of the view that India was treating the deteriorating relations between Pakistan and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as an opportunity to use Afghan soil against Pakistan.

therefore resorted to waging a proxy war against Pakistan through Afghanistan. Ambassador Chaudhry noted that the relevant committees of the UN Security Council had documented the presence of 20 terrorist groups on Afghan soil. He added that although there were reports of al-Qaeda providing training to TTP militants in Afghanistan, it remained challenging for Pakistan to generate international support for combating the global threat of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan. The primary reason, he argued, was the prevailing international political environment, characterized by uncertainty and crisis. Ambassador Chaudhry called for reviving and reinvigorating people-to-people interactions between Pakistan and Afghanistan and adopting regional and multilateral approaches to addressing the presence of terrorist groups on Afghan soil. Chairman of the PICSS, Maj. Gen. Muhammad Saad Khattak, was of the view that India was treating the deteriorating relations between Pakistan and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as an opportunity to use Afghan soil against Pakistan.



kets to address traffic congestion and parking problems faced by citizens.

The ongoing initiatives aim to make commercial areas more accessible, organized and pedestrian-friendly by improving road conditions, ensuring better utilization of available parking spaces and enhancing the overall urban environment. These measures are intended to facilitate shoppers, business owners and visitors while contributing to smoother traffic flow and greater public convenience. Citizens have appreciated CDA's efforts towards the development, beautification and uplifting of various markets in Islamabad.

ECP moves to schedule Punjab, cantonment local polls

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday decided to proceed with local government elections in Punjab and cantonment areas, directing its offices to immediately submit draft election programmes for approval, after expressing dissatisfaction with the Punjab government's proposed delay and noting the failure to receive the required formal request for cantonment polls. The decisions were taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja and attended by ECP members Nisar Ahmed Durrani, Babar Hassan Bhatti and Justice (retired) Ikramullah Khan, along with the Election Commission Secretary and senior officials. The commission reviewed the Punjab government's response received on October 14, to its October 2 letter and draft election programme.—APP

APT moot on digital transformation, USF concludes

ISLAMABAD: The Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) Symposium on Digital Transformation and Universal Service Funds (USFs) concluded on Thursday, marking a significant milestone in regional telecommunications policy and multistakeholder collaboration Co-hosted by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) and Universal Service Fund (USF) Pakistan, the three-day international forum brought together senior policymakers, regulators and telecommunications industry leaders from across the Asia-Pacific region. The symposium provided a platform to review regional digital progress in light of the Tokyo Statement 2025 and develop a collective roadmap for transitioning USFs from traditional voice and basic coverage models towards agile, outcome-oriented frameworks that support high-speed fibre connectivity, gigabit broadband and resilient digital ecosystems. On the final day, APT Secretary-General Masanori Kondo described the symposium as a platform for practical exchanges, partnerships and advancing commitments under the Tokyo Statement 2025. He formally announced the successful conclusion of the event and expressed gratitude to MoITT and USF Pakistan for organising the symposium, providing exceptional hospitality and introducing international delegates to Pakistani cuisine. During the three-day event, speakers and experts participated in 10 sessions addressing key regional priorities. Delegates discussed strategies to harness emerging technologies, bridge persistent digital divides and promote equitable digital transformation across member states.—APP

People welcome emergency, governor's rule in KP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said on Thursday that people in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had welcomed the imposition of emergency and governor's rule by distributing sweets and observing it as a day of deliverance. Speaking at a joint sitting of Parliament, he expressed concern over the law and order situation in the province and said the government's primary responsibility was to protect the lives and property of citizens. Yousaf said the provincial government should have supported operations against terrorism but had opposed them. The minister said the KP government had been in power for 13 years but had failed to improve health, education and road infrastructure. Referring to the road leading to the Lowari Tunnel in Chitral, he said it had fallen into disrepair despite being built during the tenure of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Yousaf said the imposition of emergency and governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had become necessary under the prevailing circumstances. He stressed the need to prioritise law and order, public safety and development in the province.—APP

ISSI seminar for issue-based cooperation in South Asia

ISLAMABAD: Experts at an international seminar on Thursday called for strong regional cooperation in South Asia, urging leaders to demonstrate statesmanship and focus on shared challenges, common interests and collective development to promote lasting peace and prosperity. The seminar, titled "Reimagining Regionalism in South Asia," was organised by the India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), said a press release. The speakers said that the world's most populous and strategically significant region cannot remain disintegrated in the face of looming traditional and non-traditional challenges and ever-increasing vulnerabilities. The regional countries need to revive cooperation by adapting existing institutional mechanisms with the present-day challenges and realities. They described the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as the most viable platform for regional cooperation, despite its practical limitations. The more pragmatic approach for the South Asian countries was to separate political contestations from practical issues.—APP

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Briefs

Zero tolerance for online harassment of women

ISLAMABAD: Director General National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NC-CIA) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi here held an online open court (E-Kachehri), personally heard complaints from citizens across the country through video link and directed officers to take immediate action, particularly in cases involving online harassment of women.

NC-CIA official told on Thursday that citizens from different parts of the country participated in the online session and raised complaints related to financial fraud, social media harassment and other cybercrimes. DG Rizvi listened to the complainants, reviewed their concerns and issued clear directions to the concerned officers for the prompt resolution of their complaints. He assured citizens that their complaints would be handled according to the nature of each case and that efforts would be made to provide relief as quickly as possible. The DG particularly stressed the need to protect women from online harassment and directed officers to strictly implement a zero-tolerance policy against such offences. He ordered action against suspects involved in online harassment of women without discrimination and directed investigation and directed investigations teams to deal with such complaints on priority. The official said the online E-Kachehri provided citizens with an opportunity to directly approach the agency's top management without visiting its offices. Speaking on the occasion, Rizvi said that the initiative was aimed at ensuring direct hearing of public complaints, timely relief and greater transparency in the agency's working.—APP

Heavy rain slows Islamabad traffic

ISLAMABAD: Heavy rain in Islamabad on Wednesday evening prompted the Capital Development Authority (CDA), district administration and emergency services to deploy field forces for drainage operations and measures to facilitate traffic movement and minimize inconvenience to residents. Teams from the CDA's Sanitation Department, Environment Wing, Islamabad Water and Rescue 1122 were working across the capital to remove accumulated rainwater and monitor roads, drains and other locations. The additional deputy commissioner (general) and assistant commissioners, along with their staff, were also present in the field to supervise drainage operations. The relevant departments were coordinating efforts to ensure timely drainage and provide relief to residents, while CDA teams continued dewatering operations at different locations. Meanwhile, Islamabad Traffic Police advised commuters to exercise caution, warning that water accumulation on some roads could slow traffic during the rainfall.—APP

PAL to hold moot on Shaheed-e-Millat's legacy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Association of Letters (PAL), under the National Heritage and Culture Division, will organize a seminar on Shaheed-e-Millat's legacy on Friday, October 16, to mark the 75th martyrdom anniversary of Pakistan's first prime minister, Shaheed-e-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan. The seminar is titled "Liaquat Ali Khan's Role in the Formation of Pakistani Civilisation and Culture." Talking to media, a PAL spokesperson said the seminar would be presided over by renowned poet and intellectual Ifthikhar Arif, while Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Awarazbeg Khan Khichi would attend as the chief guest. Professor Jaleel Aali will be the guest of honour, while Jabbar Mirza and Professor Dr Aalia Sohail will share their views on Liaquat Ali Khan's life, contributions and legacy, particularly his role in shaping Pakistan's national identity and cultural outlook. Rahman Hafeez will conduct the proceedings.—APP

Laila receives Dukhtaran-e-Pakistan excellence award

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Laila Naz Taj, a development professional with extensive experience across human development, public policy and humanitarian response received the prestigious Dukhtaran-e-Pakistan Excellence Award 2026 in recognition of her contributions to Pakistan's social and institutional development. The ceremony was graced by Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani as the Chief Guest, while the award was presented by the Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety.

The Dukhtaran-e-Pakistan Excellence Awards recognise distinguished women whose leadership, professional excellence and dedication have contributed meaningfully to Pakistan's social, economic and institutional development. The award citation acknowledges Taj's commitment to nation-building, public service and empowerment. Taj is a Harvard Business School and London School of Economics alumna and has worked across Pakistan, the United Kingdom, the United States and Afghanistan, engaging with governments, communities, development partners, civil society and institutions to translate



policy priorities into meaningful action. While receiving the award, Laila Naz Taj expressed her profound gratitude to Allah Almighty, The Government of Pakistan and the selection committee for recognising her service. She reaffirmed her commitment to serving mar-

ginalised communities through the Aga Khan Development Network and advancing integrated, community-driven development. She also paid tribute to her parents and mentors, whose unwavering guidance and encouragement have strengthened her resilience and in-

spired her pursuit of excellence through both achievement and perseverance. She pledged to continue contributing to national progress and the betterment of humanity with dedication, humility, and an enduring commitment to excellence. The award has been conferred by the Pa-

kistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) in collaboration with the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and the Islamabad Centre of National Cohesion and Outreach.

SC rules appeals must be filed on first day after court holidays

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has ruled that where the limitation period for filing an appeal expires during court holidays, the appellant must file the appeal on the first day the court reopens to avail the benefit under Section 4 of the Limitation Act, 1908. The court observed that an appellant who fails to file an appeal on the first working day after the holidays, without showing sufficient cause for the delay, cannot claim the benefit of the statutory provision. The observations were made while deciding two civil appeals involving the Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi authored the judgment on behalf of a bench headed by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi. The court held that the Lahore High Court's judgment dated October 27, 2015, was legally and factually unsustainable due to an error in determining the limitation period for filing the appeals. According to the judgment, the civil court had accepted the applicants' objections on July 3, 1995. The applicants claimed to be the genuine purchasers of the disputed land. Under Article 152 of the Limitation Act, 1908, the period prescribed for filing an appeal against the order was 30 days. The appellants applied for certified copies of the relevant order on July 5, 1995, which were provided on September 4, 1995. Civil courts remained closed for summer vacations from August 1 to September 9, 1995. Since September 10 fell on a Sunday, the courts reopened on September 11. However, the appellants filed their appeals on September 12 and 13, respectively, instead of the first day of reopening. The Supreme Court held that in the absence of a reasonable explanation for the delay, the appellants could not benefit from Section 4 of the Limitation Act, which provides relief where the limitation period expires during court holidays. The judgment clarified that Article 12(5) of the Act allows the time spent obtaining a certified copy to be excluded when calculating the limitation period. However, the decisive issue in the present cases was whether the appeals had been filed on the first day the courts reopened after the holidays. The court observed that the Lahore High Court had focused on Article 12(5) without properly examining the application of Section 4 and the specific facts of the cases. Consequently, the Supreme Court allowed both civil appeals, set aside the Lahore High Court's judgments and restored the orders passed by the Additional District Judge, Multan, on December 15 and 16, 2000.—APP

Sherry urges political unity against rising terrorism

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday called on political parties to unite against terrorism, saying terrorist incidents had increased by 195 per cent in two years in P-Pakistan. At a joint sitting of Parliament, she said the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had persuaded the government to hold talks with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). She praised Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and the PTI's federal team for taking part in the reconciliation process. She said the talks covered a written agreement, a joint declaration and confidence-building measures. Rehman said the PTI's leadership in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should have joined the talks, as any agreement on counterterrorism required the provincial government's involvement. She said the PPP was ready to sign the proposed agree-

ment, but the provincial leadership did not support it. The senator also called on the provincial government to strengthen police and the Counter Terrorism Department. She said no politician wanted an emergency to be imposed, but the security situation required a joint response. Referring to a distance of 16 kilometres, she warned that the threat of terrorism was close and stressed the need for a unified national policy to tackle it. Rehman recalled the sacrifices made by the PPP in the fight against terrorism, including the deaths of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and party workers in terrorist attacks. She said the PPP stood with the police and armed forces and urged political leaders to put national security ahead of their political differences.—APP

Sign MoU to strengthen academic, scientific ties

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO) and the OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTech) have signed a memorandum of understanding to expand academic, scientific and technological cooperation between Pakistan and Arab countries. The agreement was signed at the COMSTech Secretariat by Higher Education Commission Executive Director Prof Dr Zia Ul Haq on behalf of the federal education ministry, COMSTech Coordinator General Prof Dr Muhammad Ishaq Choudhury and ALECSO Director General Prof Dr Mohamed Omar. Arab Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training Wajihah Qamar attended the signing ceremony. Senior officials of the three organisations were also present. Under the agreement, the parties will develop and implement joint educational and scientific programmes in science, technology and innovation. They will also collaborate in organising conferences, seminars,

workshops, exhibitions and professional training courses at the national and international levels. The memorandum provides for the establishment of ALECSO Chairs at selected Pakistani universities and stronger linkages between Arab research centres and universities, scientific institutions and research organisations in Pakistan. The three organisations will also explore scholarship and training opportunities for Pakistani students in Arab countries and for students from Arab countries in Pakistan. Exchanges of experts, academics and researchers, along with the sharing of methodologies, experiences and good practices, form another component of the agreement. Ms Qamar described the agreement as the beginning of a new phase in educational and scientific relations between Pakistan and the Arab world. She said the partnership should translate into practical opportunities for students, teachers and researchers through scholarships, academic exchanges, professional training and collaborative research. International academic partnerships, she said, were important for equipping young people with modern skills and linking Pakistani universities with wider research and knowledge networks.

Prof Choudhury said COMSTech would serve as a facilitating institution by connecting Pakistani universities and research centres with their counterparts in Arab countries and coordinating follow-up on agreed initiatives. He said the agreement should not remain confined to a document and should instead lead to measurable programmes that directly benefit students, researchers and academic institutions. Prof Amar said the memorandum provided a practical framework for bringing educational and scientific institutions in Pakistan and the Arab world closer together.—APP

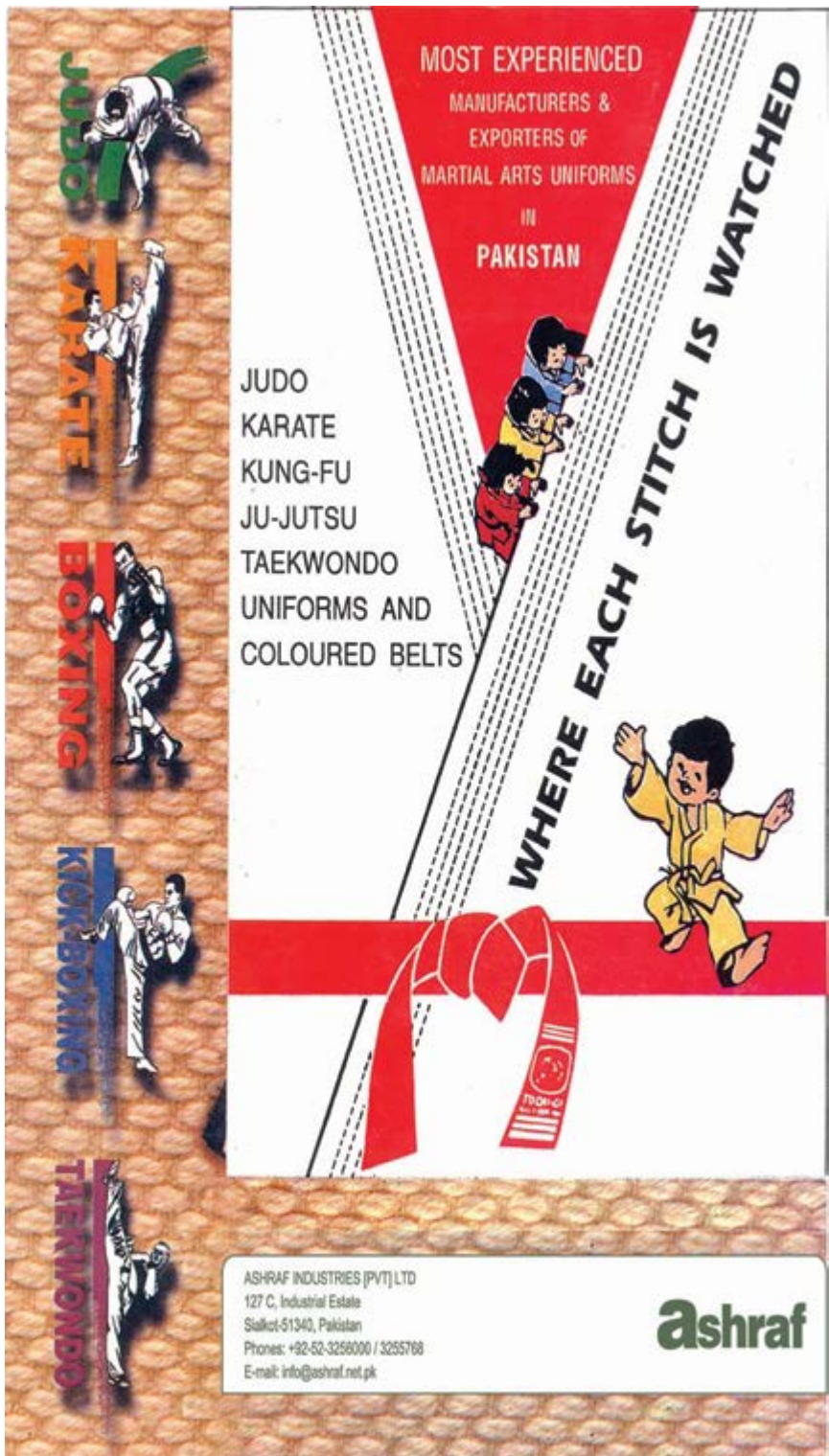
Seminar advances digital security, resilience in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan expands its digital infrastructure and adoption of next-generation technologies, JazWorld, Pakistan's leading digital platform company, organised a cybersecurity awareness seminar in collaboration with the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), bringing together industry and government stakeholders to examine emerging cyber threats and discuss measures to safeguard mobile networks, digital services and critical infrastructure. The cybersecurity awareness seminar examined the implications of e-SIMs, particularly the need for robust digital onboarding, reliable identity verification and safeguards against SIM-related fraud and social engineering. As consumers increasingly rely on mobile connectivity for digital transactions and essential services, protecting personal information and preventing data breaches have become top priorities for the industry. AI emerged as another area requiring attention, with discussions covering its dual role in cybersecurity. While AI-powered tools can improve threat detection and response, they can also be exploited to develop more sophisticated attacks. Participants highlighted the importance of combining technological safeguards with employee awareness, responsible use of AI and stronger organizational readiness.—DNA

E-Passport facility, online fee payment launched

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Assistant Director Machine Readable Passport (MRP) Attock Hafiz Abdul Nasir has said that the government has introduced several modern facilities for the convenience of the citizens seeking passports, including online fee payment and home delivery. Talking exclusively to this correspondent, he said that now the facility of passport renewal is available at all NADRA centers across the country, which has made it much easier for the public to get their passports renewed near their homes. He clarified that at NADRA center, no modification or correction in the passport can be done. The passport is always issued as per the record available with NADRA, therefore the citizens must ensure that their NADRA record is correct and updated before applying for a passport. Hafiz Abdul Nasir said that daily more than two hundred visitors come to the Regional Passport Office Attock for seeking new passports, renewal and other related matters. He said that the working days of the passport office are from Monday to Friday and the staff is trying its best to provide maximum facilities to the visitors in a courteous and timely manner. Sharing details about the new system of fee payment, he said that now the passport fee is paid online through QR Code and there is no need for applicants to go to the bank to deposit the fee. This has saved the time of the citizens and has also ensured transparency. He said, the payment must be made within 72 hours. He further said that the facility of renewal of passport while sitting at home through the official web portal is also available. People can apply online from their homes without visiting the office. The Assistant Director said that the latest generation e-passport has been launched, which is equipped with modern security features and is accepted globally. He gave details of the fee structure and said that the ordinary fee for e-passport valid for five years is Rs. 9000, while the urgent fee for e-passport valid for five years is Rs. 15000. Similarly, the ordinary fee for passport valid for ten years is Rs. 13500 and the urgent fee for ten years validity is Rs. 22500. He said that the facility of home delivery of passport is also available for which Rs. 500 are charged as delivery charges, so that the applicants can get their passports at their doorstep. He advised the citizens to apply in time for renewal of their passports and to avoid touts and unauthorized agents.



Ahsan expresses grief over deaths in school roof-collapse incident

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday expressed deep grief over the tragic incident of a school roof collapse in Peshawar that caused the loss of precious lives. In a condolence message, the minister said the tragedy involving the deaths of several innocent children and teachers had caused profound sorrow and shock across the nation. Expressing solidarity with the bereaved families and sharing their grief in this difficult hour, he prayed to Allah Almighty to grant the departed souls a place in eternal peace and patience to the bereaved families to bear the irreparable loss. He also prayed for the speedy recovery of those injured in the incident. Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hafiz Abbasi on Thursday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious human lives in the collapse of a school building in Peshawar. In a statement, the minister termed the deaths of innocent children and a female teacher in the tragic incident deeply distressing and heartbreaking.—APP

The Palestinian question presents a similar challenge. India has historically supported Palestinian statehood and a two-state settlement, yet its expanding cooperation with Israel has continued amid the immense suffering of civilians in Gaza. Strategic partnerships cannot absolve governments of their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. A credible foreign policy must reconcile national interests with the protection of civilians and the principles a country publicly endorses

Yossi Mekelberg

The connection he drew between his journey from a working-class background and the prospect of reaching 10 Downing Street, on the one hand, and his vision of a different kind of Britain, on the other, was particularly powerful. His radical agenda, grounded in social democratic principles, came across as an honest assessment of what the country needs rather than an exercise in political utopianism, even to many of his political opponents. Burnham's willingness to bring Europe back into the public debate and advocate closer relations with Britain's immediate neighbors was another notable feature of his approach

Global coalition needed to respond to Houthi attacks

DR. DANIA KOLEILAT KHATIB

WHAT is important to understand about the recent Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia is that this is not merely a conflict between the Kingdom and some renegade group in a neighboring country. It is a conflict that affects navigation in the Red Sea and thus worldwide trade. That is why the world should be concerned about the Houthi attacks just as much as Saudi Arabia. The Houthis claim their attacks are against the Kingdom only and they will not disrupt navigation in the Red Sea. They claim that ships, including American and Israeli ones, can pass — only Saudi vessels will be targeted. They said this in an effort to pacify the international community. However, the world should be smarter than this and understand that if the Houthis control the Yemeni west coast and the Red Sea, they will impose their own rules on everyone. Unfortunately, several actors do not see the big picture and have been looking at this conflict from a narrow angle. Iran sees in this destabilization the chance for new leverage, both with the US and with neighboring countries. It wants to see maximum damage inflicted on Saudi Arabia and then act as a mediator between the Kingdom and the Houthis. Through this mediation, it will seek to impose its terms on Riyadh. Unfortunately, several actors do not see the big picture and have been looking at this conflict from a narrow angle. However, it will not work that way. This "pushing the limits" policy could turn against Iran. The Iraqis have to remember that Trump made an offer to Saudi Arabia in July. He said the US would expand its defense cooperation with Riyadh if the latter joined the Abraham Accords and recognized Israel. Does Iran really want to test Riyadh's patience? The US is hoping the conflict with the Houthis will pressure Saudi Arabia to join the Abraham Accords. It was reported last month that US officials met with the Houthis in Oman and decided not to back the offensive against the group after the militants offered assurances over the safety of Red Sea shipping. Israel has an indirect interest in seeing Saudi Arabia target-

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ed by the Houthis. It wants this conflict to spiral as it is a test of the Makkah defense pact with Pakistan and Türkiye. It hopes that the pact fails. Israel is against any regional cooperation as it does not want the Middle East to unite and have substantial bargaining power against it. But the international community should understand the seriousness of what is happening and how it can affect the worldwide economy. Trump is starting to grasp the situation. He has said the Houthis are "behaving very badly" and they are, at the behest of Iran, trying to drive up the price of oil ahead of the US midterm elections. As much as the Houthi militia is important to Iran as a proxy, it is not as important as its relationship with China.

The world created a coalition to fight Daesh because it was not only a threat to Iraq — its terrorist activities and radical doctrine were a threat to the world. The world also united to fight the threat of pirates off the coast of Somalia. The piracy concerned the entire world because all nations have a vested interest in freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. Similarly, the international community should create a coalition against the Houthis. Some might say that the military option will not work — that Yemen contains difficult terrain and that only diplomacy can end the conflict and bring peace and stability to Yemen. This is true. However, those who advocate a diplomatic solution need to understand that unless some real consequences are imposed on the Houthis and Iran, they will not sit at the negotiating table or become part of the Yemeni state. The coalition should not only be a military one but also a political one. Unlike Daesh, when the target was to eliminate the group, with the Houthis the aim is to bring them to the negotiating table. The coalition should apply political pressure on Iran to stop it supporting the Houthis. It is very important to have China and Russia on board as they have immense leverage over Tehran.

Once Iran sees there is a coalition that is patrolling the Red Sea and making sure the Houthis get no munitions, it will rethink its support for the group. Also, as much as the Houthi militia is important to Iran as a proxy, it is not as important as its relationship with China. The world should wake up. The Houthis are not only targeting Saudi Arabia, they are targeting freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, which is of concern to everyone. The world cannot sit idle while a small group of fanatics disrupts world trade. This problem has to be solved once and for all and it cannot be solved unless the Houthis are contained and forced to be part of the legitimate state. The world should act now and put together a coalition to fight the Houthis.

India's Democratic Contradictions

INDIA's claim to democratic greatness rests on its vast electorate, constitutional framework and extraordinary diversity. Yet democracy is measured not merely by the frequency of elections or the size of the population, but by the protection of fundamental freedoms, the independence of institutions and the equal treatment of citizens. By these standards, India faces serious questions that economic growth and international influence cannot indefinitely conceal. Under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian politics has increasingly been shaped by Hindutva, an ideology that places Hindu identity at the centre of national consciousness. The issue is not the religious beliefs of India's Hindu majority, but the political use of religion to define national belonging. When one faith appears more closely associated with patriotism than others, equal citizenship becomes vulnerable. A republic founded on diversity cannot sustain its unity by allowing religious identity to determine who belongs more fully to the nation.

India's commitment to secularism has consequently come under strain. The Citizen Amendment Act, demolitions of Muslim-owned properties under the controversial practice known as "bulldozer justice", and recurring communal violence have raised concerns about the impartial application of the law. The violence in Manipur, which caused deaths, displacement and the destruction of places of worship, exposed the consequences of deepening ethnic and religious divisions. Inflammatory rhetoric against minorities has added to fears that intolerance is becoming an accepted feature of political discourse. When the state fails to protect vulnerable communities impartially, its constitutional promises lose credibility. Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir presents another test of democratic accountability. The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 altered the region's constitutional status and was followed by extensive security restrictions and a communications blackout. New Delhi defended its decision in the name of integration, security and development. Yet administrative control cannot, by itself, resolve political grievances. Durable stability requires civil liberties, representative government and opportunities for peaceful expression. Restrictions on dissent risk deepening the alienation they are intended to overcome. Questions about electoral integrity and institutional independence have further complicated India's demo-

cratic image. Disputes concerning voter registration, electoral administration and the treatment of opposition parties demand impartial scrutiny. Allegations of irregularities must be investigated through transparent procedures rather than dismissed or accepted along partisan lines. Electoral victory confers the authority to govern, not immunity from accountability. A democracy demonstrates its strength by ensuring fair competition, protecting peaceful opposition and allowing independent institutions to examine the conduct of those in power. International assessments reflect these concerns. V-Dem has classified India as an electoral autocracy, while Freedom House has raised questions about political rights and civil liberties. Such evaluations are open to methodological debate, but the issues underlying them deserve serious consideration. Regular elections cannot compensate for restrictions on expression, weakened institutional independence or an environment in which opposition parties struggle to operate freely.

Economic progress presents a similarly complicated picture. India has advanced considerably in technology, infrastructure, manufacturing and digital services, strengthening its position in the global economy. Yet growth alone does not guarantee shared prosperity. Youth unemployment, economic insecurity and unequal opportunities continue to challenge the promise of development. Concerns about concentrated wealth and the influence of powerful business interests also raise questions about the relationship between political authority and private capital. A rising national economy must be matched by international admiration while leaving substantial sections of its population dissatisfied. India's international standing has also been tested by allegations concerning operations against Sikh activists abroad. Investigations in Canada and the United States into alleged Indian-linked plots have raised serious questions about transnational repression and respect for foreign sovereignty. Such allegations must be resolved through credible evidence and due process. If established, the conduct of India's foreign policy would be a grave breach of international norms. No state can convincingly defend its own sovereignty while disregarding that of others. India's foreign policy reveals another tension between strategic autonomy and the consistent application of international principles. New Delhi maintains

close relations with the United States, purchases advanced weapons from France and Israel, and continues to depend substantially on Russia for energy and military equipment. Its Russian oil purchases and abstentions on several United Nations resolutions concerning Ukraine reflect its determination to preserve strategic flexibility. These choices are not inherently illegitimate; sovereign states have the right to pursue their national interests. The question is whether international law and democratic principles remain guiding commitments or are applied selectively when strategic convenience demands it.

The Palestinian question presents a similar challenge. India has historically supported Palestinian statehood and a two-state settlement, yet its expanding cooperation with Israel has continued amid the immense suffering of civilians in Gaza. Strategic partnerships cannot absolve governments of their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. A credible foreign policy must reconcile national interests with the protection of civilians and the principles a country publicly endorses. India's ambition to become a leading global power is neither unreasonable nor unwarranted. Its economic potential, technological capabilities and strategic position ensure that it will remain influential. But influence is not synonymous with moral authority, and geopolitical importance must not shield any government from scrutiny. Equally, criticism of official policies should never become hostility towards the Indian people.

India's central challenge is to reconcile majoritarian politics with the requirements of a plural society. Religious nationalism may generate electoral support, but it cannot replace constitutional restraint, social cohesion or economic opportunity. Strategic flexibility may protect immediate interests, but international credibility depends upon consistency and respect for the sovereignty of others. Ultimately, India's democratic future will be judged not simply by electoral victories, economic achievements or military strength, but by whether its institutions protect the vulnerable, its minorities enjoy equal citizenship and its government remains accountable to the law. For a country aspiring to global leadership, the decisive test is not how confidently it proclaims its greatness, but how faithfully it honours the constitutional promises and international obligations on which that greatness must rest.

A tale of two British party conferences

OVER the past two weeks, I have had the privilege of attending both the Labour Party and Conservative Party conferences in Liverpool and Birmingham, respectively, and speaking at fringe events on the broader geopolitical situation in the Middle East. What I encountered at both conferences stands in stark contrast to the political mood a year ago. In the 2024 general election, which brought Keir Starmer to Downing Street and left the Conservatives under Kemi Badenoch's leadership, few would have predicted that Starmer's position would become so precarious within two years. Nor would many have expected Reform and Nigel Farage to emerge as such serious challengers to the established political order. It remains difficult to determine whether Reform's rise in the polls reflects voters' dissatisfaction with the established parties or a genuine belief that Farage and his party are credible contenders to lead the country. For now, however, the novelty surrounding Reform appears to be wearing off as scrutiny of the finances of both the party and its leadership intensifies. Labour, meanwhile, is benefiting from the familiar polling bounce that often follows a new leader's election. For the Conservatives, who remain in third place behind Reform but are beginning to close the gap, the challenge

has been twofold. The threat from the right has forced the party to reconsider its position. At the same time, Labour's shift toward a clearer, left-leaning social democratic agenda has given the Conservatives an opportunity to more sharply define the ideological boundaries between the two parties. Now, long ago, Badenoch's position as party leader is still quite precarious. She has not yet shown signs of asserting her authority. Her insistence that she will not contemplate any form of alliance with Reform, however loose, appears to be paying dividends, both within the party and among the wider public. Badenoch may not possess Burnham's ability to connect with audiences on a personal level but she appears to have steadied the ship in the 21st century, we may have become accustomed to the idea that political leadership can be exercised remotely, with leaders communicating through screens and digital platforms. Yet this year's party conferences offered a reminder that grassroots activists still value direct, face-to-face engagement with their representatives, without technology or other intermediaries. They want their leaders to offer direction, hope and a sense of purpose, and to do it in person. Contrary to conventional wisdom, they also value leaders who are willing to express emotion and acknowledge their fears. Above all, they want leaders to stand up for presenting policies that address the issues that matter most to them, rather than relying on hyperbole. Burnham is a naturally engaging speaker. In his first conference speech as leader, he was unafraid to combine a radical political agenda with deeply personal reflections, designed to appeal to socially and economically conservative voters, including those who stand to benefit from changes to inheritance tax and childcare policy. Where Badenoch most clearly distinguished herself and her party from Reform, however, was in rejecting its divisive message to the public, allowing the nation to witness the grief of someone who has lost a loved one without concealing his emotions. He also effectively used his personal experience to highlight the need for a universal care system that is accessible and affordable to everyone who needs it. The connection he drew between his journey from a working-class background and the prospect of reaching 10 Downing Street, on the one hand, and his vision of a different kind of Britain, on the other, was particularly powerful. His radical agenda, grounded in social democratic principles, came across as an honest assessment of what the country needs rather than an exercise in political utopianism, even to many of his political opponents. Burnham's willingness to bring

Europe back into the public debate and advocate closer relations with Britain's immediate neighbors was another notable feature of his approach. By leaving open the possibility of rejoining the EU as a full member, without presenting it as the only available option, he demonstrated a readiness to challenge the political consensus of recent years. Equally striking was his declaration that it was time to move decisively beyond the Margaret Thatcher era. For years, many center-left politicians had been reluctant to break so definitively with Thatcherism. The enthusiastic response from conference delegates suggested many had been waiting for someone to articulate what they had long thought and wanted their leader to express clearly and forcefully. For Badenoch, the task was more difficult. This was not her first conference as party leader and only one year ago many Conservatives doubted she would still be in the job by the time this year's conference came around. The defection of senior Conservative politicians to Reform, coupled with the party's persistently weak polling position, had placed her leadership under intense scrutiny. Badenoch may not possess Burnham's ability to connect with audiences on a personal level but for now she appears to have steadied the ship by drawing on her strengths: a clearer agenda, a stronger sense of direction and a more confident presentation of her political convictions. She avoided some of the easy rhetorical points about migration and small boats that have become commonplace in right-wing British politics, projecting a more statesmanlike image. At the same time, she reinforced policies designed to appeal to socially and economically conservative voters, including those who stand to benefit from changes to inheritance tax and childcare policy. Where Badenoch most clearly distinguished herself and her party from Reform, however, was in rejecting its divisive message to the public, allowing the nation to witness the grief of someone who has lost a loved one without concealing his emotions. He also effectively used his personal experience to highlight the need for a universal care system that is accessible and affordable to everyone who needs it. The connection he drew between his journey from a working-class background and the prospect of reaching 10 Downing Street, on the one hand, and his vision of a different kind of Britain, on the other, was particularly powerful. His radical agenda, grounded in social democratic principles, came across as an honest assessment of what the country needs rather than an exercise in political utopianism, even to many of his political opponents. Burnham's willingness to bring

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DUBAI: The EU and Yemen's internationally recognized government have called on Houthi militias to end the siege of Al-Zouba, a town in the northwestern province of Taiz that is besieging humanitarians conditions threaten millions of people.

"We are following the situation in Taiz with grave concern and call on the Houthi leadership to end the siege, allow food and water, medicine and fuel to enter," the EU said in a statement posted on X on Wednesday.

The bloc stressed the need to ensure that the town's civilian infrastructure and essential humanitarian partners can deliver essential aid.

Yemen's Foreign Minister, Afrah Al-Zouba on Wednesday urged the UN and Saudi Arabia to pressure the Houthi government to end the siege, warning that the latest Houthi escalation threatens to trigger a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe.

The UN also addressed senior UN officials and the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Al-Zouba said, the tightening of the siege on Taiz and surrounding areas has displaced more than 4 million people.

Those affected include residents trapped inside the city and people displaced from districts in the surrounding areas, Al-Zouba said.

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"We are following the situation in Taiz with grave concern and call on the Houthi leadership to end the siege, allow food and water, medicine and fuel to enter," the EU said in a statement posted on X on Wednesday.

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Houthi escalation threatened to trigger a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe. In a letter addressed to senior UN officials and the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Al-Zoubi said the tightening of the siege of Taiz and surrounding villages threatens more than 4 million people. Those affected included residents trapped inside the city and people displaced by the fighting, including Al-Shamayati, Al-Mawasi and Jabababashi, she said. Al-Zoubi called for international pressure to secure the immediate lifting of the siege, reopening all access routes into Taiz and ensure the sustained delivery of food, fuel and drinking water—APR

Briefs

Security forces kill five India-backed terrorists

Military's media wing says IBO was conducted in Balochistan's Washuk district

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Security forces killed five terrorists affiliated with the Indian proxy, Fitna al-Hindustan, during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted in Balochistan's Washuk district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Thursday. The military's media wing said in a statement that security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation (IBO) on the night of October 12-13, 2026, following reports of the presence of terrorists belonging to the Indian proxy.

"During the conduct of the operation, a terrorist hide-out was busted by security forces through swift and decisive action," the ISPR said, adding that a huge cache of weapons, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from terrorists.

Sanitisation operations are being conducted to eliminate any other India-sponsored terrorist found in the area, it added. The military said that under the vision of Azm-e-Istehkam, approved by the Federal Apex Committee on the National Action Plan, Pakistan's security forces and law enforcement agencies would continue operations at full pace to eliminate the menace of foreign-sponsored and foreign-backed terrorism from the country.

Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in cross-border terrorist incidents, particularly in KP and Balochistan, since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021.

M6 Motorway project financing discussed with OPEC

DNA

BANGKOK: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, met with Dr. Abdulhamid Alkhalifa, President of the OPEC Fund for International Development, on the sidelines of the World Bank Group-IMF Annual Meetings 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The Finance Minister highlighted Pakistan's economic stabilization, progress under the IMF programme and renewed access to international capital markets. He appreciated the Fund's willingness to expand trade and project financing support for Pakistan. Discussions covered M6 motorway financing, including the approved first tranche, the pending loan agreement and subsequent tranches.

EU, UNDP and UNODC join forces to boost rule of law

Building on previous EU support to strengthen Pakistan's justice sector, the programme brings together the complementary expertise of UNDP and UNODC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The European Union (EU) Delegation to Pakistan, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) today signed an agreement to implement a four-year, EUR 10 million EU-funded programme aimed at strengthening the rule of law and improving access to justice in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Building on previous EU support to strengthen Pakistan's justice sector, the programme brings together the complementary expertise of UNDP and UNODC. It will work with provincial institutions to make justice and security services more accessible, particularly for women and vulnerable groups across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Welcoming the Agreement, Mr. Jeroen Willems, Head of Partnerships at the EU Delegation to Pakistan, said, "Access to justice is fundamental to protecting people's rights. Our investments in the past have had a real impact. Over the next four years, this EU-funded programme will continue to help the most vulnerable gain better access to the police, prosecution, courts and legal aid in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We are therefore



pleased to partner with the UNDP and UNODC as our implementing partners and continue to deliver justice to those that are most deserving."

The programme will contribute to greater stability, resilience and human development while advancing gender equality, human rights, and the protection of vulner-

able populations across the justice chain. From law enforcement and prosecution to courts, prisons and mediation centres, the programme focuses on strengthening accountability, alternative dispute resolution and institutional capacity to address barriers to civil and criminal justice.

"There is no development without justice.

When people can trust the law to protect their rights, resolve disputes and provide effective remedies, they are better able to build livelihoods, businesses and futures," said Dr. Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative, UNDP Pakistan. "Through this programme, UNDP, UNODC and the European Union are joining forces to help translate that trust into more accessible and responsive justice services."

The initiative will promote rights-based service delivery, stronger institutional ownership, and sustainable reforms aligned with the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rule of Law Roadmaps. On the work ahead, Mr. Troels Vester, Representative UNODC Pakistan, emphasized that, "Together with UNDP, we will combine our expertise and build on our longstanding partnerships with the Governments of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure that over the next four years, the work we do with justice institutions is felt by the people it serves, through services that are more accessible, accountable and responsive."

The programme forms part of a EUR 65 million cooperation package between the EU and the Government of Pakistan and falls under the EU's Support to the Rule of Law and Business Environment in Pakistan initiative – one of the three programmes launched through the package.

Ambassador Tirmizi meets Ishaq Dar



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The DPM/FM emphasized the need to further expand cooperation between Pakistan and Russia, particularly in trade, investment and connectivity. He also underscored the importance of sustained follow-up on recent high-level exchanges to build on the positive momentum and advance bilateral cooperation.

Punjab to hold LB elections in three phases

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Punjab government appears set to delay the long-awaited local government elections in the province once again, despite the polling schedule proposed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), it emerged on Thursday. Earlier this month, the electoral body proposed holding local government elections in Punjab on December 14 and sent a draft of the suggested schedule to the Punjab chief secretary for consultation. The Punjab cabinet has instead proposed holding the elections in phases on April 4, 11 and 18, following recommendations by a ministerial committee formed to consult the ECP on the conduct of local government elections in the province. In this regard, the Punjab Local Government

and Community Development Department wrote to the ECP on Wednesday. The letter, which conveyed the ministerial committee's decision, cited smog, dense fog and adverse winter weather conditions during December and January, followed by the commencement of Ramazan in February, as reasons for not holding the elections as scheduled.

The letter said the cabinet's ministerial committee had held its second meeting on October 5, during which it deliberated at length on the ECP's draft election schedule. The committee discussed scenarios arising from the smog, dense fog and adverse winter weather conditions expected in Punjab during December and January, followed by Ramazan in February, the letter stated. It proposed holding the local government elections in phases to facilitate the effective deployment of election staff and security personnel.

'Pakistan ranks second-worst in South Asia on hunger index'

16.1% of Pakistan's population malnourished and 33.6% of children under five stunted, shows GHI 2026 report

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has ranked second-worst in South Asia on the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2026, behind only Afghanistan, highlighting the country's worsening food insecurity and malnutrition challenges. "With a 2026 Global Hunger Index score of 25.5, Pakistan has a serious level of hunger," according to the report published on the GHI website. Only Afghanistan has a higher score than Pakistan in the South Asia region, with a score of 28.6 on the index. Across South Asia, the regional GHI score is 23.5, while the global score is 18.1. Pakistan's score has, however, fallen from 36.2 in 2000 to 25.5 in 2026, showing substantial long-term improvement, according to the report. The country ranks 106th out of 122 countries globally with sufficient data to calculate GHI 2026 scores, as per the report. Flood victims gather to receive food handout in a camp following rains and floods during the monsoon season in Sehwan, Sindh, September 14, 2022. — Reuters

Pakistan's GHI score is based on the value of undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting and child mortality. Undernourishment refers to the share of the population whose caloric intake is insufficient, while child stunting indicates the share of children under the age of five who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition. Child wasting refers to the share of children under the age of five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition, and child mortality refers to the number of children who die before their fifth birthday. According to the report, 16.1% of Pakistan's population is malnourished, while 33.6% of its children under five are stunted. It showed that 9.8% of the children are wasted, while 5.6% of the children in the country die before the age of five. The report comes just days after the International Monetary Fund projected the country's inflation rate to rise to 9.9% in the fiscal year 2026-27. In its World Economic Outlook (WEO) report released on Tuesday, the lender projected inflation to increase to 9.9% in the current fiscal year from 7.1% in 2025-26.

FCC disposes of Marwat's plea

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Thursday disposed of MNA Sher Afzal Marwat's petition challenging the election of Sohail Afridi as chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The FCC bench, headed by Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan, declared the petition infructuous following the imposition of governor's rule and an emergency in the province.

US weighs air blast bomb attack on Iran

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The US military has developed strike plans that could include using the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb, also known as the "mother of all bombs," against Iranian energy infrastructure and nuclear sites if President Donald Trump orders renewed combat operations, CNN reported on Thursday citing US officials familiar with the matter. The potential deployment of the largest non-nuclear bomb in the US arsenal would mark a significant escalation in the conflict, although officials familiar with military planning discussions told CNN questions remain over its effectiveness in achieving Washington's strategic objectives.

Nobel winner: Prosecute Israeli PM for war crimes

LONDON: Israel's prime minister should be prosecuted for war crimes, the latest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize has said.

Navi Pillay said she is "confident" that Benjamin Netanyahu will eventually face prosecution in the International Criminal Court.

The South African judge, who led the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry, last year found that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza.

On Friday, after the Nobel win was announced, Netanyahu accused Pillay of being a "bigot," while Israel's Foreign Ministry said Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels would be "applauding from hell." — APP

Energy costs to throw millions into poverty: UN



NEWS DESK

BANGKOK: Millions could be thrown into poverty by surging energy costs, the impact of an intense El Nino phenomenon and higher interest rates, with vulnerable countries being pushed to the brink by repeated crises, the UN's development chief told media. Global fuel prices have soared since the United States launched its war on Iran in late February, with Tehran's retaliations against Washington's Gulf allies curtailing major oil and natural gas supplies.

Fiscal deficits and debt-to-GDP ratios around the world have ballooned since the 2008 global financial crisis, with governments firefighting against a series of shocks including the pandemic and wars in Ukraine and the Middle East. Speaking on the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok, UN Development Programme (UNDP) head Alexander de Croo said many developing

countries had responded to the current spike in energy prices with blanket subsidies, but a succession of crises had left them with limited resources to keep that up.

"You have to repair your roof while at the same time your home is on fire," he told AFP, adding governments in the developing world did not have time to rebuild buffers or resolve previous shocks before being hit by new crises.

The IMF warned this week that while global growth had held up in the face of the energy crisis, that resilience was highly dependent on the boom in AI technology investments, and poorer countries not exposed to that were still struggling. IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva had warned that "winter is coming" — an allusion to popular fantasy book series "Game of Thrones" — implying that a cataclysm was around the corner if the world did not prepare for it.

And De Croo added: "Some countries have a well-insulated house with money in the bank. Other countries have a house without a roof and no money in the bank."

"We're stumbling from one crisis into the other, and what countries need is some space, and some time, and access to financing." Not getting the response right could be devastating. The UNDP warned in a new report that about 130 million people were at risk of being pushed into poverty this year if energy and food price increases were fully passed on without subsidies. People in South and East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are at particular risk, the agency said. With advanced economies seeing bond yields surge — owing to elevated inflation expectations, surging debt ratios and AI capital-raising activities — global borrowing costs have been rising. That in turn, de Croo warned, had tightened space for developing countries to access the capital they needed to combat the shocks, with rising interest rates feeding into increasing debt payments.