



Islamabad POST

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Ethiopian ambassador for more education links with Pakistan

Detailed News On Page-03

Ishaq Dar issues special message on UN Day

Detailed News On Page-01



Trump accuses Iran of attacks, warns action

Detailed News On Page-01



Chairs committee meeting

PM backs KP emergency rule

Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir, KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, federal ministers and newly appointed provincial advisers attended the meeting

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said the imposition of governor's rule and an emergency in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been undertaken "under extreme compulsion". The premier made the remarks while addressing a meeting of the federal apex committee in Peshawar to review the security situation. The PM arrived in Peshawar earlier in the day for his first visit to the province since governor's rule and the emergency were imposed on October 11. Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir, KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, federal ministers and newly appointed provincial advisers attended the meeting. Addressing the participants, PM Shehbaz described Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a very beautiful province and expressed hope that the government would work to accelerate its development. "I hope we work hard day and night and speedily make progress towards development and prosperity," he said. He also lashed out at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) over the worsening security situation in the province, saying the province had become a "cradle of peace" six years ago. "I promise that, with the cooperation of the field marshal, we will bring back happiness to this province," the premier said, adding that the KP would receive development at par with other provinces. PM Shehbaz said that peace had been restored across Pakistan, including KP, by 2017 and 2018 through sacrifices made by the armed forces, security institutions and civilians. He said around 80,000 people had been martyred in the war against terrorism, which had also caused billions of dollars in economic losses. The prime minister accused the PTI-led dysfunctional government of inviting terrorists back after peace had been established, saying the sacrifices made to eliminate

Continued on Page 06

Direct flights between Pak, Maldives soon

FAIZ CH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday announced that he had issued instructions for direct flights between Pakistan and the Maldives. Addressing the Pakistan-Maldives Business Forum, attended by visiting Maldivian President Dr Mohamed Muizzu, the premier said that once the dignitary returned, a delegation Pakistani government officials and businessmen would be sent to Malé. He said that the delegation would arrive within the next week or so. "I want to say that connectivity is very important. We don't have direct flights from Malé to Islamabad or Karachi so this air link is very important," PM Shehbaz said, addressing Muizzu. "I have already given instructions to our Ministry of Civil Aviation to prepare a quick feasibility [study], be it Pakistan International Airlines, or any other airline in Pakistan, to find the ways and means to take the first flight comprising tourists [and the] business community to Malé," he announced. The premier said he had been informed by President Asif Ali Zardari that he gave instructions "to his airline to work out a quick plan to start flights from [the] Maldives to Pakistan".

Continued on Page 06



PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs high level security meeting in Peshawar. – DNA

President off to Germany on a 3-day visit

The FO statement highlighted that the visit "holds special significance in the context of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries being commemorated this year"

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari departed for Germany on Thursday on a three-day visit to discuss bilateral ties as the two countries are set to mark the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. In a statement issued earlier, the Foreign Office (FO) said the president's visit, scheduled for Oct 22-24, is "part of high-level exchanges between Pakistan and Germany". President Zardari "has departed from Lahore for Germany", the President's office said on social media on Thursday. The FO statement highlighted that the visit "holds special significance in the context of the 75th anniversary of

Continued on Page 06

ICC wins EU top rights prize

DNA

WASHINGTON: Facing US sanctions, the International Criminal Court was awarded the European Union's top rights prize on Thursday, in a show of support that risks upsetting President Donald Trump. "The European Union is built on respect for multilateralism and international institutions, and this prize recognises the important work of the court in upholding international law and justice," said European Parliament chief Roberta Metsola, announcing the award.

Continued on Page 06

CEC appointment

TTAP sets two conditions for PM, Achakzai meeting

Opposition alliance pitches Constitution Room, Rana Sanaullah or Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry's residence for meeting

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Opposition alliance Tehreek Tahaffuz Ayyeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) on Thursday pitched the Constitution Room in parliament as the venue for a potential meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and National Assembly Opposition Leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai. "If the prime minister comes to the opposition chamber, we will take him to the Constitution Room," TTAP spokesperson Akhunzada Hussain told Geo News. According to the spokesperson, the opposition has proposed holding final negotiations in the Constitution Room, with the prime minister invited to visit the opposition chamber. His remarks come days after PM's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah urged the opposition to set aside its other demands and sit down with the government to discuss counterterrorism. "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is ready to invite all stakeholders to discuss this [terrorism]," he said

Continued on Page 06

'Agenda more important than venue'

PM Shehbaz is ready to meet opposition leader Achakzai in national interest, says Tariq Fazal Chaudhry

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said on Thursday the agenda of a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the opposition leader was more important than its venue, reiterating the government's willingness to hold talks. Speaking to Geo News, Chaudhry said the prime minister was ready to meet Opposition Leader in the

Continued on Page 06

LHC summons Punjab home sec, Kot Lakhpat jail superintendent

Justice Abher Gul Khan hears Aleema's son plea challenging detention of PTI founder's sisters under MPO

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday summoned the Punjab home secretary and the superintendent of Kot Lakhpat jail in person on October 28 during the hearing of a plea seeking the recovery of the three sisters of jailed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan. Aleema Khan, Noreen Niazi and Dr Uzma Khan have remained in custody since last month under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance in connection with the PTI's anti-government protest. Noreen and Uzma were detained for 30 days on September 21, shortly before

the PTI's planned September 27 protest, which was subsequently moved to October 4. Aleema's detention had taken place a day earlier, on September 20. During the hearing today, the petitioner's counsel told the court that the detention orders for all three detained sisters had expired on October 19 and 20. Justice Abher Gul Khan questioned the counsel about why the Lahore deputy commissioner had not been made a respondent in the petition. The counsel told the court that the deputy commissioner had not been included because the detention notification issued by the official had expired.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Sri Lanka stun England

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Sri Lanka produced a sensational batting performance to chase down England's mammoth target of 430 runs in the third ODI of the tri-nation series at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Thursday, completing a remarkable victory with one ball to spare. Sri Lanka reached the target in 49.5 overs, pulling off what was billed as the second-highest successful run chase in ODI history after England had posted an imposing 429 for four in their allotted 50 overs. Chasing a massive target of 430 runs, Sri Lanka secured a thrilling victory with just one ball remaining and two wickets in hand. The remarkable win marked the second-highest successful run chase in the history of Test cricket. Sri Lanka endured a shaky start to their pursuit, losing opener Kamindu Mendis for 18 and skipper Kusal Mendis for a duck.

Four cops martyred in KP

DNA

LAKKI MARWAT: Four policemen, including two officials, were martyred and two terrorists were killed during an exchange of fire in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak district on Thursday, police said. A statement by the KP police said law enforcers had initiated a search and strike operation in the Charpara area at noon, where terrorists had set up a blockade on Wednesday night. The operation was led by Banda Daud Shah and Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) deputy superintendents of police (DSP), in which bomb disposal unit (BDU) personnel, a drone team, Rescue 15 personnel and Rapid Response Force personnel also participated, the statement said.

Deportations climb under Trump but fall short of White House target

Trump, a Republican, returned to power last year promising to stanch crossings at the southern border and crack down on immigration

DNA

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's administration is on track to deport about 660,000 people over the past year, a new report released Thursday shows, as arrests ramp up across the country fueled by billions of dollars meant to supercharge his immigration agenda. The report by the Migration Policy Institute shows deportations increased from 620,000 during the first year of Trump's second administration. The numbers fall short of previous highs in the early 2000s and fail to meet the Trump administration's promise, made when it received the billions from Congress, that the money would allow for 1 million deportations annually. The report, based on publicly available data obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests, comes after the Trump administration in January 2025 stopped publicly releasing similar figures compiled by the Department of Homeland Security.

Continued on Page 06

Canada looks beyond the US

ANKARA: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney arrived in Türkiye on Thursday for a two-day visit seeking to forge a new partnership as Canada looks to reduce its dependence on the United States. Carney is making the first bilateral visit by a Canadian prime minister to Türkiye, although he traveled to Ankara in July to attend the NATO summit. He is scheduled to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other officials before traveling to Istanbul for talks with Turkish business groups as the two countries seek to deepen trade ties. The Canadian prime minister has sought to diversify partnerships and reduce reliance on the United States amid an escalating trade war with

Continued on Page 06

Islamabad to seek fresh GSP+ status from Jan 27

Pakistan will have to ensure hectic lobbying to qualify for next GSP+ scheme, say sources

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will formally apply for a renewed Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) arrangement with the European Union starting January 2027, after the current framework expires at the end of 2026. Under a two-year grace period, existing benefits will continue until December 2028 while the EU Commission and Parliament finalise the new scheme. Officials and trade sources say Islamabad must undertake intensive lobbying and demonstrate stronger compliance capacity to secure continued preferential access, even as the EU has repeatedly flagged concerns over law and order, human rights, and implementation of international conventions. According to official sources, any country, including current beneficiaries such as Pakistan, may apply once the new GSP+ Regulation enters into force on 1 January 2027. Present beneficiaries will retain their status under the grace period running from January 1, 2027, to December 31, 2028. This transitional window is intended to allow the EU

institutions to complete legislative procedures and assessments. To remain eligible under the revised rules taking effect in 2027, Pakistan will need to address multiple priorities linked to its international commitments. Sources emphasise that the revised framework is expected to tighten monitoring of labour standards, environmental protections, and governance indicators, requiring enhanced institutional capacity in Islamabad and provincial governments. EU Ambassador Raimundas Karoblis recently met the leadership of the Pakistan Textile Council (PTC) in Karachi to discuss the GSP+ scheme and the broader trajectory of trade relations. The ambassador underscored the importance of effective implementation of existing international commitments if Pakistan wishes to retain preferential market access. The textile sector, which accounts for a large share of Pakistan's exports to the EU, has long viewed GSP+ as critical for competitiveness in European markets. Industry representatives have privately expressed concern that any erosion of preferences could affect employment and export volumes,

Pak, EU agree to strengthen cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the European Union (EU) have agreed to strengthen cooperation at multilateral forums, including the United Nations, to advance a coherent counterterrorism approach, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office (FO) on Thursday. The agreement was reached during the 10th round of the Pakistan-EU Bilateral Counterterrorism Dialogue, held in Islamabad. The Pakistani delegation was led by Dr Fareha Bugti, director general (counterterrorism), while the EU side was headed by Anna Strazska, the European External Action Service's special envoy for counterterrorism.

Continued on Page 06

particularly in garments and home textiles. Last month, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar highlighted the centrality of GSP+ during a meeting with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly. Trade analysts and diplomatic sources in Islamabad, however, point to a more pragmatic calculus. It is a widely held view among officials that GSP+ decisions have always carried a substantial political dimension. Consequently, many believe Pakistan is likely to retain preferential access even if longstanding concerns over human rights, freedom of expression, minority protections, and law-and-order conditions remain only partially addressed. These concerns have been raised in successive EU monitoring reports and parliamentary resolutions. While the EU has linked continued benefits to measurable progress on the 27 core international conventions covering human rights, labour rights, environmental standards, and good governance, enforcement has often been uneven. Sources indicate that the most probable

outcome, short of outright denial, would be a reduction in the number of product lines eligible for zero-duty treatment under the next scheme. Such a narrowing of the product list would still leave core textile and apparel categories largely intact but could exclude certain intermediate or value-added items, thereby limiting the overall commercial gain. This approach would allow the EU to signal continued scrutiny without triggering a major disruption in bilateral trade, which has grown substantially since Pakistan first obtained GSP+ status in 2014. Pakistan's export performance under GSP+ has been mixed. While textile and clothing shipments to the EU have risen, critics argue that the scheme has not produced commensurate improvements in labour conditions or environmental compliance in the manufacturing hubs of Punjab and Sindh. Labour unions and rights organisations have documented persistent issues of wage delays, weak union representation, and inadequate factory safety standards. On the governance side, concerns over media freedom,

Continued on Page 06

Pak-China friendship strong foundation for prosperity: Zeb

PESHAWAR :Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Tribal Affairs, Mubarak Zeb, has said that the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and China, founded on mutual trust, respect and shared interests, remains a vital pillar of Pakistan's economic development, industrial progress and regional stability. He said Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is taking keen interest in further strengthening relations with China, expanding bilateral trade, attracting Chinese investment and accelerating projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He expressed these views while talking to media during his visit to China Window, a Chinese cultural and information centre in Peshawar. During his visit, Mubarak Zeb toured various galleries of China Window and showed keen interest in exhibitions highlighting China's history, civilization, cultural heritage, technological advancements, economic transformation and the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and China. He appreciated China's remarkable development achievements, describing the country's extraordinary economic transformation over recent decades as an inspiring example for developing nations, including Pakistan. Special Assistant said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif regarded Pakistan's relationship with China as a cornerstone of the country's foreign and economic policies. He noted that the Prime Minister was making sustained efforts to expand economic cooperation, promote joint industrial ventures, establish special economic zones and create an investment-friendly environment for Chinese companies. Referring to CPEC, Mubarak Zeb said the initiative was much more than a collection of infrastructure, road and energy projects. Rather, it represented a comprehensive framework for Pakistan's long-term economic transformation and sustainable development. Highlighting the economic potential of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly the merged tribal districts, he said these areas possessed enormous opportunities in minerals, agriculture, tourism and cross-border trade. Mubarak Zeb expressed optimism that enhanced economic cooperation between Pakistan and China would create new opportunities for young people in the tribal districts, particularly in education, technical training, entrepreneurship and employment. Appreciating the activities of China Window, the Special Assistant described the centre as an important platform for promoting mutual understanding and strengthening people-to-people contacts between the two countries.—APP

Public Notice

The public is informed that the Serial / Certificate Number **901187** Roll Number **189233** DAE Mechanical Technology Second Annual 2018 issued in my name by Punjab Board of Technical Education Lahore has been lost somewhere. If anyone finds it, please send it to the following address. **Name:** Umar Waheed Parentage Waheed Gul **Address:** House No. 230/10, Street No. 08, Bakra Mandi, Allama Iqbal Road, District Rawalpindi.

CDA chief for Islamabad Expressway project timely completion

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Sohail Ashraf visited the Islamabad Expressway Service Road East Project and reviewed the latest progress and quality and standard of ongoing development works. He directed the concerned officers to ensure timely completion of the project in accordance with approved designs while maintaining the highest construction quality standards. During the visit, the Chairman CDA was also briefed on the ongoing enforcement operation against illegal construction, unauthorized commercial activities and violations of building control regulations along Islamabad Expressway East. So far, 58 buildings have been sealed, while 124 structures between Sohan and Khanna Pul have been identified for demolition. A total of 377 structures, including 281 commercial buildings, have been identified for enforcement action. The enforcement operation has resulted in the recovery of Rs. 250,590,157 (approximately Rs. 250.59 million), while approximately Rs. 3 billion remains recoverable under applicable regulations. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf directed the concerned formations to ensure strict and uniform implementation of building control regulations, land use rules and mandatory fire safety requirements. He further directed that development projects be completed within the stipulated timelines without compromising on quality or construction standards. He reaffirmed CDA's commitment to accelerating development, improving infrastructure and transforming Islamabad into a modern, beautiful and well planned capital.—DNA



RCCI Women's expo attracts large gathering

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Women's Business & Lifestyle Expo 2026 attracted a large number of visitors at Chamber House, Rawalpindi, highlighting the creativity, talent, and entrepreneurial potential of women across diverse business sectors. The two-day expo featured more than 40 stalls showcasing a wide range of products, including clothing and fashion, jewellery, gemstones, home décor, beauty and skincare, boutiques, herbal products, and handicrafts. The event provided women entrepreneurs with a valuable platform to showcase their products, connect with

customers, expand market access, and explore new business opportunities. = Huma Akhtar Chughtai, Member of the National Assembly, and Ms. Asma Abbasi, Member of the Punjab Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Population, Punjab, visited the expo and toured various stalls. They appreciated the quality and diversity of products presented by women entrepreneurs and commended RCCI's efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship, business development, and economic empowerment. Ms. Nabila Faran Baig, Chief Commissioner of the Regional Tax Office (RTO), Rawalpindi, also visited the exhibition and explored products displayed by participating entrepreneurs. She appreciated the initiative for providing

women-led businesses with opportunities to enhance their visibility, strengthen their market presence, and expand their commercial networks. The expo also attracted university students interested in entrepreneurship, along with visitors from the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector, providing opportunities for learning, networking, and business collaboration. The visitors were accompanied by RCCI President Noshervan Khalil Khan, Senior Vice President Waseem Aslam, and Vice President Ikram Abbasi. The expo reflects RCCI's commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs, encouraging innovation, and creating new avenues for business growth and inclusive economic development.

Pakistan must build sustainable growth model

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatization Muhammad Ali on Thursday stressed the need for sustainable economic growth through structural reforms, private-sector investment and export-led development, identifying agriculture, textiles and information technology (IT) as key sectors that could help Pakistan strengthen its economy. Addressing the CEO Summit, he said Pakistan needed to learn from countries such as China, South Korea, Vietnam and Bangladesh, which had built their economies by focusing on existing strengths and developing them consistently over time. He said Pakistan had faced severe economic challenges during 2022 and 2023, including fiscal constraints, low productivity, production curtailments, high inflation and elevated interest rates, which had slowed economic activity. "We cannot go through that sort of test again. So we need to do something to avoid it in the future," he said, emphasizing the importance of perseverance, patience, focus and coordinated policymaking in navigating economic difficulties. The adviser said the key question was how to build an economy resilient enough to withstand future challenges while maintaining a higher and sustainable growth trajectory. Citing international examples, he said China had initially built on its agricultural strengths after launching economic reforms in 1978, South Korea had developed industries such as textiles and plywood during the 1960s, while Vietnam had transformed itself from a rice importer into a major exporter. Bangladesh, he added, had also developed its garment industry by capitalizing on its existing strengths. "These countries did not try to do everything at once. They started from what they could already do well and built upon it," he said, adding that sustained efforts and policy continuity had enabled them to achieve long-term economic progress. Presenting a framework called "TRUST" for Pakistan's economic growth, Muhammad Ali said it focused on targeting sectors where the country had competitive strengths, implementing sustainable reforms, unlocking private capital, scaling up exports and developing talent.—APP

Punjab CM orders crackdown on crimes against women, kids

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has given police officers four weeks to improve the overall law and order situation, particularly crimes against women and children, warning that officers concerned would be removed if the situation failed to improve. Chairing a special meeting on law and order, here on Thursday, attended by regional police officers (RPOs) and district police officers (DPOs) through video link, the chief minister expressed serious concern over crimes against women and children and sought detailed briefings on the security situation in every division and district. She directed police to intensify action against corruption within the department and take

strict action against officials involved in corrupt practices. She also ordered effective measures to stop wheat smuggling in all districts, particularly areas along provincial borders. Expressing dissatisfaction with traffic management, the chief minister directed police to ensure strict action against over-speeding. She also ordered proactive operations against illegal weapons and directed authorities to ensure a ban on camera-equipped glasses and other surveillance devices. CM Maryam Nawaz ordered visible police patrolling throughout the province to create a sense of security among citizens and deter criminal elements. She directed police officers

to personally contact the organizers of the Tablighi congregation and ordered the provision of motorcycles and other facilities to the Dolphin Force in Lahore to improve patrolling. Expressing concern over the law and order situation in Rawalpindi Division, she directed all RPOs to hold weekly meetings to review crimes of all categories and submit reports on the performance of the relevant DPOs. She also received detailed briefings on every serious crime, including the Multan incident. The CM said there would be no tolerance for the culture of lawlessness and no concessions for those involved in criminal activities. She directed police to ensure an effective crackdown on drugs, identify crime hotspots and dismantle criminal networks. She also ordered continued capacity-building of the specialized RMC police force deployed to deal with crowds and appreciated its performance during duty in connection with the proposed sit-in.—APP

50 scholarships to deserving FATA varsity students

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and FATA University on Thursday agreed to provide 50 scholarships to deserving students to help them meet educational expenses and continue their studies. The understanding was reached during a meeting between PBM Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Director Dr Lal Badshah and FATA University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Mohsin Nawaz during the director's visit to the university. Both sides agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) soon to formalise the scholarship programme and strengthen cooperation in supporting students facing financial difficulties. The meeting also discussed students' educational needs, financial assistance and measures to promote higher education. Administrative officers of both institutions and Agriculture University Peshawar Director Sports Muhammad Bilal Marwat also attended the meeting. Prof Dr Mohsin Nawaz said financial constraints should not prevent deserving students from continuing their education. He said the university administration was committed to providing quality education and improving facilities while addressing students' academic concerns. The vice chancellor appreciated PBM's willingness to support students and expressed hope that the proposed scholarships would help deserving students meet their educational expenses and pursue higher education without financial hardship.—APP

AI now defining ethical challenge for accountancy profession

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI: In line with Global Ethics Day observed on 21 October, the latest survey by ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) has shown a dramatic increase in the number of professional accountants that rank AI use as the leading ethical challenge - cited by 61% of respondents, up from 32% in ACCA's 2024 survey. According to the report, Navigating ethics for trust, both ethical leadership (43%) and ethical culture (39%) remain in respondents' top three ethical challenges. The 2026 survey draws on 1,178 responses from finance and accountancy professionals across 135 countries, with roundtable discussions adding qualitative depth. The report shows a profession that remains strongly grounded in the fundamental principles - but working in conditions that are becoming more pressured, complex and difficult to navigate in practice. 50% of respondents agreed that ethical challenges have become more difficult to resolve in the last three years, and 53% report witnessing unethical behaviour in that period. Sarah Lane, Head of Ethics and Assurance at ACCA said: "The overall picture is one of a profession that remains ethically grounded, self-aware, and willing to adapt. Finance professionals are not asking for more rules, the fundamental principles remain the ethical anchor. They are asking for the tools, support and guidance needed to apply the fundamental principles in an increasingly complex world." Assad Hameed Khan, Head of ACCA in Pakistan, said: "As

AI becomes more embedded in business and finance, its use must be guided by the same principles that underpin trust in the accountancy profession: integrity, objectivity, professional competence, confidentiality and professional behaviour. For Pakistan's finance professionals, this means applying sound judgement, questioning AI-generated outputs and ensuring that accountability remains clear. Strong ethical leadership, supportive organisational cultures and continuous learning will be essential to using technology responsibly while maintaining public confidence." The report includes a toolkit that provides a practical 10-step process for applying the International Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (IEBSA Code) in real situations. Other key findings from the survey data include: 1. 89% agree ethical capability in the profession remains strong - but it depends on continuous professional development. 2. Trust in the profession is grounded in strong ethical standards (46%), transparency (38%), and independence (36%). 3. Enabling ethical behaviour in practice is a shared responsibility - with ethical culture and leadership acting as core conditions for ethical action. In the survey, ethical leadership and ethical culture remained among the top ethical challenges in both 2024 and 2026. Sarah Lane added: "Ethics has always been at the heart of the ACCA Qualification. We're stepping that up still further when we introduce our redesigned qualification next year, which has ethics integrated throughout to help future generations navigate emerging challenges.—DNA

DNA

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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

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114

PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Canth 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.....0321-5744480

Oumer hosts COMSATS rector over coffee ceremony

The Ambassador proposed faculty exchanges as an initial step toward broader cooperation, which could later include joint research and publications in scientific and technological fields

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Dr. Oumer H. Oba hosted Rector COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) Dr. Raheel Qamar at the Ethiopian Embassy on Thursday over a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony. According to a press release issued by the Ethiopian Embassy, the Rector and his team visited the Embassy following the Ambassador's recent meeting with COMSATS leadership at the CUI campus. During the meeting, both sides discussed ways to build on the previous discussions which had explored cooperation in student and faculty exchanges, joint research in science and technology and collaboration in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence and robotics. The Ambassador proposed faculty exchanges as an initial step toward broader cooperation, which could later include joint research and publications in scientific and technological fields. He also briefed the Rector on Ethiopia's tourism, culture and history, including the story of coffee, which originated in Ethiopia and has become a household ritual that fosters harmony among its people.

Rector COMSATS University Islamabad invited Ethiopian universities to visit Pakistan and work with COMSATS toward

shared goals of prosperity in the spirit of South-South Cooperation. He praised Ethiopian coffee culture and

assured the Ambassador of his full support in strengthening educational cooperation between the two countries.—DNA



Call for regional trade, investment reforms

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Thursday stressed the need for facilitating businesses, reforming regulations and strengthening regional trade to attract investment, boost exports and accelerate economic growth. Addressing the CEO summit, the minister said Pakistan needed to improve its investment climate by simplifying regulatory procedures and developing a facilitation-oriented approach to encourage both

domestic and foreign investors. He said Pakistanis living abroad had substantial financial resources and investment potential, which could be tapped by addressing regulatory concerns and creating a more business-friendly environment. Referring to the experiences of China and South Korea, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh emphasized that human resource development, technology transfer, education and effective economic planning were essential for sus-

tainable growth. He said Pakistan also needed to improve access to financing for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the agriculture sector, noting that these sectors accounted for a major share of employment but received only around seven per cent of total bank lending. The minister said limited access to affordable credit forced many small businesses to borrow from informal sources at interest rates as high as 40 to 50 per cent, restricting their ability to expand and contribute to economic growth. Highlighting the importance of regional connectivity, he said sustained economic growth was difficult without regional trade, citing Southeast Asia, where around 70 per cent of trade takes place within the region.—APP

Over one million Pakistanis rely on insulin

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has an estimated 33 million people living with diabetes, with more than one million relying on insulin, highlighting the need for sustainable solutions to ensure uninterrupted access to the essential medicine. Amid concerns over insulin access, Novo Pakistan has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting people living with diabetes by working with partners to help maintain continuity of treatment. In a statement issued on Thursday, the company said it recognized the importance of reliable insulin supplies for patients and their families and was working to play its part in supporting access to treatment. Mehtaz Sultan Khan, General Manager of Novo Pakistan, said diabetes care had remained central to the company's mission for more than a century, adding that supporting reliable access to treatment remained a priority "For people who depend on insulin, reliable access to treatment is essential. We recognize the concerns being raised and are stepping up to play our part in supporting patients in Pakistan," she said. The company said it remained committed to working with healthcare professionals, policymakers.—APP

Student council of IMCG F-7/2 sworn in

ISLAMABAD: In a grand ceremony held at the F-7/2 campus, Islamabad Model College for Girls (Post Graduate) witnessed the formal induction of the newly elected representatives of the Student Council. The oath-taking event, organized to mark the commitment of the student leaders, took place in hall. The Student Council serves as an important forum for student representation, fostering a sense of responsibility, teamwork, and leadership among students. It provides opportunities for active participation in institutional affairs and the organization of academic and co-curricular activities and contributes significantly to the overall educational objectives of the institution. The ceremony was graced by Dr. Noor Anna Malik, Managing Director, National Academy of Higher Education (HEC), Islamabad, as the honourable Chief Guest. While Principal Prof Fauzia tanveer sheikh presided the ceremony. Subsequently, the outgoing President, Ms. Aon Muskan, delivered a heartfelt farewell address and formally handed over her responsibilities to the newly appointed President, Ms. Areeba Aziz after she had taken her oath of office from the Chief Guest. She also presented the College Activities Report for the session 2025-2026 to the Principal, Prof. Dr. Fauzia Tanveer Sheikh. A significant highlight of the ceremony was the administration of the oath of office by the Chief Guest, Dr. Noor Anna Malik, to the newly elected officers, including President Ms. Areeba Aziz, Vice President Ms. Mahnoor Ishiaque, General Secretary Ms. Mominah Arshad, Joint Secretary Ms. Rehab Kamran, the Secretaries of various societies, and the Class Representatives. The Chief Guest subsequently distributed badges among the newly appointed office bearers of the Student Council 2026-27, including Ruqayya Majid (Environment Secretary), Irsa Jahangir and Laiba Rehman (Discipline Secretaries), Eman Chaudhary (English Literary Secretary), Maryam Nawaz (Urdu Literary Secretary), Areeba Nadeem (IT Secretary), Ayesha Arshad (Vocal Skills Secretary), Hafsa Rauf Abbasi (Fine Arts Secretary), Shehliza Zainub (Home Economics Secretary), Ayesha Tehreem (Podcast Secretary), Ujala Afzal Khan (Transport Secretary) and Hijab Gohar (Sports Secretary), formally marking the commencement of their responsibilities.—DNA

Pakistan, Maldives vow to strengthen bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Thursday met with President of Republic of Maldives, Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, during his state visit to Pakistan. The meeting focused on bilateral relations between Pakistan and the Maldives, with particular emphasis on further strengthening cooperation and promoting people-to-people contacts. During the meeting, Ayaz Sadiq said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its longstanding, friendly and brotherly relations with the Maldives. He emphasised the need to further enhance cooperation between the two countries in areas of mutual interest, including trade, education, health, tourism and capacity building. Ayaz Sadiq underscored the importance of high-level exchanges in promoting mutual understanding and strengthening institutional linkages between the two countries. He said that continued engagement between the leadership and institutions of Pakistan and the Maldives would help explore new avenues of cooperation and further consolidate bilateral relations. Ayaz Sadiq highlighted the significance of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting dialogue, mutual understanding and closer ties between the two nations. He expressed confidence that enhanced interaction between the parliamentary institutions of Pakistan and the Maldives would contribute to strengthening bilateral relations and fostering cooperation on matters of mutual interest.—APP

NUMS holds breast cancer awareness event

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) organized a breast cancer awareness event titled "From Awareness to Action" to highlight the importance of early detection, timely diagnosis and treatment. Organized by the NUMS Scientific Society (BioCluster), the event brought together students and healthcare professionals to promote awareness and encourage informed health decisions. Expert talks provided participants with insights into breast cancer, emphasizing the importance of early detection and seeking timely medical advice to improve treatment outcomes. The event also featured "Women on the Move," an initiative by EVEC Electric Bike Company, which offered students practical guidance on riding electric bikes and essential road safety measures.—APP

Health experts reaffirm polio vaccine safety

ISLAMABAD: Medical experts have reaffirmed that the polio vaccine is safe for children and essential for protecting them against poliovirus, urging parents to ensure that every child under five years of age receives two drops during each vaccination campaign. Health experts of District Health Office (DHO) Islamabad and other concerned departments explained that the polio vaccine is safe for children's health and according to recommended guidelines. They stressed that vaccination remains the most effective way to protect children against the potentially crippling disease. They said completing polio vaccination during every campaign was crucial, as repeated doses strengthen children's immunity and provide protection against the virus. The health authorities urged parents and caregivers to avoid paying attention to rumours, myths and misleading information about polio vaccination. They advised the public to rely only on authentic information and guidance provided by the Health Department and qualified medical professionals.—APP

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**DHO to
organize
cycling event
on Oct 31**

ISLAMABAD: The District Health Office (DHO) Islamabad will organize a community cycling event, "Ride with Pink," at F-9 Park on October 31 to raise awareness about breast cancer and promote healthy lifestyles.

The event, scheduled to begin at 2:00 pm, aims to encourage early detection of breast cancer and mobilize community support for awareness and prevention. The initiative will bring together community members and families to promote physical activity while highlighting the importance of timely screening and access to healthcare services.

The event will also highlight free health screening initiatives, including screening for hepatitis C and diabetes, as part of broader efforts to promote preventive healthcare and improve community well-being.

The DHO Islamabad is organizing the activity in collaboration with partner organisations, including Ministry of Health, DOPASI, PILLS, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, Muslim Hands, and Marie Stopes. Through the initiative, the health authorities aim to encourage greater public participation in health awareness activities and reinforce the message that early detection and timely medical consultation can help improve health outcomes.—APP

**IRSA releases
78,800 cusecs
water**

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 78,800 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 67,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1516.45 feet, which was 114.45 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 32,100 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1197.95 feet, which was 147.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 13,000 cusecs and 16,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu, and Sukkur was recorded as 61,000, 51,600, 45,100, and 15,900 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 12,700 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 4,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

**SC restores
2014
recruitment
rules**

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has ruled that a Service Tribunal cannot assume the role of the executive by striking down recruitment rules or directing their reformulation, holding that the government has the authority to amend service structures and recruitment rules in accordance with administrative requirements.

The court restored the 2014 recruitment rules of the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) and set aside the Federal Service Tribunal's judgment dated October 17, 2022.

In a written judgment authored by Justice Ayesha A. Malik, the Supreme Court held that under Article 212 of the Constitution, the jurisdiction of a Service Tribunal was confined to matters relating to the terms and conditions of service of civil servants. The tribunal must remain within the limits of its jurisdiction and refrain from interfering in administrative policy matters, the judgment stated. According to the judgment, the Federal Service Tribunal had struck down the CGA recruitment rules framed on July 15, 2014, on the ground that they had not received prior approval from the Establishment Division. The Supreme Court observed that the Establishment Division had subsequently approved amendments to the same rules in 2017, 2019 and 2021.—APP

Maldives President, First Lady explore Pak heritage

He visit offered a glimpse of Pakistan beyond its political and diplomatic engagements, bringing its living traditions, regional diversity and artistic heritage into focus

ISLAMABAD: President of the Maldives, Dr. Mohamed Muizzu and First Lady, Sajidha Mohamed expressed keen interest in Pakistan's rich cultural heritage during their visit to the Lok Virsa Museum on Thursday, exploring the country's diverse regional traditions, indigenous craftsmanship and artistic legacy.

Executive Director Lok Virsa, Muhammad Waqas Saleem and other officials welcomed the visiting dignitaries and conducted their tour of the museum, briefing them on the cultural significance of its collections and the institution's efforts to preserve and promote Pakistan's folk and traditional heritage.

Moving through the museum's galleries, the Maldivian President and the First Lady viewed exhibits reflecting the distinctive identities of Pakistan's regions, from intricate embroidery and traditional textiles to pottery, woodwork and other forms of indigenous art. The displays offered a glimpse into the creativity of local artisans and the cultural traditions that continue to shape communities across the country.

The distinguished guests took interest in the exhibits portraying traditional lifestyles, regional customs and artistic practices handed down through generations, gaining an insight into the cultural richness that defines Pakistan's national heritage.

Muhammad Waqas Saleem explained how Lok Virsa documents and showcases the country's diverse cultural expressions, helping preserve traditional skills and ensuring that the knowledge



and craftsmanship of local communities remain accessible to future generations.

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry and Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Waji-

ha Qamar were also present during the visit.

They joined the engagement with the visiting dignitaries and highlighted the importance of introducing international guests to Pakistan's cultural wealth and

longstanding traditions of hospitality.

The visit offered a glimpse of Pakistan beyond its political and diplomatic engagements, bringing its living traditions, regional diversity and artistic heritage into focus.—DNA

Health minister, AJ Vaccines explore local vaccine production

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal met a delegation led by Jens Ulrik Als, Global Sales Director of AJ Vaccines, to discuss potential cooperation in local vaccine production and manufacturing in Pakistan. During the meeting, the minister briefed the delegation on Pakistan's population of approximately 260 million, the challenges facing the healthcare sector and the country's vaccine requirements. He said the National Immunization Programme provides children with 13 types of vaccines to protect them against various preventable diseases. The meeting also discussed opportunities to enhance local manufacturing capacity, reduce reliance on imported vaccines and promote self-sufficiency in vaccine production. Both sides exchanged views on potential collaboration to strengthen Pakistan's domestic vaccine manufacturing capabilities and support the country's immunisation needs. The engagement reflects efforts to explore international partnerships and technology-based cooperation to strengthen local pharmaceutical production and improve the sustainability of vaccine supplies in Pakistan.—APP

FCCP seeks details of action against teacher with fake credentials

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan (FCCP) has issued notices to teacher Ansar Abbas and former Assistant Advocate General Punjab Ayub Buzdar over allegations that the teacher secured employment on the basis of allegedly fake academic credentials, seeking details from the Punjab Education Department about the action taken against him and verification of his degrees. A two-member bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi heard an appeal filed by the Punjab Education Department on Thursday. During the hearing, the Acting Chief Justice asked what action the department had taken against Ansar Abbas after the alleged forgery came to light. He also sought details of

the inquiry conducted into the fake degree allegations and asked whether the Punjab government had taken any action against Ayub Buzdar.

The bench further questioned why the teacher's credentials had not been verified during the four years he remained in service. It also asked why the former Assistant Advocate General had withdrawn an intra-court appeal before the Lahore High Court.

The Additional Advocate General told the court that Ansar Abbas initially secured a teaching job on the basis of an engineering degree. After serving for four years, he resigned and subsequently applied for employment again on the basis of an intermediate certificate.

During departmental scrutiny, alleged forgery in his academic credentials was detected, prompting the Education Department to reject his fresh application, the law officer said. He added that Ansar Abbas approached the Lahore High Court, which directed the authorities to retain him in service. The Additional Advocate General further submitted that Ayub Buzdar had withdrawn the intra-court appeal filed before the Lahore High Court without obtaining permission from the competent authority. The court issued notices to Ansar Abbas and Ayub Buzdar, seeking their responses, and sought further clarification on the matter.—DNA

Govt to strengthen PIMS stroke intervention, critical-care services

ISLAMABAD :The government is undertaking a Rs7.22 billion project to establish specialized stroke intervention services and expand critical-care facilities at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS).

The project is being started with an aim to improve access to advanced treatment, strengthen emergency response and enhance healthcare delivery in the federal capital, hospital sources said. The project, titled Establishment of Stroke Intervention and Expansion of Critical-Care Facilities at PIMS (2024-27), has a total estimated cost of Rs7,220.956 million and is designed to strengthen the hospital's capacity to provide specialized treatment to stroke patients and people suffering from life-threatening conditions. According to hospital sources, the initiative focuses on improving specialized stroke intervention services, expanding critical-care infrastructure and facilitating timely diagnosis and treatment for patients requiring urgent medical attention. The project is expected to enhance the hospital's capacity to manage complex medical emergencies by strengthening access to specialized interventions, intensive care and advanced treatment facilities.

These improvements are particularly important for patients whose conditions require immediate medical assessment and continuous monitoring.

The sources said stroke intervention was a key component of the project, as timely diagnosis and appropriate treatment could help reduce the risk of permanent disability and improve recovery prospects. Strengthening specialized services would support medical teams in responding more effectively to stroke emergencies.

They added that expanding critical-care facilities would help improve the management of critically ill patients who require intensive monitoring, specialized medical support and prompt intervention.

The initiative is intended to strengthen the hospital's overall capacity to respond to serious illnesses and medical emergencies. Aligned with the Equity, Education, Health and Population pillar of the URAAN Pakistan initiative, the project reflects the government's broader priority of strengthening public-sector healthcare institutions and improving access to advanced medical services.—DNA

Jordanian envoy Dr Maen welcomes new Saudi ambassador

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan, Dr. Maen Khreasat, met with the newly appointed Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Dr. Rajeh Albugamy, in Islamabad and discussed bilateral relations, recent developments, and avenues for enhanced cooperation between their respective diplomatic missions. During the meeting, Dr. Maen Khreasat welcomed Dr. Rajeh Albugamy and conveyed his best wishes for a successful tenure in Pakistan. The two envoys exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and explored ways to strengthen collaboration and coordination between

the Jordanian and Saudi missions.

The meeting reflected

the cordial relations between the two brotherly

countries and their shared

commitment to promoting

cooperation on issues of common concern.

**Free hepatitis
C testing,
treatment drive
underway in
Islamabad**

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has urged residents of Islamabad to benefit from free hepatitis C testing and treatment under the Prime Minister's National Programme for the Elimination of Hepatitis C, aimed at reducing the disease burden and preventing its spread.

An official of the Prime Minister's National Programme for the Elimination of Hepatitis C said the campaign had been launched to facilitate early diagnosis and ensure access to treatment for patients across the country.

Under the initiative, diagnostic testing worth Rs8,000 is being provided free of charge, while the government will bear treatment costs ranging from Rs34,000 to Rs68,000 per patient, he said.

He urged citizens who had not yet been screened for hepatitis C to undergo testing without delay, emphasizing that early diagnosis and timely treatment were essential to preventing complications and improving health outcomes.

The official said the programme aimed to facilitate access to diagnosis and treatment, particularly for people who might otherwise be unable to afford healthcare expenses.

He encouraged residents to motivate their family members and others in their communities to undergo screening and benefit from the free services.—APP

HSA holds scientific session on one health approach

Sectoral specialists shared their perspectives on strengthening integrated disease surveillance, developing a skilled One Health workforce and improving coordination among relevant sectors to address emerging public health threats. The discussions highlighted the importance of integrating human, animal and environmental health approaches to detect emerging diseases, mitigate pandemic risks and strengthen national health security. Participants emphasized the need for coordinated, evidence-based strategies and stronger institutional partnerships to improve Pakistan's capacity to prevent, detect and respond to future pandemics. The session underscored HSA's commitment to advancing the One Health approach and promoting collaborative efforts towards a more resilient and pandemic-ready Pakistan.—APP

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Russia can help in containing the Iran war

DR. ABDEL AZIZ ALUWAISEH

THE Gulf Cooperation Council-Russia Strategic Dialogue, held in Bahrain on Sunday, was an opportunity to discuss regional crises collectively after months of bilateral consultations since the last meeting in Sochi in September 2025. These discussions between Russian and GCC foreign ministers have been taking place regularly since November 2011, when this process was started. Originally focused on growing economic and cultural ties between the two sides, discussions in subsequent meetings evolved to focus on regional crises, of which there have been plenty since the inaugural meeting of the strategic dialogue was held in Abu Dhabi 15 years ago. For several years, Syria dominated the discussions, as the two sides took opposing positions. The issue was settled in December 2024 with the departure of the Assad regime, thus removing an obstacle to progress in GCC-Russia engagement. Trade flourished, exceeding \$24 billion in 2025, a jump of about 60 percent in one year and 200 percent since 2021, before the Ukraine war started. The dramatic increase in two-way trade and investment was accompanied by many high-level meetings between leaders and officials and the signing of agreements to deepen that engagement. Then, in 2026, the US-Iran war started and the two sides took gradually diverging views toward the conflict. The Bahrain meeting was meant to narrow the gap. Russia looks at the conflict from the prism of its confrontation with the West. It blames the US for starting the war on Feb. 28, calling it an "unjustified aggression," and thus tends to minimize Iran's role in expanding the conflict to engulf the whole region, directly and through its proxies. Russia tends to minimize Iran's role in expanding the conflict to engulf the whole region, directly and through its proxies. When the GCC side tabled UN Security Council Resolution 2817 in March, Russia abstained and allowed it to pass. The resolution demanded that Iran immediately halt strikes against Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Jordan. It also deplored the targeting of residential areas, airports, energy facilities and civilian infrastructure and condemned threats by Iran to obstruct international navigation and commerce through the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab Al-Mandab. That was probably the height of GCC-Russian engagement on the conflict because, when Iran persisted in closing the Strait of Hormuz, Moscow shielded it from censure by blocking a second draft resolution presented by the GCC side in April, which was focused on securing freedom of navigation. Since that time, the UNSC has been paralyzed from taking further action to restore the situation in the waterway to its prewar situation, giving Iran a free hand to wreak havoc in the region. Regardless of how the conflict started, the GCC side believes Iran bears all

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the blame for attacking GCC civilian targets, including energy installations, and for closing the Strait of Hormuz, thus strangling local economies and disrupting oil and gas supplies around the world. On Monday in Tehran, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov once again spoke about Russia's proposal for a regional security architecture in the Gulf, an idea that goes back "years, indeed decades," as he said. The proposal went through several iterations but, according to the minister, "the goal is to build trust, rely primarily on the principles and arrangements agreed upon by the littoral states – including transparency in military affairs and the exchange of information on matters that are relevant to each country's security – and gradually expand joint activities that will further strengthen trust, which is critical in this region." Trust is at the core of Iran's problem not only with the Gulf littoral states but with the international community at large. It "allows for and envisages participation, in a supporting and facilitating capacity alongside the littoral states, of permanent members of the UN Security Council and senior officials from the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Their role would be to help create the conditions for the littoral states to reach agreement among themselves." The idea was always too ambitious but has now become even more far-fetched, especially the part about "transparency in military affairs and the exchange of information on matters that are relevant to each country's security." Such transparency requires trust, which is at the core of Iran's problem not only with the Gulf littoral states but with the international community at large. Iran's nuclear program is only one example, with others being its closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the damage Iran's attacks have inflicted on the production and export facilities and supply chains that meet the world's energy needs. Iran's continuing attacks, directly and through proxies, on civilian targets in GCC countries have eviscerated what little trust existed before Feb. 28. So, any regional arrangements will need to be considered only after regaining that lost trust, starting with a firm commitment by Tehran to stop attacking its neighbors. After thousands of attacks causing massive casualties among GCC civilians and the destruction of civilian life, Iran's commitment to international law, including the UN Charter, is in doubt. Contrary to the implications in Lavrov's remarks in Bahrain and Tehran, those attacks are not directed at the US or Israel, neither of which have been affected by them. It is Russia's friends, the GCC countries, which are on the receiving end. The US and Israel are also not affected by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz – instead, the GCC and the rest of the world are. Russia's close relationship with Tehran can help secure Iran's commitment to refrain from attacking its neighbors. Russia's help is also needed to persuade Tehran to respect freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and restore the status quo ante. Iran needs to rein in its proxies in Iraq, from which half the attacks on GCC states have been launched, and in Yemen, where the Houthis are threatening Bab Al-Mandab, attacking Saudi Arabia and disrupting energy supplies in the Red Sea.

A New Balance in the Middle East

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Saudi Arabia and Israel have no formal diplomatic relationship, and the Palestinian question remains a profound obstacle to a public strategic partnership. Yet security calculations have their own logic. Both countries regard the expansion of Iranian influence and the activities of Iran-backed armed groups as major security concerns. The prospect of intelligence cooperation therefore reflects a convergence of interests rather than a disappearance of political differences. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent visit to the United Arab Emirates, accompanied by representation from other Gulf countries, is another indication of this changing...

FOR decades, the politics of the Middle East has revolved around one familiar assumption: whenever a crisis becomes too dangerous, Washington eventually steps in. American aircraft, warships, intelligence networks and diplomatic pressure have repeatedly shaped the outcome of conflicts stretching from the Gulf to the Levant. That assumption is now being tested. The most important consequence of the current confrontation with Iran may not be the immediate military outcome. It may be the gradual emergence of a regional order in which Arab states are increasingly prepared to defend their interests themselves. Iran faces a serious economic problem. Its oil revenues have been sharply constrained for months, while sanctions and the American blockade have narrowed its ability to sell crude and bring foreign currency into the country. An economy already under pressure cannot indefinitely sustain the costs of military confrontation, regional operations and domestic security. Tehran therefore has a powerful reason to seek some form of accommodation if the economic pressure continues. But Iran's economic difficulties are only one part of a much larger story. The more consequential development is that neighbouring states are no longer waiting for Washington to determine how regional security should be managed. President Donald Trump has repeatedly argued that the United States should not remain the permanent policeman of the Middle East. Whether Washington can maintain that position consistently is another question. American involvement in the region is too deep to disappear overnight. Yet even a partial American withdrawal creates pressure on regional governments to reconsider their own security arrangements. For years, Riyadh relied heavily on American military support and intelligence cooperation to confront threats from Yemen and elsewhere. The war against the Houthis demonstrated both the strengths and limitations of that dependence. Saudi Arabia possessed considerable military resources, but the conflict also showed how difficult it is to defeat a determined adversary through air power alone. The

present circumstances are different. The Saudis are increasingly taking direct responsibility for confronting the Houthi threat, while intelligence cooperation with Israel has reportedly become part of the wider regional picture. That development would have been difficult to imagine only a few years ago. Saudi Arabia and Israel have no formal diplomatic relationship, and the Palestinian question remains a profound obstacle to a public strategic partnership. Yet security calculations have their own logic. Both countries regard the expansion of Iranian influence and the activities of Iran-backed armed groups as major security concerns. The prospect of intelligence cooperation therefore reflects a convergence of interests rather than a disappearance of political differences. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent visit to the United Arab Emirates, accompanied by representation from other Gulf countries, is another indication of this changing environment. Such contacts do not automatically create a unified regional alliance. Gulf monarchies have different priorities, and their relations with Iran vary considerably. Nevertheless, regular political and security contacts can gradually produce a common understanding of shared threats. This matters because Iran's regional influence has never depended solely on its conventional military strength. Tehran has built networks of armed and political partners across Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. These relationships have enabled Iran to project power without relying exclusively on its own armed forces. The Gulf countries have learned that they cannot simply depend on an outside power to manage every crisis. The experience of Yemen, attacks on oil facilities and shipping disruptions have demonstrated the vulnerability of critical infrastructure. Economic diversification, stronger defence capabilities and closer intelligence cooperation are increasingly being treated as matters of national survival. There is, however, a danger in assuming that a regional security bloc will automatically produce stability. If the Middle East becomes divided into opposing camps, competition could become more

dangerous rather than less. Iran may respond to growing regional cooperation by strengthening its own alliances and increasing support for non-state groups. A cycle of retaliation could follow. The Gulf states therefore face a delicate task. They need sufficient strength to deter Iranian intervention, but they also need channels through which disputes can be contained. Military power without diplomacy can produce temporary victories while leaving the underlying conflict unresolved. For Pakistan, these developments deserve close attention. Islamabad has traditionally maintained relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran. That position has sometimes been difficult, but it remains strategically valuable. Pakistan cannot afford to become a party to a wider confrontation between regional powers. At the same time, developments in the Gulf directly affect Pakistan through energy supplies, remittances, trade and the welfare of millions of Pakistanis working in the region. The changing Middle East therefore requires careful diplomacy rather than automatic alignment. Iran's economic vulnerability may eventually push Tehran towards negotiation. But the larger transformation is taking place among its neighbours. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf states increasingly recognise that their security cannot permanently be outsourced to Washington. The Middle East may not be becoming peaceful. It may, however, be becoming more responsible for its own security. That could prove to be the most significant change of all. If regional states learn to combine deterrence with diplomacy, the gradual reduction of American policing need not create a vacuum. It could instead encourage the emergence of a regional balance in which states themselves carry a greater share of the responsibility for preventing conflict. The real test will be whether they use their growing power to prepare for the next war or to make the next war less likely. – The writer is Assistant Professor Pakistan Studies Imperial College of Business Studies Lahore muhammad.akram@imperial.edu.pk

When Dignity Transcends Politics

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Born on December 25, 1937, into a respected family of Gujranwala, Virk grew up in Kamu Workan, also known as Qila Kamu Workan. His father, Chaudhry Bashir Ahmed Virk, was remembered for his humanity during the upheaval of Partition in 1947, when he provided protection to Sikh and Hindu families, including that of Captain Ajit Singh Butalia

IN the National Assembly of Pakistan, where representatives from diverse regions and political parties assemble to debate the affairs of the state, disagreements are inevitable. Party loyalties often sharpen political differences, and parliamentary proceedings can become an arena of intense confrontation. Yet, from time to time, individuals emerge whose conduct transcends these divisions, reminding their colleagues that public service demands more than political allegiance. Chaudhry Mahmood Bashir Virk, the veteran parliamentarian from Gujranwala who passed away on September 11, 2026, at the age of 88, was one such figure. The tributes paid to him by members across the political spectrum offered a reminder that personal dignity remains among the most enduring qualities of parliamentary life. Born on December 25, 1937, into a respected family of Gujranwala, Virk grew up in Kamu Workan, also known as Qila Kamu Workan. His father, Chaudhry Bashir Ahmed Virk, was remembered for his humanity during the upheaval of Partition in 1947, when he provided protection to Sikh and Hindu families, including that of Captain Ajit Singh Butalia. According to family accounts, he pledged on the Holy Quran to safeguard those entrusted to his care. This example of compassion across religious boundaries offers a meaningful glimpse into the moral traditions within which Mahmood Bashir Virk was raised. Chaudhry Mahmood Bashir Virk chose law as his profession, becoming a senior legal practitioner and serving as president of the Gujranwala District Bar Association. He also taught at a private law college in his hometown. His professional experience brought him into sustained contact with legal principles, judicial procedure and the concerns of ordinary citizens. These foundations would later prove valuable in a parliamentary career in which the quality of legislation and respect for constitutional processes were central responsibilities. His political journey began in local government. Elect-

ed chairman of a union council in 1962, he entered public life long before securing a seat in the National Assembly. His first election to the National Assembly came in 1997, when he represented Gujranwala as a candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Although he lost the 2002 general election, he returned to Parliament in 2008 and was re-elected in 2013, 2018 and 2024. His election to five National Assembly terms reflected a sustained relationship with his constituents in a political environment often characterised by shifting loyalties and electoral uncertainty. He remained closely associated with PML-N and its leadership, particularly Nawaz Sharif. Nevertheless, the significance of his parliamentary career lay not merely in his political affiliations but also in the manner in which he discharged his responsibilities. His colleagues remembered him for his composure, courtesy and willingness to listen, including to those who disagreed with him. In a legislature where political differences can sometimes overshadow institutional obligations, such qualities are neither insignificant nor easily acquired. In January 2018, Virk joined the federal cabinet of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as Minister for Law and Justice. He held the portfolio until the dissolution of the National Assembly in May that year. The appointment brought his legal experience into the sphere of executive responsibility, where legislation, constitutional requirements and administrative judgement intersect. He subsequently returned to Parliament following the 2018 election and continued his legislative work. His association with the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Law and Justice further reflected the connection between his professional training and public responsibilities. As chairman, he presided over deliberations concerning government legislation and private members' bills. Parliamentary committees perform an essential function in democratic governance by examining proposed laws, scrutinising their implications and providing opportunities for informed

discussion beyond the political theatre of the main chamber. The patience and fairness attributed to Virk in conducting such proceedings were therefore qualities relevant not only to his personal reputation but also to the effective functioning of Parliament. Following his death, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq expressed their condolences and acknowledged his parliamentary, political and social services. Members of the Assembly also paid tribute to him during the session held on October 13, 2026. Their expressions of grief reflected the loss of a longstanding colleague and invited a broader consideration of the values that sustain democratic institutions. A parliament is strengthened not simply by the laws it passes, but also by the standards of conduct its members establish for those who follow them. His death marked the end of a life that had traversed the legal profession, local government, national politics and ministerial office. The Holy Quran reminds humanity that honour and authority ultimately belong to Almighty Allah: "You honour whom You will, and You humble whom You will" (Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:26). The verse places worldly position in its proper perspective, reminding us that titles and authority are temporary, while the moral consequences of how they are exercised carry a deeper significance. Chaudhry Mahmood Bashir Virk's public life spanned more than six decades. His five terms in the National Assembly, his tenure as federal law minister and his work in parliamentary committees constitute the formal record of his service. Yet the respect expressed by colleagues across party lines points to something less easily recorded: the value of civility, professional integrity and human decency in public affairs. His life serves as a reminder that political differences need not extinguish mutual respect, and that the lasting stature of a parliamentarian rests as much upon his character as upon the offices he holds.

Briefs

Islamabad to seek...

FROM PAGE 01

judicial independence, and treatment of political opposition have featured regularly in EU assessments. To prepare for the 2027 application, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are expected to intensify coordination with industry bodies, provincial labour departments, and human-rights commissions. Officials acknowledge that “hectic lobbying” will be required both in Brussels and through member-state capitals. Capacity-building programmes focused on data collection, factory inspections, and reporting on convention implementation are already under discussion. Whether these efforts will satisfy the stricter monitoring mechanisms of the new regulation remains an open question.

Pak, EU agree to...

FROM PAGE 01

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on recent regional and global developments affecting the terrorism threat landscape and unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms, reaffirming their commitment to combating the threat. According to FO, the EU condemned recent terrorist attacks in Pakistan, expressed solidarity with the suffering of affected civilians and recognised the value of Pakistan’s efforts to combat terrorism. “Acknowledging each other’s role in the ongoing global fight against terrorism, Pakistan and the EU expressed concern at the security implications of the situation in Afghanistan,” the statement added.

PM backs KP emergency...

FROM PAGE 01

militancy had been undermined. He said the province’s people had paid the price, while several political families had also suffered losses during the fight against terrorism. The PM alleged that the “previous” provincial government had neglected education, healthcare and public safety. He said 5,000 police vacancies had remained unfilled during its tenure, while the Safe City project was still incomplete. He also criticised the lack of attention given to the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), police training and the provision of modern weapons and equipment to security personnel.

Deportations climb...

FROM PAGE 01

Trump, a Republican, returned to power last year promising to stanch crossings at the southern border and crack down on immigration. His administration has pushed through restrictions on both legal and illegal immigration and launched high-profile arrest operations in its bid to force migrants out. More people being deported, but not at all-time highs. The analysis found that the Department of Homeland Security carried out 980,000 deportations during the first 18 months of the second Trump administration. During the last fiscal year – when the Trump administration’s immigration enforcement mechanisms were shifting into high gear – an estimated 660,000 people were deported.

President off to...

FROM PAGE 01

the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries being commemorated this year”. It said the visit reflects the “deep commitment of both countries to further strengthening the partnership”. During his visit, President Zardari will hold meetings with his German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier, as well as senior leadership and business leaders, with a “particular focus economic and trade cooperation”, FO said.

Fifth Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open to take place in the New Year

“The tournament has grown significantly in just a few years, while its impact reaches beyond the court through its engagement with young players, schools and the wider community”

DNA

ABU DHABI: The Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open, presented by the Abu Dhabi Sports Council, will celebrate its milestone fifth edition from Jan. 30 to Feb. 6 at the International Tennis Centre, Zayed Sports City, the organizers have announced. In 2026, the WTA 500 tournament welcomed more than 60,000 people, and will now run under the campaign theme “5 Years Strong – Strong on court. Strong in community. Stronger than ever.” The tournament’s growing popularity has helped establish it as a major fixture on the international tennis calendar, with many of the world’s best players participating at the start of the WTA season. The 2027 tournament will once again fea-

ture 28 singles players and 16 doubles teams competing across eight days, with a \$1.2-million prize fund and valuable WTA ranking points on offer. Aref Hamad Al-Awani, secretary-general of the Abu Dhabi Sports Council, said it was a “milestone” event. “The tournament has grown significantly in just a few years, while its impact reaches beyond the court through its engagement with young players, schools and the wider community. “Through these initiatives, we aim to support the development of tennis, strengthen sporting culture and encourage people to make sport a way of life. “We look forward to welcoming another world-class field to Abu Dhabi and continuing to use major sporting events to inspire participation, connect communities and reinforce the emirate’s position as a leading global sporting destination.”

Homaïd Al-Shimmari, deputy group CEO, Mubadala Investment Co., said the tournament reflects the company’s longstanding commitment to tennis. “Beyond bringing the world’s best players to Abu Dhabi, the tournament serves as a platform to inspire young people, encourage greater participation in sport, and bring families and communities together.” He added: “Reaching a fifth edition, we are proud to build on this momentum alongside our partners, creating opportunities for the next generation and delivering a lasting legacy that extends well beyond the court.” Nigel Gupta, tournament director at MARI, the event’s organizer, said that “what is most exciting is how much the tournament has grown in such a short space of time. “Seeing over 60,000 in attendance in 2026 was remarkable and a real testament to the

appetite for world-class tennis in Abu Dhabi and the kind of fan experience we have tried to build. “The tournament village has become a destination in itself, where a growing community of fans, young players and families come together to enjoy everything surrounding the tennis. “We have built something that goes far beyond the court and are determined to make the fifth edition our strongest yet.” For the 2027 edition, the tournament will introduce a new Village Pass, giving fans of all ages and families access to the 15,000 sq. meter Mubadala Village. The event has also made its mark on the wider sporting landscape, becoming the first WTA-only event to stage a wheelchair tennis tournament and reinforcing its commitment to inclusion and growing opportunities to engage with the sport.

Maradona doctor was made ‘scapegoat’

DNA

SAN ISIDRO: A lawyer for Leopoldo Luque, a doctor charged in the 2020 death of Argentine football legend Diego Maradona, said in closing arguments on Wednesday that his client was innocent and had been made a “scapegoat.” Attorney Roberto Rallin rejected the prosecution’s argument that Maradona’s November 2020 death was foreseeable, while another defence attorney, Francisco Oneto, maintained that his death resulted from an “acute and unpredictable” heart attack. There was absolutely no possibility of predicting this fatal outcome,” Oneto insisted. Prosecutors have requested a 12-year prison sentence for Luque, a neurosurgeon considered a key decision-maker for Maradona at the time of his death. “We are here to proclaim Luque’s innocence, not with television slogans, but

with the evidence that supports it,” Rallin said. “Leopoldo Luque has been the scapegoat.” Maradona died at age 60 from a cardiorespiratory crisis coupled with pulmonary edema. He was found dead in his bed at a residence in Tigre, north of Buenos Aires, rented for his convalescence, following surgery for a subdural hematoma. The death of Argentina’s favourite son plunged the country into mourning in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Tens of thousands of people defied social distancing rules to bid farewell to him as he lay in state at the presidential palace. A total of seven health-care professionals have been on trial since April for potential negligence leading to the star’s death during his two weeks of convalescence. Prosecutors have requested sentences ranging from four to 12 years for six of the seven defendants. In its closing arguments, the prosecution condemned

Saka injury doesn’t look good, says Arsenal manager Arteta

DNA

ARSENAL manager Mikel Arteta said he is worried about the severity of Bukayo Saka’s quadriceps injury after the winger left the pitch in the 10th minute of Wednesday’s 2-2 Champions League draw at Bayern Munich. The 25-year-old clutched his left thigh after falling while attempting a pass and was replaced by Eberechi Eze. “When a player has to come off with sharp pain it is never good news. We have to wait and see,” Arteta told TNT Sports. “He doesn’t look good at all, but we’ll have to wait and see.” Saka missed seven games last season with an Achilles problem and had hamstring surgery in December 2024 which sidelined him for more than three months.

Saudi’s Al-Nakhli and Al-Zahrani win gold

DNA

DUBAI: Saudi athletes Ali Al-Nakhli and Thamer Al-Zahrani each claimed gold at the fifth Asian Para Games (Aichi-Nagoya 2026) on Wednesday. The tournament, in Japan, runs until Oct. 24. Al-Nakhli’s medal came in the 100-meter T37 event, which he won with a time of 11.31 seconds, while his teammate Al-Zahrani added the second gold by taking the honors in the 400-meter T37 with a time of 55.74 seconds. Saudi athletes competing in other disciplines included Hani Al-Nakhli, who was unable to complete the 400 meters due to injury, and Hadeel Al-Thuwaiel, who finished fourth in the shot put with a throw of 6.78 meters. Nada Al-Humaidani finished fourth in the discus throw with 17.30 meters. In the swimming events, Hussein Al-Rashed finished seventh in the 200-meter freestyle with a time of 3:32.99 minutes, while teammate Ibrahim Al-Marzouqi was eighth in 3:35.06. Al-Rashed also came fourth in the 100-meter breaststroke with a time of 1:58.42 minutes. The cycling competitions saw Sara Al-Jumrah finish fifth in the T1-2 women’s time trial, with a time of 39:45.91 minutes, while Fahd Al-Dosari came sixth in the men’s event with 25:32.79 minutes. His teammate, Fawaz Al-Fawaz, was seventh with a time of 27:18.15. In table tennis, Saudi duo Ibrahim Al-Hassan and Rakan Al-Salmi lost 3-1 to India and 3-2 to South Korea in the group stages of the men’s doubles. In the women’s doubles, Mariam Al-Muraiseel and Zahraa Al-Tale’ lost to 3-0 to Thailand. The mixed doubles saw Al-Muraiseel and Al-Hassan secure a 3-0 victory over India before losing 3-0 to both South Korea and Thailand.

LeBron James makes 76ers home debut against his hometown Cavaliers

DNA

NEW YORK: The new-look Philadelphia 76ers are off to a flying start – and now they’ll take the court in front of the home fans for the first time Thursday when the Cleveland Cavaliers come to town. The Sixers’ starting lineup returns Tyrese Maxey, Joel Embiid and VJ Edgecombe, although a couple of star-studded additions – LeBron James and Jaylen Brown – have raised expectations in the City of Brotherly Love. The team looked a bit rusty early in Tuesday’s season opener against the defending champion New York Knicks, but a strong second half resulted in a promising 106-100 triumph. Maxey led the way with 28 points, while Brown had 19 and Embiid chipped in with 13 points, 11 rebounds and six assists. “We’re not even at the tip of the iceberg in terms of chemistry, understanding ourselves on the floor, understanding our spacing,” said Brown, who added eight rebounds and six assists. “We’re still at the very early stages of what we can possibly be. So it’s a good sign that we can win while still being in that early stage.” In the first game of his record 24th NBA season, James registered 14 points, nine rebounds and seven assists. He signed a two-year deal with Philadelphia in the offseason after eight seasons with the Los Angeles Lakers. “We’re still new to each other,” James said. “We had some turnovers that were kind of unforced... Tonight we knew we gave them some pick-sixes in the first half, and we gave them offensive rebounds. ... We cleaned that up in the second half and that’s the sign of a good team.” Many NBA pundits thought James would re-sign with the Cavaliers in the offseason after two previous stints with his hometown team.

Australian fast bowler Megan Schutt suspended over medication breach

DNA

STAR Australian fast bowler Megan Schutt was suspended for two matches on Thursday for breaching prescription medication rules. The 33-year-old, who was a standout in Australia’s recent one-day series against Bangladesh, apologised for “failing to meet the standards” expected of her. Cricket Australia said in a statement she breached “requirements under the Sports Science and Sports Medicine guidelines with regard to prescription medication”. “This relates to a single incident which occurred while out of competition and was not for performance-enhancing purposes,” it added. We will continue to provide appropriate support to Megan and reinforce the standards and responsibilities expected of everyone representing our game.”

Verstappen bids to delay Antonelli’s F1 coronation in US

AUSTIN: Max Verstappen is set to be a party-pooper this weekend as he seeks to delay Kimi Antonelli’s title celebrations by notching a third consecutive win with another triumph at the United States Grand Prix. Red Bull’s four-time world champion won both the Bahrain Grand Prix in Malaysia and then the Singapore Grand Prix to emerge as a leading contender for more success just when Mercedes’ precocious 20-year-old Italian moved within reach of the title. The 29-year-old Dutchman, who has acknowledged Antonelli’s generational talent, won from pole at the Circuit of the Americas last year and is chasing a fifth win at the Texan track where Ferrari’s Lewis Hamilton was won five times. But Verstappen has been reluctant to claim that Red Bull’s recovery in form and results will automatically translate to more success. “It’s difficult to say – I don’t want to say now that I will be in the fight in Austin,” he said after his Singapore win. “But the last few weekends have been great. I just take it race by race and we’ll see how it goes there. It’s another very different kind of track.” After a run of seven podium finishes in his last eight races, including two wins and three second places, Verstappen, 119 points adrift in fourth, may well scupper

hopes that Antonelli can win and, with the stars aligning, become Italy’s first champion since 1953 and the youngest in F1 history. To seize the title in Texas, the Italian, who leads Mercedes team-mate George Russell by 102 points, needs to win the race and see Russell fail to finish in the top nine and Hamilton outside the top four. Antonelli was only four years old when Sebastian Vettel took the record as youngest champion, with Red Bull, in 2010, and he knows he must stay focused and race to win, as he always does. “I know it’s very close and I know it’s there, but I need to make sure I keep doing my best and go out and win and perform in my best way,” he said. Italy’s last champion was Alberto Ascari for Ferrari. McLaren’s deputy team principal Bradley Lord drew upon tennis when he described Antonelli’s position by saying: “We’re in that uncomfortable phase where you have to navigate the media with everyone saying ‘you can do it – you’ve got first match point.’” Russell’s hopes of reining in Antonelli may be aided by Verstappen while Hamilton could also be a threat as he returns to one of his favorite circuits seeking a record sixth win and seventh in the United States GP. – DNA

Rice rescues Arsenal at Bayern as Real Madrid hit four

Isco’s 59th-minute penalty following a handball gave Real Betis victory over Feyenoord in Seville, while Club Brugge beat Lens 3-0 through goals from Hans Vanaken, Joaquin Seys and Carlos Forbs

DNA

MADRID: Declan Rice rescued Arsenal with a late equalizer in an electric 2-2 Champions League draw at Bayern Munich on Wednesday, while Real Madrid beat RB Leipzig 4-1 and Como handed Manchester United a bruising defeat by the same score. Arsenal’s evening in Germany began ominously when Bukayo Saka limped out of the contest in the 10th minute, clutching his knee after falling while attempting a pass. Fifteen minutes later, however, Eberechi Eze raced on to Martin Odegaard’s long ball and fired an angled shot past Manuel Neuer. Initially flagged offside, the goal was awarded following a VAR review.

Bayern replied in the 35th minute when Harry Kane released Alphonso Davies down the left with a through ball from halfway, the Canadian breaking clear before beating David Raya with a composed right-footed finish. Kane put the hosts ahead from the penalty spot in the 61st minute after his shot struck Jurrien Timber’s raised hand, blasting his 58th Champions League goal into the roof of the net. But Rice had the final say eight minutes from time, exchanging passes with Viktor Gyokeres inside the box before slotting past Neuer. At the Santiago Bernabeu, Real’s emphatic scoreline owed much to goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who denied Romulo’s close-range volley and thwarted Christopher Nkunku one-on-one before the hosts found their rhythm. Bernardo Silva broke the deadlock in the 43rd minute, pouncing to tap home almost on the goalline after Leipzig goalkeeper Maarten Vandevoordt spilled Federico Valverde’s shot. Arda Guler doubled the lead seven minutes after halftime, beating a defender to Kylian Mbappe’s goalbound header from Jude Bellingham’s cross. Mbappe curled a shot into the top corner in the 83rd minute before Tidiam Gomis pulled one back a minute later. Substitute Yan Diomande capped Real’s victory with a spectacular volley from Braham Diaz’s cross. Elsewhere, Galatasaray won 4-2 at

Lille, Inter Milan edged Shakhtar Donetsk 1-0, Aston Villa beat Viking Stavanger 3-1 and Real Betis beat Feyenoord 1-0, while LASK stunned Sporting 3-2 in Lisbon. Paris St. Germain, Aston Villa, Real Madrid, Liverpool and Real Betis top the standings having all made perfect starts to their Champions League campaigns, with three wins from three matches. Inter Milan overcame Alessandro Bastoni’s dismissal to beat Shakhtar Donetsk, Carlos Augusto controlling Henrikh Mkhitaryan’s long pass in his stride before scoring the 77th-minute winner. Bastoni had received a second booking eight minutes earlier for pushing an opponent away from the ball. Aston Villa comfortably beat Norway’s Viking, Ross Barkley heading the opener from a corner before Emiliano Buendia converted a penalty and Alysson found the net with a deflected shot. Peter Christiansen struck Viking’s late consolation. Isco’s 59th-minute penalty following a handball gave Real Betis victory over Feyenoord in Seville, while Club Brugge beat Lens 3-0 through goals from Hans Vanaken, Joaquin Seys and Carlos Forbs. LASK stunned Sporting, recovering from Luis Suarez’s early penalty with goals from Christoph Lang, Sasa Kalajdzic and Krystof Danek. Suarez scored again in the 89th minute but the hosts could not salvage a point. Earlier, Nico Paz tormented

Manchester United with two goals and an assist as Como swept to victory in northern Italy, while Galatasaray won a six-goal thriller at Lille. Paz put Como ahead inside two minutes with a curling effort from the edge of the box, then helped double the lead four minutes after halftime, threading a perfectly weighted pass through for Anastasios Douvikas to finish first time past the advancing goalkeeper. The Argentine then robbed Carlos Baleba near the right touchline and surged diagonally for more than 30 meters before steering a left-footed finish inside the far post. Jacobo Ramon headed Como’s fourth from substitute Kaiki Bruno’s cross in the 76th minute, with Joshua Zirkzee grabbing United’s stoppage-time consolation from Amad Diallo’s delivery. In France, Galatasaray recovered from surrendering an early lead to beat Lille 4-2. Yunus Akgun fired the visitors ahead shortly after kickoff, but Soriba Diaoune equalized five minutes later and struck again in the 39th minute to put Lille in front. Alexey Batrakov headed Galatasaray level in the 44th minute before Lucas Torreira appeared to glance home a corner in the 52nd, although the effort was later credited as a Nabil Bentaleb own goal. Victor Osimhen completed the scoring nine minutes later with a powerful strike from the edge of the box.

Direct flights between Pak, Maldives...

FROM PAGE 01

“I have given instructions to our Civil Aviation Department to immediately invite a delegation from [the] Maldives and work out a plan whereby we can start these air flights between the two countries as early as possible,” PM Shehbaz added.

LHC summons Punjab...

FROM PAGE 01

However, during the proceedings, Ahd Khan, husband of Uzma Khan, requested the court to summon the Lahore deputy commissioner as well. At this, Justice Abher Gul observed that the deputy commissioner could not be summoned when the official had not been made a party to the case. Aleema Khan’s son, Shahrez Khan, filed a fresh petition in the LHC a day ago challenging the detention of Imran Khan’s sisters. The petition stated that the sisters remained detained at Lahore’s Kot Lakhpat Jail despite the expiry of the 30-day detention period.

TTAP sets two conditions...

FROM PAGE 01

while speaking during a Senate session on Tuesday. Sanaullah previously rejected Achakzai’s demand for a neutral venue to meet PM Shehbaz, insisting that talks must take place at the PM House. “Prime Minister House is not anyone’s personal property; it belongs to the state,” he had said. Meanwhile, the TTAP spokesperson said that negotiations should not be obstructed by ego or stubbornness, adding that Achakzai had also suggested meeting at the residence of Sanaullah or Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry.

Canada looks beyond the US

FROM PAGE 01

US President Donald Trump, marked by US tariffs on Canadian goods, retaliatory measures by Canada and statements questioning Canadian sovereignty. In an interview with Turkey’s state-run Anadolu Agency, Canada’s Ambassador to Turkey, Marcel Lebleu, said this week that the visit’s main purpose was to “launch a strategic partnership through a joint declaration by the two leaders.” Talks would focus on cooperation in energy, nuclear plants, sustainable mining and the defense industry. The two countries would also hold negotiations on a free-trade agreement, he said.

‘Agenda more important...

FROM PAGE 01

National Assembly Mahmood Khan Achakzai to discuss matters of national interest and fulfil constitutional requirements. Earlier today, opposition alliance Tehreek Tahaffuz Aiyee-e-Pakistan (TTAP) proposed the Constitution Room in Parliament for a potential meeting between the premier and Achakzai. “If the prime minister comes to the opposition chamber, we will take him to the Constitution Room,” TTAP spokesperson Akhunzada Hussain told Geo News, adding that the opposition wanted negotiations to take place at a neutral venue without ego or stubbornness obstructing dialogue.

ICC wins EU top rights prize

FROM PAGE 01

The ICC thanked the European Parliament for giving it the Sakharov Prize “at a time when the Court and its officials face unprecedented challenges”. “Against this backdrop, the Sakharov Prize carries particular significance, reaffirming the importance of independent judicial institutions and of those who work to uphold international law,” ICC President Tomoko Akane said.

Briefs

Gold prices
decline by
Rs3,000 per
tola

ISLAMABAD Gold prices witnessed a decline in the domestic market on Thursday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola falling by Rs3,000 to Rs431,536, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold decreased by Rs2,572 to Rs369,972, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold declined by Rs2,358 to Rs339,153. In the international market, the price of gold fell by \$30 to \$4,090 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola dropped by Rs121 to Rs6,086, while the price of 10 grams of 24-karat silver decreased by Rs104 to Rs5,217. The price of silver in the international market also registered a decline, falling by \$1.21 to \$56.08 per ounce, the association added.—APP

Gaza's
remaining
bakeries face
closure within
48 hours amid
flour shortage

LONDON: Flour stocks in warehouses across Gaza have run out, leaving the territory's seven remaining operational bakeries at risk of closing within 48 hours unless fresh supplies are allowed in, the head of Gaza's Bakeries Association said on Thursday.

Abdul Nasser Al-Ajrami told the Palestine News Agency, WAFA, that Israel's closure of Gaza's crossings over the past week and its continued refusal to allow commercial flour shipments through, despite a partial reopening, had exhausted supplies. Only seven of Gaza's 20 bakeries remain open, he said, warning that those still operating could soon be forced to close, cutting off bread supplies to residents. Al-Ajrami said flour available in local markets came from the UN World Food Programme, while commercial bakeries dependent on shipments through the crossings had stopped operating. The shortage comes alongside cuts to the UN's assistance because of a severe funding shortfall, increasing demand for flour and driving up prices. Carl Skau, the UN World Food Programme's acting executive director, said on Oct. 18 that funding constraints had forced the agency to reduce the number of people receiving assistance in Gaza from 1.8 million to about 500,000. The cuts reflected a lack of money, not a decline in need, as winter approaches, he said.—APP

Indonesia
urged to
reconsider
involvement in
Trump's Gaza
board

JAKARTA: Indonesia should reconsider its involvement in US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan because it is being shaped by Israel and the US and lacks a Palestinian voice, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories told Reuters on Thursday. Trump announced in January that he was setting up a "Board of Peace" to address global conflicts typically handled by the UN. Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, has said it would be a member of the new body and it has also pledged troops to be deployed to Gaza as part of an international stabilization force. Francesca Albanese, a human rights lawyer and UN special rapporteur known for her criticism of Israel, said in an interview in Jakarta that Indonesia has historically supported the Palestinian cause but joining the board was dangerous. Indonesia's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday that its Board of Peace discussions remained on hold, reiterating its earlier position. A number of Western capitals have criticized Albanese, while the US has imposed sanctions on her. "I understand (Indonesia's) good intentions. I still think that it's very dangerous, because it risks to normalize a very abnormal mechanism," she said.—APP

Jam reviews exporters' concerns,
seeks steps to boost exports

Regarding China, he said Pakistan had been advocating greater tariff concessions in line with preferential treatment available to other countries. Discussions on preferential trade arrangements with South Korea were also progressing, while engagement with other trading partners continued through diplomatic missions, trade offices and bilateral consultations.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan on Thursday reviewed issues hampering Pakistan's exports and discussed practical measures to improve competitiveness, reduce the cost of doing business and expand access to international markets.

He chaired a follow-up consultative meeting with leading exporters and senior government officials to assess progress on issues raised during an earlier meeting and identify solutions requiring policy intervention, said a news release.

Minister of State for Finance and Revenue, Bilal Azhar Kayani, senior officials of the Ministry of Commerce and representatives of relevant ministries and departments attended the meeting, while exporters participated both in person and virtually.

At the outset, a consolidated presentation was made on concerns raised by exporters and responses provided by relevant government departments. The ensuing discussion focused on outstanding issues related to energy costs, taxation, financing constraints, regulatory procedures and international market access.

Jam Kamal Khan said the government was pursuing improved access to international markets through sustained diplomatic and trade engagements. Pakistan was also re-

viewing existing trade arrangements and seeking enhanced preferential access with major trading partners, including China, South Korea, Türkiye, Japan and Vietnam. Regarding China, he said Pakistan had been advocating greater tariff concessions in line with preferential treatment available to other countries. Discussions on preferential trade arrangements with South Korea were also progressing, while engagement with other trading partners continued through diplomatic missions, trade offices and bilateral consultations.

On market access for Pakistani tyre exports to Türkiye, officials informed the meeting that certain tyre categories already benefited from concessions under the bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement. Exporters were encouraged to submit specific product details and HS codes to enable the Ministry to pursue outstanding issues with Turkish counterparts.

The meeting also reviewed industrial energy costs, particularly the gas levy and its implications for export competitiveness. Participants were informed that the Ministry of Finance had constituted a committee comprising relevant government and industry representatives to review the levy policy and its calculation formula and recommend possible improvements.

The Punjab infrastructure cess was also discussed, with exporters highlighting concerns regarding its application, collection mechanism and additional costs. The meeting emphasized the need for clarity regarding the legal framework, exemptions and coordination with relevant provincial authorities. On taxation, participants discussed proposals to rationalize export-related eligibility thresholds, explore proportionate super tax relief linked to export-derived income and address concerns regarding additional sales tax and refund arrangements for non-traditional exporters. Relevant proposals would be examined in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and FBR. The Export Facilitation Scheme was reviewed, particularly procedural requirements, eligibility criteria and possible improvements to facilitate exporters. Participants also proposed enhancing incentives under the export growth scheme to encourage businesses to increase their international sales. Exporters highlighted certification charges and repeated documentation amendment fees imposed by the Department of Plant Protection. The meeting emphasized rationalizing regulatory charges to ensure institutional sustainability without placing unnecessary financial burdens on exporters. The Ministry of Commerce was already examining the matter. Business visa

restrictions, foreign travel advisories and associated insurance costs also came under discussion. Participants were informed that the relevant authorities were pursuing these issues through diplomatic channels, while options to expedite visa processing for verified exporters and business representatives were being explored. The minister underscored the potential for expanding livestock and dairy exports, directing officials to coordinate new proposals with ongoing government initiatives and consultations involving relevant ministries and private-sector stakeholders. Consolidated recommendations would be prepared to identify additional opportunities for sectoral development. Participants also discussed the importance of maintaining Pakistan's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) status through continued compliance with international commitments and sustained engagement with European partners to safeguard preferential market access. The minister stressed that consultations must lead to practical outcomes through effective coordination among federal ministries, provincial governments, regulatory authorities and leading exporters. He emphasized that even relatively small regulatory costs and procedural difficulties could collectively affect exporters' competitiveness and therefore required attention.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: FGEHA Chief Engineer Syed Muhammad Hassan and FDHL Executive Director Brigadier (Retd) Muhammad Nadeem Aslam with Director General FGEHA Captain (Retd) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal following the signing of the MoU.

Qatari, France
explore industrial
partnerships

RIYADH: The Qatari Businessmen Association discussed expanding mutual investment and industrial partnerships with French Foreign Trade Minister Nicolas Forissier, seeking joint projects that support economic diversification. The meeting, hosted by the association, was attended by its chairman Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani as well as other board members, Qatar Financial Centre CEO Mansoor Rashid Al Khater, and a delegation of major French companies. The discussions come as Qatar seeks to deepen foreign investment and develop a more diversified, knowledge-based economy under its National Vision 2030 program. While bilateral trade with France has expanded, the latest talks point to a broader ambition to move beyond traditional trade and distribution toward industrial partnerships, technology transfer and projects that create greater value within Qatar. France-Qatar goods trade rose 36.2 percent in 2025 to 1.67 billion (\$1.87 billion), still below the 2023 level of 2.8 billion, according to the French Treasury. France's trade surplus tripled to 1.41 billion, the second-largest in the Middle East, as exports more than doubled on aircraft deliveries. "Combining the investment capabilities of Qatari companies with French industrial and technological expertise offers broad opportunities for value-added projects for both economies," Qatar News Agency reported Sheikh Faisal as saying. Forissier stressed the need to turn agreements into tangible projects and to support small and medium-sized firms. He said about 3 billion has been allocated to startups in France and called for a joint business council. Board member Sheikh Nawaf bin Nasser bin Khalid Al Thani urged a shift from agencies, imports and distribution to industrial partnerships, including technology localization. _APP

Pak's incomes could triple by 2050
with faster structural reforms: WB

The report said sustained progress would depend on further reforms to improve the business environment, overhaul the tax system, reduce the state's role in the economy and expand access to finance

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank Group on Thursday released its latest report, titled Pakistan Development Update: October 2026 — Attaining Escape Velocity, saying the country could triple its incomes by 2050 through accelerated structural reforms to boost private investment and sustain economic growth. The report said that following progress in macroeconomic stabilization, Pakistan has an opportunity to achieve faster and sustained economic growth and create more jobs.— Sound macroeconomic policies in recent years have helped stabilize the economy and preserve growth despite the impact of the Middle East conflict, it said, adding that the real gross domestic product (GDP) growth increased to 3.7 percent in fiscal year 2026 (FY26), up from 3.2 percent in FY25. Revenue growth and expenditure restraint supported record primary fiscal surpluses, which reached 2.9 percent of GDP in FY26. Meanwhile, strong remittances enabled the country to rebuild its foreign exchange reserves, the study said. It said the improvements were recognized through credit rating upgrades by two major international rating agencies, S&P and Moody's, and enabled Pakistan to return to international debt markets with the issuance of a \$3 billion Eurobond. "Pakistan has made real progress in restoring stability, and markets have taken notice," World Bank country director for Pakistan Bolormaa Amgaabazar said while launching the report. "But real per capita growth, the rate at which the income of the average Pakistani increases, remains stuck at around 1.6 percent. Reforms to drive faster growth are now urgently needed," she added. The report found that stronger growth was achievable if Pakistan follows the path of other successful countries by pursuing ambitious economic reforms. "Upgrading policies and institutions to levels comparable with those of the average middle-income country could support sustained annual growth of 6.2 to 6.9 percent. Such growth could enable Pakistan to reach Vietnam's current income level by 2050," it added. "With macro stabilization achieved but fiscal resources and foreign exchange still tightly constrained, structural reform to encourage private investment is the necessary next step towards higher living standards," said Sebastian Essl, lead author of the report. "Achieving this kind of private-sector-led growth requires a plan, coordination, and committed reform implementation," he added. The report outlined an ambitious package of reforms that could help Pakistan attain by 2050 the per capita income levels of countries currently classified at the upper-middle-income threshold. It said several proposed measures build on reforms were already under way, adding "These include timely power-sector tariff adjustments, which helped reduce energy subsidies from 1.1 percent of GDP in FY25 to 0.8 percent in FY26, continued trade liberalization under the National Tariff Policy and the recent privatization of Pakistan International Airlines.—DNA

Jordan's
King rejects
Israeli
attacks on
Syria

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II on Thursday condemned Israeli attacks on Syrian territory and reaffirmed his country's support for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The king made the remarks during a meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Al-Shaibani in Jordan's Aqaba, where they discussed regional developments and efforts to ease tensions, according to the Jordan News Agency.

During the meeting, King Abdullah and Al-Shaibani highlighted the need for closer coordination to promote regional security and stability.

The meeting came as Israeli forces reportedly killed a man with a disability during an incursion into Jamla village in the western countryside of Daraa, southern Syria, according to the Syrian state news agency.

Israeli troops entered the village early Thursday, deploying snipers on the rooftops of residential buildings, SANA reported.

The incursion followed Israeli artillery shelling near the town of Abidin in the Yarmouk Basin area on Wednesday evening. Two shells landed west of the town, with no casualties or damage reported.

Israel has carried out repeated strikes and ground incursions into southern Syria since the overthrow of Bashar Assad in December 2024, when its forces moved into a UN-monitored buffer zone established under a 1974 disengagement agreement.

Damascus has repeatedly demanded Israel's withdrawal, accusing it of violating Syrian sovereignty and international law.—APP

Lebanon
govt efforts
in preserving
state institutions
lauded

BEIRUT: Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Fahad bin Abdulrahman Al-Dosari praised on Wednesday the Lebanese government's efforts to preserve the state and its national institutions. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam received Ambassador Al-Dosari at the Grand Serail with the ambassador conveying the greetings of Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, said a statement from the PM's office.

The officials discussed bilateral relations and ways to boost cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. Al-Dosari underlined Saudi Arabia's support for Lebanon, praising the government's efforts to safeguard the state and its national institutions, the statement added. For his part, Salam stressed that Lebanon stands by Saudi Arabia and its efforts to protect its territories and citizens.—APP

WB
acknowledges
Pak's reform
progress

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Finance Minister Khuram Schehzad on Thursday said the World Bank (WB) had acknowledged Pakistan's progress in restoring macroeconomic stability, strengthening fiscal discipline and advancing structural reforms, while highlighting the country's potential to significantly increase per capita incomes by 2050.

In a post on social media platform X, the advisor while highlighting the key findings of the World Bank's latest Pakistan Development Update, titled Attaining Escape Velocity, released in October 2026, said the report recognized the improvement in Pakistan's economic indicators and outlined opportunities for achieving higher and sustainable growth through continued reforms. According to the report, Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP) growth increased to 3.7 percent in fiscal year 2026, compared with 3.2 percent in FY2025, despite global and regional challenges. The report also highlighted an improvement in fiscal performance, with the primary fiscal surplus reaching 2.9 percent of GDP, supported by higher revenues and expenditure discipline.—APP

Oil climbs more than \$1
on fresh Houthi attacks

Oil prices remain well bid, with ICE Brent back above \$110 per barrel this morning following additional deadly attacks on Saudi Arabia," analysts said in a note on Thursday

SINGAPORE: Oil prices rose more than \$1 a barrel on Thursday after more Houthi attacks in Saudi Arabia stoked concerns over a broader escalation of conflict and further disruptions to supplies from the Middle East. Brent crude futures rose \$1.93, or 1.77 percent, to \$110.75 a barrel at 07:42 a.m. Saudi time, while US West Texas Intermediate crude gained \$1.43, or 1.47 percent, to \$98.58. Brent had settled largely unchanged on Wednesday, while WTI had eased 67 cents. "Oil prices remain well bid, with ICE Brent back above \$110 per barrel this morning following additional deadly attacks on Saudi Arabia," ING analysts said in a note on Thursday.

The US State Department plans to withdraw family members from a number of other US missions in the region, US officials told Reuters.

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis struck several targets on Wednesday with at least one person killed and eight more wounded at a civilian airport in Dammam, and two people killed in a drone attack on a Saudi oil field. Explosions were also heard in Sirik in southern Iran, Iranian media reported on Wednesday, saying the nature and origin of the explosions were unknown.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy said on Thursday that four vessels involved in illegal oil transfers in the northern Persian Gulf were simultaneously hit and caught fire after being tracked by its forces on Wednesday. The IRGC added that three more vessels collided with mines west of the Strait of Hormuz, and warned the US military that continued provocations could lead to a wider response against its regional bases. Supply disruption continued to impact global inventories. US crude stocks fell by 3.06 million barrels to 412.5 million barrels last week, the US Energy Infor-

mation Administration said on Wednesday, compared with analysts' expectations in a Reuters poll for an 820,000-barrel draw. Distillate stockpiles, which include diesel and heating oil, rose 1.68 million barrels in the week to 104.3 million barrels, versus expectations for a 1.16 million-barrel drop, EIA data showed.

The Trump administration is offering to loan up to nearly a third of the 1-million-barrel US emergency heating oil reserve, the Department of Energy said on Wednesday, seeking to contain prices that have surged on diesel shortages due to the wars in Iran and Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff in St Petersburg on Wednesday for talks on ending the war in Ukraine amid Washington's latest push to stop Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War Two. The Kremlin said Putin had agreed to resume US-mediated peace talks with Ukraine as soon as next month. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he supported the talks and hoped they would start as soon as possible.—Agencies

Briefs

Govt approaches
JI for fresh
talks on
petroleum
levy

DNA

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal has contacted Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Vice Emir Liaquat Baloch as the government and the opposition party's negotiating committees prepare to meet in Islamabad on Friday to discuss the petroleum levy. The meeting will discuss the petroleum levy issue, while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and JI chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman are also scheduled to meet, JI Vice Emir Liaquat Baloch said. The government's renewed contact came after JI announced that it will launch the third phase of its nationwide protest movement against the petroleum levy on Friday (October 23), with sit-ins planned in all districts across the country. The federal govt and JI had agreed to form committees in early September, when the party planned a nationwide strike, to recommend measures to reduce the petroleum levy. However, on September 22, JI chief Naeem announced that the party was postponing its long march, whose convoy had reached Multan, at the request of PM Shehbaz, pending a meeting with him. At the time, the JI chief said PM Shehbaz had asked the party to postpone its march and invited its leadership for talks after his return to Pakistan.

Starlink access
in Ukraine
a decision
for Musk

MUMBAI: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday that decisions regarding Ukraine's access to Starlink were up to its parent company SpaceX and Elon Musk, not the White House, comments that suggested Musk may have restricted Kyiv's access to the service. The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday that Musk had ordered the slowdown of Starshield, a military-grade version of Starlink that Ukraine relies on to defend itself against missile attacks from Russia. The Journal cited one person saying that SpaceX CEO Musk, President Donald Trump and White House officials discussed the matter beforehand, and two people saying that Musk and the president discussed the matter in the days after the slowdown. "I'm not aware that we knew about this decision beforehand. But that's irrelevant," Rubio told reporters during a trip to India. "The bottom line is that that is governed by a private commercial contract as to how their stuff can be used and what speeds they'll allow it to be used at." - APP

Pakistan Must Sustain Reforms,
Boost Exports to Achieve Growth

Mr Ali said privatisation and public-private partnerships could bring investment, expertise and efficiency into businesses and infrastructure, while allowing public resources to be directed towards essential services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Privatisation and Chairman Privatisation Commission Muhammad Ali has called for consistent economic reforms, greater private investment and an export-led growth strategy, identifying agriculture, textiles and IT services as key sectors for Pakistan's economic future. Addressing the CEO Summit Islamabad at Serena Hotel on Thursday, the minister said Pakistan had weathered severe economic and fiscal challenges in 2022 and 2023, but sustained growth required a clear direction and consistent implementation of reforms. Presenting his five-point "TRUST" framework, he emphasised targeting competitive sectors, sustaining reforms, unlocking private capital, scaling up exports and developing talent through education and skills training. He said Pakistan should prioritise sectors with proven strengths, strong international demand, potential for large-scale employment and the capacity to generate foreign exchange. Citing the experiences of China, South Korea, Vietnam and Bangladesh, Mr Ali said sustained economic progress depended on building on existing strengths and maintaining a consistent policy direction. He identified agriculture and agri-processing, textiles and apparel, and IT and digital services as sectors with significant growth potential. The minister highlighted energy

reforms, economic documentation and state-owned enterprise restructuring as key priorities. He said affordable and reliable energy, a broader tax base and consistent reforms were essential to improving the business environment and attracting investment. He said the Privatisation Commission was working on the privatisation of 17 state-owned enterprises, including nine power distribution companies, as well as the outsourcing of three major airports and transactions involving banks and insurance companies. Mr Ali said privatisation and public-private partnerships could bring investment, expertise and efficiency into businesses and infrastructure, while allowing public resources to be directed towards essential services. Stressing the need to expand exports, he noted that Pakistan received approximately \$41.6 billion in workers' remittances in the previous fiscal year, compared with around \$30 billion in goods exports. While acknowledging the importance of remittances, he said long-term growth required stronger production and higher-value exports. He also called for greater foreign investment, support for start-ups and industry-focused technical and vocational training. Expanding women's participation in the workforce, he added, was important for improving productivity and economic competitiveness. The Advisor said the five elements of the TRUST framework needed to advance together to build a more resilient economy capable of sustaining growth in a changing global environment.

Pakistan-US ties can rest on
trade, Minerals and Technology

Professor Holland built his talk around a central argument: "Shared interests can sustain cooperation. Strategic differences require careful management"



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Trade, critical minerals and technology offer Pakistan and the United States a more durable basis for bilateral relations than the security-driven partnerships of the past, Professor Dr. Kenneth M. Holland, Fulbright Specialist and Adjunct Professor of Political Science at the University of Utah, said at the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) in Islamabad. Professor Holland was speaking at a session titled "Pakistan-US Relations in a Multipolar

World," hosted by the IRS China Program under its Eminent Speaker Series. Opening the discussion, Ms. Nabila Jaffer Research Analyst observed that one of the longest-standing relationships in Pakistan's foreign policy was evolving amid intensifying competition among the United States, China and Russia, with middle powers assuming a more prominent role in international affairs. She framed the discussion around whether Pakistan-US ties could be anchored more firmly in trade, investment, education and technology rather than security alone. Professor Holland built his

talk around a central argument: "Shared interests can sustain cooperation. Strategic differences require careful management." Working with several major powers at once, he noted, brings competing pressures that a country must balance. Lasting cooperation, he argued, depends on predictable institutions and not only on access to leaders. Professor Holland contrasted the foreign policy approaches of Presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump. He said Biden had continued the post-Second World War tradition of American leadership in promoting democracy and free markets, whereas

Trump had rejected nation-building in favour of a more transactional, "America First" approach. Drawing on his work in Afghanistan, Myanmar and other countries, he noted that the US record on nation-building was mixed, citing Germany, Italy and Japan as examples of success alongside less successful interventions. He placed Pakistan-US relations within the broader context of US-China strategic competition. Washington regards India as a key partner in countering China, he said, making Pakistan more strategically relevant when US-India relations become strained. He cited tensions in 2026 over tariffs, visa restrictions and market access as factors affecting the bilateral equation. Professor Holland identified several areas in which the two countries' interests converge. Counterterrorism remains one, particularly given the shared threat posed by ISIS-K. On the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he said Washington did not object to its economic objectives but remained concerned about its potential military applications. Critical minerals and technology, he argued, offered promising avenues for cooperation. Pakistan possesses substantial mineral resources, and US companies have begun work involving antimony and copper. Pakistan's educated, English-speaking young workforce also gives it potential in artificial intelligence-related services. Together, these sectors could provide a more sustainable foundation for bilateral relations than the security partnerships that characterised the Cold War, the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the post-9/11 period. Turning to regional dynamics, Professor Holland said Pakistan, like other middle powers, sought strategic autonomy.

Christiane
Amanpour
to leave CNN
after 43 years

NEW YORK: Veteran journalist Christiane Amanpour said Monday she is leaving her role at CNN after a 43-year career as one of the US broadcaster's most prominent international correspondents. "After thinking carefully for several months and experiencing a few sleepless nights, as you can imagine, I've decided to separate from CNN," Amanpour, 68, said in a statement. Her announcement came weeks after media corporation Paramount Skydance formally took over Warner Bros. Discovery, the parent company of CNN. That merger has drawn concerns over the independence of CNN as the merged company's owners, the Ellison family, are close allies of US President Donald Trump - a fierce critic of the TV network. Amanpour did not reference the deal but emphasized her commitment to being "fiercely independent." "That's especially important today as we face unprecedented pressures from all sides, political, financial, and also from the rising dangers in the field," she said. British-born Amanpour first became known to the CNN audience internationally for her coverage of the 1991 Gulf War that followed Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. - APP

What to know
about Ebola

ABUJA: Ebola disease from the fast-moving outbreak in Congo has now spread to four other countries, including two where it's active. It has spread farther across Africa than any previous Ebola outbreak, reaching three regions. Nigeria on Tuesday became the latest country affected by the outbreak, which was first declared in eastern Congo in mid-May. Caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus for which there's no approved vaccine or drug, the outbreak has killed at least 4,600 of the 9,500 people infected in Congo. The World Health Organization has said it is the fastest-growing outbreak of Ebola in history. In Africa, it's been recorded in the central, western and eastern regions. A recurring problem in the spread in Africa is what appears to be lax surveillance efforts as most of the first cases were confirmed long after people started showing symptoms or after traveling. - APP

Rahul Gandhi's nephew
says he was forced to
remove protest artwork

Exhibition listed as featuring nature, wildlife, abstract paintings and other artworks, says Bikaner House

DNA

NEW DELHI: The nephew of Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said he was forced to remove several pieces of art documenting youth protests from his exhibition at a government-run cultural centre in New Delhi this week, as they were deemed "objectionable." Raihan Vadra, 26, the son of Gandhi's sister, lawmaker Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, said the management at Bikaner House forced him to remove the artwork just hours before his exhibition opened on Wednesday. Youth protests, led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), have emerged as a major challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. A weeks-long sit-in forced the resignation of his education minister in July over exam pa-

per leaks. Demonstrations erupted again this month, with opposition groups led by Gandhi at the forefront, seeking the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over a controversial revision of voter lists. "The photos were of the youth protests in Delhi," Vadra said in a post on social media. "Apparently the content is objectionable." He was also directed to remove two photographs of the Indian flag, but he refused, he said. The Bikaner House Management Society said it had requested the removal of "certain photographs" from the exhibition that were inconsistent with its policies, without elaborating. The Bikaner House Management Society said it had requested the removal of "certain photographs" from the exhibition that were inconsistent with its policies, without elaborating.

Top EU diplomats
to meet in Turkey

DNA

Istanbul: Top European diplomats will hold talks in Istanbul Friday with their counterparts from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Egypt for a meeting initiated by Ankara, a Turkish foreign ministry source said. Foreign ministers from the so-called E3 group - Britain, France and Germany - will meet counterparts from the newly created R4 group to discuss the Palestinian issue, developments in Yemen and the Strait of Hormuz, and ways to end the Russia-Ukraine war, the source said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan will host the meeting, the first to bring together the two groups. "The seven countries will come together for the first time in the R4+E3 format, at Turkiye's initiative," the source said, indicating they would explore "opportunities for cooperation and coordination that could be put into practice ... in the coming period." In chairing the meeting, Fidan was expected to focus on the international community "increasing pressure on Israel" in response to its settlement expansion and its "encouragement of settler terrorism," the source said.



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