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Daily Islamabad POST

Tuesday, November 17, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

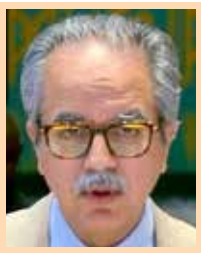
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US President says Meeting with the Korean leader soon

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Foreign Secy says ties with Italy cordial



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Minister says Imran letter for NRO



Detailed News On Page-01

ECO ministers moot

PM resolves to promote cooperation, connectivity

Highlighting Pakistan's Chairmanship of ECO for 2026-2027 under the theme "Reviving Regionalism for a Resilient ECO," Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the need to translate the Organization's collective vision into concrete, result-oriented initiatives that deliver tangible benefits to the people of the region

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reiterated the government's resolve to promote regional cooperation, connectivity, and economic integration within the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member states. He was talking to the Foreign Ministers and heads of delegations of member states of the ECO, who paid a joint call on him in Islamabad today. Warmly welcoming the visiting dignitaries, the Prime Minister thanked them for their participation in the 30th ECO Council of Ministers meeting and reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to the objectives of ECO.

He appreciated the successful conclusion of the 30th ECO Council of Ministers Meeting and welcomed the adoption of the Islamabad Communiqué and the Strategic Goals of Economic Cooperation 2026-2035, describing them as important steps towards strengthening the Organization and advancing shared regional priorities. Highlighting Pakistan's Chairmanship of ECO for 2026-2027 under the theme "Reviving Regionalism for a Resilient ECO," Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the need to translate the Organization's collective vision into concrete,

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with the Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegations of ECO member states, participating in the 30th meeting of ECO Council of Ministers. – DNA

Action against terrorism a must, says Pakistan

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Monday stressed that action by the Afghan Taliban regime against terrorism and ensuring a stable and secure environment were "absolutely essential" for sustained regional economic cooperation. "Pakistan desires peaceful, prosperous and stable Afghanistan, fully integrated within the ECO framework," he said while chairing the 30th meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad. The DPM said Afghanistan at peace with itself and all its neighbours would not only benefit its own people but also contribute to peace and prosperity across wider region.

Continued on Page 06

Araghchi calls sustainable regional energy mechanism

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stressed the need for a reliable and sustainable regional energy mechanism on Monday, as he addressed the 30th meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) Council of Ministers in Islamabad. He made these remarks while speaking about the US-Israeli war on Iran, which has also resulted in the choking of key fuel supply routes — the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab. "Our region needs not only an independent security framework but also a reliable and sustainable regional energy mechanism to safeguard energy flows, ensure stable

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In tit-for-tat move

Chaudhry Salik sends CM Maryam, Azma defamation notices

In a separate X post, Salik announced, "Further, I have also sent through my legal counsel two legal notices for defamation. One to Mrs Maryam Nawaz Sharif and the other one to Mrs Azma Zahid Bokhari

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: In a tit-for-tat move, PML-Q leader and Overseas Pakistanis Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Monday also sent a defamation notice to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

After the PML-Q leader levelled allegations of corruption against the incumbent Punjab government, CM Maryam sent a Rs5 billion defamation notice to him, demanding he retract his remarks. Alongside furnishing a reply to that notice, Salik said on Monday that he had also sent two legal notices for defamation to Maryam and Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari. "A formal reply to the legal notice has been duly sent," Salik said in a post on X.

"Attempts to intimidate through legal notices will neither silence nor deter me from raising concerns on matters of public interest and their well-being," he reaffirmed.

The minister went on to reiterate the allegations: "The province continues to suffer from gross mismanagement and rampant corruption, issues that demand a 'little' self-reflection and accountability, not intimidation." The PML-Q leader also reiterated the "commitment to transparency in the interest of Punjab and Pakistan".

In a separate X post, Salik announced, "Further, I have also sent through my legal counsel two legal notices for defamation. One to Mrs Maryam Nawaz Sharif and the other one to Mrs Azma Zahid Bokhari." In an interview last week, Salik stated that he stood by his earlier remarks regarding corruption in

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Briefs

British prince and princess in Mumbai

NEWS DESK

MUMBAI: Britain's Prince William and Princess Catherine arrived in India on Monday for a three-day visit, the first overseas trip together since Catherine was diagnosed with cancer in 2024. The royal couple will begin their visit in Mumbai and attend the Earthshot Prize awards ceremony on Tuesday. Founded by William, the environmental initiative awards five winners $1.3 million each to expand solutions addressing climate change.

The ceremony, expected to be the biggest since the prize was established in 2020, will feature several prominent guests including Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, actors Alia Bhatt and Rami Malek and British pop group Take That making its debut performance in India. "India has made an extraordinary contribution to Earthshot over the past six years and is home to more Earthshot finalists and winners than any other country," William posted on social media.

Trump may meet N. Korean leader

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Monday said he could meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in China, in a surprise announcement as he left the White House at the start of a trip to Asia.

"We may meet with Kim Jong Un," Trump told reporters, adding that President Xi Jinping might invite Kim when leaders gather in Shenzhen for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.

Changing sands of politics

Govt says Imran letter an attempt to seek NRO

The Minister recalled that the PTI Founder has undergone medical examinations by specialist doctors at PIMS Hospital eight times, and doctors have declared him completely fit after each examination. He added that a doctor had also been called from London, when required, for blood pressure check-ups

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has termed the letter written by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder to the country's top judicial authorities, contrary to facts and an attempt to seek an NRO. Responding to the PTI Founder's letter, Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said those who used to accuse others of seeking an NRO are now seeking one themselves.

The Minister said the PTI founder is in jail not because of political victimisation but due to the 190 million pound corruption case. He said the PTI Founder can get relief only through the courts. Rejecting allegations regarding solitary confinement and the denial of access to books and television, the Minister said the PTI founder is being provided all necessary facilities, including food of his choice. He said the PTI Founder is currently the most privileged prisoner in Pakistan.

Referring to concerns about PTI Founder's health raised in the letter, the Minister termed the claims baseless and said the government had neither been negligent in this regard in the past nor would it be so in the future. He said medical experts conduct a comprehensive assessment of PTI Founder's health on a weekly basis, while the best medical facilities are also provided outside the prison on the recommendations of specialists. The Minister recalled that the PTI Founder has undergone medical examinations by specialist doctors at PIMS Hospital eight times, and doctors have declared him completely fit after each examination.

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UN chief urges countries to rein in killer robots

DNA

NEW YORK: The United Nations chief called on Monday for countries to work towards imposing strict and binding rules on the use of "merciless" lethal autonomous weapons systems, often dubbed "killer robots". Warfare is undergoing a radical transformation as armies seek to capitalise on artificial intelligence to boost their fighting abilities by identifying and striking targets more quickly and accurately. Amid a chorus of warnings

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Pak inflation expected to ease to 5-7% target range in FY27: SBP

Central bank projects 3.5-4.5% GDP growth, with current account deficit projected at 0-1% of GDP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's consumer price inflation is expected to gradually ease towards the medium-term target range of 5% to 7% during financial year 2027, the country's central bank said on Monday. Real GDP growth will remain in the range of 3.5% to 4.5%, the bank said in a yearly report, which added that the country's current account deficit was likely to be in the range of 0 to 1% of GDP in the financial year.

It projected the fiscal deficit to range between 3.0%-4.0% of GDP. In its Annual Report on the State of Pakistan's Economy for fiscal year 2025-26, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said the country's economy demonstrated resilience against domestic and global economic shocks, recording improvements across key macroeconomic indicators. The central bank attributed the improvement to a prudent monetary policy stance, continued fiscal consolidation and economic reforms under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. It said Pakistan managed to safeguard its macroeconomic stability despite challenges arising from shifting

Continued on Page 06

Imran Khan appeals for medical treatment

Khan, 73, has remained in prison since August 2023 following convictions in several cases that he and his party describe as politically motivated. He has faced multiple legal proceedings since his ouster as prime minister in April 2022 following a no-confidence vote

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Jailed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan has reportedly written a letter to the chief justices of the Supreme Court (SC), Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) and Islamabad High Court (IHC), expressing concern over his health and urging them to ensure the implementation of court orders.

In the letter authored by Barrister Salman Sadar on behalf of the ex-premier, the former prime minister said doctors had warned him of the risk of a brain haemorrhage and a heart attack, adding that his blood pressure had reached 193.

"Doctors have told me that I am at risk of a brain haemorrhage and a heart attack. My blood pressure has reached 193," he wrote in the letter.

Khan, 73, has remained in prison since August 2023 following convictions in several cases that he and his party describe as politically motivated. He has faced multiple legal proceedings since his ouster as prime minister in April 2022 following a no-confidence vote. In the letter, Imran urged the chief justices to ensure that court decisions were implemented, saying he wanted to prove his innocence if he remained alive.

"I will prove my innocence if I remain alive," he wrote.

The letter was addressed to the chief justices through his counsel Barrister Salman Safdar. "I do not ask Your Lordships for any favour. All I request as justice is the implementation of the orders of the Honourable Supreme Court and proper treatment for our medical conditions. I will only remain able to prove my innocence if I stay alive. I appeal to Your Lordships, on the most basic grounds of human compassion, give me justice before it is too late," Khan wrote.

The development came days after IHC division bench comprising Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif had directed jail authorities to allow lawyers Khosa and Salman Safdar to meet Imran and his wife, Bushra, at Adiala jail while hearing their appeals against convictions in the £190 million case. Lawyers representing former prime minister Imran and his wife, Bushra Bibi, have submitted affidavits to the IHC, detailing their meeting with the incarcerated couple at Adiala jail on November 11.

Continued on Page 06

FCC allows PHC to hear Article 199 cases

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) has amended its November 5 stay order restraining the Peshawar High Court from hearing cases concerning arrests under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The clarification was issued on Monday as the FCC bench comprising Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Aamer Farooq approved the PTI's petition.

The top court clarified that its November 5 stay order was related to matters concerning 3-MPO and governor's rule, adding that the PHC could continue hearing other cases under Article 199 — except those concerning the imposition of governor's rule or a state of emergency in KP. Ahead of the FCC's Nov 5 stay order, the PHC had restrained authorities from making arrests under 3-MPO. It had also ordered the release of 28 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers detained in various districts of KP. During the hearing of the case, PTI chief Barrister Gohar told the court that its November 5 stay order had affected proceedings of the PHC and brought lawyers' professional activities to a halt.

Justice Aamer Farooq observed that a simple reading of Article 245 suggested that cases under Article 199 could not be heard. However, a literal interpretation of the provision would bring the entire judicial system to a standstill, the judge observed. The court also granted the Peshawar Bar Council permission to become a party to the proceedings.

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IMDC opens pre-registration for MBBS, BDS

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Medical and Dental College (IMDC) has opened pre-registration for admissions to its MBBS and BDS programmes for the 2026-27 academic session.

According to the college, prospective students can submit their pre-registration forms through its official website as part of the admission process for the upcoming academic session. The college has invited aspiring medical and dental students to register online and explore opportunities to pursue professional education in the healthcare sector. Interested candidates can access the pre-registration form at https://imdcollege.edu.pk/pre-register.–**APP**

Seminar to raise awareness about dangers of drugs, vaping

RAWALPINDI : Rawalpindi Police organised a seminar at Police Lines Headquarters to raise awareness about the harmful effects of drugs and vaping and measures to prevent their use.Students from universities and colleges in the twin cities attended the seminar, where police officers, along with Additional Public Prosecutor Hasnain Paracha, delivered lectures highlighting the harmful effects of vaping and narcotics. According to a police spokesperson, banners and posters have also been displayed at educational institutions and various locations across the city to spread awareness among students and the general public. Awareness walks were also organised in different areas of the city as part of the campaign. The spokesperson said the prime objective of the seminar was to educate students and young people about the dangers of vaping and drug abuse. He termed vaping and narcotics a serious threat to life and urged students and citizens to support the police in efforts to discourage their use. Parents were also urged to keep a close eye on their children and play an active role in protecting them from the menace of drugs. The spokesperson further said the sale and purchase of vapes were prohibited and strict action would be taken against those involved in the illegal trade. He added that the crackdown against vaping and drug abuse was being intensified across the district.–**APP**

Pak, Finland agree to expand energy, minerals cooperation



DNA

ISLAMABAD : Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik held a meeting with a Finnish delegation led by Jarno Syrjälä, Deputy Minister for International Trade and Under-Secretary of State at Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to explore opportunities for enhancing bilateral cooperation and promoting Finnish investment in Pakistan.

The delegation included Mr. Wille Eerola, Honorary Consul General of Pakistan in Finland and Chairman of the Finland-Pakistan Business Council, along with representatives of leading Finnish and international companies, including Wärtsilä, Elematic and Casagrande Laboratories. During the meeting, the Federal Minister briefed the delegation on the reforms being undertaken by the government in the petroleum sector, particularly initiatives aimed at deregulation, improving market efficiency and creating a more conducive environment for private-sector investment. He highlighted the government's efforts to diversify Pakistan's energy mix and strengthen energy security through international partnerships and investment. The Minister also highlighted the potential of Pakistan's mineral sector and the government's commitment to accelerating its development by attracting foreign investment, introducing reforms and facilitating modern exploration and mining practices. He emphasized that strengthening regulatory institutions and improving regulatory frameworks were important areas requiring continued efforts to ensure transparency, institutional capacity and investor confidence across the energy and minerals sectors. The Federal Minister welcomed Finnish companies' interest in Pakistan and encouraged them to explore investment opportunities and establish stronger business linkages with Pakistani counterparts. He stressed that Pakistan was keen to benefit from Finnish expertise, technology and investment in energy, minerals and infrastructure development. The Finnish side expressed its interest in expanding commercial engagement with Pakistan. H.E. Jarno Syrjälä said that efforts were being made to bring more Finnish companies to Pakistan and encourage them to explore business and investment opportunities in the country. Both sides discussed avenues for strengthening bilateral economic engagement and promoting business-to-business cooperation, with a shared resolve to translate mutual interest into concrete investment partnerships.

Goods exports reach record $11.4b

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's goods exports have reached an all-time high of US$11.4 billion during the first four months (July–October) of fiscal year 2026-27, registering an impressive growth of 8.8 percent compared to US$10.4 billion recorded in the corresponding period last year. The record export perform nce reflects the impact of targeted measures introduced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the Federal Budget, supported by coordinated efforts of the Finance Team and relevant government institutions to strengthen exports and facilitate businesses and industry,said a data issued on Sunday. Key measures included reductions in taxes and surcharges for businesses and industrial sectors, particularly exporters, faster processing of tax refunds, improved utilisation of export development funds, enhanced concessional export financing and dedicated financial support for small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) exporters, particularly micro and small businesses. These interventions, coupled with coordinated institutional efforts, have helped create a more conducive business environment and strengthen the country's export capacity despite persistent regional and global economic challenges. –**APP**

Tariq terms PTI founder's letter contrary to facts

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Monday termed a letter written from jail by the PTI founder to the chief justices as contrary to the facts. Speakng to the media at Parliament House, the minister said the letter was, in effect, a request for an NRO. He said those who used to taunt others with the NRO label were now seeking one themselves. He said the PTI founder could obtain relief only through the courts. Rejecting the claim of political victimisation, he said the PTI founder was in jail because he had been convicted in the £190 million corruption case. The minister said the £190 million was supposed to go to the national treasury but was instead transferred to Malik Riaz's account. In return, he, Malik Riaz, gifted the PTI founder around 450 kanals of land. He maintained that the case rests on clear and solid evidence. Rejecting the letter's allegations about a lack of medical facilities and non-compliance with court orders, the minister called them baseless. He also denied claims that the PTI founder was held in solitary confinement for 22 hours a day.–**APP**

Bari Imam House asked to submit ownership documents to CDA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday directed the petitioner in the Bari Imam House case to submit ownership documents of the property to the Capital Development Authority (CDA) within five days.Justice Ayaz Shaukat issued a detailed five-page verdict on the CDA's application seeking vacation of the stay order against the authority's decision to seal Bari Imam House. The court directed the CDA to decide the matter, along with written reasons, after receiving the ownership documents.

The judgment stated that if the petitioner failed to produce the ownership documents, the CDA could proceed in accordance with the law. The previous order regarding the stay would also form part of the present judgment. Earlier, during the hearing, the petitioner's counsel sought a short adjournment, which the court declined. Justice Ayaz Shaukat questioned how the court could grant more time when no documents had been attached to the petition, asking the counsel to at least produce copies of the available documents. The petitioner's counsel told the court that the property did not belong to his client, who was merely the caretaker of the shrine.

The court asked whether there was any document establishing his status as the Gaddi Nasheen. The counsel replied that no such document was issued to a Gaddi Nasheen.

He further argued that the relevant documents were in the CDA's possession and that the petitioner had made the authority a party to the case for this reason. He maintained that the petitioner was associated with the shrine and that the property belonged to the shrine. Justice Ayaz Shaukat questioned the counsel's argument, observing that ownership documents should ordinarily be in the possession of the owner or the CDA. CDA counsel Kashif Ali Malik informed the court that the authority had filed a miscellaneous application along with the complete record. He alleged that the petitioner had encroached upon CDA land and requested the court to dismiss the petition as not maintainable.

It may be recalled that the CDA had approached the court, claiming that Bari Imam House was situated on encroached land and seeking vacation of the stay order restraining it from sealing the building.– **DNA**

Gilani attends Dua for late former AJK President

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Monday attended the prayer gathering (Dua) for the departed soul of the former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Late Raja Muhammad Zulqarnain Khan, and offered Fateha for the eternal peace of the deceased.

On the occasion, the Chairman Senate expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved family, including the wife of the deceased, Fakhriya Zulqarnain, Raja Qaiser Zulqarnain, Raja Umar Zulqarnain, Mr. and Mrs. Raja Babar Ali Zulqarnain, and Ms. Sabiha Laiq Ahmed.

He paid tribute to the political and social services of Late Raja Muhammad Zulqarnain Khan, stating that his political and public services for the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the Kashmir cause would always be remembered.

The Chairman Senate prayed for the forgiveness of the departed soul, elevation of his rank in the hereafter, and patience and strength for the bereaved family and relatives.

He prayed that Almighty Allah may grant the deceased a place in His eternal mercy and bless the grieving family with the strength to bear this irreparable loss.–**APP**

Efforts afoot to accelerate industrial growth

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain on Monday said the Punjab government had taken historic measures to promote investment and accelerate industrial development in the province.

He was addressing the concluding ceremony of the three-day 10th Pakistan Industrial Exhibition 2026,held at the Expo Center Lahore.

The exhibition was jointly organized by Everest International Expo (Pvt.) Ltd. and COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus with more than 150 local and international companies showcasing their products.The provincial minister also visited various stalls and took keen interest in the products on display. Chaudhry Shafay Hussain said such exhibitions played an important role in promoting industrial,commercial and economic activities. He said historic measures had been taken over the past two and a half years to accelerate industrial development and attract investment in Punjab. He said the decades-old practice of using industrial estates for real estate business had been permanently discontinued,adding that plots allotted in industrial estates were now being utilized rapidly for establishing industrial units.

The provincial minister said the Punjab government had introduced a new industrial policy to further accelerate industrialization,under which industrial plots could be acquired on leases ranging from 30 to 50 years for setting up industrial units.

He said interest-free loans under the Chief Minister's Asaan Karobar Finance Scheme were being provided to facilitate entrepreneurs.–**APP**

Dangerous school buildings identification ordered

ISLAMABAD: The Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Nadeem Mahbub, today visited four educational institutions as part of the ongoing survey aimed at identifying dangerous and structurally unsafe school buildings. The institutions visited included IMCG Kotha Sattial, IMSG (I–VIII) Kotha Sattial, IMS (I–V) Suban, and IMSB Malpur. During the visit, the Secretary directed the concerned authorities to establish prefabricated rooms in the institutions mentioned at Serial Nos. 2 to 4 to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of academic activities in a safe environment. He categorically instructed that no student should be allowed to use or enter any building declared dangerous until appropriate safety measures are taken. He further observed that the building of the institution mentioned at Serial No. 1 requires only minor repair work. The Secretary also inspected the latest educational interventions introduced in the institutions, including computer laboratories, mathematics laboratories, technical laboratories, and science laboratories. He emphasized that the interactive boards provided to schools, along with other available educational facilities, must be utilized to their maximum potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.–**DNA**

Pak, Italy discuss muti-faceted bilateral relations

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad received Ambassador Riccardo Guariglia, Secretary General of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad for the 7th round of Pakistan-Italy Bilateral Political Consultations. The two sides reviewed the multi-faceted bilateral relations and discussed ways to strengthen political dialogue and further expand the ongoing cooperation in trade, investment, development, agriculture, defence and security, migration, labour mobility, education, new technologies, cultural exchanges and heritage conservatioThe Foreign Secretary underscored the importance of high-level exchanges as well as early convening of the second Ministerial Review of the Pakistan-Italy Strategic Engagement Plan, recalling the invitation extended by Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, to Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Antonio Tajani, to visit Pakistan.

Both sides exchanged views on the sixth session of the Joint Economic Commission to be held in Pakistan in January 2027. The Foreign Secretary highlighted opportunities for Italian investment and joint ventures in agriculture and food processing, textiles, marble, mining, and energy. They stressed the importance of people-to-people contacts and the full implementation of the MoUon Migration and Labour Mobility signed in May 2025. Both sides exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest. They reaffirmed their shared commitment to multilateralism and the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the UN Charter. They also underscored the importance of continued cooperation at the United Nations and in other multilateral fora. They particularly emphasised their complete convergence on UN Security

HPV vaccination drive continues across KP

ISLAMABAD: The cervical cancer prevention vaccination drive is continuing across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from November 11 to 24, encouraging parents to get their daughters aged 9 to 14 vaccinated against the disease. According to the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), the campaign aims to protect young girls against cervical cancer through timely vaccination and raise awareness among parents about the importance of preventive healthcare. The programme has urged parents to ensure that their eligible daughters receive the vaccine during the ongoing campaign, emphasizing that timely immunization can help protect them against cervical cancer. It further encouraged families to take advantage of the vaccination drive at designated health facilities to safeguard their daughters' future health. It said that for further information and guidance, citizens can contact the Sehat Tahaffuz helpline at 1166._**APP**



Islamabad POST
METROLITE
Tuesday November 17, 2026

American rock band champions citizen diplomacy

"In visiting the 11th country with the Arts and Music Envoy program, we feel very fortunate to have always been met with friendly, enthusiastic, generous, open-minded people across a wide range of cultures," said Jack Ivins, drummer for Burn the Ballroom

DNA



ISLAMABAD : U.S. rock band "Burn the Ballroom" concluded a two-week tour of Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, November 2-15, sponsored by the U.S. Arts and Music Envoy program. The band reached thousands of Pakistani youth through performances and workshops, celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States. The tour emphasized creative entrepreneurship, showcasing how the band's strategic branding and business mindset can elevate innovative ideas for a global audience. "In visiting the 11th country with the Arts and Music Envoy program, we feel very fortunate to have always been met with friendly, enthusiastic, generous, open-minded people across a wide range of cultures," said Jack Ivins, drummer for Burn the Ballroom. "This time is different. Never have we experienced the levels of hospitality as in Pakistan. Everyone made us feel like we are a part of their family and we are deeply grateful. This is a singular experience that we will be talking about for the rest of our lives." In Islamabad and Lahore, the band headlined major events, including a Freedom 250 Concert at the United States Education Foundation in Pakistan, and collaborated with the Surtaal Academy of Music on fusion renditions of "Dil Dil Pakistan" and "America the Beautiful." The band also connected with students at Roots International, Iqra University, the National College of Arts, and the National Institute of Technology. In Karachi, Burn the Ballroom hosted jam sessions at Khatoon-e-Pakistan Government Girls School, the KFC-supported Deaf Reach School, and the National Academy of Performing Arts. The tour culminated in a main-stage performance at the World Culture Festival, presented by the Arts Council of Pakistan. The band also led interactive workshops, including "The Business Behind the Band," which provided local youth with practical strategies for navigating the international music industry. At the Common Chords music collaboration labs, the musicians composed and performed joint pieces alongside Pakistani folk vocalists and instrumentalists. U.S. Arts and Music Envoy program is the U.S. government's flagship exchange program for artists and musicians, reaching audiences in more than 20 countries each year. Artists and bands from across the United States participate in one-to-three-week, multi-country art, music, and education tours hosted by U.S. embassies and consulates.

National Days and Armed Forces Days

NOVEMBER

Nov 01/Algeria
National Day

Nov 04/Italy
Armed Forces Day

Nov 07/Russian Federation
Socialist Revolution

Nov 09/Cambodia
National Day

Nov 11/Poland
Independence Day

Nov 14/Jordan
Birthday of King Hussein

Nov 15/Belgium
Kings Day

Nov 15/Brazil
Republic Day

Nov 15/Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
National Day

Nov 18/Oman
National Day

Nov 18/Morocco
Independence Day

Nov 21/Bangladesh
Armed Forces Day

Nov 22/Lebanon
Independence Day

Nov 25/Suriname
National Day

Nov 28/Mauritania
National Day

Nov 28/Albania
Flags Day



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Islamabad Metropolitan

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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

President urges nation to help build tolerant society

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari called upon all Pakistanis to help build a society where every person can live with dignity, practise their faith without fear and express a different opinion without facing hatred or violence. In a message on the occasion of International Day for Tolerance (16 November 2026), he said, "Our strength as a nation lies in our ability to live together with respect, united by our shared citizenship and our hopes for Pakistan."

"Islam teaches compassion, justice and respect for human dignity. These values also find clear expression in the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. In his historic address of 11 August 1947, he declared: We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State," he added. He said, "Article 25(1) of the Constitution of Pakistan gives this principle an unequivocal guarantee: All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law. These words must guide the conduct of every public institution and be reflected in the daily experience of every citizen."

He said, "Pakistan belongs equally to all its people. Our non-Muslim citizens have helped build this country through their service in education, healthcare, public life, the armed forces and countless other fields. Their place in Pakistan rests on equal citizenship. Every child must feel safe in the classroom, every family secure in its neighbourhood and every worshipper protected in a place of worship. Equal citizenship must be a lived reality for every Pakistani."

"Tolerance also requires us to respect differences of language, culture, belief and political opinion. In a democracy, disagreement must be met with reason and dialogue. We must be able to debate firmly while respecting one another's dignity. A society grows stronger when people can speak, question and participate without fear," he added.—**APP**

15-year pension restoration period can't apply to all retirees

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan (FCCP) has ruled that a uniform 15-year period for restoration of the commuted portion of pension cannot be applied to all retired employees, as the restoration period must be determined according to their age at retirement and the formula prescribed under the Punjab Civil Services Pension Rules, 1963.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Muhammad Karim Khan Agha announced the verdict in four appeals filed by former employees of the Punjab Road Transport Corporation (PRTC), setting aside the judgments of the Lahore High Court's single and division benches. The former employees had retired under a golden handshake scheme in 1997, receiving half of their pension as a lump sum while the remaining half was paid monthly. They argued that the commuted portion should have been restored after 15 years, in 2012, instead of 2017, and sought five years of outstanding pension benefits. They also cited the case of another retired employee, Mian Muhammad Ishaq, who had been granted restoration after 15 years, arguing that the same benefit should be extended to them. The FCC observed that the decision in Ishaq's case was final only between the parties concerned and did not establish a binding legal principle applicable to all PRTC employees. The court held that under Rules 8.11 and 8.12 of the Punjab Civil Services Pension Rules, 1963, the restoration period is calculated on the basis of the pensioner's age at retirement and the relevant commutation table. Differences in restoration periods due to differences in retirement ages do not constitute discrimination under Article 25 of the Constitution. The judgment clarified that setting aside the high court's decisions would not affect the employees' legal entitlement to pension restoration.—**APP**

Political differences must be resolved thru dialogue

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has called for renewed national efforts to promote tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and understanding, describing these values as essential to peace, national unity, democratic stability and social cohesion. In his message on the occasion of the International Day for Tolerance, the Speaker said that tolerance and mutual respect are not merely social virtues but fundamental values essential for building a peaceful, progressive and resilient society. He said that differences of opinion are a natural feature of a pluralistic society, but they must be addressed through patience, dialogue, reason and mutual understanding rather than confrontation and hostility. Ayaz Sadiq said that Pakistan's strength lies in its rich religious, cultural, linguistic and social diversity. He emphasized that respect for the beliefs, identities, traditions and viewpoints of others is vital to strengthening national harmony and fostering a shared sense of citizenship. The Speaker stressed that intolerance, prejudice, hatred and extremism pose serious challenges to social cohesion and national unity. He called for collective efforts to promote an environment in which diversity is respected, differences are acknowledged and every citizen is able to live with dignity, security and equal rights. "Tolerance means creating space for difference without allowing difference to become a source of division, hatred or conflict," the Speaker said. He emphasized that the promotion of tolerance must begin with individual conduct and extend to families, communities, educational institutions, the media and public institutions. Ayaz Sadiq underscored the particularly important role of young people, educational institutions and the media in nurturing a culture of dialogue and responsible public discourse. He said that the younger generation must be equipped with the ability to listen, understand differing perspectives, engage constructively and resolve disagreements peacefully.

NA Speaker said that the media has a vital responsibility in promoting informed and responsible discourse and in strengthening understanding among different sections of society. Educational institutions, he added, can play a transformative role in cultivating respect for diversity, critical thinking, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.—**APP**

Road safety awareness workshop for bus drivers

RAWALPINDI: On the directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi, a road safety awareness workshop was organised for public service vehicle drivers and staff at the Traffic Headquarters Rawalpindi.

Bus drivers and other staff members attended the workshop, where Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Traffic Muhammad Kaleem and the In-charge of the Traffic Education Wing delivered lectures on road safety and traffic laws.

The participants were briefed on precautionary measures while driving, the importance of traffic discipline and safe driving practices on roads. DSP Traffic Headquarters urged bus drivers to strictly observe traffic laws and road safety principles, advising them to avoid overspeeding, unnecessary lane changes, improper parking and other traffic violations. He also stressed that drivers must ensure the smooth flow of traffic whenever they stop or park their vehicles. –**APP**

Work on Pandorian model graveyard project in progress

ISLAMABAD: Work on the Pandorian Model Graveyard project on over 860 kanals of land in the Federal Capital Islamabad is continuing at a fast pace. Overall, 70 percent of the construction work of the Pandorian Model Graveyard has been completed, while the remaining construction work will also be completed within the current year. All obstacles in the Pandorian Model Graveyard project are being removed on a priority basis. In this regard, action is being taken against illegal constructions and encroachments and 95 percent of Government land has also been vacated. Under the project, a spacious parking area adjacent to the model graveyard is also being constructed. The construction of the boundary wall of the model graveyard is also in its final stages. Grey structure of the admin block of the Pandorian Model Graveyard has been completed. The most important part of the project, the roofing and finishing work of the funeral hall (Janazah Gah), is continuing at a fast pace. To ensure proper lighting arrangements in the graveyard, light poles have also been installed, while utilities work has also been completed up to 50 percent. In line with the direction of Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf, environmentally friendly tree plantation and modern permanent lights will also be installed in the Pandorian Model Graveyard. On the direction of the Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, the relevant teams are busy day and night to ensure the completion of the project. Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf, while directing that the construction work of the model graveyard be completed soon while maintaining high quality.—**APP**

Wanted suspect, two accomplices nabbed

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have arrested a wanted suspect, Nasir Mehmood alias Thaproo, along with two accomplices and recovered over three kilograms of ice (crystal methamphetamine) and illegal weapons during a joint operation by Bani Gala Police and Capital Patrol teams. An ICT Police official told APP on Monday that the arrested suspect had a previous criminal record involving more than 19 cases, including attempted murder, drug trafficking and other offences, and was wanted by police. He said the joint police teams recovered more than 3,000 grams of ice and illegal weapons from the possession of the arrested suspects. SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza said effective operations were underway against drug dealers and other criminal elements across the federal capital. He said Islamabad Police were using all available resources to protect citizens and eliminate criminal activities.—**APP**



Briefs

Kamal stresses complete polio eradication

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal has stressed that progress made in the fight against polio would remain meaningless until the virus is completely eradicated from the country.
He expressed these views during a meeting with Sindh Chief Secretary Syed Asif Haider, where matters relating to polio eradication, routine immunization and child health were discussed in detail. The meeting emphasized timely birth registration of children, vaccination coverage and strengthening environmental surveillance to ensure effective monitoring of the poliovirus. The participants also discussed the provision of immunization services at 114 basic health units across Sindh and stressed the need for effective measures to address malnutrition and child development challenges. The health minister said Pakistan had made considerable progress in its fight against polio, but sustained efforts and coordinated action were essential to achieve complete eradication of the disease.–**APP**

Free hepatitis C services available at 13 health centres

ISLAMABAD: Free screening, diagnosis, and treatment facilities for Hepatitis C are being provided to citizens at 13 healthcare centres across Islamabad under the Prime Minister's Programme for the Elimination of Hepatitis C.
According to an official of the District Health Office Islamabad, the services are available at Rural Health Centres (RHCs) in Tarlai, Bhara Kahu and Sihala, Community Health Centres in Rawat and Shah Allah Ditta, and Basic Health Units (BHUs) in Sohan, Golra Sharif, Jhang Syedan and Gokina. The facilities are also available at Police Lines, an outreach camp, Family Welfare Centre Kuri and Family Welfare Centre at the National Institute of Health (NIH). The District Health Office has urged citizens to avail themselves of the free screening facilities for early detection and seek treatment where required to prevent the spread of the infection. The official said that the initiative aims to improve access to hepatitis screening and treatment services and contribute towards the national goal of eliminating Hepatitis C.–**APP**

Tajikistan to export electricity to Pakistan: Muhriddin

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of Tajikistan Sirojiddin Muhriddin on Monday expressed hope that next year would be a very important time for the completion of the CASA-1000 power project, enabling Tajikistan to export electricity to Pakistan soon. The Tajik foreign minister, talking to the media on the sidelines of the 30th Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), termed CASA-1000 a very significant initiative for all stakeholders. He stated that Tajikistan had already completed a great deal of work on its part of the project and expressed hope that, with the support of other partners, the Afghanistan section would also be implemented. Muhriddin noted that Tajikistan was keenly interested in exporting electricity to Pakistan. Acknowledging that the project has unfortunately taken a considerable amount of time due to the situation in Afghanistan, he expressed the hope that electricity from Tajikistan would reach Pakistan soon. Discussing the regional situation, the foreign minister wished for stability and security in Afghanistan, noting that it was a neighbouring country to both Tajikistan and Pakistan. Acknowledging Pakistan's efforts, Muhriddin said that Pakistan was taking many important and positive steps toward establishing security.–**APP**

Structural reforms vital for economic revival: Zikria

He strongly advocated a strategic partnership with China through joint ventures, technology transfer and collaboration with local manufacturers

DNA



ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Muhammad Zikria Akbar Zia, has stressed that Pakistan must focus on fixing its domestic economic structure, promoting industrialization and ensuring consistent long-term policies to achieve sustainable economic growth. Speaking during a roundtable discussion titled ' Indo-US Economic Relations: Prospects and Opportunities for Pakistan ' hosted by the Institute of Strategic Institute Islamabad (ISSI) he observed that Pakistan's economic challenges largely stem from structural weaknesses, policy inconsistency and overreliance on short-term financial arrangements. He said Pakistan must take ownership of its economic shortcomings instead of repeatedly blaming external institutions, including the IMF. He said that prolonged policy uncertainty, high financing costs, changing energy tariffs and unpredictable government decisions had discouraged industrial investment. He emphasised that industrial projects require long-term planning, as investors need several years to establish production facilities and recover their investments. He strongly advocated a strategic partnership with China through joint ventures, technology transfer and collaboration with local manufacturers. He said Pakistan should attract Chinese companies to establish partnerships with domestic businesses rather than setting up completely independent operations. Criticizing blanket subsidies and sector-specific incentives, he said these policies often benefit influential business lobbies instead of delivering relief to consumers or strengthening the wider economy. He advocated replacing institutional subsidies with targeted income support for deserving households and ensuring a level playing field across industrial sectors. He also called for strengthening small and medium enterprises (SMEs), describing them as essential drivers of sustainable economic growth. Genuine ease of doing business, he maintained, would become possible when small businesses could operate without excessive regulatory hurdles, high borrowing costs and policy uncertainty.
Highlighting the importance of professional trade diplomacy, he said Pakistan should appoint commercially experienced professionals as trade officers abroad to identify business opportunities, facilitate investors and promote Pakistani exports. He added that effective international trade required stronger business-to-business engagement rather than relying exclusively on government-to-government arrangements.
Concluding, Zikria Akbar Zia urged policymakers to move beyond short-term economic management and formulate a comprehensive, predictable and long-term industrial policy, warning that continued policy inconsistency, excessive incentives and neglect of domestic manufacturing would undermine Pakistan's economic prospects.

Child maid's death

Court hands senior cop's wife, Qari to police on remand

ISLAMABAD: A local court in Islamabad on Monday handed over the wife of a senior police officer and a religious teacher (Qari) to police on a four-day physical remand in connection with the death of a 13-year-old domestic worker, police said.
Judicial Magistrate Naima Iffat granted the four-day remand after the suspects were produced before the court.
The domestic worker, identified as Fatima, was allegedly tortured to death at the residence of a senior police officer in the Police Lines Headquarters. A murder case has been registered at the Shams Colony police station on the complaint of her father, Asghar. Senior police officer Muhammad bin Ashraf told that the girl had been living with the family for a considerable period. He said the family itself had contacted the police after the incident. Meanwhile, it was learnt that complaints had reportedly been made against the senior cop Muhammad bin Ashraf during his tenure as district police officer (DPO) of Chakwal. According to the reports, the officer had sent a female constable to the DPO House to look after his children. After the constable refused, the officer's wife allegedly had her transferred to Kallar Kahar police station as punishment. Ex-Punjab IGP Rao Sardar visited the police station around midnight and was surprised to find the female constable posted there. He later took notice of the matter after asking her about the circumstances of her transfer.–**APP**

Call for equipping women with digital skills

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a session called for a coordinated efforts to equip women entrepreneurs with digital skills, improve their access to markets and finance, and simplify business registration and export procedures, saying technology-based training might deliver meaningful results only when linked with practical business opportunities.



The session, titled: "Digital Skill Development of Women Entrepreneurs on Enhancing Business Opportunities", was organized at the 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), here.Mikiko Tanaka of the UNESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, said digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) are creating new opportunities for women entrepreneurs to promote products, reach customers in other cities and countries, receive digital payments and explore international markets.
She said AI tools could help small businesses prepare marketing material, identify potential markets, communicate with customers and manage routine tasks. She said Pakistan had considerable potential in sectors such as textiles, handicrafts, food products and services, but women entrepreneurs needed reliable information, affordable logistics, access to finance and effective business support to connect with regional and global value chains. Ms Roshan Khursheed Bharucha, Member of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan and former Senator, emphasized the importance of capacity-building and skills development in enabling women to participate in economic activities.–**DNA**

Govt committed to fostering interfaith harmony: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said the government remained steadfast in its commitment to fostering interfaith harmony and religious tolerance, safeguarding the rights of minorities and vulnerable segments of society, curbing hate speech, and advancing the National Action Plan on Human Rights, which underscores human rights education and the promotion of peace.
In a message on the International Day for Tolerance, 16 November 20226, he said, "On the occasion of the International Day for Tolerance, Pakistan joins the international community in reaffirming its commitment to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and the protection of human dignity. The true essence of tolerance lies in respecting the beliefs, convictions and rights of others, even in the face of differences." "Islamic teachings provide an enduring guiding light for patience, tolerance, compassion, justice and respect for humanity. The exemplary life and perfect Uswa-e-Hasana of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) provide a timeless model of patience, forbearance and kindness towards others," he said adding, "The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees dignity, protection, equal opportunities and equality before the law to all citizens, without discrimination on the basis of colour, religion or creed." "Pakistan's diverse society, comprising different faiths, traditions and cultures, can progress and prosper only through mutual cooperation, understanding and tolerance. Our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is a source of strength and a valuable national asset," he remarked. The Prime Minister said, "The enactment of the National Commission for Minority Rights Act, 2025, represents another significant step towards strengthening the legal framework for the protection of minority rights. Translating these legal safeguards into effective institutional protection and ensuring meaningful access to justice remain among the government's foremost priorities." "The values of tolerance and forbearance are instilled through upbringing at home, while educational institutions, places of worship and wider social circles play a vital role in nurturing and promoting them," he added. He called upon religious scholars, teachers, the media, civil society, public institutions and every citizen, particularly youth, to reject prejudice, foster mutual understanding and play a constructive role in countering hatred and violence.–**APP**

FCCP declares disciplinary proceedings against NAB DG illegal

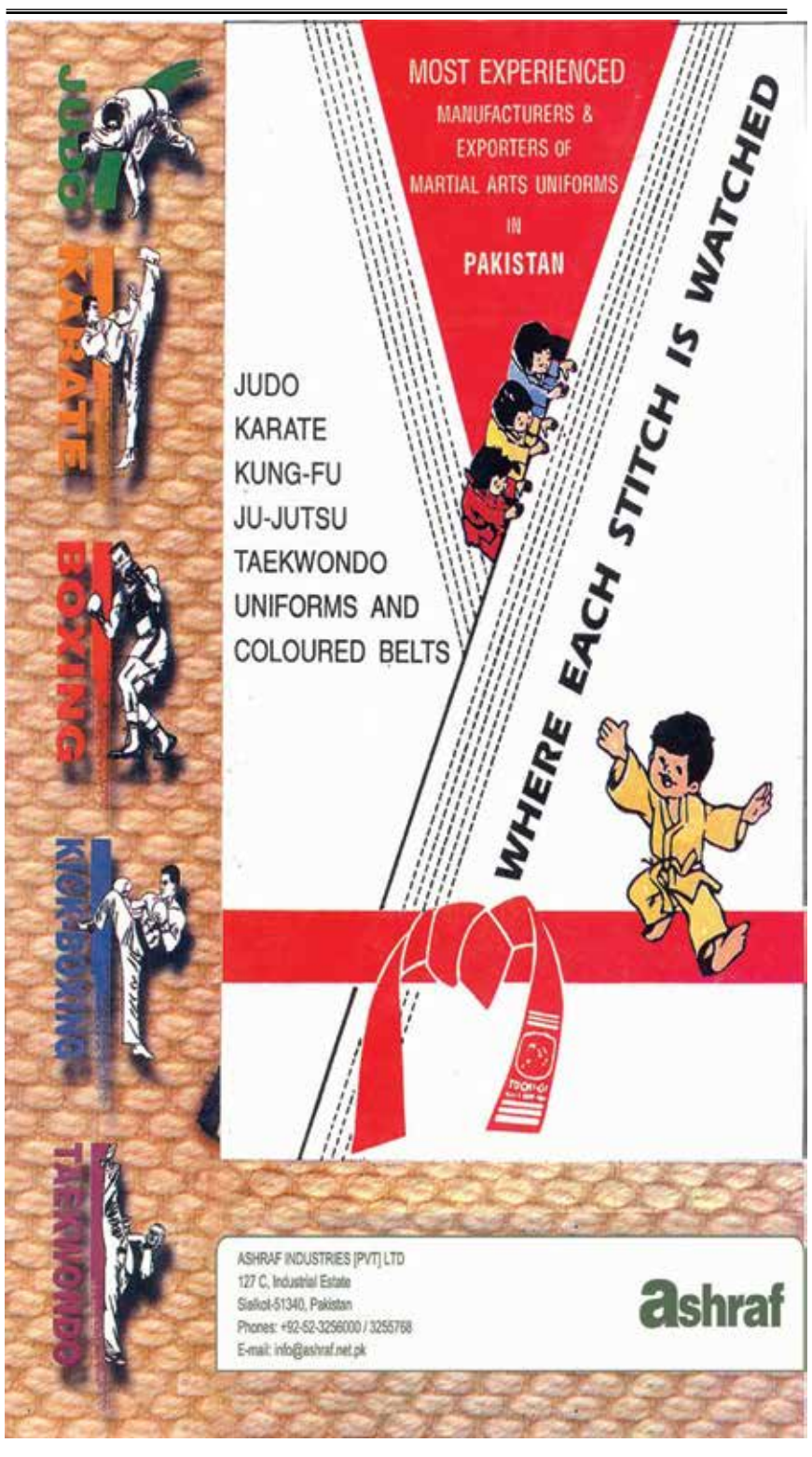
ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan (FCCP) has declared illegal and set aside the charge sheet and departmental inquiry initiated against National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Director General Shahzad Saleem, ruling that matters already examined by the Supreme Court cannot be reopened after two decades without new evidence or legal justification.
A two-member bench comprising Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Muhammad Karim Khan Agha announced the detailed judgment on Shahzad Saleem's petition, also setting aside the Islamabad High Court's May 12, 2026, judgment.
The court observed that a violation of recruitment rules alone could not constitute misconduct unless an officer had secured appointment through fraud, misrepresentation, concealment of facts or corruption.
According to the judgment, Shahzad Saleem was absorbed into NAB in 2003, while questions regarding his appointment, qualifications and promotions had already been examined by the Supreme Court. NAB had also informed the apex court that his master's degree was verified by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and that he possessed the required qualifications at the time of his appointment.
The court noted that NAB subsequently questioned the same degree and initiated disciplinary proceedings without presenting any new evidence or reasonable justification. It also observed that the allegation regarding a lack of five years' experience could not constitute misconduct in the absence of any charge of misrepresentation or concealment of facts.
The judgment further pointed out that NAB initiated proceedings on a private complaint without even verifying the complainant's identity or properly examining its own records and previous submissions before the Supreme Court.
Distinguishing between an appointment made in violation of rules and misconduct by an employee, the court held that reopening settled matters after an excessive delay was legally unjustified.
Consequently, the court declared the October 10, 2024, charge sheet, statement of allegations and all subsequent departmental proceedings against Shahzad Saleem null and void.–**DNA**

Masood calls for ECO regional integration

ISLAMABAD: Former ambassador to the United States, China and the United Nations, and former AJK president, Sardar Masood Khan said here Monday that Pakistan's ECO chairmanship offers a rare opportunity to revitalise the regional body and strengthen economic connectivity among its ten member states. HE observed that although the ECO was established in 1985 by Pakistan, Türkiye and Iran, and subsequently expanded in 1992 with the inclusion of seven additional members, the organisation had not evolved to the extent of its considerable potential. In a statement, Khan said, its ten member states collectively represent a significant geographical area, a substantial population and an estimated nominal GDP of approximately $3 trillion. Their geographical contiguity and existing infrastructure provide a strong foundation for regional trade, transportation and economic cooperation.
He described Pakistan's forthcoming two-year chairmanship, alongside the leadership of Secretary General Ambassador Asad Majid, as an important opportunity to give the organisation renewed direction. The priority, he stressed, should be to move beyond ceremonial meetings towards measurable outcomes, stronger institutions and a practical regional connectivity agenda. Khan said Pakistan's growing international diplomatic standing, particularly its recent role in facilitating efforts to end the conflict between Iran and the United States, provides additional credibility and an opportunity to exercise constructive regional leadership. He emphasised that strengthening the ECO also aligns with Pakistan's own national objectives of expanding connectivity and emerging as a major economic power over the coming decades. He emphasised that regional connectivity should encompass energy supplies, transportation, merchandise trade and services, creating multiple routes for economic cooperation. On insulating regional economies from geopolitical rivalries, Khan called for institutionalising trade links, increasing intra-regional commerce and consolidating existing bilateral agreements. He highlighted Pakistan-Türkiye cooperation in defence production, business and education as examples of the broader partnerships that could strengthen the ECO. He also noted that regional security arrangements, including the Makkah Alliance and other emerging partnerships, could support a more stable environment for economic integration. He said, the ECO must develop an actionable, collectively supported strategy to withstand regional turbulence and convert its considerable economic and geographical advantages into sustainable prosperity for all member states.–**DNA**

BISP to expand mobile registration fleet with seven new vans

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will add seven mobile registration vans to its existing fleet of 25, taking the total to 32, to extend household registration and survey services to vulnerable populations in remote and underserved areas across Pakistan, particularly the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where access to registration facilities remains limited.
According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, the expansion is aimed at strengthening BISP's outreach capacity and facilitating households seeking registration in the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER), especially in far-flung areas where access to permanent registration centres is difficult.
The existing fleet of 25 mobile registration vans comprises 16 in Balochistan, five in Sindh, three in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one in Islamabad.
The addition of seven vehicles is expected to improve the programme's ability to reach underserved communities and provide registration facilities closer to their homes.
Separately, BISP has established 647 Dynamic Registry Centres (DRCs) at the tehsil level across the country, offering free household registration and updating facilities.
Operating under the dynamic NSER framework, these centres allow citizens to register their households and update socioeconomic information without waiting for another nationwide survey. Initially developed through a nationwide door-to-door survey during fiscal year 2010-11, the NSER was converted into a dynamic registry in February 2023 under the Multiple Entry Localised Access (MELA) approach. The registry currently contains socioeconomic information on more than 38.7 million households, of which approximately 10.2 million are receiving assistance under various BISP programmes, the document states. For beneficiary selection, BISP employs the Proxy Means Test (PMT), which evaluates household poverty levels through 43 indicators, including household size, education, employment status, disability, assets, agricultural holdings and health conditions. Under the relevant unconditional cash transfer programme, households with a PMT score of 32 or below qualify on the poverty-score criterion for financial assistance.–**APP**



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In wartime, the Gulf's deepest reserves are legal as well as financial

Dr. Bashayer Al-Majed

IN February 1953, eight years before independence, Kuwait set up an investment board in London to place its surplus oil revenue abroad. It was the world's first sovereign wealth fund. Few people outside the Gulf noticed. Thirty-seven years later, the idea behind it was tested in the hardest way possible.

When Iraq invaded in August 1990, Kuwait lost its territory in a day. It did not lose its wealth. Within hours, Washington and London froze Kuwaiti state assets, not to punish Kuwait but to keep them out of the invader's reach. The investments built up over four decades sustained the government in exile and helped pay for liberation and reconstruction. A state had lost its land and kept its means because the law of state property protected its sovereignty when its borders could not.

That lesson matters again. Saudi Arabia is under fire and the Gulf's sovereign funds are among the largest pools of capital in the world. Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund manages about $900 billion. The Kuwait Investment Authority is estimated to manage about $1 trillion. The question is what protects that wealth in a war.

In 1990, freezing orders protected a state's assets. In 2022, Western governments froze about $300 billion of Russia's central bank reserves after the invasion of Ukraine. The legal tool was the same. The outcome was the opposite. The difference was legitimacy: in one case the state was the victim of aggression, in the other it was the aggressor. Missiles can strike airports and pipelines. They cannot reach a well-governed fund

For Gulf funds, the lesson is precise. Sovereign assets abroad are protected less by their size than by the legal standing of the state that owns them. Customary international law gives strong immunity to central bank assets, weaker protection to state property used for commercial purposes and far less to states that place themselves outside the law. A state that acts within the UN Charter, as Saudi Arabia does in defending itself, keeps the law on its side, in its courts and in everyone else's. The second protection is governance. In 2008, a group of sovereign funds agreed the Santiago Principles, 24 standards on transparency, accountability and investment purpose. In April 2009, meeting in Kuwait City, they adopted the Kuwait Declaration, which created the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds to carry those standards forward.

This is not bureaucratic detail. Host countries increasingly screen foreign state investment on national security grounds. A fund that can show that its decisions are commercial, its governance clear and its purposes published is treated as an investor. A fund that cannot is treated as a political actor. In a crisis, that distinction decides whether capital moves freely or is stopped at the border.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have built their funds for different purposes but the region needs both. Kuwait's model, with its Future Generations Fund created in 1976, is a long-term store of value invested largely abroad: a shock absorber and a savings account for citizens not yet born. Even this model has had to defend its rules when budgets were tight, as Kuwait did in 2020. Saudi Arabia's PIF is an engine of transformation, investing heavily at home to build the non-oil economy that Vision 2030 requires, alongside a substantial international portfolio.

In wartime, each model does a different job. External reserves absorb shocks that hit the domestic economy. Domestic investment builds the resilience that makes the next shock smaller. A region that combines the two is harder to destabilize than either model alone.

Three steps would turn financial strength into legal strength. First, Gulf funds should review where their assets sit and under which legal systems and treat jurisdiction as a strategic risk, not an administrative choice. Second, they should keep raising their governance standards under the Santiago Principles because transparency is cheaper than suspicion. Third, the GCC should formalize how members support one another in a crisis. It has done so before: in 2018, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait agreed a $10 billion package for Bahrain. A standing framework would make that solidarity predictable rather than improvised.

Kuwait learned in 1990 that a state's wealth can outlast the occupation of its territory, if the law stands behind it. The lesson for the Gulf today is the same. Missiles can strike airports and pipelines. They cannot reach a well-governed fund held under the protection of the law. The Gulf's deepest reserves are not only measured in dollars. They are measured in legitimacy.



The End of US Aid to Israel

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The disagreement is not limited to Washington. Reports in the Israeli press suggest that the two governments have discussed a substantial reduction rather than an immediate termination. One reported obstacle concerns American demands for greater control over Israeli military technology. There are also questions about how Israel would manage its defence budget if the existing financial arrangement ended before alternative funding mechanisms were established. Israeli financial reporting has pointed to a possible shortfall running into tens of billions of shekels. This is where the real challenge lies

THE possibility of ending American military assistance to Israel, once considered politically unthinkable in Washington, is now being discussed openly by both governments. President Donald Trump has indicated that the annual financial support will come to an end in December, bringing forward a debate that has continued for more than three decades. The question, however, is not simply whether the United States should stop funding Israel's military. It is whether both countries are prepared for the political, military and economic consequences of ending a relationship that has become a central feature of their strategic partnership.

Speaking on Fox & Friends on Tuesday, Trump said that he and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had agreed to end the annual assistance of approximately $4 billion. He added that Washington would no longer make payments to Israel by the end of the year, although it would continue to help if necessary. According to Trump, Netanyahu himself had raised the matter.

The announcement has created uncertainty because the existing agreement between the two countries extends until September 2028. Signed in 2016, the ten-year memorandum of understanding provides Israel with $3.3 billion annually in Foreign Military Financing and another $500 million for missile defence. The assistance is subject to congressional appropriations, meaning that the president cannot simply disregard the existing arrangements without involving Congress. The Associated Press has described such an abrupt change as extremely difficult, while Politico has pointed out that lawmakers would probably have to consider the matter. An official from Israel's Finance Ministry also acknowledged that the government knew of the intention to end American assistance but was surprised by the proposed timetable. The remaining two years of the agreement reportedly involve around $8 billion in military equipment, including F-35 and F-15 aircraft, helicopters and missile interceptors.

The political reaction in Israel reflects the importance of the issue. Gadi Eisenkot, who leads the political opposition bloc against Netanyahu, has questioned the prime minister's credibility and called for his replacement. Meanwhile, Matt Brooks of the Republican Jewish Coalition described the proposed termination as neither unexpected nor uncoordinated, suggesting that discussions had taken place between the two governments. Yet the debate over American assistance to Israel did not begin with Trump. It has a history stretching back more than three decades. In 1995, the Middle East Quarterly published a debate under the title End American Aid to Israel? Joel Bainerman argued that foreign assistance had become a form of welfare that weakened rather than strengthened national independence. Other contributors, including Raphael Danziger and Bradley Gordon of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, defended the existing arrangement.

In July 1996, Netanyahu himself addressed a joint meeting of the US Congress and declared that Israel had reached the end of its childhood. He announced that his government would begin gradually reducing its dependence on American economic assistance. The argument was straightforward: a country that had developed a strong economy and an advanced industrial base should increasingly finance its own requirements. In 1997, Mitchell Bard and Daniel Pipes made a similar case, arguing that Israel had become an affluent country and that its relationship with Washington was unlike ordinary foreign aid arrangements. The following year, Israeli Finance Minister Yaakov Ne'eman presented a proposal to Congress to reduce economic assistance by $120 million annually over ten years while increasing military assistance by half that amount. The US appropriations bills for 1999, 2000 and 2001 reflected this arrangement.

However, the reduction in economic assistance did not lead to a corresponding decline in military support. Instead, military cooperation expanded. The 2007 memorandum committed Washington to providing $30 billion over ten years. The 2016 agreement increased the amount to $38 billion. It also included provisions requiring Israel gradually to reduce its use of American military financing for purchases from its own domestic defence industry, with that arrangement due to end in 2028. The argument for reducing dependence has gained further support from Netanyahu in recent years. In December last year, he announced plans to allocate 350 billion shekels over a decade to develop an independent Israeli weapons industry. Speaking on 60 Minutes in May, he expressed his desire to bring American financial assistance down to zero rather than leave the decision to a future Congress. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also told House appropriators in June that Israel wanted to reduce assistance gradually until it reached zero.

These statements suggest that the idea of ending American military grants is not necessarily a rupture in the alliance. It may instead represent an attempt to redefine it. Israel has developed considerable military, technological and industrial capabilities. Its defence industry produces advanced aircraft systems, drones, missile technology and other sophisticated equipment. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether a country with such resources should continue receiving billions of dollars in annual military assistance. Nevertheless, the political obstacles remain substantial. On July 15, the US House of Representatives rejected an amendment introduced by Republican Congressman Thomas Massie to remove the $3.3 billion military financing provision. The proposal was defeated by 314 votes to 104, although 103 Democrats supported it. House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries had already indicated opposition to the assistance and argued that Israel was capable of purchasing its own sophisticated weapons.

The disagreement is not limited to Washington. Reports in the Israeli press suggest that the two governments have discussed a substantial reduction rather than an immediate termination. One reported obstacle concerns American demands for greater control over Israeli military technology. There are also questions about how Israel would manage its defence budget if the existing financial arrangement ended before alternative funding mechanisms were established. Israeli financial reporting has pointed to a possible shortfall running into tens of billions of shekels. This is where the real challenge lies. Ending military assistance without preparing an alternative arrangement could create difficulties for both countries. Israel would need to ensure that its defence procurement, missile defence programmes and military readiness remain unaffected.

The United States, meanwhile, would have to decide how to maintain strategic cooperation without relying on the existing financial framework.

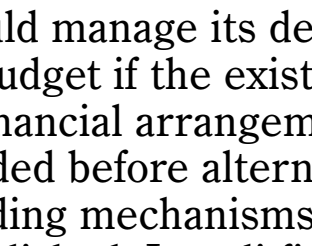
Washington and Tel Aviv should therefore distinguish between military assistance and the broader strategic alliance. Ending direct grants does not necessarily require ending intelligence cooperation, joint research, military coordination or diplomatic engagement. These arrangements can continue through a revised framework based on shared interests rather than annual financial transfers. For Israel, the transition could strengthen domestic defence production and reduce the perception that its security depends on American taxpayers. For the United States, it could provide an opportunity to reconsider a long-standing financial commitment while maintaining its influence in the Middle East.

The danger is not necessarily the termination of assistance but the absence of a carefully negotiated transition. Three decades of discussion have established that the relationship needs to evolve. Trump's announcement has now placed a deadline on that debate. Whether the two governments can turn it into a workable agreement will determine if the end of American military grants becomes a step towards greater Israeli independence or another source of uncertainty in an already unsettled region.

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The New Politics of Geopolitical Power

Mehnaz Bibi



The price of the letter of the message for Pakistan is evident. The Red Sea is not the scene of the eyes of Pakistan. The Red Sea and the Suez Canal are responsible for over 90 per cent of the volume of the trade. But in early 2024, the freight rate skyrocketed on several routes, while insurance costs also saw an increase, creating a burden for the importers...

A CONTAINER ship from Singapore to Rotterdam chose not to take the shortest route through the Red Sea but had to take the Cape of Good Hope route which involved an additional 3,500 nautical miles and almost two weeks to complete. It is a truth that not many books on geopolitics make a mention of but that hundreds of ships have shown itself to be true: Power today is not only determined by who owns the territory; it is who owns the story of the territory. It's the spirit of modern and critical geopolitics. The classroom has been the setting for geopolitics. In a deeper question of critical geopolitics, who decides what is legitimate, what is a threat and whose security is important? The Red Sea crisis is the most recent and strongest example of this change in recent years.

The Red Sea is more than just water. It accounts for 12 per cent of world trade, 30 per cent of the world's container traffic and is home to most of the energy pipeline linking Asia and Europe. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the narrowest in the world, is at its narrowest point only 29 kilometers wide, and is one of the world's most critical chokepoints. What makes one person a small chicken can break it, can break the world. Yemen's Houthis launched attacks on commercial shipping in November 2023 on the grounds that it was in solidarity with the Palestinians in the Gaza region. It was a non-state thugging the sea lanes of a superpower as it is traditionally. It was more than that, it was a story of the war from a Critical Geopolitics standpoint.

Houthis were not pirates. They claimed that they were "the voice of the oppressed. The United States and its allies did not respond that it was an "answer" of "a war of shipping profits. They brought it in as a safeguard of freedom of navigation and world trade. It was a struggle for both parties for legitimacy in the world. In that battle, perception was crucial as missiles. None of this can be used as justification for an attack on civilian crews, who were not involved in the conflict, and in some cases were killed. It is for this reason that the crisis dragged on for so long even with the overwhelming US and allied naval strength. A coalition might send destroyers, but if they couldn't do that they couldn't do much else without being able to respond to a plausible narrative in much of the Global South. The numbers were in their favor as well, and the world's mightiest navies used high-cost interceptors, and low-cost drones were used. Maps are non-neutral: critical geopolitics has told us that. The notion of terrorists, the notion of freedom fighters, the definition of a victim, all have an impact on policy.

The price of the letter of the message for Pakistan is evident. The Red Sea is not the scene of the eyes of Pakistan. The Red Sea and the Suez Canal are responsible for over 90 per cent of the volume of the trade. But in early 2024, the freight rate skyrocketed on several routes, while insurance costs also saw an increase, creating a burden for the importers, exporters and ultimately for the common people of Pakistan. On the other hand, the export of textiles to Europe was affected, the prices of imports had risen and the foreign exchange reserves had been impacted by geopolitics. They were felt at the ports of Karachi and markets of Lahore. The crisis also brought into the limelight the strategic weaknesses of Pakistan. Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea, mere hundreds kilometers east of the Strait of Hormuz is the main hub of CPEC and the success of CPEC hinges on the stability of sea lanes in the Gulf, Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Pakistan's connectivity vision must be rethought as long as a war with the same narrative is a way to close one of the chokepoints. There is no right way, no one, no one's story.

What are the lessons to be learned by Pakistan? The first is, that the job of maritime security has ceased to be a navy one. It is a diplomatic and information work. Patrolling is the strength of Pakistan Navy and Pakistan also needs to develop narratives in international forums about freedom of navigation, climate security and fair trade. Secondly, Pakistan needs to diversify itself. The importance of the regional cooperation with the Gulf states and Central Asia and ASEAN, and investments in coastal infrastructure, port efficiency and blue economy will be more significant. Importing nearly all the components overseas, this country must have a strategy for supply shocks, and strengthen shipping and insurance sectors.

Thirdly, Pakistan must tell its story. Over the last few decades in Pakistan it has been seen as a 'frontline state' and a security issue or a 'corridor'. Critical geopolitics is the view that a state that is not defined by itself will be defined by others. Credible delivery is effective port and custom and sound policy. It wasn't a battle of navies that solved the Red Sea crisis. It was because of political calculations, stories and talks which were moving. Shipping companies have been gradually returning to shipping on the Suez route since the Gaza ceasefire in October 2025, and the Houthis stating they had ceased attacks on shipping. Lesson does not eliminate the risk, it is still present. This new geopolitics is not a map, but a mind. It is a must for Pakistan to fight on both fronts, on sea and on story otherwise it cannot survive in this world.

– Lecturer University of Okara
Department of Political Science

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Imran Khan appeals for medical...

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Meanwhile, Bushra Bibi has approached the IHC through lawyers Latif Khosa and Barrister Salman, seeking her immediate transfer to a specialised hospital for medical treatment and possible eye surgery. In her petition, she requested the court to order authorities to produce her complete medical record and ensure that all necessary facilities were provided for her surgery. The petition stated that Imran Khan had raised concerns about his wife's health during a meeting with lawyers on November 10. It added that Bushra Bibi had informed them about a possible eye surgery scheduled for November 15. According to the petition, she was experiencing eye pain and difficulty seeing. A doctor examined her in jail seven to eight days after she first complained of the problem and informed her that she would require surgery. The petition also raised concerns about the conditions in which former first lady was being held, claiming that she was confined in a large hall-like room with poor hygiene. It further alleged that seven small snakes had emerged from her cell and were killed by jail staff. Rats, cockroaches and insects were also said to be present in the room. The petitioner's counsel argued that inadequate cleanliness in the jail could increase the risk of infection following eye surgery and urged the court to arrange her transfer to a specialised hospital for proper care.

FCC allows PHC to...

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Barrister Gohar also sought relief concerning arrests made under Section 3 of the MPO, pointing out that a review board had not yet been constituted in KP. Responding to the observation, the KP advocate general informed the court that the review board would be formed after three months. Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan told Gohar that the miscellaneous petitions had been filed at the Peshawar Registry and would be examined once they were brought before the bench. Speaking to the media after the hearing in Islamabad, PTI chairman said cases relating to governor's rule and a state of emergency would not be heard by the PHC. He added that the court had accepted the Peshawar Bar Council's application to become a party to the case. Gohar further clarified that proceedings in other cases under Article 199 would continue at the PHC, excluding those concerning governor's rule or a state of emergency.

PM resolves to promote...

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result-oriented initiatives that deliver tangible benefits to the people of the region. The Prime Minister called for enhanced cooperation in trade and investment, transport and transit connectivity, energy, information and communication technology, and sustainable development. He stressed the importance of effective implementation of existing ECO agreements and strengthening institutional mechanisms to accelerate regional economic integration. Highlighting Pakistan's strategic geographical location, Shehbaz Sharif reiterated Pakistan's commitment to enhancing regional connectivity through road, rail, and multimodal transport corridors, including linkages with the ports of Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar, to facilitate access to regional and international markets, particularly for landlocked ECO Member States. Underlining Pakistan's commitment to dialogue and diplomacy for the peaceful resolution of disputes, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of collective efforts to address threats to regional security. The Prime Minister invited ECO Member States to actively participate in the celebrations marking Lahore's designation as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027.

30th CNS golf championship concludes in Karachi

Chief of the Naval Staff congratulated the winners and commended the sportsman spirit displayed by all players. While addressing the audience, Chief Guest appreciated the contribution of sponsors and media in supporting the championship and acknowledged the tireless efforts of organizers

DNA

KARACHI: 30th CNS Open Golf Championship 2026 concluded at Karachi Golf Club with Aadam Syed as the winner and Hamza Taimur Amin as runner-up in Professionals category. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as Chief Guest and gave away prizes to winners of all the categories.

Professional golfers from all over Pakistan participated in the flagship tournament from 12 to 15 November 2026. A healthy competition was witnessed during last four days at KGC, highlighting the hard work and commitment of golfers with the circuit. M Nazir won the title of Senior Professionals while M Ashass became winner of Junior Professionals



category. Winners of Ladies Professionals category was Humna Amjad and for Senior Amateurs Net category was Commodore (R) Ghazanfar Abbas while Gross category was Maj (R) Irfan Khan. Musa Hussaini and Abdullah Ansar won in Amateurs category Net and Gross, respectively. Syeda Amna Khalid and Humera Khalid won Net and Gross categories of Ladies, respectively.

Chief of the Naval Staff congratulated the winners and commended the sportsman spirit displayed by all players. While addressing the audience, Chief Guest appreciated the contribution of sponsors and media in supporting the championship and acknowledged the tireless efforts of organizers. Closing ceremony was attended by various dignitaries including sponsors, golfers and members of the media fraternity.

Unbeaten Andreeva captures WTA Finals crown on debut

DNA

INDIAN WELLS: Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva beat Ukraine's Elina Svitolina 7-5 6-3 on Sunday to win the WTA Finals, completing an unbeaten singles debut at the season-ending championships in Indian Wells without dropping a set. Andreeva threw her racket into the air and jumped for joy when Svitolina put an overhead into the net on match point, before hugging coach Conchita Martinez and her team.

"I'm super thankful to my team for helping me work hard every day and pushing me to my limits," she said during the trophy ceremony. "Thanks for fighting with me." The 19-year-old French Open champion won all five of her matches at the event, which brings together the top eight players of the season.

She takes home the maximum prize money of $3.37 million and the Billie Jean King Trophy. King watched the final from the stands on a sunny day in the California desert. Andreeva will rise to a career-high world number two in Monday's rankings and will move within 300 points of Elena Rybakina. She also won a custom Mercedes-Benz AMG SL 55 painted in the WTA's signature purple, though she does not yet have a driver's license.

"This is an amazing motivation for me to get my driver's license as fast as I can," she said during the trophy ceremony. "But I still want to just try to give it a little spin, maybe a couple of meters. I'm sure I'm going to be able to do that or at least honk a little bit. "If not, then look, I have five people on my team. I'm gonna be a passenger princess forever so that's also an option for me." Andreeva was the favorite against Svitolina, the 2018 champion, and had beaten her 6-4 6-0 on Monday in the round-robin stage.

The first set was tight, with long rallies as both players tried to control points by pushing the other from side to side and drawing them in off the baseline. Andreeva served for the set at 5-4 but struggled, hitting two double faults and a backhand long to let Svitolina back into it. She stayed composed, though, breaking Svitolina in the next game and then showing great poise to serve out the 55-minute set.

The intensity stayed high in the second set, including a 10-minute seventh game, the longest of the tournament, which featured six deuces. Svitolina won the game when Andreeva sent a backhand wide to cut her opponent's lead to 4-3.

But frustration began to mount for Svitolina during the subsequent changeover as she gestured to her team and Andreeva rolled on from there, easily holding serve and then breaking Svitolina for a sixth time to seal the win.

Svitolina, 32, said she hoped her return to the highest level after becoming a mother would inspire other women and athletes. "I'm really happy to be in great form and to be coming back after pregnancy. Hopefully it inspires some ladies and athletes around the world to believe that it's possible," she said. Svitolina did not shake hands with Andreeva after the match, maintaining her policy of not doing so with Russian or Belarusian opponents following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which Moscow launched using Belarus as a staging ground.

Action against terrorism must...

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DPM Dar called on the ECO member states to strengthen regional connectivity amid prevailing global uncertainty and rapid technological advancements. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the principles, objectives and vision outlined in the ECO Charter, saying Pakistan, as a founding member of the organisation, attached particular importance to regional cooperation. "Our guiding principles are equality of sovereignty, mutual respect, non-interference and cooperation based on mutual benefit," DPM Dar said.

Highlighting the region's geographical significance, he said it occupied a unique position at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. He noted that the region brought together major markets, abundant natural resources and a historical foundation for trade. The DPM called for efforts to transform this geographical advantage into stronger economic connectivity and shared prosperity.

He also expressed Pakistan's commitment to making its ECO chairmanship productive and meaningful, saying the country was proud to assume the organisation's presidency for 2026-2027. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called for stronger regional cooperation through the ECO, emphasising trade, transport and energy as strategic priorities. Addressing the meeting, Araghchi praised DPM Dar's leadership within the organisation and Pakistan's warm hospitality. He thanked countries that had condemned US and Israeli aggression against Iran's territorial integrity and expressed solidarity with the Iranian people. Araghchi called for the ECO to become an effective platform for collective action, stronger cooperation and a shared regional strategy.

Taliban authorities ban cricket on Kandahar radio

The manager of another Kandahar radio station confirmed the directive, saying that the authorities called and said "anything related to cricket is banned for now"

DNA

AFGHANISTAN: The Taliban authorities have banned radio stations in southern Kandahar from airing content related to cricket, a rapidly growing sport in Afghanistan, two broadcasters and a provincial source told AFP on Sunday.

The government has shown support for the game, hosting cricket matches during the August anniversary of its return to power. But the provincial Information and Culture Department told radio stations on Saturday that anything related to cricket is no longer allowed. A source from that department, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, confirmed that "cricket coverage is banned." "Both commentary and news coverage, or even reporting about their winning result, is also banned," he told AFP, without providing further details.

The head of a local radio station told AFP: "We received a call from Information and Culture, and we were told that we can't cover cricket on the radio anymore."

The manager of another Kandahar radio station confirmed the directive, saying that the authorities called and said "anything related to cricket is banned for now."

Both broadcasters spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity for security reasons. Afghanistan's cricket board did not respond immediately to an AFP request for comment on the decision in Kandahar, which is home to the country's supreme leader. The Taliban authorities have restricted some sports in Afghanistan – outlawing mixed martial arts – but has allowed men and boys to continue playing cricket. Women and girls, however, are banned from gyms and sport more broadly as part of rules severely limiting their access to public life.

QAU, Chinese medical institutions to cooperate in biomedical research

ISLAMABAD: Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a delegation representing five Chinese medical and healthcare institutions to strengthen cooperation in traditional medicine, medicinal plants, herbal medicine and biomedical research. Prof. Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed of the Department of Plant Sciences and Prof. Dr. Sohail Yousaf of the Department of Environmental Sciences signed the agreement on behalf of QAU, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Monday. The five-member Chinese delegation represented Wenmai Huazhang (Beijing) Cultural Development Center, Fosun Pharma, Fosun Wanbang (Jiangsu) Health Development Co. Ltd., Beijing Aerospace General Hospital and Wuxi People's Hospital.

The agreement aims to promote joint research initiatives, academic and scientific exchanges, and collaboration on the potential applications of medicinal plants and traditional herbal medicine in healthcare innovation.

Under the MoU, QAU's Medicinal Plant Laboratory in the Department of Plant Sciences will serve as the focal research and coordination unit. Prof. Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed has been designated as the university's focal person for the collaboration. Relevant departments within QAU's Faculty of Biological Sciences will also participate in the initiative to encourage interdisciplinary research and strengthen institutional ties between Pakistan and China in medicinal plant sciences, traditional medicine and healthcare research. The partnership is expected to create opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaborative research and scientific innovation, further expanding academic and research cooperation between the two countries. Earlier, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ishtiaq Ali, chairperson of the Department of Microbiology and director of the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC), welcomed the Chinese delegation and briefed its members on the university's academic programs, research initiatives and institutional strengths. – **DNA**



Proud' — FIA president Ben Sulayem looks forward to 35th Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge

DNA

DUBAI: The president of the FIA, Mohammed Ben Sulayem, says he is looking with pride to the 35th edition of the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, set to take place from Nov. 22-27. The event, founded by Ben Sulayem in 1991, will host the final round of the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship for the first time, with several major world titles to be decided in the UAE.

Following a fiercely contested season which began with the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia in January and continued through rounds in Portugal, Argentina and Morocco, the 2026 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge will determine this year's FIA World Rally-Raid driver, manufacturer and co-driver champions.

Organized by the Emirates Motorsports Organization, it will start and finish in Al-Ain and will once more present a formidable test for competitors and rally machinery across some of the world's most dramatic desert terrain. The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge underlines that the Middle East is safe and ready to host Formula One and other world-class motorsport events. The Dubai International Baja, which concluded on Nov. 8, delivered a thrilling climax to the FIA World Baja Cup and FIA Middle East Baja Cup, ahead of the F1 races in Qatar from Nov. 27-29 and Abu Dhabi from Dec. 4-6.

"There have been many landmark moments in the history of the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, and it has now established itself as one of the world's most enduring and technically demanding rally-raid events, and one which continues to grow." said Ben Sulayem, who will be in attendance.

"When I launched the event in 1991, my plan was to take it into the FIA World Cup for Cross Country Rallies, something we achieved just two years later. I am proud of this event, showcasing the very best of the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship while promoting the UAE's outstanding natural beauty and global motorsport standing. That's what keeps competitors and visitors returning year after year."

The launch of the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship in 2022 opened an exciting new era for the rally-raid community. The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge has continued to match the ambition to take the sport to a new level and has played an important part in strengthening the UAE's position as a motorsport destination.

Ben Sulayem said: "Motorsport in the UAE has grown through long-term investment by the country's leadership and a clear understanding of what major sporting events bring to the nation. The EMSO, our Member Club, works hand in hand with government partners, promoters, organizers, officials and volunteers, and the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge is a product of that strong collaboration."

He added: "Our task at the FIA is to build on that foundation by growing the sport and opening doors for the next generation of Emirati drivers, officials, and fans. The UAE has an important role to play in the future of our sport and I look forward to attending this landmark race once again

The FIA World Rally-Raid Championship finale promises a compelling climax. Toyota Gazoo Racing's Seth Quintero leads the drivers' championship as the American pursues a maiden title against two of the sport's most famous names.

Following his victory in Morocco, Quintero sits on 135 points, 14 ahead of nine-time World Rally Champion Sebastien Loeb on 121, with six-time Dakar Rally winner Nasser Al-Attiyah third on 115. With 30 points available for the overall win in Abu Dhabi, all three remain firmly in contention.

The navigators' championship mirrors the drivers' contest, with Toyota's Andrew Short leading on 135 points from Dacia's Edouard Boulanger on 121 and Fabian Lurquin on 115. In the manufacturers' contest, Dacia Sandriders hold a 47-point lead on 372 over Toyota Gazoo Racing who closed the gap with successive victories, while Ford Racing are third on 232.

Govt says Imran letter...

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He added that a doctor had also been called from London, when required, for blood pressure check-ups. Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said providing all necessary medical facilities to ensure PTI Founder's health is the government's responsibility. It is pertinent to mention that PTI Founder's lawyer Salman Safdar has written letters to the Chief Justice of Pakistan, the Chief Justice of the Federal Constitutional Court, and the Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court, seeking medical relief for his client on humanitarian grounds. According to Salman Safdar, the letter has been written on the instructions of PTI Founder, who has called for the provision of medical facilities and implementation of court orders.

Araghchi calls...

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supplies, reduce external vulnerabilities and enhance collective resilience against geopolitical shocks and disruptions," Araghchi said, according to a transcript of his speech provided by the Iranian embassy in Pakistan. Araghchi said ECO was moving "beyond its traditional role towards becoming an effective platform for collective action, strengthened cooperation and joint efforts". He said the shift would enable member states "to address emerging challenges and contribute to an inclusive and equitable global economic order". He stressed the need for a "modern, new-generation, more inclusive, effective and operational trade agreement" that would benefit the region.

UN chief urges...

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against handing the power of life and death to autonomous machines, country representatives have gathered for a conference at the UN in Geneva this week to debate whether to launch talks on binding rules for such weapons. "Take action to prevent the use and spread of these merciless weapons," UN chief Antonio Guterres urged the conference in a video message. "I call on you to move towards negotiating a legally binding instrument to regulate autonomous weapon systems – including clear prohibitions and restrictions," he said. "We must never stop shielding civilians from the carnage and devastation of armed conflict, and preventing unnecessary suffering."

Pak inflation expected...

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US trade tariff policies, monsoon flooding at the start of the fiscal year and the outbreak of the Middle East conflict in late February 2026. The report noted that real GDP growth increased during FY26, supported primarily by a rebound in large-scale manufacturing, which has strong linkages with the agriculture and services sectors. The recovery in economic activity also resulted in a volume-led expansion in imports, while unfavourable global economic trends constrained exports. However, strong growth in workers' remittances helped contain the current account deficit at 0.1% of GDP during FY26, the SBP said.

Chaudhry Salik...

FROM PAGE 01

Punjab and also termed Maryam's statements in response to him as "below the belt". The PML-Q minister also regretted that fiery statements by Bokhari had worsened the row. Reply to CM's defamation notice Salik's response to CM Maryam's notice, a copy of which is available with Dawn, stated that the minister's remarks were "an expression of opinion on a matter that is fair and in the public interest". "Even otherwise, and without prejudice to the foregoing, the remarks would not have fallen within the scope of 'defamation' at all," it contended. It said that the notice from CM Maryam wrongly portrayed Salik's remarks as "assertions of fact".

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PSX gains over 300 points

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Monday, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index gaining 309.07 points, a positive change of 0.17 percent, to close at 178,182.95 points against 177,873.88 points recorded in the previous trading session.
The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 1,339.586 million shares, compared to 1,042.810 million shares traded in the previous session. The traded value of the ready market stood at Rs32.584 billion, up from Rs31.001 billion a day earlier.
Meanwhile, total market capitalisation increased to Rs19.359 trillion from Rs19.336 trillion recorded in the previous session.
Out of 498 companies that traded in the ready market, 260 posted gains, 211 suffered losses, while 27 remained unchanged, reflecting a positive trend in the market.
WorldCall Telecom led the volume chart with 376.274 million shares, followed by LSE Financial Services with 136.512 million shares and Pervez Ahmed Company with 92.785 million shares.—**APP**

Israeli authorities order demolitions in Hebron

LONDON: Israeli authorities issued demolition orders for two residential buildings and a villa in the Palestinian city of Hebron, south of the occupied West Bank.
Hebron Mayor Yousef Al-Jabari said on Monday that the residences were built with permits from the Hebron Municipality, as they are located in Area A, where the Palestinian Authority controls security and administrative matters, according to the Palestine News Agency.
The demolition orders will affect dozens of families living in 25 apartments in one building and 40 apartments in another, along with a villa, in the Bir Al-Mahjar neighborhood, northwest of the city.
Al-Jabari said that the Israeli authorities claim the structures are too close to the settler Route 35, describing the demolition notices as a policy of collective punishment targeting Hebron. Some notices set a deadline of only one week. He added that the Hebron Municipality is taking legal action to stop the orders and called on humanitarian organizations to intervene and halt violence by troops and Jewish settlers. Israeli forces have been increasingly active in Hebron since an attack on Oct. 23 in which two soldiers were shot and killed. More than 4,000 people were displaced from their homes during the 11-day military siege that followed, before troops declared their withdrawal earlier this month.—**APP**

EU nations to unveil Rwanda deal for migrant return hub

VIENNA: Five EU countries including Germany and Denmark are set to announce Monday a deal to establish a migrant deportation center in Rwanda — the first such facility outside the bloc. The group, also comprising Austria, Greece and the Netherlands, has been gunning to open a so-called "return-hub" despite rights groups' concerns, after the European Union cleared the way with a recent toughening of migration rules. The five have kept the location under wraps as they negotiated with potential hosts, but European diplomats and other people briefed on the talks have indicated Rwanda as the chosen country. The African Great Lakes nation had confirmed in August it had begun "preliminary discussions" with several European states.
And it is sending a delegation to a migration conference in Vienna, where several sources said the agreement would be unveiled at a press conference on Monday. "We shall see next week in Vienna," Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker told reporters Friday, when asked about the matter. The announcement is to mark the culmination of an EU push to boost deportations launched in 2024.—**APP**

Pak eyes investment-led shift from wastewater disposal to recycling

Dr Malik said the proposed national investment platform for water and sanitation would help translate climate vulnerabilities into bankable projects by mobilising public investment and attracting climate and private-sector financing

DNA



ISLAMABAD :Pakistan is seeking to mobilise public and private investment to transform wastewater management from a conventional disposal system into a circular model focused on treatment, recycling and reuse, amid mounting water security challenges driven by climate change, pollution and extreme weather.
Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik shared the vision during a meeting with UNICEF Chief of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Climate, Environment and Energy (CEE) Cindy Kushner and her team, the other day.
The meeting focused on Pakistan's preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference, co-hosted by Senegal and the United Arab Emirates, and opportunities to advance child-sensitive climate action ahead of COP31. Dr Malik said the proposed national investment platform for water and sanitation would help translate climate vulnerabilities into bankable projects by mobilising public investment and attracting climate and private-sector financing.
He said the Indus Basin was facing mounting pressures from glacial melt, extreme heat, floods and pollution, requiring Pakistan to move away from the linear model of waste disposal towards a circular approach to waste and wastewater management.
The proposed platform would prioritise wastewater circularity, with particular emphasis on significantly increasing the proportion of wastewater that was safely treated and reused, which currently remained low. The minister also highlighted plans to develop National WASH Accounts and Service Level Delivery Standards to strengthen transparency and accountability in the sector. He said credible tracking of expenditure, service delivery and wastewater reuse would be essential to build confidence among development partners and investors. The meeting also discussed UNICEF's Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC), for which an opening consultation was welcomed by the minister at COP31. The UNICEF-led framework is intended to guide climate-related interventions across health, education, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and child protection. Dr Malik said millions of children were facing overlapping climate hazards, making it essential to place their needs at the centre of climate planning. Appreciating UNICEF's partnership, he expressed hope that the proposed WASH-sector initiative would provide a foundation for similar interventions in other social sectors, strengthen programming and build greater investor confidence. Cindy Kushner and the UNICEF team expressed interest in the proposed vision and discussed the possibility of UNICEF engaging as a technical partner to support the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination in developing the partnership.

Tripled climate adaptation aid falls short of vulnerable nations' needs

UNITED NATIONS: As climate finance and debt relief dominated COP31 talks in Antalya, Turkiye, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned that tripling adaptation funding would still cover less than a third of vulnerable nations' needs, intensifying pressure on wealthy economies and fossil fuel polluters to close an estimated $840 billion annual shortfall. This statement came as pressure increased on wealthy nations and major polluters to contribute their fair share. Along the corridors and waterways of the COP31 venue in Antalya, protesters from across the globe gathered to demand climate justice, according to media reports. Some fought back tears, while others wept openly, recounting the lives and livelihoods already lost to climate change. Developing nations require an estimated $305 billion per year by 2035 for adaptation alone, yet current trends leave annual climate finance tracking roughly $840 billion below the broader $1.3 trillion target. Meanwhile, development finance agencies from Britain, Norway and Canada unveiled a $10 billion package to back climate projects across emerging markets. In remarks at his last press conference at COP31, the UN chief called for fundamental reforms to the international financial system, arguing that climate disasters were reversing decades of development progress and pushing vulnerable countries further into debt. Guterres warned that even tripling adaptation finance would cover less than 30% of global needs and urged international climate funds to simplify access to financial assistance. He also called for a faster transition away from fossil fuels, arguing that governments could not credibly support the 1.5°C target while continuing to expand fossil fuel production. Financial discussions made important, but very limited progress. However, concerns remain about the wider funding gap: developed countries are expected to help mobilize at least $300 billion annually for developing nations by 2035, within a broader $1.3 trillion target.—**APP**

Pakistan, Turkmenistan agree to expand bilateral trade coop

Both sides also agreed to enhance cooperation between the FPCCI and the Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce, with particular emphasis on establishing stronger institutional linkages, facilitating business-to-business contacts and promoting joint investment initiatives

ISLAMABAD: President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh, and Chairman of the Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce, Gurdov Mergen Meretdurdyevich have agreed to strengthen bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Turkmenistan through enhanced business cooperation, investment partnerships and regular exchanges of business delegations. The understanding was reached during a meeting between the two business leaders in FPCCI house here, which focused on exploring new avenues of trade, investment and institutional collaboration between the business communities of the two brotherly countries. Both sides also agreed to enhance cooperation between the FPCCI and the Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce, with particular emphasis on establishing stronger institutional linkages, facilitating business-to-business contacts and promoting joint investment initiatives. During the meeting, Atif Ikram Sheikh highlighted the significant potential for expanding bilateral economic cooperation, particularly in energy, renewable energy, textiles, agriculture and pharmaceuticals. He emphasized that Pakistan and Turkmenistan needed to take concrete and coordinated measures to translate their existing economic potential into tangible trade and investment opportunities. President FPCCI proposed organizing joint investment forums and signing memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between business organizations of the two countries to provide a structured framework for long-term cooperation. The FPCCI president stressed that regular exchanges of business delegations could play an important role in strengthening institutional cooperation and enabling entrepreneurs to identify viable business opportunities. He urged the business communities of both countries to move forward with joint ventures and investment projects, adding that the exchange of market information, trade statistics and business intelligence could help identify new areas of mutual interest. Atif Ikram Sheikh assured the visiting delegation that the FPCCI would take comprehensive measures to connect Turkmenistan's business community with Pakistani entrepreneurs and facilitate direct business contacts. He further underlined the need to expand cooperation in emerging sectors, including information technology, digital services, halal food and healthcare, saying that these areas offered considerable opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships. He observed that stronger engagement between private-sector institutions could provide fresh momentum to bilateral economic relations and help businesses from both countries benefit from their respective market strengths. Chairman of the Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce, Gurdo Mergen, expressed his commitment to strengthening commercial and economic relations with Pakistan at every level. He said the Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce was keen to develop closer ties with the Pakistani business community and promote practical cooperation between entrepreneurs, investors and trade organizations. Mergen emphasized that Pakistan and Turkmenistan should utilize their longstanding historical and friendly relations to increase bilateral trade, investment and business-to-business cooperation. He noted that several initiatives had been undertaken recently to promote relations between the two countries, adding that the business community could play a significant role in taking these ties to new heights. Both sides expressed confidence that closer institutional engagement, joint business forums, investment exchanges and sector-specific partnerships would help unlock the untapped potential of bilateral economic relations. The meeting was also attended by FPCCI Vice President Tariq Jadoon and Chairman Capital Office Karim Aziz Malik.—**DNA**

Could Russia help mediate an end to the US-Iran war?

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the confrontation between Iran and the United States hovers between renewed hostilities and a settlement that respects both sides' red lines, the idea that Russia may mediate to end the war has resurfaced. There is no shortage of capable mediators already involved, but Russia's relationship with Iran, together with President Vladimir Putin's relationship with President Donald Trump, could let it broker an agreement that allows both sides to save face. High-level contacts between Moscow and Tehran have continued uninterrupted since the war began. Iranian leaders seem to think that Russia might be able to help, as the American economic blockade of Iranian ports takes its toll. For Moscow, successful mediation could advance its wider geopolitical ambitions. Maintaining relations with Iran's current leadership is essential to preserving the delicate balance underpinning the security and economic arrangements Russia has spent years developing in partnership with Tehran across strategically important regions, including the South Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. These considerations also shape Moscow's approach to the Gulf Arab states and the wider Middle East. Russia derives certain limited benefits from the continuation of the war, including higher energy prices and the diversion of international attention from its war in Ukraine. A political settlement that leaves neither side defeated, however, would give Moscow an opportunity to join Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in negotiations over a new division of global spheres of influence. Such an arrangement would recall the proposed 'Yalta 2' formula, much discussed in recent months amid the rapprochement between the Kremlin and the White House. Russia-Iran relations Recent years have exposed deep divisions within Iran over how to view Russia, not least how far to rely on Moscow and the importance (or otherwise) of this relationship to Iran's economic and political future. Russia is a major power seeking to expand its global influence, but its relationship with Iran's leadership is governed by considerations that sometimes give rise to conflicting objectives, even though the two countries are bound by a 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty, signed in January 2025 and ratified by both parliaments in October that year. Iran appeared to intensify its efforts to conclude the treaty after Trump's re-election. It provides for closer cooperation in several fields, notably trade, nuclear energy, infrastructure, cybersecurity, media and counterterrorism, but there is no explicit provision for mutual defence in the event of war. It simply says that both states undertake not to assist an aggressor against the other, avoid joining sanctions imposed by third parties, and strengthen efforts to counter shared threats. Russian officials regularly invoke these provisions, particularly those relating to defence, to explain Moscow's refusal to provide military assistance to Iran. Strategic partner Another factor is Iran's place in Russia's view of a multipolar world. Iran is a strategic partner for Moscow in its approach to the West, and Russia has tried to integrate Tehran into economic and political initiatives that support its plans for a new global system. For instance, Iran became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in the summer of 2023 and joined BRICS as a full member at the beginning of 2024. Moscow has no desire to see the US-Iran war end with the overthrow of Iran's current government; the cost to Russia would be enormous. The Kremlin lost Bashar al-Assad as an ally in Syria in December 2024 and Nicolás Maduro as an ally in Venezuela in January 2026. The loss of Iran would be a far more serious setback. As much as anything, a US victory there would deepen doubts among Russia's allies in the Global South about the reliability and effectiveness of Moscow's support should they find themselves at odds with the West.
The power balance in Russia's southern neighbourhood is also important. Moscow does not want Iran to collapse or lose its standing as a regional power in the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Caspian Sea, but Russia is equally wary of Iran becoming too powerful in its near abroad. For years, Russia has seen Iran as a dependable partner that respects its interests in these regions.
Regime change in Iran, or the country's descent into state failure, would create security risks, including drug trafficking and a terrorist threat moving into Central Asia and, from there, into Russia. Any disruption of existing regional security arrangements could also provide an opportunity for the United States or China to establish new security structures that exclude Moscow.
The regional balance in the Middle East needs to be weighed up, too. Following the collapse of the Assad regime, Russia's ability to maintain a political role in the region depends on preserving the existing balance of power between Iran and the Gulf Arab states, and between Iran and Israel. Moscow does not want any of these parties to become substantially stronger or weaker. Maintaining this balance allows Russia to preserve its partnerships with competing regional powers and act as a mediator.
Despite their strategic partnership, Russia remains firmly opposed to Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. The history of conflict between the Russian and Persian empires, and the tension between the Soviet Union and Iran, has reinforced Moscow's opposition to the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran on its southern borders. Russia also thinks a nuclear Iran would lead others to develop the same capabilities. Economic considerations Despite the immediate financial benefits Russia derives from the war, Iran's collapse or a change of government in Tehran would impose heavy economic losses on Moscow and threaten the big projects on which it places so much hope.—**DNA**

PLO executive committee sets 2027

RAMALLAH: The Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization reaffirmed that Palestinian presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for 2027 in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, but could be held earlier if current obstacles are resolved.
The announcement followed a Sunday meeting on recent political and field developments and growing threats to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
The committee said the national priority is to end the Israeli occupation and establish an independent, sovereign Palestinian state along the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.
It reaffirmed the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and called for a just, mutually agreed solution to the refugee issue in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.
It urged the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to take concrete, time-bound steps to implement relevant international resolutions, especially Security Council Resolution 2334.
It also called for implementation of the New York Declaration commitments, recognition of the state of Palestine by countries that have yet to do so, and support for full UN membership.
On Gaza, the committee called for maintaining the ceasefire, ending ongoing Israeli violations, protecting civilians, reopening border crossings, and ensuring unrestricted humanitarian aid. It urged progress on the second phase of the process under Security Council Resolution 2803, leading to a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Strip, the assumption of responsibilities by state of Palestine institutions, and the launch of recovery and reconstruction.—**APP**

Syrian, Jordanian chiefs meet to tackle border smuggling issues

LONDON: Chief of General Staff in the Syrian Arab Republic Maj. Gen. Ali al-Naasan met with Brig. Gen. Nael Mohammad Abdullah, Jordanian commander of the Strategic Planning Team, to discuss border control and efforts to combat smuggling. Several Syrian and Jordanian officers attended the meeting in Damascus on Sunday to discuss common interests and strengthen security cooperation between the two countries, according to the Syrian Arab News Agency. In April, the Syrian Ministry of Interior intercepted a major attempt to smuggle 943 kilograms of captagon through the Jaber border crossing into Jordan. Both countries are confronted with various regional threats, including criminal drug gangs and the security threat posed by the Daesh group.—**APP**

Singapore, US agree to continue discussing Megaspeed case

Singapore and the US have agreed to continue discussions about Megaspeed, the company at the center of the Nvidia scandal, while Megaspeed's Indonesian unit was raided by Indonesian police earlier this year, media reports said. The Singapore-based cloud-computing company has become a focal point of attention after reports that Nvidia's former CEO Jensen Huang had an affair with Alice Huang, a former Megaspeed executive, whom US authorities suspect of being a Chinese spy. Josephine Teo, Singapore's minister for digital development, discussed Megaspeed when she met with US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau in Washington last week, the Straits Times reported over the weekend.
Singapore's ministry for digital development did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. In October 2025, the New York Times reported that US authorities were investigating whether Megaspeed helped Chinese customers obtain Nvidia computer chips subject to Washington's export controls. China has denied the allegation and Megaspeed has not been found to have violated the rules.—**APP**

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Briefs

Those seeking CM Maryam's removal will get a 'shock'

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari on Monday ruled out the possibility of a change in the province's chief minister, asserting that CM Maryam Nawaz would complete her term. "We will go to the polls after completing our term. Those hoping to see someone else replace chief minister [Maryam] will receive a shock," she said during a press conference in Lahore.

Bokhari asserted that CM Maryam would head into the next election based on her performance during her term. The Punjab minister criticised Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain response to a notice, saying it failed to adequately address the corruption allegations.

Her remarks refer to the public dispute that erupted after Hussain criticised the Punjab government's governance and alleged widespread corruption in the province during an interview with a private television channel. The federal minister had alleged that political considerations were influencing development priorities and the allocation of public funds, claiming that a disproportionate share of Punjab's development budget was being channelled towards Lahore while other districts were being overlooked.

However, Hussain acknowledged that he did not possess documentary evidence to substantiate the claims but maintained that corruption was taking place. – **APP**

PM push for SMEs promotion lauded

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Representatives of the business community have appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's initiatives to promote Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and enhance the country's exports. Talking to the media after a meeting with the Prime Minister in Islamabad today, they said the Prime Minister is making concerted efforts to address the issues faced by SMEs at the federal, provincial, and district levels.

The business representatives said the government is working to create an enabling ecosystem for SMEs, with a focus on innovation, artificial intelligence, and access to finance. They observed that employment generation is a key objective of the government's initiatives, which can be achieved through the promotion of SMEs. The business representatives expressed confidence that the proposals presented during the meeting will receive due consideration and help strengthen the SME sector and boost exports.

Xi-Putin-Trump meeting has 'groundbreaking significance'

Three countries bear an important responsibility to cooperate in addressing global challenges, says Beijing

DNA

BEIJING: China's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that this week's trilateral meeting between the Chinese, US and Russian leaders is of "groundbreaking significance" and will promote world peace and stability.

The meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin will take place on Thursday in China's southern city of Shenzhen, the site of this week's Apec summit. Trump will raise efforts to reduce nuclear arms at the meeting, the White House said last week. China has rebuffed attempts to talk about nuclear arms with Russia and the United States, which have the largest stockpiles of such weapons.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters in Beijing this would be the first face-to-face meeting among the heads of state of China, Russia, and the United States. "They will exchange views in depth on safeguarding world peace and promoting strategic stability in major-power relations, which is of groundbreaking significance," she added.

Under the current circumstances, the three countries bear an important responsibility to cooperate in addressing global challenges and to promote world peace and stability, Mao said. "Stronger communication among China, Russia, and the United States, along with managing differences and stabilising relations, serves the interests of all three countries," she added.

It also meets the expectations of the international community, and helps "stabilise the global situation and advance dialogue and cooperation". Mao did not give details of what exactly is on the agenda for the trilateral meeting.

Speaking in Manila on Monday, UN chief Antonio Guterres said the United Nations is prepared to support any denuclearisation effort that may arise from the summit meeting of the three countries. China has said it was more appropriate for Russia and the US to speak directly because of their large arsenals. The UN has long advocated nuclear disarmament, warning that rising geopolitical tension and growing rivalry among major powers have fuelled global nuclear risks.

US and Russia to oppose talks on limiting autonomous weapons

GENEVA: Major arms producers the United States and Russia look set to oppose a push at a global meeting in Geneva this week to launch negotiations on legally binding rules for autonomous weapons, in what diplomats and rights groups expect to be difficult talks. The rise of artificial intelligence has boosted development of drones, robots, tanks, submarines and other military hardware capable of killing without human involvement. Semi-autonomous, AI-assisted weapons have already been used in Ukraine, Sudan and the Middle East, despite ethical concerns. The UN-hosted meeting starting on Monday is due to decide whether to launch negotiations for a legally binding agreement on prohibitions and regulations for Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

But while most of the 128 states party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons support that, major military nations including the US, Russia and Israel oppose it, arguing that existing humanitarian law is sufficient. The leaders of the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross, along with the Pope, have all warned of the dangers from autonomous weapons and support regulation. "Machines should never be allowed to decide who lives and dies on a battlefield but that is the dystopian reality that is fast approaching," said Verity Coyle from Human Rights Watch, which is urging the Review Conference to take firm action. Two diplomats told Reuters the discussions looked set to be challenging. But states could build bridges to find a compromise agreement by the end of the week, they said. All options are on the table, from legally binding to non-legally binding, as well as a hybrid agreement with both elements, one of the diplomats added. – DNA

Syria needs EU support

"We really see that Syria needs a lot of investments, to build up institutions and its reforms," Kaja Kallas told reporters ahead of a monthly foreign ministers meeting in Brussels

DNA

BRUSSELS: European Union foreign ministers will discuss on Monday elevating their relationship with Syria as the war-torn country needs urgent support to ensure stability amid escalating tensions in the region, the bloc's foreign policy chief said.

"We really see that Syria needs a lot of investments, to build up institutions and its reforms," Kaja Kallas told reporters ahead of a monthly foreign ministers meeting in Brussels.

"On the European side we want to see Syrian refugees return but they need conditions to return. There's a lot we can do together because the stability of Syria is in our interest and the interest of region."



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in a cordial exchange with the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, Sirojiddin Muhriddin and ECO Secretary General Dr. Asad Majeed Khan on the sidelines of the 30th ECO Council of Ministers Meeting in Islamabad. – DNA

India's Jay Shah reappointed ICC chairman for second term

In his second two-year term, Shah will oversee cricket's return to the Olympics at 2028 Los Angeles Games

JAY Shah was elected unopposed for a second term as chair of the International Cricket Council at the governing body's board meeting in Bali, the ICC said on Monday. Former India cricket board secretary Shah became the youngest ICC chair when he was first elected to the role in 2024 at the age of 35. In his second two-year term, he will oversee cricket's return to the Olympics at the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

Cricket's return to the Games presented an extraordinary opportunity to introduce the sport to new audiences and inspire a new generation of players and fans, he said.

In a statement, ICC Chairman Jay Shah said: "I am deeply honoured by the confidence the ICC Board has placed in me and sincerely grateful to every Director for their continued trust and support. Serving as Chair of the ICC is both a privilege and a responsibility, and I remain committed to working with our members to advance the interests of cricket across the world. "We are entering one of the most important and exciting periods in our sport's history. Cricket's return to the Olympic Games at LA28 presents an extraordinary opportunity to introduce our game to new audiences and inspire a new generation of players and fans. "Our responsibility extends well beyond delivering successful events.

We must build a stronger and more sustainable future for the sport with a focus on fans, athletes, commercial partners and other key stakeholders.

England and Wales Cricket Board Chair, Richard Thompson, said: "Jay's continued leadership comes at an important time for international cricket. The game is evolving rapidly, and it is essential that we continue to strengthen the international calendar, protect the relevance and competitiveness of bilateral cricket and ensure that our major events remain central to the sport's future. – **APP**

French troops deployed in Ukraine on secret mission

PARIS: French soldiers have been operating in Ukraine for several months, training Ukrainian troops and helping maintain military equipment, Radio France Internationale (RFI) reported on Monday. Citing sources, RFI said French lawmakers had not been informed of the deployment of the confidential mission, led by a French general and codenamed "Volia," which can be translated as "freedom" and "will" from Ukrainian. The report did not say how many soldiers took part in the mission, which has been present in Ukraine since at least the summer of 2026. It described a "light and flexible" structure made up of "small teams deployed on short-term assignments."

Several sources described as being familiar with the matter told RFI that an official "Gerfaut" mission in Poland serves as a cover for the presence of French troops in Ukraine and acts as a gateway for deployments into the country. Gerfaut is a French military detachment deployed in Poland since 2023 as part of the European Union's military assistance mission supporting Ukraine. Under that framework, French army personnel are tasked with training officers who will go on to command Ukrainian combat units. Since 2023, 25,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been trained by the French army, both in France and in Poland.

France will hold a two-round vote in April and May to elect a successor to President Emmanuel Macron, who has been a staunch supporter of Ukraine. – **APP**

Southeast Asian leaders denounce violence in Myanmar

ASEAN leaders approved the plan in April 2021 to try to ease the violence that erupted after the army seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The army's takeover triggered widespread pro-democracy protests that were brutally quashed, leading to armed resistance and a civil war that has spread over much of the country.

The leaders reiterated "deep concern" over insufficient progress in implementing the peace plan. They urged all parties and stakeholders in Myanmar, "in particular the armed forces, security forces and armed groups to de-escalate violence and stop targeted attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure and enhance trust-building efforts." Last month, a United Nations rights investigator said the military-backed government in Myanmar was intentionally attacking civilians to terrorize them and force them into submission. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, an independent organization that keeps detailed tallies of arrests and casualties linked to the civil war, more than 8,600 people have been killed and 32,406 arrested by Myanmar's security forces as of Friday.

The leaders said the ban on Myanmar's leader and foreign minister attending ASEAN summit meetings would continue "until there is meaningful progress in the implementation" of the peace plan. The plan calls for, among other things, an immediate end to hostilities and the start of a dialogue mediated by the regional bloc's special envoy.

Under the ban, Myanmar can be represented only by lower-level career diplomats, including at the ongoing ASEAN meetings in Manila. Myanmar was due to hold ASEAN's rotating chair this year and host its multiple regional meetings, but because of the civil strife, the role passed to the Philippines. "There's still certain bombings and displacement of Myanmar people so step-by-step, we give it to them, how they're going to tackle this issue, and we'll monitor that," Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro, ASEAN's current special envoy to Myanmar, said in a news conference in Manila.

The three-day ASEAN summit, which includes scheduled talks with world leaders led by US President Donald Trump, will focus on conflicts, including the civil war in Myanmar, according to drafts of post-summit communiques seen by The Associated Press. – **DNA**

Israeli opposition chiefs denounce Netanyahu over 'attempted coup'

"If the findings are confirmed, this is a criminal mechanism that operated from the heart of government to rig the election results. Everyone found responsible must be held accountable, including Netanyahu," he wrote on X

JERUSALEM: Two Israeli opposition leaders denounced Monday an "attempted coup" following press reports that outgoing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office tried to frame members of an Arab-Israeli party ahead of last month's election. "As more and more details come to light, it becomes clear: This wasn't an attempt to disrupt the elections. It was an attempted coup," wrote Yair Lapid on X, who headed the opposition in the previous legislature and co-chairs the Beyachad list. Israel's Channel 12 reported Sunday that on the eve of the October 27 election, Netanyahu's chief of staff Ido Norden had phoned in a complaint to the police about members of the Arab-Israeli Raam party.

Norden reportedly pointed the police to a purported intelligence source — a former employee of Netanyahu's office — who provided information that led to the arrest of three Raam members. The three men were later released when the police determined that the information was unfounded.

Netanyahu subsequently accused Arab parties of electoral fraud after they gained a record number of seats. His Likud party issued a statement denying the latest allegations.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz also reported that David Zini, head of the Shin Bet domestic security service, sought to wiretap leaders of the other Arab slate, the Joint List, but the attorney general turned down his request due to lack of evidence. Following the report, Joint List leader Yousef Jabareen also denounced an "attempted coup by Netanyahu." "If the findings are confirmed, this is a criminal mechanism that operated from the heart of government to rig the election results. Everyone found responsible must be held accountable, including Netanyahu," he wrote on X. Raam's number two, former police chief Yoav Segalovitz, called for an urgent investigation.

"These suspicions require an immediate, independent and thorough criminal investigation that reaches everyone involved, at every level and in every role," he wrote on X. "Netanyahu cried out that his election was being stolen, while he himself tried to steal the country and is still trying to do so now," he added. Netanyahu's main rival, former army chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot, wrote on Sunday that the caretaker prime minister "cannot remain at the head of the government for a minute longer."

Neither Netanyahu's bloc nor Eisenkot's opposition secured the 61 seats required to form a government following last month's election. The two Arab parties, the Joint List and Raam, have indicated support for Eisenkot. Southeast Asian leaders said Sunday that Myanmar has failed to comply with a 2021 peace plan and that its military and other armed groups continue to attack civilians, prompting them to extend a ban on Myanmar's leader attending the bloc's annual summits.

The stern rebuke by leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, who opened their annual summit meetings in the Philippine capital on Sunday, came after a review of the progress on the five-point peace plan by the country's military-backed government. Myanmar is a member of the 11-nation regional bloc. – **APP**

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