LAHORE - KARACHI - ISLAMABAD

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Aurangzeb takes up investment plans with businessmen

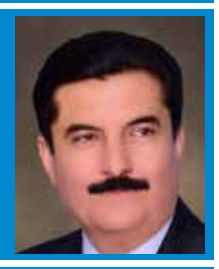
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Bilawal says his views more than genuine



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Faisal Kundi for quality education



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Briefs

Submarine cable fault disrupts internet

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Internet users across Pakistan are currently experiencing intermittent connectivity and slow speeds after a fault was reported in one of the country's international submarine cable systems, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) said on Wednesday night. In a statement, the PTA said that the fault has occurred in the SEA-ME-WE 5 (SMW5) cable system, about 11 kilometres from Pakistan's shore which may cause some internet users to experience intermittent connectivity issues and a decline in service quality. Transworld Associates (TWA), which operates the cable landing in Pakistan, was coordinating with the SMW5 Consortium to identify the root cause of the fault and determine the Estimated Time for Restoration (ETTR), said the PTA. In the meantime, PTA said internet traffic is being rerouted through alternative international links to minimise the impact and ensure service continuity to the greatest extent possible.

'Public opinion must prevail'

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: Federal and provincial leaders have launched a strong rebuttal to Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's remarks on the creation of new provinces, escalating a heated debate over Sindh's division, public consent and the constitutional process for carving out new provinces. The PPP chief had warned that forcibly dividing Sindh could deepen social divisions and lead to bloodshed. He said that his supported the creation of provinces in accordance with public wishes, the Constitution and the law, but would resist any move imposed through force. Responding to the remarks, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said no system could be reset without public support, adding that politicians should not describe consultation with the people as a "backdoor" process. He said Parliament could debate the issue while also taking public opinion into account, as politicians derived their legitimacy from the people.

Shehbaz, Nawaz discuss AJK's development, reconstruction

The visit comes nearly three months after the PML-N came to power in AJK in August, following phased elections in which Nawaz played an active role in the campaign

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: The PML-N's top leadership on Wednesday discussed development and reconstruction in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) with the region's President Muhammad Najeeb Naqi Khan and Prime Minister Syed Iftikhar Ali Gillani, the party said. The meeting, held in Muzaffarabad, was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, who discussed public welfare, development projects and the implementation of election promises with the AJK leadership, according to a post by the party on X.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also attended the meeting, along with federal and provincial ministers, including Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar.

The federal and Punjab governments reaffirmed their commitment to supporting AJK's development and prosperity, the statement added. The visit comes nearly three months after the PML-N came to power in AJK in August, following phased elections in which Nawaz played an active role in the campaign.

Speaking in Muzaffarabad during the election campaign in July, Nawaz had asserted that the city should be transformed into the most beautiful city of Pakistan. He said that whatever CM Maryam was doing in Lahore and other cities of Punjab should also be "copied" in Muzaffarabad and other cities of AJK. He had also promised AJK residents that every development project

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Cabinet body reviews sugar import issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Cabinet Committee on the Export of Surplus Sugar chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar was held in Islamabad. The Committee examined the overall sugar demand and supply balance across the country, reviewing current production and consumption estimates and supply chain logistics to ensure uninterrupted availability in local markets. The Deputy Prime Minister instructed the concerned authorities to maintain price stability across domestic markets.He said in line with the directions of the Prime Minister, the government remains fully committed to taking all possible steps to facilitate the general public and shield consumers while at the same time protecting the interests of the farmers.



MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses a meeting regarding the implementation of 100 day transformative plan of AJK. – DNA

Petrol, diesel prices reduced

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has reduced the prices of petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD) by Rs3 per litre each, according to a notification issued by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) on Wednesday. Following the revision, petrol will be available at Rs322 per litre, while diesel will cost Rs355 per litre. According to Ogra, the revised prices be effective for November 19.

Ogra has also begun publishing daily petroleum prices on its website to improve transparency and allow changes in international oil prices to be passed on to consumers more quickly.

Amid volatility in global oil rates on the back of renewed hostilities in the Middle East, the government decided to switch to a daily fuel price review mechanism. The government had introduced a weekly fuel price review system after the conflict in the Middle East began on February 28, when Israel and

Continued on Page 06

£190m case

IHC orders all possible medical facilities for jailed Bushra Bibi

Imran Khan's counsel Barrister Salman Safdar seeks live streaming of pleas in £190m case

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday directed jail authorities to provide all possible medical facilities to former prime minister Imran Khan's wife, Bushra Bibi, and ensure proper cleanliness and hygiene in her prison cell.

A division bench comprising IHC Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif issued directives while hearing appeals filed by Imran and Bushra against their convictions in the £190 million case and a separate plea seeking medical reports of Bushra Bibi

"Bushra Bibi should be provided with all possible medical facilities in jail. If a specialist doctor is required, she should be treated by one," the court ordered. An accountability court in Islamabad had earlier sentenced the former prime minister to 14 years' imprisonment with a fine of Rs1 million, while the ex-first lady was awarded seven years' imprisonment along with a fine of Rs500,000. 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.

During the hearing today, Advocate Latif Khosa, representing Bushra, told the court that she had submitted a fresh application concerning her health and eyesight. "Nothing is more important than life. Please take a look at this application," Khosa told the court, adding that the matter concerned her eyesight.

He warned that her condition could deteriorate to the point where she might lose her vision. In response, IHC CJ Dogar said medical facilities would be provided to her under the jail rules. "An application has already been filed in this regard. I will pass an order on it," the chief justice replied. Khosa maintained that the latest application had been filed on fresh grounds. However, IHC CJ Dogar asked Khosa to begin arguments on the main £190m appeals, noting that the court had already facilitated the meeting as requested.

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Pak conducts successful launch of Fatah-3 supersonic cruise missile

Weapon system equipped with advanced navigation and propulsion systems, says ISPR

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army has conducted a successful launch of Fatah-3 supersonic cruise missile, marking another significant milestone in the advancement of national defence capabilities, the military's media wing said in a statement on Wednesday. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the weapon system is equipped with advanced navigation and propulsion systems and is capable of engaging targets at long range with high precision and lethality at supersonic speed.

"Fatah-3 will significantly enhance the operational flexibility and strike reach of the Pakistan Army's Rocket Force Command, further strengthening the country's overall conventional deterrence and defence posture," it added. The launch was witnessed by Commander Army Rocket Force Command and senior officers of the Pakistan Armed Forces, along with scientists and engineers, said the ISPR.

President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir and the services chiefs commended the successful launch of Fatah-3. They appreciated the dedication and commitment of all those who contributed towards achievement of another significant milestone in development of national defence capabilities of Pakistan.

Defence minister Kh. Asif hits back at Bilawal Bhutto

Bilawal referred to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's recommendation of holding a referendum to decide on the creation of new administrative units and said: "In our history, a referendum has always been carried out for an undemocratic act and never a democratic one"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif joined others from the ruling PML-N on Wednesday in responding to PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari following the latter's hard-hitting speech over several issues, including new provinces, constitutional tweaks and treatment of the opposition.

"He who claims equity must come with clean hands," Asif reminded Bilawal in a post on X, as the wrangling between coalition partners PML-N and PPP appeared to deepen.

The exchange has particularly heated up after Bilawal delivered a no-holds-barred speech the previous day that covered the question of new provinces. The Bhutto scion also expressed support for several opposition demands and questioned past decisions and actions taken by the ruling coalition. Bilawal referred to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's recommendation of holding a referendum to decide on the creation of new administrative units and said: "In our history, a referendum has always been carried out for an

Continued on Page 06

Have the courage to listen to the debate: Bilawal

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Wednesday maintained that his recent remarks on the country's political situation were the "truth", urging government representatives to have the "courage" to listen to his point of view. Speaking in an interview on Hum News programme 'Faisla Aap Ka', Bilawal reiterated his stance from his Tuesday's speech, cautioning against new provinces and calling for a "political reset" so public issues could be addressed. Bilawal emphasised that he spoke in the context of the US-Iran war, which has impacted economies around the world due to rising energy costs. "Elites do not have the idea of what kind of difficulties Pakistanis are facing," he said,

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Key initiatives for economic stability highlighted

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Tuesday, released the Governor's Annual Report (GAR) for fiscal year 2025-26, highlighting the improvement and resilience of macroeconomic indicators and financial system of the country. Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators continued to show resilience during FY26, as the combination of a prudent and data-dependent monetary policy stance and continued fiscal consolidation, strengthened the country's economic resilience against successive shocks during the year, a statement on GAR FY26 said. Average national CPI (NCPI) inflation remained close to the upper bound of the medium-term target range despite global energy price shock; foreign exchange reserves exceeded the year-end target amid a marginal current account deficit, and real GDP recorded higher growth, it added. GAR is published under Section 39 (1) of the SBP Act, 1956, that mandates the Governor to submit an annual report to the Parliament regarding the Bank's objectives, the conduct of monetary policy, and the state of the economy and the financial system.

Throughout the year, the country's capacity to withstand consecutive shocks-including monsoon floods, US trade tariffs uncertainty and Middle East situation-was bolstered by sustained fiscal consolidation paired with a cautious, data-informed monetary policy strategy. The financial system also remained resilient as financial depth improved amid an expansion in banks' credit to private sector.

According to the Report, average NCPI inflation was 5.5 percent for the period Jul-Feb 2026 but a significant rise in global oil prices pushed the headline inflation into double digits from April 2026 onward while food inflation also increased, driven by a sharp rise in prices of wheat and related products reflecting supply constraints.

Core inflation continued to moderate during most of FY26; however, it remained elevated and rose slightly after the surge in energy prices started to reflect in the costs of production and transport services.

The Report also took a detailed view of monetary policy decisions during FY26, highlighting that the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) reduced the rate in December 2025 on the back of improved economic indicators but the geopolitical situation prompted an increase in April 2026 to contain second-round effects and support macroeconomic stability.

The GAR FY26 also points out the strengthening of SBP's FX reserves, which exceeded the US$ 18.0 billion target for end-June 2026. "During the year, SBP made net FX purchases of US$ 8.1 billion, and reduced its forward/swap liabilities by US$ 1.6 billion, reflecting a qualitative improvement in the country's FX reserve position," it added. Despite a moderate current account deficit, higher remittances and ICT exports offset the widening merchandise trade deficit while the overall balance of payments improved amid ample multilateral and bilateral flows and successful bond issuances, the Report stated._**APP**

APNS delegation discusses newspaper dues, print media issues with Punjab DGPR

The delegation, led by Mohsin Sial, held a detailed discussion at the DGPR office on the financial challenges faced by newspapers and the need for timely clearance of government advertisement bills to help sustain the print media industry

DNA



LAHORE: A delegation of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) Recovery Committee for Punjab met Director General Public Relations (DGPR) Punjab Sheikh Farid Ahmed on Tuesday to discuss outstanding payments to newspapers, government advertising dues and issues facing the print media industry. The delegation, led by Mohsin Sial, held a detailed discussion at the DGPR office on the financial challenges faced by newspapers and the need for timely clearance of government advertisement bills to help sustain the print media industry. Sheikh Farid Ahmed assured the delegation that steps were being taken to clear pending bills and outstanding dues of newspapers. He said Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari had issued special directives to ensure timely payments to newspapers and address their financial difficulties. He said the DGPR office would continue playing an active role in supporting the media industry under the guidance of the provincial government and the information minister, adding that particular attention was being given to promoting regional and local newspapers to strengthen journalism at the grassroots level. The DGPR also informed the delegation that the government had decided to issue colour advertisements to regional newspapers, a move aimed at providing additional financial support to local publications and helping them remain economically viable. Emphasising the importance of newspapers in society, Sheikh Farid Ahmed said print media played a vital role in promoting democratic values and keeping citizens informed about government performance, policies and development initiatives. He said newspapers remained an important pillar in building an informed society. The APNS delegation later visited the newly constructed building of the DGPR's Digital Media Wing and reviewed its facilities. The delegation appreciated the efforts of Information Minister Azma Bokhari and DGPR Sheikh Farid Ahmed in improving the department's infrastructure and supporting the media sector. The delegation included APNS Finance Secretary Naveed Kashif, Usman Shami of Pakistan, Kashif of Dawn, Bilal Mahmood of Nawa-i-Waqt, Imran Athar of Jurat, Munir Jilani of Paigham and Humayun Gulzar of Siyadat. Muhammad Farooq of Pakistan and Awais Razi of Taqat attended the meeting as observers.

Afghan CG, PAJCCI discuss challenges to bilateral trade

PESHAWAR: A delegation of Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), led by Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, called on Acting Afghan Consul General, Hafiz Muhibullah Shakir at the Afghan Consulate here Wednesday.

According to a press release issued here, the delegation included PAJCCI's newly elected Senior Vice President, Engineer Syed Mahmood, Director Imtiaz Ahmed and Central Coordinator Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi.

During the meeting, the impact of the prolonged closure of border crossings on bilateral trade, industry, and employment was reviewed and an agreement was reached to undertake joint efforts toward finding a lasting solution to trade-related obstacles.

Acting Afghan Consul General, Hafiz Muhibullah Shakir stated that the closure of border crossings is adversely affecting trade between the two nations.

Emphasizing the need to keep commercial matters separate from political differences, he noted that the business communities of both countries could play a constructive role in resolving issues through mutual communication and understanding. The Chamber's Senior Vice President, Engineer Syed Mahmood remarked that practical solutions to the challenges facing bilateral trade can be found while prioritizing Pakistan's national security, effective border management and legal requirements. He stated that the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan share long-standing social and commercial ties, and the prolonged border closure has adversely affected exporters, transporters, industrial workers, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and businesses located in the border regions. Engineer Syed Mahmood urged the federal government and relevant authorities to consult with the business community and consider a phased restoration of commercial traffic subject to necessary security checks and established customs regulations wherever conditions permit. He added that PAJCCI would soon present the challenges faced by the business community, along with viable proposals for the resumption of trade, during meetings with government and military leadership as well as other relevant officials. Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, the Chamber's Central Coordinator, highlighted the financial losses incurred by both Pakistani and Afghan traders due to the border closure. He called upon both governments to take steps through mutual consultation to promptly restore legal commercial traffic at the border crossings, thereby preventing further losses. Speaking on the occasion, Director Imtiaz Ahmed remarked that this is the first time in history that the business communities of both nations have been pushed to their limits by such a prolonged closure of trade routes.–**DNA**

Jam, HBL CEO regulatory reforms, global trade expansion

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a meeting with a delegation led by Muhammad Nassir Salim, President and CEO of Habib Bank Limited (HBL), to discuss SME financing, digital banking, export facilitation and expansion of Pakistan's trade in key international markets. Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan emphasized the need to bring Pakistan's largely informal SME sector into the documented economy to improve access to institutional financing, enhance product quality and strengthen export competitiveness, said a release issued here on Wednesday. Commerce Minister, HBL CEO discuss SME financing, regulatory reforms,global trade expansion He stressed that compliance with international standards, quality assurance and traceability were increasingly important for Pakistani businesses competing in global markets. The Minister also highlighted the Government's efforts to simplify business regulations, remove overlapping licensing requirements and reduce unnecessary administrative hurdles to encourage investment and industrial growth.The HBL delegation shared its perspectives on SME financing, digital financial services and the challenges faced by banks in financing undocumented businesses. Both sides discussed measures to strengthen financial inclusion and promote digital transactions and greater economic formalization. The Minister highlighted emerging trade and investment opportunities across Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and noted that the Ministry of Commerce was developing country-specific and sector-wise strategies to diversify Pakistan's exports and identify new markets. He underscored the importance of banking-sector support in providing trade finance, facilitating international transactions and enabling Pakistani exporters to enter and expand in overseas markets. It was also agreed that the Ministry of Commerce would support HBL in strengthening trade-related banking and financing linkages with Pakistan's key trading partners, including Bangladesh, China, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.–**DNA**

IGP takes notice of trader's killing during robbery

KARACHI: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh, Javed Alam Odho has taken notice of the killing of a young trader, Sanaullah Khuhso, during a robbery in Mehar, Dadu district, and sought detailed reports from the Deputy Inspector General of Police Hyderabad and Senior Superintendent of Police Dadu.

According to a Sindh Police spokesperson on Wednesday, the IGP directed the concerned officers to utilise all available resources for the immediate arrest of those involved in the incident. He also instructed police to make full use of modern investigative tools and technical resources to identify and apprehend the suspects. Javed Alam Odho directed the officers to conduct a transparent and effective investigation into all possible aspects of the incident and keep him regularly informed about the progress._**APP**

National policy to transform marble, granite industry

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister for Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday said that the government is developing a comprehensive Marble Policy 2026–29 to modernize marble and granite industry, improve mining and processing standards, promote value addition and boost exports. He spoke at a meeting with representatives of the Marble Association and discussed developing Pakistan's marble and granite industry and formulating a comprehensive national model policy to make the sector globally competitive, a news release said. The meeting was attended by the coordinator to the prime minister for industries and production and commerce Rana Ihsan Afzaal ,the Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Stone Development Company (PASDEC), Chief Executive Officer of the National Productivity Organization (NPO), Additional Secretary Industries and representatives of the marble industry. Haroon said that the proposed policy would focus on modernising the industry through advanced technology, efficient mining practices and value addition. It would cover the entire value chain, from quarrying and extraction to processing, finishing, polishing and exports. The adviser said that Pakistan possessed enormous potential in marble and natural stone resources, offering significant opportunities for investment, industrial development and export growth. –**APP**

Kashmir dispute key obstacle to lasting peace in South Asia

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistani ambassador and ex-AJK president, Sardar Masood Khan said here Wednesday that the lasting peace and stability in South Asia hinges on resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination.

Addressing students and faculty at Rawalpindi Law College, Khan underscored that the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir was recognised through the United Nations Security Council's consideration of the dispute. He recalled India's commitment to a plebiscite and stressed that the people of the territory must be allowed to determine their political future. Masood Khan explained that the Indian Independence Act provided for the accession of princely states to either India or Pakistan, taking into account geographical contiguity and the demographic composition of their populations. He recalled that the Muslim Conference, representing the people of Jammu and Kashmir, adopted a resolution on July 19, 1947, in favour of accession to Pakistan. He discussed the subsequent political developments, the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India, and the events surrounding October 1947. He also highlighted the Jammu massacre, describing it as one of the gravest tragedies in the history of the region, and referred to the displacement and abduction of thousands of Muslims. He emphasised that these events remain an important but insufficiently understood part of Kashmir's history, particularly among younger generations. Referring to developments since 2019, he spoke about restrictions, detentions, enforced disappearances and the use of pellet guns against civilians in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. He urged students to understand the dispute not merely as a political disagreement but also through its humanitarian and international legal dimensions.–**APP**

Arid University holds academia–industry roundtable

RAWALPINDI:PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi strengthened its international academic and industry linkages by organizing a high-level Academia–Industry Roundtable in collaboration with Bayer Crop Science, titled "Agricultural Biotechnology, Innovation Governance and Sustainable Agricultural Transformation in Pakistan."

The event brought together international industry representatives, university leadership, and academic experts to explore opportunities for research collaboration, technological innovation, and sustainable agricultural development.

In his address, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Qamar Uz Zaman highlighted the significance of international academic partnerships and academia–industry collaboration in addressing emerging challenges in the agricultural sector. He also emphasized that universities must play a proactive role in connecting academic research with industry expertise to translate scientific knowledge into practical solutions.

He stated that agricultural biotechnology, artificial intelligence, modern research techniques, and emerging technologies offer tremendous opportunities for transforming Pakistan's agricultural landscape.David Blanco Jimenez, Director of Bayer South East Asia Pte. Ltd., Singapore, and ASEAN & ANZ Cluster Lead for Law, Patents & Compliance, actively participated in the discussions.

Drawing on his more than 29 years of international experience in the life sciences sector, he shared valuable insights into agricultural biotechnology, gene editing, regulatory frameworks, intellectual property rights, and international collaboration.

Moderated by Dr. Aneela Afzal, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension, the roundtable provided an interactive platform for constructive dialogue on agricultural biotechnology, emerging technologies, regulatory governance, intellectual property protection, academia–industry collaboration, public awareness, and stakeholder capacity building.

In his concluding remarks, Prof. Dr. M. Azam Khan, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture appreciated the Bayer delegation and university leadership for facilitating this important engagement. He emphasized the need to strengthen academia–industry partnerships to promote innovative research, technology transfer.–**APP**



Kundi for stronger governance, quality learning in KP

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has chaired a special briefing at the Governor House on the performance of the Education Department and the overall state of the province's education sector, stressing the need for improved governance, transparency and quality education across schools, colleges and universities.

The briefing was attended by Adviser to Governor on Education Dr Syed Aamir Abdullah, provincial advisers, secretaries of various departments, senior government officials and media representatives. Dr Syed Aamir Abdullah gave a comprehensive presentation on the current status of the education sector, ongoing reforms, administrative measures and future development plans. A question-and-answer session followed the briefing, during which he responded to queries from the participants. The participants were informed that the provincial government was implementing wide-ranging reforms to improve the education system, strengthen governance, enhance institutional performance and expand access to quality education. Administrative reforms, financial discipline and digitalisation have been prioritised in both the Elementary and Secondary Education Department and the Higher Education Department. According to the briefing, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has 34,848 public schools with around 5.96 million students and 187,159 teachers. However, 44,747 teaching posts remain vacant, including 8,837 in the merged districts. The government has revised the e-transfer policy to ensure merit-based teacher deployment and has also introduced measures to improve teacher availability and rationalise staffing. Participants were told that teacher training and professional development were being strengthened through a 100-day training plan under the Directorate of Professional Development, while attendance monitoring was being carried out in real time through the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The briefing highlighted 100-day and 180-day action plans aimed at improving transparency in development projects, efficient utilisation of resources and timely completion of schemes. These include the solarisation of 424 schools, conversion of 15 middle and high schools into model schools, establishment of IT laboratories, upgrading girls' schools and launching an education internship programme with 500 interns. Officials said the government was also working on the rationalisation of schools, outsourcing 1,500 schools in the second phase, enrolling out-of-school children in 12 priority districts and improving school infrastructure and digital learning facilities, including digital classrooms and IT connectivity. On higher education, the briefing stated that 34 public universities and institutions have an enrolment of 160,587 students, while 388 government colleges cater to 280,777 students. A high-level working group has been formed to address financial and governance challenges facing universities. –**DNA**

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METROLITE
Thursday, November 19 , 2026

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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MH.....561116
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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
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Shifa International 4603666



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RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ICCI to get representation in ADRC's: SSP Operations

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Recognizing the business community as a key pillar of economic stability and growth, Islamabad Police has reaffirmed its commitment to addressing traders' concerns, strengthening their security and ensuring the prompt resolution of police-related grievances through effective institutional coordination.

This was stated by SSP (Operations) Captain (R) Ali Raza Qazi during a well-attended interactive session with the business community at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). The session brought together ICCI Executive Members, leading traders, industrialists and representatives of various trade bodies to discuss issues affecting the business environment and explore practical mechanisms for closer cooperation between the Police and the business community.

The SSP (Operations) emphasized that sustained engagement between Islamabad Police and the ICCI Police Committee was essential for translating the community's concerns into timely action. He assured that ICCI would be given representation in the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism to strengthen its role in dispute resolution. Addressing the issue of lost property documents, he announced that comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) would be formulated to facilitate the complainants, while business community-related grievances would preferably be resolved at the police station level to minimize procedural hurdles and ensure speedy relief.

Welcoming the initiative, ICCI President Mohammad Zikria Akbar Zia stressed that a secure business environment and an efficient policing system were fundamental to economic activity, investor confidence and sustainable business growth. He said closer coordination between the Chamber and Islamabad Police would not only help resolve traders' day-to-day problems but also strengthen public trust and create a more conducive environment for trade and investment.

ICCI Senior Vice President Mohammad Ashfaq Hussain Chatha also highlighted the importance of a responsive and business-friendly policing approach, emphasizing that regular interaction between the two institutions could help identify emerging challenges and develop effective solutions. The session was moderated by Chairman ICCI Police Committee Saif ur Rehman Khan, while Vice Chairman Zohaib Ahmad Malik also attended.. The interactive engagement concluded with the presentation of relevant letters to members of the ICCI Police Committee, marking a further step towards strengthening institutional collaboration.

IHC judge warns of contempt proceedings against CDA

ISLAMABAD: Justice Islamabad High Court (IHC) Inaam Ameen Minhas on Wednesday expressed displeasure over the Capital Development Authority (CDA) for failing to submit comments in five consecutive cases and warned of contempt proceedings against the responsible officials. During the hearing, the judge asked whether any CDA representative was present and questioned a CDA director about his length of service. The director replied that he had been working for the authority for 20 years. Expressing annoyance, the judge questioned what the official had been doing during his long service and why citizens were being subjected to unnecessary difficulties. He warned the director that he could be sent to Adiala Jail, adding that the court would take action over the authority's conduct. The judge also directed that the CDA counsel be called, observing that the authority's bureaucratic attitude was unacceptable. He warned that if its lawyer did not appear, he would summon the CDA chairman the following day.

CDA counsel Amir Latif Gill subsequently appeared before the court. The judge told him that the official concerned was a director and that he could initiate contempt proceedings against him immediately. He reiterated that he would take action and summon the CDA chairman if necessary.–**APP**

NIH, WHO urge responsible antibiotic use to combat AMR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's National Institute of Health (NIH) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have called for responsible antibiotic use, warning that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) contributes to over 200,000 deaths annually in Pakistan. NIH, WHO urge responsible antibiotic use to combat AMR The call was made during the launch of World Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Awareness Week under the global theme "One Health, One Action: Prevent AMR Now," organized in collaboration with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), students and civil society representatives. The event highlighted the need for a coordinated One Health approach, recognizing the close links between human, animal and environmental health in tackling antimicrobial resistance. AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites no longer respond to medicines, making infections increasingly difficult or impossible to treat. The growing threat is largely driven by the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in healthcare, agriculture and livestock farming. According to estimates, AMR is directly responsible for nearly 40,000 deaths annually in Pakistan, while more than 160,000 additional deaths are associated with it. Without urgent action, the annual toll could rise to 63,000 directly attributable deaths and 262,000 associated deaths by 2050. Chief Executive Officer NIH Dr Muhammad Salman said combating AMR required a comprehensive One Health approach involving all relevant sectors. He identified irrational prescribing practices, over-the-counter sales of antibiotics, poor infection prevention and control in hospitals and communities, and inappropriate use of antimicrobials in agriculture and livestock as major factors driving resistance in Pakistan. WHO Representative in Pakistan Dr Luo Dapeng said AMR-related deaths were preventable and stressed that antibiotics should only be used when medically necessary. He said misuse and overuse of antibiotics posed a major public health threat, adding that individuals, families and healthcare professionals all had a role in preserving the effectiveness of these medicines. Dr Zeeshan Iqbal Baig, National Lead UKHSA, described AMR as one of the most pressing public health threats, warning that inappropriate antimicrobial use in humans, animals and agriculture was leading to treatment failures, deaths and rising healthcare costs. He called for a coordinated One Health response, emphasizing the need to move beyond awareness towards responsible antimicrobial use. Dr Pawin Padungtod, One Health Team Lead at FAO Pakistan, said tackling AMR required collective action across human, animal and environmental health sectors. He said strong participation in the awareness walk reflected a shared commitment by the government and development partners to address the growing challenge through responsible antimicrobial use and stronger collaboration.–**DNA**

DHO intensifies outreach to vaccinate zero-dose

ISLAMABAD: The District Health Office (DHO) Islamabad has intensified immunization outreach activities across several union councils to identify and vaccinate zero-dose and defaulter children, ensuring wider coverage of life-saving vaccines.

DHO intensifies outreach to vaccinate zero-dose. According to the DHO, monitoring and supportive supervision visits were conducted in UC Phulgran-II, UC Bhara Kahu-I, UC Bhara Kahu-VI (Bani Gala), UC I-11 (Roail Colony), UC Rural-10 and UC Kirpa-I. DHO intensifies outreach to vaccinate zero-dose The outreach sessions were conducted as planned, with vaccination teams equipped with due and defaulter lists, tally sheets and vaccine carriers. Lady Health Workers (LHWs) and social mobilizers also supported the activities. Special focus was placed on identifying children who had not received any routine vaccination (zero-dose) and those who had missed scheduled vaccine doses. Community mobilization, including Mosque announcements, was also undertaken to encourage parents to bring eligible children for vaccination._**APP**

JICA seeks stronger education ties with Pakistan

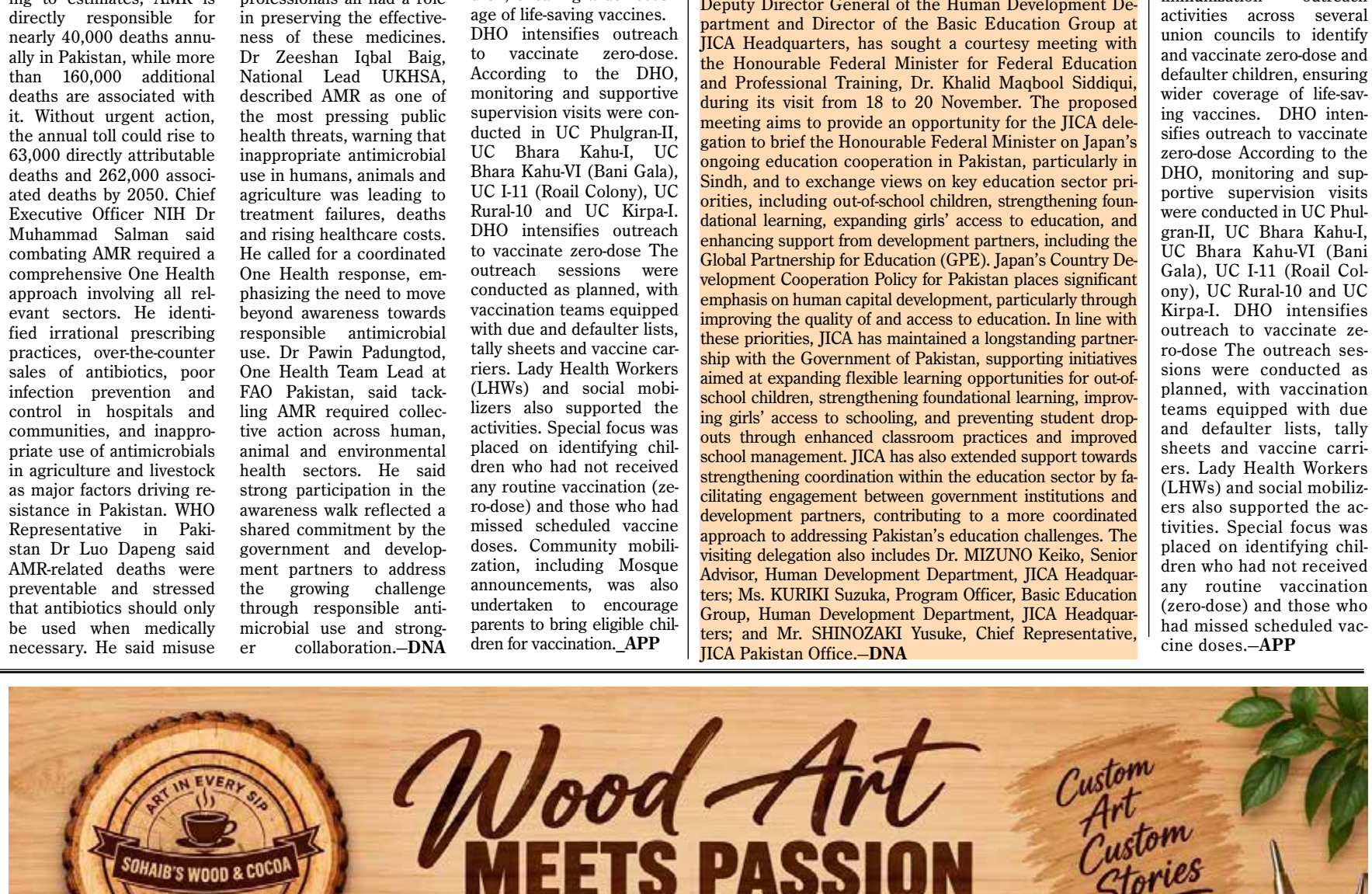
ISLAMABAD : A high-level delegation from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Headquarters is visiting Pakistan this week to strengthen education cooperation, with a special focus on improving access to quality education and addressing the challenge of out-of-school children. The JICA delegation, led by Ms. KOMORI Akiko, Deputy Director General of the Human Development Department and Director of the Basic Education Group at JICA Headquarters, has sought a courtesy meeting with the Honourable Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, during its visit from 18 to 20 November. The proposed meeting aims to provide an opportunity for the JICA delegation to brief the Honourable Federal Minister on Japan's ongoing education cooperation in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh, and to exchange views on key education sector priorities, including out-of-school children, strengthening foundational learning, expanding girls' access to education, and enhancing support from development partners, including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Japan's Country Development Cooperation Policy for Pakistan places significant emphasis on human capital development, particularly through improving the quality of and access to education. In line with these priorities, JICA has maintained a longstanding partnership with the Government of Pakistan, supporting initiatives aimed at expanding flexible learning opportunities for out-of-school children, strengthening foundational learning, improving girls' access to schooling, and preventing student drop-outs through enhanced classroom practices and improved school management. JICA has also extended support towards strengthening coordination within the education sector by facilitating engagement between government institutions and development partners, contributing to a more coordinated approach to addressing Pakistan's education challenges. The visiting delegation also includes Dr. MIZUNO Keiko, Senior Advisor, Human Development Department, JICA Headquarters; Ms. KURIKI Suzuka, Program Officer, Basic Education Group, Human Development Department, JICA Headquarters; and Mr. SHINOZAKI Yusuke, Chief Representative, JICA Pakistan Office.–**DNA**

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PCFHI performs first-ever general surgery

ISLAMABAD: Pak-China Friendship Hospital Islamabad (PCFHI) managed by the Indus Hospital & Health Network (IHHN), has successfully performed its first general surgery, marking a significant milestone in expanding specialized healthcare services in the capital.The landmark procedure, a life-saving appendectomy (surgical removal of the appendix), was performed by Dr Muhammad Ashfaq Ahmed Nadeem in collaboration with the hospital's General Surgery, Anaesthesia and Operation Theatre teams. Head of Campus Dr Khizzer Pervaiz appreciated the medical staff for their professionalism, precision and teamwork, while acknowledging Faculty Chair Dr Danish for his leadership in initiating surgical services at the hospital. The commencement of surgical operations has been welcomed by local residents and patients' families, who appreciated the government's partnership with IHHN to improve access to quality healthcare.–**APP**



Briefs

SECP caps digital nano-loan APR to 90%

ISLAMABAD:The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has sharply reduced the maximum cost lenders can charge for digital nano-loans, lowering the annual percentage rate (APR) cap from 274% to 90% for new borrowers and 70% for repeat borrowers. The move aims to strengthen borrower safeguards and promote responsible lending practices, said a news release. The SECP has issued Circular No. 26 of 2026, amending its earlier Circular No. 12 of 2024 to rationalize the maximum permissible APR on digital nano-loans. The revised requirements apply to loans of up to Rs50,000, with a maximum repayment period of 90 days. The new limits translate to a maximum daily cost of about 0.2466% of the loan amount for a new borrower and 0.1918% for a repeat borrower.

On a Rs10,000 loan, that is approximately Rs 24.66 and Rs19.18 per day, respectively. These amounts include all charges connected with the loan, such as mark-up, processing and platform fees. At the former 274% ceiling, the equivalent 14-day cost would have been about Rs 1,051.

The lower ceiling must be applied automatically to repeat borrowers. The circular defines a repeat borrower as someone who has fully repaid their latest loan from the same lender within the original repayment period.

The circular also bars compounding, requires lenders to allow early repayment with charges limited to the days the loan remained outstanding, and prohibits automatic rollovers. A rollover or restructuring requires the borrower's express request after receiving a fresh statement showing its cost in rupees and as an APR. Borrowers will also receive a three-day grace period after the due date before late-payment charges can be imposed. After that, charges may apply only to overdue principal and cannot exceed the applicable daily rate. The total amount recovered for the loan, including the principal amount and all fees, charges, mark-up and penalties cannot exceed twice the principal amount.–**APP**

SSP assures business community of improved security

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza on Wednesday assured the business community of improved security arrangements and continued police cooperation to provide a safe and favourable environment for commercial activities in the federal capital. An Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police official told APP that the SSP Qazi gave the assurance during a meeting with newly elected office-bearers of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, whom he congratulated on assuming their responsibilities.

The official said the meeting discussed issues faced by the business community, security arrangements, promotion of commercial activities and measures to strengthen coordination between police and traders. SSP Qazi Ali Raza said providing a secure and business-friendly environment remained among the priorities of Islamabad Police. He said effective communication and mutual cooperation between police and the business community played an important role in maintaining law and order and promoting economic activities in the city. The SSP Qazi assured the chamber representatives that consultation would continue to address their concerns and resolve security-related issues. He added that Islamabad Police were utilising all available resources to protect the lives and property of citizens and the business community.–**APP**

Ethiopia, Pakistan vow to boost bilateral relations

Emphasizing Ethiopia's strategic positioning as the seat of the African Union, the Ambassador noted that Pakistan can leverage its relations with Ethiopia to significantly increase its footprint across Africa

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on Wednesday held a productive meeting with the Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly, H.E. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, at the Parliament House, Islamabad.

The two sides discuss ways to strengthen bilateral relations by enhancing cooperation across various areas including parliamentary diplomacy, trade, investment, culture and tourism. They also emphasized the importance of strengthening parliamentary relations, encouraging exchanges of high-level delegations and identifying new areas of mutual cooperation.

Ambassador Dr. Oumer reaffirmed the deep-rooted and long-standing bilateral relations between the two nations, highlighting their shared history, culture, and values. Emphasizing Ethiopia's strategic positioning as the seat of the African Union, the Ambassador noted that Pakistan can leverage its relations with Ethiopia to significantly increase its footprint across Africa. The Ambassador reiterated his commitment to further strengthen the two countries bilateral relations by encouraging exchange of high-level delegations to further increase their cooperation across various areas. The Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly said Pakistan attached great importance to its friendly relations with Ethiopia, adding that both countries had extensive opportunities to enhance trade, investment and economic cooperation. He said promoting trade and economic relations with African countries was an important priority under Pakistan's Look Africa Policy. He added that the Engage Africa Policy reflected Pakistan's commitment to strengthening political, economic and diplomatic cooperation with African nations. The Honorable Speaker said identifying new avenues of cooperation between Pakistan and Ethiopia was an important need of the time.

Islamabad dialogue highlights China's governance model

ISLAMABAD: China's governance experience, people-centred development and role in global cooperation came under discussion at an international dialogue held here on Tuesday. It brought together senior Pakistani and Chinese officials, policymakers and representatives of the media. Titled "China's Governance and Worldwide Development Global Dialogue," the event was organised by China Media Group (CMG), the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan and the Pakistan-China Institute. Its discussions focused on China's development path and the lessons and opportunities it may offer to countries seeking effective governance and sustainable development. His Excellency Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of China to Pakistan, highlighted China's economic transformation and long-term stability, noting that the country's progress was visible in improvements in public services, technology, communications, transportation and living standards. Ambassadorial Jiang said, understanding China's governance system required an understanding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and its approach to governance. He referred to the Party's emphasis on self-governance, institutional strengthening, discipline and self-reform, describing these as important elements of its governance experience. He said China's experience could offer useful references for political parties, particularly in developing countries, while emphasising the value of dialogue, mutual respect and exchanges among countries. The Ambassador also acknowledged Pakistan's economic progress and congratulated its government and people on the country's achievements.

He expressed confidence in continued cooperation and the strengthening of relations between the two countries. In a video address, Shen Haixiong, President of China Media Group, discussed the CPC's approach to full and rigorous self-governance, highlighting institutional mechanisms, accountability, organisational discipline and efforts to combat corruption. He said the CPC's experience in self-reform formed an important part of its governance approach, adding that countries could draw lessons from different governance experiences while developing paths suited to their own national conditions. Mr Shen also highlighted CMG's role in promoting international understanding of China's governance and development, and in strengthening cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, who also addressed the gathering through a video message, highlighted China's people-centred development approach, particularly its poverty alleviation efforts and support for less-developed regions. He referred to the principle of serving the people and said China's experience demonstrated the importance of combining policy direction with financial and technical support to improve living standards and promote balanced regional development. The senator also discussed the Global Governance Initiative proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in September 2025, describing its emphasis on multilateralism, sovereign equality, international law and a more representative system of global governance as relevant to the international community. Highlighting the resilience behind China's modernisation, he referred to the spirit of the Long March as an example of perseverance and determination in pursuing national development goals. He also pointed to expanding Pakistan-China cooperation in emerging areas, including space exploration and education, as evidence of the breadth of the bilateral partnership. Federal Minister for the Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh also attended the dialogue, which provided a platform for discussion on China's development experience and its wider implications for international cooperation. The dialogue underscored the importance of exchanges between countries on governance, institutional development and economic progress at a time when developing economies are seeking approaches to address complex domestic and global challenges.–**DNA**

Work on M-6 development Motorway approved

ISLAMABAD: Approval marks a decisive milestone in completing Pakistan's north–south motorway corridor and mobilizing private capital for strategic infrastructure.

The board of the Public Private Partnership Authority (P3A) approved Sections I and II of the M-6 motorway, about 121 kilometres long, at its 46th meeting. The meeting was chaired by Advisor to the Prime Minister on Privatisation, Chairman Privatisation Commission Muhammad Ali, who also chairs the P3A board. The two sections will be awarded under separate concession agreements.

The private investors will develop and operate each section for 25 years and recover their investment through toll revenues. After that, the motorway will be handed back to the National Highway Authority (NHA) in good working condition. The government will give Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for Section I only, to make the project commercially viable and keep tolls affordable for road users. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is the NHA's transaction adviser for the two sections. Under that process, the NHA will invite bids from qualified local and foreign investors.

The 306 kilometre, six-lane, access-controlled M-6 is planned as a five-section motorway. Once complete, it is expected to cut the Hyderabad-Sukkur journey from about six hours to three. At present, all traffic between the two cities uses the N-5 National Highway. Its crowded stretches run through towns and settlements, where heavy freight vehicles share the road with local traffic, and road-safety risks have long been a concern. The remaining three sections, from Nawabshah to Sukkur, are being financed through sovereign loans from the OPEC Fund and the Islamic Development Bank. They are currently in procurement. Under the PPP structure, the government gets a modern motorway without paying the whole upfront cost. It also hands over repair and maintenance to the private operator for the concession period and will receive a share of project revenues.–DNA

NUML moot calls for People-Centred, output-driven CPEC

ISLAMABAD: The two-day International Conference on "CPEC 2.0 and Pakistan-China Strategic Partnership: Mapping Opportunities, Addressing Challenges, and Designing Future Pathways" concluded at Jinnah Auditorium, National University of Modern Languages with experts calling for a more people-centred, output-driven and inclusive approach to the next phase of CPEC. Rector NUML, Maj Gen Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI(M) (retd), DG NUML Brig Muhammad Rafiq Khan, Deans, Directors, faculty members and a large number of students attended the closing ceremony. The conference highlighted that the success of CPEC 2.0 will ultimately be measured by the people-centric connectivity and benefits. The conference identified tourism, language learning, cultural exchanges and academic linkages as practical tools for strengthening ties between Pakistan and China, while stressing the importance of shaping positive and informed narratives around CPEC. The recommendations called for making CPEC 2.0 more output-driven, linking foreign investment with local capabilities, strengthening access to verified data, ensuring a just and circular green transition, and investing in innovation, skills and livelihoods. Participants also emphasized securing the regional economic base and further strengthening business-to-business ties between the two countries. Former Ambassador and Special Secretary Naela Chohan, one of the keynote speakers, described CPEC as a corridor of opportunities and stressed that Pakistan must move from importing towards manufacturing to achieve long-term economic stability. She emphasized the importance of human capital, technological capabilities, stronger academic and institutional partnerships, cultural exchanges, bilateral tourism and research collaboration between Pakistan and China. Maj Gen (Retd) Dr. M. Samrez Salik termed CPEC a potential turning point for Pakistan's economy, saying it could help transform the country towards an economy-driven future. He noted that while China has strategic interests in CPEC, Pakistan stands to gain significant economic opportunities, adding that the constraints in this regard need to be addressed proactively.–**DNA**

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday on various feeders due to ongoing development works being carried out by the district administration. According to an IESCO spokesperson, electricity supply will remain suspended in Islamabad Circle, from 08:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Islamabad Club-I, Scheme-II, Feeders, from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Melody, Islamabad Club-I, F-6/2, Aabpara, Zia Masjid, Highway, Sohan, Scheme-II, UC-2, OPF, Abbasia Market, G-10/3, I-8/1, I-10/1, I-11/3, Mera Jaffar, F-11/3, N.I.H, Mohra Noor, Sunny Bank, Cecil, Kohallah, Tret, Balawara, Khanna Dak, Barma, Tramari, Sudhran Road, ISI, Kurri, Waheed Abad, Service road East, Khanna East, Highway, feeders. In Rawalpindi City Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Gulzar-e-Quaid, Air Port, Nawaz Colony, B.B.H, Khanna Road, Q. Azam Hospital, Fazaiya Colony, 6th Road, Faizabad, Shakrial, Noor Muhammad Road, Service Road, Gangal, Shamasabad, Ojri Camp, Dhoke Hassu, Amin Town, Dhoke Khabba, Dhoke Hukamdad, Eid Gah, Fawara Chowk, Jamia Masjid, Jinnah Road, Madina Colony, Azizabad, Race Course, Capt. Amir Shaheed, Azharabad, Zarkoon Heights, Dhoke Suleman, Noon, Pind Hoon, Ratta, Railway Colony, Al-Noor Colony, feeders, from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM: Qadeer Road, feeder. Similarly, in Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM: Maj. Muhammad Hanif, Sep. Ibrar Hussain, Ghazan Khan, KRL Colony, Lehtrar, Feeders, from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: VVIP, MES, SPD-2, Gracy Line, RIC, T.H.Q, Mall Road, Sir Syed Road, Rahimabad, Swan Garden-II, Mohra Nagial, Jhanda, Pindi Board, Tulsa Road, Shahpur, Gulshan-e-Fatima, Shah Jeven Colony, Chungi No. 22, Chountra, Jandala, Narh, Punjar, New Choa Khalsa, Chowk Pindori, Khawaja, Mandra, Basali, Pind Jhatla, P.A.E.C.H.S, H.P.T-3, Islamabad Feed Mill, Reliance Weaving Mill, Jhatta Hathial, Industrial, Lab-No. I, Lab-No. II, Kurnb Kaswal, Syed Kasran, Bhall, Nara Matore, Kahuta City, Kahuta City-II, Humayun Road, New 502 Work Shop, Askari-7, Rose Lane, feeders. In Attock Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 07:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Khan Abad, Col. Sher Khan, Bahtar Morh, Kashif Gul, Ahmed Nagar, feeders, from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Nawababad, Jalala, Multi Orchard, Gulshan-e-Sehat (E-18), D-18, A Block, Shahia, Ahmed Nagar, KSB, Waisa, Musa D/C, Khanzada D/C, Shahdher D/C, Darya Sharif D/C, Hazro D/C, Shams Abad T/C, Hattian T/C, Qazi Abad .–**DNA**

FDI reviews progress on immunization workforce capacity building

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Directorate of Immunization (FDI) has reviewed progress on its Learning Management System (LMS) and discussed plans to expand digital learning and capacity-building opportunities for the country's immunization workforce.

FDI reviews progress on immunization workforce capacity building

The review took place during a Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting chaired by Director General FDI Dr Musa Khan, attended by provincial and area Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) representatives and development partners.

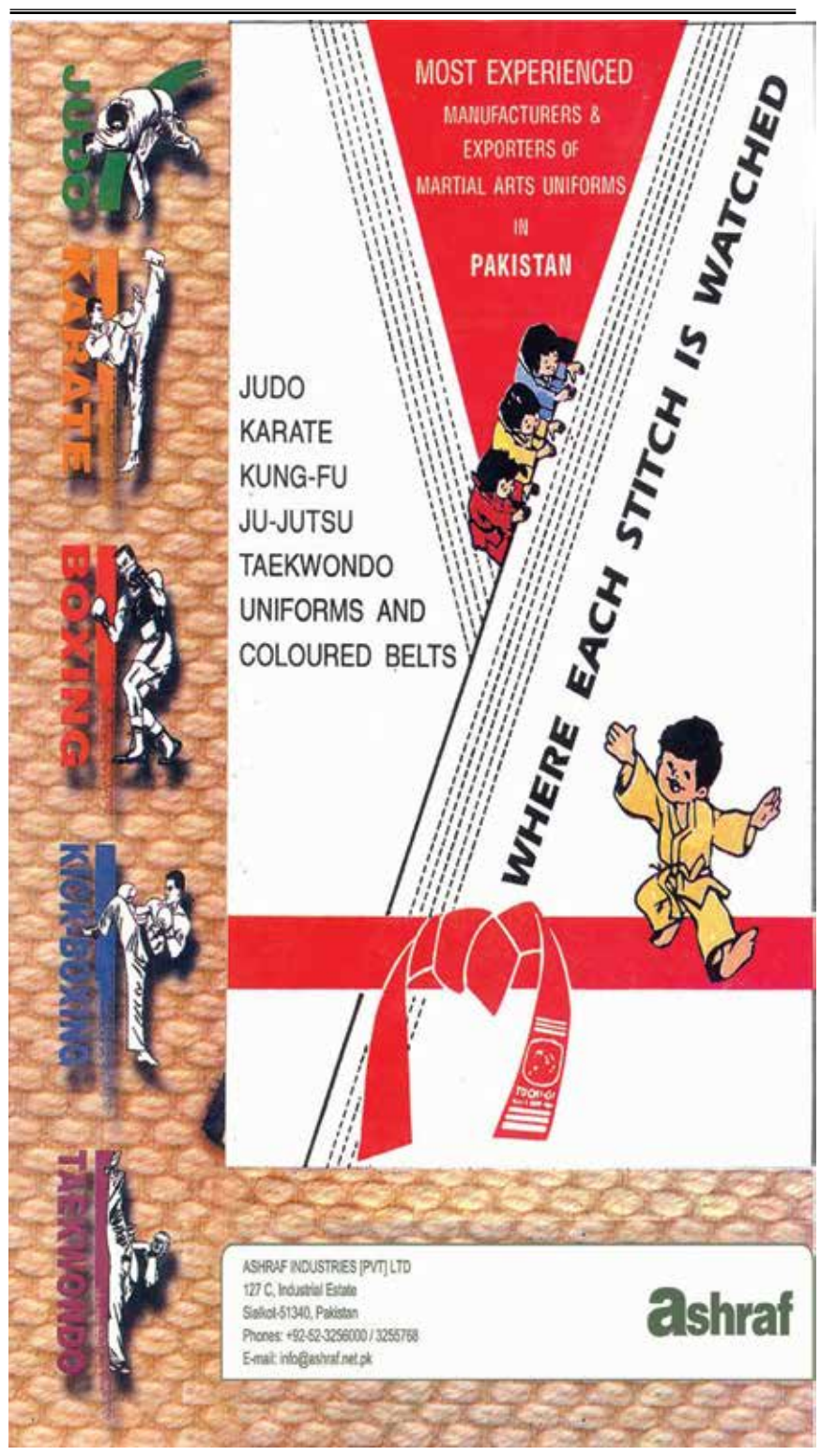
The meeting formally introduced the LMS Technical Working Group and reviewed achievements under Phase I, while deliberating on implementation priorities, key activities and the proposed rollout of Phase II.

The discussions focused on expanding access to structured, technology-enabled learning for immunisation professionals across the country.

Dr Majid Salim, IG-CDC/FDI, provided technical inputs in line with the DG's vision, while Dr Waheed Ahmed Lashari, Deputy Director, Training and Capacity Building, FDI, coordinated the discussions.

A detailed presentation on the LMS was delivered by Dr Khawaja Aftab Ahmed, Team Lead of the OPM LMS, along with members of his team.

Representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO), Gates Foundation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), OPM and provincial and area EPIs also attended the meeting. Addressing the participants, Dr Musa Khan thanked Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and OPM for their technical and financial support, expressing confidence that the initiative would become a success through collective efforts. He stressed the need for a coordinated, practical and results-oriented approach to LMS implementation, emphasizing stronger collaboration among technical teams and partners, integration with existing provincial platforms and timely completion of planned activities.



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New US Congress must demand a clear strategy on Iran

Dalia Al-Aqidi

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth kept his job after the House last week voted 211-204 to send Republican Rep. Thomas Massie's impeachment resolution to the Judiciary Committee. The referral stalled the impeachment effort. When the new Congress takes office on Jan. 3, 2027, it should publicly debate and vote on whether to authorize continued US military action against Iran. For Gulf countries whose ships pass through the Strait of Hormuz, three questions matter. What does Washington hope to achieve? How long is it prepared to fight? What would bring the war to an end?

For the US, the immediate stakes are the safety of American troops and the cost of a prolonged military campaign. If fighting resumes, US troops and bases in the Middle East could come under attack. Congress should ask how the Pentagon plans to defend them, what resources it would need and what a sustained operation would mean for other US military commitments. Americans deserve to know what they are being asked to pay for and what risks their service members would face. Tehran has used the Strait of Hormuz to pressure its neighbors and countries far beyond the Gulf. Washington's stop-start approach has given Tehran time to repair damaged military sites. Before authorizing further military action, Congress should ask what Washington achieved during those pauses and what Tehran was able to recover.

Americans deserve to know what they are being asked to pay for and what risks their service members would face A BBC analysis of satellite images taken this month found signs of new construction near two major Iranian missile sites and apparent repairs at a dozen other military sites. At a damaged missile base in Kermanshah, workers rebuilt roofs over buildings that were hit during the war. How much military capability Tehran has recovered remains unclear. But the work itself should prompt Congress to ask how long the gains from any new round of strikes would last. Even during pauses in US strikes, Gulf governments have had to prepare for renewed fighting. Reuters reported that Saudi Arabia recently urged Washington to hold off on further strikes, arguing that sanctions were already pressuring Tehran. The same report said US intelligence officials assessed that renewed strikes would do little to change Iran's demands in negotiations. Congress should ask what the administration expects sanctions to achieve and how it will judge whether they are working.



President Donald Trump has played down the likelihood of major new strikes while keeping the naval blockade of Iranian ports in place. A blockade carries its own costs and risks, even with fewer airstrikes. Congress should ask what would lead Washington to lift it, what commitments it would seek from Tehran in return and how it would verify those commitments.

For Iraq, the stakes are clear. Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said Baghdad had reached an understanding with Washington that would allow Iraqi oil tankers to pass through the Strait of Hormuz using a shipping lane near Oman. Iraqi energy officials told Reuters that oil exports recovered from about 2.65 million barrels a day in September to 3.5 million in October. That rebound matters for a country that relies heavily on oil revenue. Iraq and other Gulf exporters need to know how Washington plans to protect commercial ships and whether that route would stay open if the fighting were to intensify. Congress should ask how Washington plans to stop Tehran from attacking its neighbors and curb the influence it wields through armed groups across the region. Keeping the Strait of Hormuz open, weakening Iran's missile capabilities and securing limits on its nuclear program all matter. The administration should explain how each goal serves US interests and what it is prepared to do if Tehran retaliates against the US or its partners.

Congress should demand a strategy that protects Americans and makes Tehran pay a price for aggression Stopping the aggression of the Islamic Republic serves an American interest. Attacks by Tehran and the armed groups it supports can disrupt trade and raise energy costs for American families. Washington should expect regional partners to help counter those threats. The administration should tell Congress what those governments can do to disrupt weapons shipments, share intelligence and protect commercial shipping. Lawmakers can then judge where American military power is needed and how much of the burden the US should carry.

The incoming Democratic majority in the House could also revive the effort to impeach Hegseth in 2027. If Massie's resolution expires at the end of this Congress, a member of the new House would have to introduce fresh articles. A House majority could impeach Hegseth but removal would require two-thirds of the senators present. A renewed impeachment effort would examine Hegseth's decisions. Congress still has to decide the next phase of the war. Iran's aggression must be stopped. The test for the new Democratic Congress will be whether it understands the regime it faces. A government that answers peaceful dissent at home with prison and execution and uses armed groups to intimidate its neighbors has shown what it is willing to do to preserve its power. Congress should demand a strategy that protects Americans and makes Tehran pay a price for aggression. The question will be whether the new majority will take that threat seriously enough to act.

Trump's Iran War: Trillions Lost and Accountability Looms

Qamar Bashir



The wider Middle East has experienced economic and strategic upheaval. More than twenty regional military facilities and infrastructure sites have reportedly suffered damage. Disrupted shipping, higher insurance premiums, damaged energy installations and interrupted investment have generated reconstruction liabilities potentially reaching tens of billions. Gulf governments dependent upon American protection have witnessed the vulnerability of their security arrangements...

PRESIDENT Donald Trump's war against Iran, launched alongside Israel on February 28, 2026, has become a devastating demonstration of military overreach, economic destruction and political failure. What began with promises of overwhelming American superiority has consumed tens of billions in military expenditure, imposed hundreds of billions in domestic economic losses and potentially inflicted trillions in global damage. The political consequences are equally devastating, threatening leadership in Washington and Tel Aviv while undermining American influence worldwide.

During a congressional hearing, a senator confronted a senior Pentagon official over the naval blockade of Iranian ports. Independent estimates placed its daily cost at $32.5 million, equivalent to $975 million monthly and $11.86 billion annually. The official acknowledged approximately $30 million daily but could not provide comprehensive accounting. An operation intended to economically strangle Iran has instead become a billion-dollar monthly burden on American taxpayers. Iranian retaliation has compounded the destruction. Strikes against the American naval base in Bahrain, headquarters of the Fifth Fleet, reportedly inflicted at least $400 million in damage. Yet the Pentagon official could not confirm the estimate. The senator cited $47 billion already spent on the conflict, exposing the administration's inability to explain the mounting costs of military operations, equipment losses and reconstruction.

The opportunity cost is devastating. As the senator argued, $47 billion could eliminate federal student debt for more than two million Americans, finance preschool education for every four-year-old, reduce family health insurance premiums by approximately $200 monthly, or relieve over ten million families of medical debt. Instead, resources essential for education, healthcare, infrastructure and human development have been consumed by destruction. By starving the civilian economy that generates national wealth and sustains military strength, Washington is undermining the foundations of American power. American households have paid heavily. Estimates cited by the Center for American Progress place the burden at approximately $2,000 per household, representing $260 billion across 130 million households. Broader assessments suggest domestic losses approaching $447 billion through energy inflation, disrupted commerce and declining purchasing power. Gasoline prices exceeding $4.27 per gallon and diesel surpassing $6.31 during peak disruptions intensified pressure on consumers, transportation and manufacturing.

Military replenishment presents another enormous liability. Direct expenditure has been estimated between $37.5 billion and $47.1 billion, while replacing depleted missiles, interceptors, aircraft and drones could require another $29 billion to over $100 billion. Strategic inventories of Tomahawk missiles, Patriot interceptors and precision weapons have been strained. At least 21 American service members have reportedly been killed and 865 wounded, generating additional long-term medical and veterans' obligations.

Israel has suffered substantial economic and political damage. Military mobilization, missile-defense operations, infrastructure repairs and disrupted commerce have imposed multibillion-dollar burdens. The earlier twelve-day confrontation in 2025 generated combined regional losses estimated at $24 billion to $35 billion. The continuing war has multiplied these liabilities. Netanyahu's electoral setback and inability to secure a dependable parliamentary majority have exposed the political consequences of his military adventurism. Iran has endured extensive destruction of military, industrial, energy and civilian infrastructure, with reported fatalities exceeding 6,000. Yet despite enormous human and financial losses, Tehran has sustained resistance and imposed substantial costs upon its adversaries. Washington's expectation that overwhelming military superiority and economic strangulation would force Iranian submission has failed to deliver its proclaimed objectives.

The wider Middle East has experienced economic and strategic upheaval. More than twenty regional military facilities and infrastructure sites have reportedly suffered damage. Disrupted shipping, higher insurance premiums, damaged energy installations and interrupted investment have generated reconstruction liabilities potentially reaching tens of billions. Gulf governments dependent upon American protection have witnessed the vulnerability of their security arrangements, weakening confidence in Washington's regional guarantees. Globally, the economic consequences potentially reach trillions. Brent crude surged more than 54% during acute phases, exceeding $112 per barrel. Disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz increased transportation, manufacturing, fertilizer and food costs across continents. Europe, Asia and developing economies have absorbed inflationary shocks from a confrontation they neither initiated nor controlled. Lost economic output, interrupted investment and disrupted supply chains have multiplied the destruction far beyond the battlefield.

The political costs are equally punishing. Trump's November midterm setbacks weakened his domestic authority, while Netanyahu's parliamentary difficulties threatened his political survival. Washington's diplomatic credibility has deteriorated as governments question whether American military intervention produces security or instability. Iran's continued resistance has further challenged the assumption that military superiority guarantees political dominance. America's domestic infrastructure has simultaneously exposed disturbing vulnerabilities. Disruptions involving Microsoft services, aviation networks, banking operations, communications systems and Apple-related platforms have affected sectors supporting trillions in economic activity. These failures underscore the contradiction of financing military destruction abroad while essential technological and civilian infrastructure at home urgently requires modernization and protection.

Trump's broader policies reinforce the pattern. Tariff confrontations generated economic uncertainty, immigration restrictions disrupted labor markets, territorial ambitions concerning Greenland and Canada encountered resistance, and intervention in Venezuela raised questions about sovereignty and control over national resources. The Iranian war represents the most expensive manifestation of a foreign policy increasingly dependent upon coercion rather than diplomacy. Congress now confronts the question of accountability. The hearing exposed the administration's failure to justify $47 billion in expenditure while Americans struggle with education, healthcare and household expenses. Congressional authority over appropriations provides a powerful mechanism to deny further funding, halt military escalation and redirect national resources toward productive investment and public welfare.

Accountability must extend beyond Washington. Iran, Lebanon and neighboring countries have suffered enormous destruction, displacement and civilian casualties. Reported deaths in Lebanon have exceeded 7,000, while millions across the region have faced disruption. Reconstruction, lost economic output and damaged infrastructure represent substantial financial claims requiring consideration in any eventual settlement. Trump promised military victory, restored deterrence and strengthened American supremacy. Instead, America confronts $47 billion in cited war expenditure, potentially $100 billion in additional military replenishment, hundreds of billions in domestic losses and worldwide disruption potentially reaching trillions. Israel faces political instability, Gulf governments are reassessing their dependencies, and Iran remains resistant.

The ultimate reckoning will concern more than squandered billions. It will encompass shattered economies, weakened political leadership, diminished American credibility and opportunities stolen from future generations. Trump launched a war to demonstrate American supremacy; instead, he has exposed the economic and political foundations of that supremacy to unprecedented strain. The financial losses are staggering, the political consequences potentially irreversible, and responsibility leads directly to the president who chose the war.

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

The Changing Meaning of Victory in Modern Warfare

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The United States faces a difficult question: how can it translate military superiority into a sustainable political outcome? Destroying military installations, weakening missile capabilities and damaging strategic infrastructure may reduce Iran's immediate military strength. However, these measures do not necessarily guarantee political submission or the collapse of the existing system

THE understanding of victory reflects a different approach to warfare, one in which endurance can matter more than battlefield dominance. Iran's strategy is built around the calculation that a prolonged confrontation could eventually become more costly for its opponents than for itself. Rather than attempting to match American military capabilities, Tehran seeks to increase the political, economic and security costs of continued confrontation. Military analysts describe this approach as strategic attrition. Instead of seeking a decisive military victory, a weaker power attempts to exhaust a stronger adversary through sustained pressure. The objective is to weaken the opponent's willingness to continue fighting, undermine domestic support for the conflict and create conditions in which negotiations become more attractive than further military action. Iran's military doctrine has developed around this reality. Its conventional military capabilities remain considerably inferior to those of the United States. Washington possesses advanced air power, intelligence networks, naval forces and technological capabilities that Tehran cannot easily match. A direct conventional confrontation would therefore expose Iran to enormous risks. Tehran has consequently invested in missiles, drones, asymmetric warfare and regional partnerships. These instruments allow it to threaten military installations, disrupt maritime trade and create security challenges across a much wider geographical area. The purpose is not necessarily to destroy the military capabilities of its adversaries but to demonstrate that military superiority does not guarantee a politically acceptable outcome. The experience of previous American military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan has also influenced Iranian strategic thinking. Those conflicts demonstrated that superior military technology does not automatically translate into lasting political success. A country may win individual battles while struggling to achieve its broader political objectives.

One of Iran's most important strategic calculations concerns the relationship between military confrontation and the global economy. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a substantial proportion of internationally traded oil passes, provides Tehran with considerable geographical leverage. Any serious disruption to shipping through this narrow waterway can affect international energy markets, increase transportation and insurance costs and create pressure on governments far beyond the Middle East. Iran understands that the consequences of a regional conflict would not remain confined to its borders. Reuters reported in March 2026 that Tehran was relying on military pressure and disruption to energy routes to increase the costs of confrontation for Washington and its regional partners. Its analysis highlighted the Iranian calculation that economic uncertainty and rising energy prices could eventually weaken international support for a prolonged conflict. This approach also explains why the economic consequences of a confrontation matter as much as its military outcome. Higher oil prices can create inflationary pressures, affect industrial production and increase the political difficulties faced by governments already dealing with domestic economic concerns. For the United States, a prolonged regional conflict could mean additional military expenditure, pressure on energy prices, uncertainty in international markets and growing domestic criticism. Iran's wager is that Washington may eventually conclude that the costs of continuing the confrontation outweigh its strategic benefits.

The United States faces a difficult question: how can it translate military superiority into a sustainable political outcome? Destroying military installations, weakening missile capabilities and damaging strategic infrastructure may reduce Iran's immediate military strength. However, these measures do not necessarily guarantee political submission or the collapse of the existing system. Iran's leadership has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to absorb considerable economic pressure. Decades of sanctions have encouraged the development of alternative trade networks, domestic production arrangements and mechanisms for operating under international restrictions. Nevertheless, endurance should not be confused with immunity. Iran's economy faces serious structural weaknesses, inflation, currency depreciation and declining investment. Military confrontation further increases these difficulties. The burden of sanctions and war falls heavily on ordinary citizens, whose living standards may deteriorate even when the political leadership remains in control. A November 2026 Reuters assessment of the conflict highlights the danger of both sides believing that time is necessarily working in their favour. Continued confrontation may impose growing costs on Iran while also exposing the United States and its regional partners to economic and security pressures.

The preservation of the political system is another central element of Iran's calculations. For Tehran, the consequences of military defeat cannot be separated from the future of the Islamic Republic itself. A leadership that considers external pressure an existential threat may be prepared to accept economic hardship and military losses rather than make concessions that could undermine its political survival. This explains why regime continuity may be regarded as a measure of success even when the country suffers extensive damage. If the United States fails to achieve its principal political objectives, Iran may argue that it has denied its adversary a decisive victory. However, there is an important distinction between the survival of a government and the well-being of a nation. A political system may remain intact while the country's economy, infrastructure and social fabric suffer long-term damage. Describing such an outcome as victory would therefore require considerable qualification.

The confrontation between Iran and the United States illustrates an important principle of modern international politics: military superiority does not always determine the final political outcome of a war. Iran cannot realistically expect to defeat the United States in a conventional military contest. Its objective is instead to prevent Washington from achieving a decisive political victory, preserve the existing system and retain enough strategic leverage to negotiate from a position that does not amount to surrender. For Tehran, therefore, victory may mean not losing on the enemy's terms. A ceasefire, reduced military pressure, sanctions relief or the withdrawal of American forces could become political achievements if they allow the Iranian leadership to claim that its adversary failed to impose its preferred outcome. Yet survival alone cannot resolve Iran's economic problems or guarantee its long-term security. The ultimate test of this strategy will be whether the country can move beyond the immediate confrontation and secure a more stable political and economic future. Iran's approach is less about winning a conventional war than about changing the calculation of those who wage it. It is a strategy built on endurance, economic pressure and political patience. Whether it succeeds will depend not simply on how much damage Iran can absorb, but on whether its adversaries eventually decide that continuing the conflict is no longer worth the cost.

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Briefs

Shehbaz, Nawaz discuss AJK's...

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would be implemented and that PML-N would resolve "all the issues" if it won the elections. In his speech, he had also cautioned his party leadership in AJK that he would visit AJK every three months to see whether the party's manifesto was being implemented. "If we win the election, I will come after every three months, and will visit each and every street with the prime minister." After PM Gillani's election, Nawaz handed him a comprehensive 100-day reform agenda, stressing that essential public services, including healthcare, education, sanitation and reliable roads, were basic rights of the people of AJK and should also reach remote areas rather than remain confined to major urban centres.

Defence minister Kh. Asif hits back at Bilawal Bhutto

FROM PAGE 01

undemocratic act and never a democratic one." The PPP chairperson also remarked that the governance system had not collapsed, but was rather "made to collapse" – seemingly reacting to Naqvi's statement in July that the current "system" of governance had "collapsed" and needed a "reset". Asif began his response to Bilawal by addressing this matter. He said: "No system can reset without public support. If you are talking about a system collapse, then all of us, as people connected to this system, must also take stock of our responsibilities. The defence minister also appeared to throw his weight behind the proposal for holding a referendum on new province as he said that there would surely be a debate on "system reset" in Parliament, but the public too could not be "deprived of its fundamental right". "The pinnacle of legitimacy would be reached if the public opinion is also taken into account along with that of Parliament." Seemingly reacting to Bilawal's support for the release of incarcerated former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan and other demands by the opposition, Asif added: "Holding politicians accountable in this country is nothing new, and no politician exempt from accountability." He mentioned that the PPP had been in power in Sindh for 18 years. "Sindh has turned into paradise. The world admires the condition of Karachi," he said, seemingly taking a jibe at the PPP, which is often criticised over the lack of development in Sindh. Asif then said Bilawal and his party had been a "partner of the PML-N in the business of government since 2022. You get the profit and the PML-N and Pakistan suffer loss". "He who claims equity must come with clean hands," Asif continued. "This is a centuries-old maxim of equity. Are your hands clean? Do you have the right to lecture or threaten?" The defence minister said, "We have just one objective: to change the lives of the people of Pakistan so that ordinary people can live with dignity. Make public participation in governance a reality ... Do not confine the people's rights to the pages of the Constitution." He said after achievements on diplomatic and military fronts, now the "fight is for devolving governance to grassroots, in which public opinion and Parliament's role are entirely democratic and constitutional. Governance is not anyone's monopoly; Allah has granted this right to 250 million people."

New China-Pakistan Platforms to Boost Agricultural Research and Innovation

Led by Professor Zhang Lixin of Northwest A&F University (NWAFU), the initiative has also opened up new opportunities for collaboration with more than 10 Pakistani universities

DNA



LAHORE: The joint establishment of the Shaanxi Belt and Road Joint Laboratory on Dryland Biological Resources and Green Smart Agriculture and the Pakistan Branch of the Shaanxi International Technology Transfer and Innovation Cooperation Centre was officially launched here at the 2026 Punjab Innovation and Technology Expo (PINTECH EXPO). Led by Professor Zhang Lixin of Northwest A&F University (NWAFU), the initiative has also opened up new opportunities for collaboration with more than 10 Pakistani universities.

These include the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, University of Sargodha, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore, University of Engineering and Technology Lahore, and the Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

The proposed cooperation covers the establishment of joint laboratories and agricultural demonstration bases, as well as talent development programmes, according to a report carried by China Economic Net (CEN) on Wednesday.

Additionally, the Shaanxi International Technology Transfer and Innovation Cooperation Centre and the Pakistan Higher Education Commission signed a letter of intent to establish a joint research fund.

Four agricultural technical publications were also announced for distribution in Pakistan. Published by Shaanxi Science and Technology Press and Northwest A&F University Press, they cover sesame cultivation, apple cultivation, layer chicken farming and bio-healthy agricultural product production, with editions available in English, Urdu, Chinese and Russian.

Haaland's late penalty sends Norway into Nations League quarters

DNA

COPENHAGEN: Erling Haaland's penalty deep in injury time completed a dramatic comeback as Norway recovered from 2-0 down to beat Denmark 3-2 on Tuesday and reach the Nations League quarter-finals

Portugal, who needed a point to guarantee top spot in League A Group Four, defeated Wales 3-2 in their second game of the post-Cristiano Ronaldo era to finish with 15 points, while Norway finished second ahead of Denmark, with both nations finishing with nine points. Wales rounded out the group in fourth with three points.

Haaland scored twice for Norway, including the decisive goal in the 96th minute after Denmark defender Joachim Andersen was penalized for handball, sealing a remarkable turnaround and sparking wild celebrations among the visiting fans.

"It's one of the crazier football years," Haaland told TV2. "It's fun to be a part of finishing it off in style. Stale (Solbakken, Norway's coach) said it before the match: 'Let's just get a good finish now to a completely indescribable football year.' It's fun to be Norwegian."

Norway's latest success came on the back of their memorable World Cup run, when Haaland and Odegaard led the country to the quarter-finals in their first appearance at the tournament for 28 years.

"It's completely fantastic and fun," Haaland said. "I should have had a hat-trick today, but I'm happy with two goals, so that's totally fine." Denmark had dominated early and Rasmus Hojlund capitalized, sweeping home a left-footed shot from very close range in the 11th minute for his sixth goal in six Nations League games. They doubled their lead three minutes later through Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg.

Haaland had a goal disallowed due to a handball before the big Manchester City striker finally put Norway on the scoreboard in the 37th minute thanks to a costly error by Mads Hermansen. Martin Odegaard pounced on Hermansen's poor clearance attempt and then left the rolling ball for Haaland to tap in.

Odegaard equalized with a strike from the center of the box in the 83rd minute.

In Cardiff, reigning Nations League champions Portugal had already secured their quarter-final spot with a 2-1 win over Norway last month. They still needed a point on Tuesday to guarantee top spot in the group and to be one of the seeded sides in the last eight.

Carlos Forbs struck the winner in the 70th minute after Ben Cabango's loose header gifted possession to the substitute, who cut inside Ben Davies and fired low into the far corner.

The visitors were then reduced to 10 men when Pedro Neto saw red after a second booking for a foul on Brennan Johnson, minutes after bringing down Josh Sheehan Portugal had taken an early lead through a fine Bruno Fernandes finish after Joao Neves dispossessed Josh Sheehan and squared for Fernandes, who fired into the top corner from outside the box.

Wales hit back two minutes later as Harry Wilson's saved shot broke for Rubin Colwill, who squared for David Brooks to tap in.

Wales went ahead just before the break when Brooks' deft touch released Sorba Thomas and he steered a low shot inside the far post.

Their lead did not last long as Neto fired home Francisco Trincao's cross at the far post. Elsewhere, Ukraine defeated Georgia 1-0, Poland and Sweden drew 1-1, Ireland thrashed Kosovo 3-0, Hungary and Northern Ireland drew 1-1, while Israel and Austria also played out a 1-1 draw.

Vinicius hits 12-minute hat-trick as Brazil thrash Singapore

DNA

SINGAPORE: Vinicius Junior hit a 12-minute hat-trick in the first half as Brazil turned on the style in a 7-0 trouncing of Singapore on Tuesday. Endrick, Estevao, Rayan and substitute Allan also scored as the South Americans brushed aside the hosts with a dominant performance at the National Stadium. Brazil were much changed from their 3-2 loss to Japan on Saturday in which manager Carlo Ancelotti and captain Raphinha were shown red cards, with Vinicius one of only four players retaining their places in the starting line-up. Bruno Guimaraes took over as skipper and set up the opener after nine minutes, playing a quick pass to Vinicius who wrong-footed Singapore captain Hariss Harun with his first touch before despatching a left-footed shot past goalkeeper Izwan Mahbud.

The Real Madrid forward notched his second in the 15th minute after a quick counter-attack as Endrick laid the ball off for his unmarked team-mate to slot home.

Vinicius was denied by Izwan shortly afterwards but he completed his hat-trick in the 21st minute when he was found unmarked in the six-yard box by Estevao's low center. Rayan had an effort disallowed for offside but Endrick added to Brazil's lead in the 31st minute with a low effort from range which found the bottom right corner. Estevao also had a goal disallowed for a foul by Vinicius but the Chelsea winger added to Brazil's tally just after the interval with a deflected shot from the edge of the box. Rayan rocked the crossbar soon after but the endeavour of the Bournemouth forward was rewarded in the 65th minute when he rounded substitute goalkeeper Syazwan Buhari to make it 6-0.

China offers 61 scholarships to Paki students for 2027-28

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese government has announced 61 scholarships for Pakistani students to pursue undergraduate, master's and doctoral studies at Chinese universities for the 2027–28 academic year, continuing a scholarship scheme that has supported Pakistani learners for years. Administered by the China Scholarship Council (CSC), the scholarships seek to boost educational cooperation between China and Pakistan and broaden higher education opportunities for Pakistani youth, according to Gwadar Pro. The latest quota includes 25 scholarships for bachelor's programmes, 21 for master's studies and 15 for PhD research. Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) will act as the nominating body to select eligible candidates under the Type A Chinese Government Scholarship programme. Applicants must submit applications via the HEC scholarship portal by 4:00 pm Pakistan Standard Time on January 5, 2027. The scholarship programme has run on an annual basis for successive years. For the 2026–27 academic year, China allocated 75 scholarship seats for Pakistan: 35 at bachelor's level, 25 for master's and 15 for PhD candidates. Beyond the HEC nominated stream, thousands of Pakistani students benefit from diverse Chinese scholarship opportunities. According to the Consulate General of Pakistan in Chengdu, nearly 29,000 Pakistani students were studying in China as of December 2025, around 6,000 of whom held awards ranging from national, provincial and municipal grants to university specific scholarships. Pakistani scholars cover a wide spectrum of disciplines, including engineering, computer science, information technology, business administration and international relations. – **APP**

Zverev beats Shelton again in rematch of US Open final

"I felt that I couldn't compete," Jodar said. "Physically, I wasn't at the level today, especially in the last two sets

DNA

TURIN, Italy: Ben Shelton tried coming forward. He tried staying back. He served-and-volleyed. He resorted to coming in on his second shot.

None of it was quite enough in the American's attempt to make a breakthrough against Alexander Zverev

The top-ranked Zverev was impeccable on his serve and improved to 7-0 in his career against Shelton with a 6-2, 7-6 (4) victory at the ATP Finals on Tuesday in a rematch of the US Open final. Zverev finished it off with a forehand passing shot on the run on his first match point.

"I was very clear-minded of what I wanted to do with that ball and it was perfect," Zverev said.

The result secured Zverev a spot in the semifinals of the elite, season-ending event for the year's top eight players; while Shelton dropped to 1-1 and likely needs to win his final group match against Rafael Jodar.

Earlier, Arthur Fils claimed his first win at the Finals by rallying past fellow debutant Jodar 4-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Aiming to win the Finals for the third time, Zverev improved to 2-0 at this year's edition after beating Jodar in his opener. Amid criticism over how he earned the No. 1 ranking following injuries to Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, Zverev has now earned back-to-back top-10 wins for the first time since the 2024 Finals.

Jodar receives treatment Jodar appeared to be struggling physically midway through the second set and was given medicine to mix into his water bottle during a medical timeout. He also downed a banana and then a gel and an energy bar during the next changeover.

"I felt that I couldn't compete," Jodar said. "Physically, I wasn't at the level today, especially in the last two sets.

The 20-year-old Jodar is the first man to qualify for the year-end finals in the same season in which he made his tour-level debut. He has appeared fatigued recently.

Fils aims to play fewer tournaments

The 22-year-old Fils is the first Frenchman to compete at the Finals since Gael Monfils a decade ago.

Fils didn't start his season until February after an eight-month layoff due to a back injury and then also missed the French Open. He is aiming to take better care of his body in 2027. "The goal," Fils said, "is to play as less as possible and to go as deep as possible because of my body.

Cricket Australia to open 'Sandpapergate' forum but no new probe

DNA

CRICKET Australia on Wednesday ruled out reopening an investigation into the 2018 ball-tampering scandal but will launch an independent forum for players to share their version of events as a "circuit breaker". Festering wounds over what happened in the third Test at Cape Town eight years ago reopened last week when Usman Khawaja released his autobiography. In the book, he alleged that the whole team knew about the plot to rough up the ball with sandpaper to make it swing, an allegation strenuously denied by current captain Pat Cummins.

A Cricket Australia probe at the time concluded only skipper Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and Cameron Bancroft were in the know, with all three sent home in disgrace and banned.

Warner, who has backed Khawaja's new version of events, over the weekend accused CA of conducting "a shoddy investigation", claiming not all players were interviewed.

CA chief executive Todd Greenberg said the past week had been an "incredibly difficult and uncomfortable time for the game and for everyone who was involved".

But, speaking in Hobart ahead of Australia's one-day clash with England on Wednesday, Greenberg was adamant that "the investigation has been completed" and ruled out making it public, citing confidentiality.

Interim chairman David Boon said instead that a forum, likely led by a former judge, would be established. But there would be no new sanctions coming out of it.

"After careful discussion, we agreed to establish a forum that will allow players and staff involved in the events of South Africa in 2018 to share their experiences and their perspectives," he said.

"We believe it is time for a circuit breaker. This is not about litigating the past. It is about giving the opportunity to those involved to have their voices heard.

"Australian cricket is at its strongest when we're united, and we owe it to everyone who loves the game to make every reasonable effort to move forward together with understanding, respect and perspective."

Cricket Australia would not commit to making the contents of the forum public, which it hopes can be wrapped up within a month.

"We will look to be as transparent as we possibly can, whilst at the same time protecting the confidentiality of the people who come forward," Greenberg said.

He denied the forum was to appease Warner, who has been vocal in support of Khawaja. "This is not about appeasing any individual. This is about the game; it's about the sport," Greenberg said.

"The game needs to move on somehow from this. These events were eight years ago. They caused enormous pain and hurt for lots of people and are doing it again now.

"And at some point we have to move forward. And we can't move forward without putting some of the steps in place

Warner said he agreed that there should be no new sanctions for anyone involved, but would prefer to have an open inquiry.

"I would've liked an open inquiry and the people that were there at the time actually can come forward and speak," he said while commentating on the Australia-England match. "It's not about penalties. It's about transparency and accountability – which Todd's acknowledged, on CA's behalf, about the culture at the time with the players and CA." Khawaja, also on commentary for the match, said he welcomed a "safe space to chat", but voiced concern that it would be behind closed doors. "The biggest question I have is (that) the board makes the decisions of what comes out at the end," he said. "How is that an actual way of trying to present what people have said?

Petrol, diesel prices reduced

FROM PAGE 01

the United States attacked Iran, leading Tehran to shut the Strait of Hormuz – the main route before the war for around a fifth of global energy supplies. Tensions have mounted since a fragile June truce between Tehran and Washington collapsed, reviving fears of full-scale war and disrupting energy flows through the Strait. Previously, the petroleum rates were revised fortnightly. The federal cabinet approved changes to the petrol pricing mechanism on October 30 amid volatility caused by the US-Iran war. Under the revised formula, the import price of petrol is determined on the basis of the actual import cost of the relevant PSO cargo. If that cost is unavailable for daily pricing, the premium, incidentals and customs duty of the last available cargo are used instead. For local refineries, the government has temporarily fixed the premium, incidentals and customs duty used in calculating the ex-refinery petrol price at their March 7, 2026 – pre-war – levels for 30 days. The difference between the import price and the resulting ex-refinery price is to be surrendered by refineries under the petroleum levy account, with the resulting benefit passed on through a corresponding reduction in the petrol price.

IHC orders all possible medical facilities...

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"You had requested that the meeting be arranged, and that has been done. Now begin your arguments on the appeals," the chief justice remarked. During the hearing, Khosa read out his affidavit and the contents of the application before the court. He claimed that seven small snakes had been found in Bushra Bibi's prison cell. According to Khosa, a jail official named Sabtain killed the snakes and later had the area covered with cement. He also alleged that cleanliness in her cell was extremely poor. After hearing arguments, the IHC directed jail authorities to ensure proper medical care and hygiene for Bushra Bibi. Later, Barrister Salman Safdar began arguments on behalf of Imran in £190 million case. He told the court that the former prime minister had been sentenced to 14 years in prison, while Bushra Bibi had received a seven-year sentence for abetment. Safdar requested live streaming of the proceedings on the appeals, citing the practice followed in cases heard by the Supreme Court and previous proceedings, including the case involving former military ruler (late) General (retd) Pervez Musharraf. The lawyer also sought two weeks to prepare his arguments, telling the court that he had only briefly reviewed the case records. He said the registrar's office had spent four consecutive days photocopying the record and requested adequate time to prepare the appeals. Subsequently, the court granted him seven days to prepare and directed that the appeals filed by Imran and the former first lady be fixed for hearing after a week.

Have the courage to listen to the debate: Bilawal

FROM PAGE 01

highlighting the need for politicians to set aside their partisan political perspectives and think about how to "fix the system". The PPP chairman asserted it was his right to provide his perspective on what shape a "reset" should take if someone was suggesting that a reset was needed, indirectly referring to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's July remarks.

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Thursday, November 19 , 2026

Briefs

Gold prices decline by Rs10,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a sharp decline in the local market on Wednesday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola falling by Rs10,000 to settle at Rs398,936, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold decreased by Rs8,573 to Rs342,023, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold declined by Rs7,859 to Rs313,532.

In the international market, the price of gold decreased by $100 to $3,764 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola fell by Rs180 to Rs5,048, while the price of 10 grams of silver declined by Rs155 to Rs4,327. The price of silver in the international market also decreased by $1.80 to $45.70 per ounce, the association added.–**APP**

PSX stays bearish, loses over 1,223 points

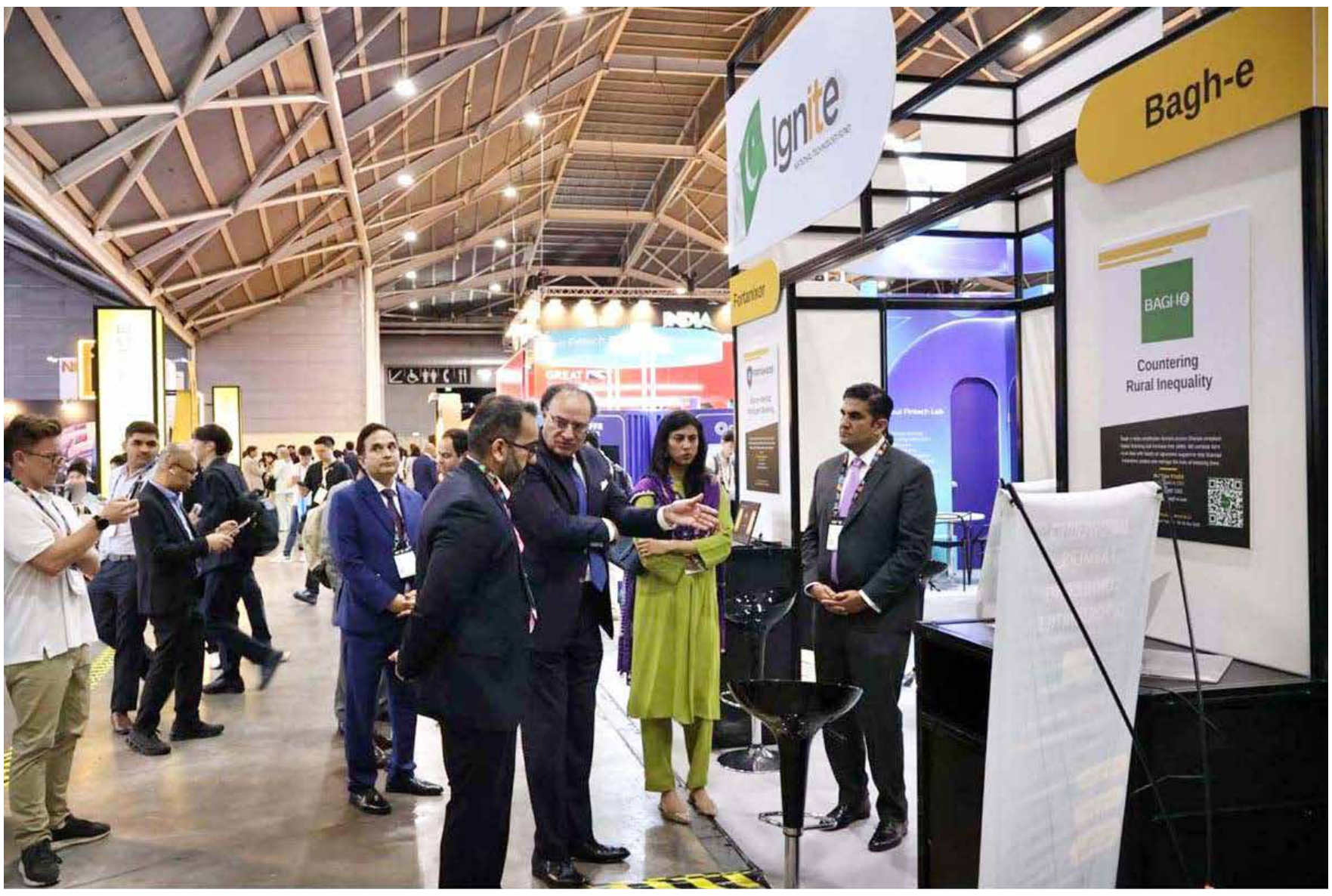
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued its bearish trend on Wednesday, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index losing 1,223.41 points, a negative change of 0.69 percent, to close at 176,294.33 points against 177,517.74 points recorded in the previous trading session.

The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 742.121 million shares, compared to 839.224 million shares traded in the previous session. The traded value of the ready market stood at Rs25.975 billion, up from Rs20.158 billion a day earlier. Meanwhile, total market capitalisation decreased to Rs19.198 trillion from Rs19.290 trillion recorded in the previous session. Out of 502 companies that traded in the ready market, 179 posted gains, 285 suffered losses, while 38 remained unchanged, reflecting a negative trend in the market. WorldCall Telecom led the volume chart with 68.692 million shares, followed by Cnergyico PK with 68.508 million shares and PIA Holding Company with 47.820 million shares. Among the top gainers in the ready market, Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited surged by Rs283.67 to close at Rs26,500.00, while Khyber Textile Mills Limited advanced by Rs67.12 to settle at Rs1,946.88. On the losing side, Pakistan Services Limited declined by Rs40.30 to close at Rs1,366.03, while Sazgar Engineering Works Limited fell by Rs30.13 to Rs1,461.41. In the futures (DFC) market, turnover stood at 163.189 million shares with a traded value of Rs6.849 billion, compared with 121.302 million shares worth Rs4.372 billion in the previous session. –**APP**

Pak's freelancer export earnings hit record $210m in Oct

ISLAMABAD, Nov 18 (APP):Advisor to the Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad on Wednesday said Pakistan's freelancers' export earnings had reached an all-time monthly high of US$ 210 million in October, registering a 53 per cent increase year-on-year.

In a post on his official handle on X, Schehzad shared that freelancers' export earnings during July-October of the ongoing fiscal year 2026-27 (FY27) had surged to US$ 760 million, compared with US$ 515 million in the corresponding period last year, reflecting a growth of 47 per cent. He said freelancers had also recorded historic annual export earnings of US$ 1.76 billion in FY26, highlighting the growing contribution of Pakistan's digital workforce to the country's services exports. According to the figures shared by the advisor, if the current growth momentum continues, freelancers' annual export earnings could surpass US$ two billion in FY27. Schehzad said Pakistan's freelancers were emerging as an important contributor to services exports, helping expand the country's digital presence in international markets, strengthen foreign exchange inflows and create new economic opportunities for the youth.–**APP**



SINGAPORE: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Au-rangzeb, interacting with representatives of Pakistani start-ups participating in the Singapore Fin-Tech Festival (SFF) 2026 and receiving briefings on their innovative products, services and fintech solutions.

Iran's war comes at a growing cost

DUBAI: The consequences of the war with the US and Israel are becoming increasingly difficult for Iran to contain, reaching far beyond the damage to its military infrastructure and oil revenues.

When the fighting erupted on Feb. 28 this year, Tehran was already contending with years of sanctions, economic problems and growing public discontent. The war has compounded these problems, with the damage extending to its diplomatic relationships with neighboring countries. The regional fallout has been particularly significant. Iranian attacks on Gulf states have deepened mistrust and set back years of efforts to rebuild diplomatic ties. The extent of opposition to Tehran's actions was reflected in a UN Security Council resolution condemning the attacks, adopted in March with 13 votes in favor and abstentions from Russia and China. Although Oman and Qatar have continued to provide diplomatic channels, their mediation efforts have not translated into political support for Iran. The military losses have also left Tehran with a difficult task ahead. A June assessment by the Center for Strategic and International Studies estimated that US and Israeli strikes since February had destroyed around 70 percent of Iran's pre-war missile stockpile. Satellite imagery also indicated that nearly all of the country's conventional surface fleet had been lost. Replacing that equipment will be a considerable undertaking, particularly as sanctions continue to restrict Iran's access to foreign components and technology. Iran's partnerships with Russia and China have not offered the kind of backing that might help offset those losses. Both countries have criticized the US and Israeli campaign, but neither has shown an appetite for direct military involvement or for assuming the costs of defending Tehran. Moscow has remained engaged diplomatically, while Beijing has its own substantial economic and strategic interests across the Gulf. For Iran, this has exposed the limits of partnerships it has long regarded as central to its international standing. The economic consequences are likely to be harder to contain. Iran's oil exports, one of its main sources of foreign currency, have come under further pressure from the US naval blockade. With the economy already weakened by years of sanctions and structural problems, the government has limited room to absorb the additional strain. A prolonged disruption to oil revenues would leave even fewer resources available for reconstruction and economic recovery.

There is also the question of who will be left to rebuild. Iran's loss of skilled professionals has been a growing concern, particularly in sectors such as healthcare and education. Figures reported by the Commonwealth Fund show that around 6,500 doctors, including 2,300 specialists, left the country in 2022 and 2023, 30 percent more than entered the profession during the same period. Another 850 medical faculty members left their academic positions in the year to March 2024. The continued departure of experienced professionals threatens to leave gaps that will be difficult to fill, regardless of how much money is eventually available for reconstruction. Public confidence presents another challenge. A national survey cited by Iran's deputy interior minister found that social capital had fallen from 43.5 in 2015 to 36.6 in 2025, with 60 percent of respondents expressing little hope that conditions would improve. The findings point to a loss of trust that predates the current conflict, suggesting that the government was already facing a growing disconnect with the public before the June 2025 war. Further economic hardship and prolonged instability could make those divisions harder to address. Whether mounting military and economic pressure will eventually threaten the survival of the Islamic Republic is far less certain. Economic hardship, public discontent and weakened military capabilities do not, on their own, mean the regime is close to collapse. The Revolutionary Guards continue to wield considerable influence and appear to have strengthened their position within the political system. Disagreements among officials over negotiations and economic priorities are evident, but they are not necessarily signs of an imminent breakdown. Kamran Bokhari, a strategic forecaster and senior resident fellow at the Middle East Policy Council, described the Islamic Republic as undergoing a "slow meltdown" in an October interview with Iran International. "This regime cannot go back to what it was," he said, pointing to mounting economic pressure and divisions among hardliners. Bokhari also identified public disagreements within the ruling establishment and potential fractures in the security apparatus as developments worth watching. The longer the conflict continues without a clear timeline or a credible plan for bringing it to an end, the harder it may become for the authorities to sustain public support. Measures initially presented as necessary for security or administrative reasons could become increasingly difficult to justify as their costs mount. For now, Tehran is still trying to keep diplomatic options open. Recent contacts with Oman, which the foreign minister described as constructive, alongside Araghchi's regional engagements, suggest that the government has not abandoned diplomatic efforts. The question is whether these contacts can produce anything tangible. Tehran needs more than announcements of military gains or assurances that diplomatic channels remain open; it needs results that it can present to the Iranian public as evidence that the country is moving towards a way out of the crisis.

For the moment, the government continues to project confidence and an image of control. But with mounting pressures at home and increasingly strained relations abroad, the more pressing question is how much longer it can sustain that position, and what it will have left to show for it.–**DNA**

Iraq orders army, allied forces into Kataeb Hezbollah stronghold

DUBAI: Iraq's armed forces command on Wednesday ordered the army, federal police and Popular Mobilization Forces to take over Jurf Al-Sakher, in a move that would end Kataeb Hezbollah's control of its stronghold south of Baghdad. Under the plan, approved by Prime Minister Ali Al-Zaidi as commander-in-chief and seen by the Iraqi News Agency, an army brigade, a federal police brigade and two PMF brigades will each take over a sector of the area. An Energy Police regiment will secure the oil pipelines, and a counterterrorism unit will be held in reserve.

The plan also orders the reopening of a main road through the area to traffic, and new police checkpoints on the routes toward Musayyib and Amiriyat Al-Fallujah. It followed a proposal from PMF chief Faleh Al-Fayyad that the umbrella group's own units take control of the area, with the Energy Police guarding the oil pipeline. Local media reported that talks between the government and the ruling Coordination Framework alliance over Jurf Al-Sakher were continuing. The plan does not mention Kataeb Hezbollah, and there was no immediate word on whether the group had agreed to withdraw. Military reinforcements continued to arrive in Babil province on Wednesday to deploy around Jurf Al-Sakher, according to videos circulating online. A group of Iraqi lawmakers also arrived in the area, Al Arabiya reported. Zaidi had postponed a visit to Lebanon until further notice, Iraq's ambassador in Beirut, Mohammed Reza Al-Husseini, told the Iraqi News Agency on Tuesday. The ambassador gave no reason. Earlier on Tuesday, he had announced that Zaidi would visit Beirut on Wednesday as part of a tour of several Arab countries. On Tuesday, a Kataeb Hezbollah commander told AFP that the Iran-backed militant group would not leave Jurf Al-Sakher, after Iraqi authorities called on it to withdraw and allow the army to enter. "That will not happen, not even over our dead bodies," Abu Taleb Al-Saidi said during a press visit to the stronghold. On Monday, Zaidi gave Kataeb Hezbollah a deadline to withdraw from Jurf Al-Sakher, after the government said an investigative committee had confirmed oil smuggling in the area. A security source told AFP that the deadline was Friday. Kataeb Hezbollah said in a statement on Sunday that Zaidi's office was "fabricating lies." "Since they were unable in practice to twist our arm with the slogan of surrendering weapons, they resorted to weakening us with the slogan of – God forbid – smuggling oil," Saidi told AFP. He held Tom Barrack, US special envoy for Iraq and Syria, responsible for the "escalation." But Saidi also stressed that the group had no record of "any high-level clash with the Iraqi government or the security services." "We and they are extremely keen to avoid bloodshed," he said. Saidi said that "understandings were reached at the end of September" regarding the group's weapons, but that "the government refuses... to make it public." Iraq has been facing mounting US pressure to curb Iran's influence and rein in Tehran-backed armed groups, which Washington designates as terrorist organizations – a difficult task in a country long caught between the two rivals. Successive Iraqi governments have struggled to balance relations between the US and Iran, whose influence has grown significantly in Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. Zaidi, who came to power early this year, has pursued closer ties with Washington, and Iraqi political sources told AFP that his relationship with Tehran has been strained.–**DNA**

Military coalition carries out wave of strikes on Houthi targets

RIYADH: The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen said early Wednesday it had carried out a "precision military operation," striking 60 Houthi military targets across Yemen.

Spokesperson Maj. Gen. Turki Al-Maliki said the strikes were carried out on the group's locations in Sanaa, Amran, Saada, and Hodeidah. The operation focused on "degrading the militia's ballistic missile and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capabilities and neutralizing maritime threats," Al-Maliki said. The coalition said precision strikes destroyed tunnels housing underground ballistic missile storage facilities, as well as drone assembly and storage workshops. Later on Wednesday, Saudi air defenses destroyed two Houthi cruise missiles that targeted the Riyadh region.–**APP**

115 Israeli settlers enter Al-Aqsa Mosque amid security tension in Jerusalem

LONDON: About 115 Israeli settlers stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the walled city of occupied East Jerusalem on Wednesday, according to the Palestine News Agency.

The Jerusalem Governorate reported that groups of settlers toured the site, accompanied by Israeli police. They entered the compound in groups through the Mughrabi Gate, conducting provocative tours and performing Jewish rituals in its courtyards, it added. Israeli forces usually impose strict entry measures on visitors and worshippers of the mosque, and scrutinize their personal identities while settlers are on the site. Al-Aqsa compound, Islam's third-holiest site, also known as Al-Haram Al-Sharif, has been the site of frequent conflicts – including raids by Israeli settlers and restrictions on Muslim worshippers – since East Jerusalem was occupied in June 1967. Settlers, who refer to the area as the Temple Mount, seek to establish a presence in the compound to pray at certain times. Several far-right ministers and Knesset members have publicly endorsed these plans.–**APP**

Iraqi court sentences six French nationals to life for joining Daesh

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi court on Wednesday sentenced six French nationals including militant Thomas Barnouin to life in prison for joining the Daesh group. Trials began in September for 47 French citizens who were transferred from Syria last year and charged with belonging to the extremist group, which controlled large parts of both countries between 2014 and 2017. The court had already handed prison terms to 10 of the group, with most receiving life sentences. On Wednesday, the six Frenchmen were also given life terms, an AFP correspondent in the courtroom reported. During his trial this month, Barnouin, 45, said he had traveled to Syria convinced he had a religious duty and did not know Daesh would carry out attacks in France. He converted to Islam in the early 2000s and gradually became radicalized, belonging to a militant network in southwestern France that included Mohamed Merah, who killed four people including three children at a Jewish school in 2012. Barnouin made his way to Syria to join Daesh in 2014 but was captured by Kurdish-led forces three years later. Iraq's prisons are already crowded with suspected militants. In February, the jails also received more than 5,700 Daesh detainees from over 60 countries after the United States transferred them from Syria, following years of detention in prisons run by Kurdish-led forces. Trials for that group will start from Sunday, according to a source in the court. For years, Iraqi courts have handed down hundreds of execution orders and life sentences to people convicted of terrorism offenses, including foreign fighters. But some rights groups have denounced the trials as rushed and lacking due process. Daesh swept across Syria and Iraq in 2014, committing massacres.–**APP**

Pakistan takes its climate story to COP31

PRCS puts communities at heart of climate action

DNA

ANTALYA: Pakistan arrived at COP31 with a clear message: climate action works best when communities lead it. The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) delegation, led by Chairperson Mrs. Farzhana Naek in her first COP and accompanied by Mr. Sajjad Ali Kandhir, Deputy Director, Climate Change Adaptation, and Mr. Sher Zaman, Head of Media and Communications Department, carried the voices of climate-affected Pakistanis to the world's biggest climate forum, supported by the German Red Cross.

At the Pakistan Pavilion, with senior government participation, PRCS hosted its flagship session, "Empowering Communities: The Role of Locally Led Adaptation in Building Climate Resilience." The panel brought together Ms. Ninni Ikkala Nyman (Climate and Environment Lead, IFRC), Mr. Dickenson Tevi (Secretary General, Vanuatu Red Cross), Ms. Altagracia Capellan Casta os (Director of Relief and Disaster Risk Management, Dominican Red Cross), Ms. Ibtihelle Ben (Climate and Social Justice Activist), Mr. Sajjad Ali Kandhir (PRCS) and Mr. Ghulam Rasool Farooqui (German Red Cross)."We are here because climate change is no longer a distant threat for Pakistan. It is a daily reality," said Mrs. Naek. "Floods wash away homes and livelihoods, heatwaves and droughts push families to the edge, and the poorest communities, who have contributed the least to this crisis, pay the highest price. Every disaster sets back years of progress and leaves families starting again from zero.

"The answer lies with communities themselves. Locally led adaptation, nature-based solutions, early warning systems and preparedness are not optional extras. They are what builds real resilience. When communities are informed, warned in time and equipped to lead, lives and livelihoods are saved. That is why the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, with its volunteers and presence across the country, is the partner of choice for climate-affected communities. We are there before, during and after every disaster, and we invite the world to make PRCS its first choice for reaching the last mile." Mrs. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, urged the world to turn promises into practice. "Climate commitments must translate into action on the ground. Vulnerable communities need access to climate finance, technical support and inclusive adaptation opportunities," she said. The message carried on at the IFRC Pavilion, where Mr. Sajjad Ali Kandhir, Deputy Director, Climate Change Adaptation, PRCS, spoke at the side event "Scaling Up Asia-Pacific Climate Resilience." He called for accessible, predictable and sustainable climate finance, directed towards locally led adaptation, community capacities, anticipatory action and nature-based solutions.

At the IFRC's panel on Loss and Damage, Mr. Ghulam Rasool Farooqui highlighted the devastating and often overlooked human cost of climate disasters. Mr. Kandhir and Mr. Sher Zaman, Head of Media and Communications Department, PRCS, also attended.

Across every platform, PRCS made one case: local leadership, strong partnerships and finance that reaches the last mile are the way to a climate-resilient Pakistan, with the Red Crescent ready to be the first choice for the communities who need it most.

On the sidelines of COP31, Mrs. Naek also held meetings with the teams and management of the IFRC and Partner National Societies, including the Norwegian Red Cross, German Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, Australian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross and Türk K z lay (Turkish Red Crescent), along with National Societies from the African region, reaffirming PRCS's commitment to stronger collaboration on climate resilience and humanitarian action.

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Briefs

Xi and Putin hold talks

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin began talks in Shenzhen on Wednesday on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, a day before a historic three-way meeting with US President Donald Trump in the southern Chinese city.

The trilateral summit has raised fears that the leaders could make decisions about Ukraine over the heads of Kyiv and Europe, and divide the world into new spheres of influence. Washington initially signaled that Ukraine might not be discussed, but Trump later said it would be on the agenda. Russian officials said Xi and Putin were expected to discuss energy and finance, followed by talks on foreign policy, including Ukraine and North Korea, in a smaller format. The meeting is their fifth this year.

Xi called for closer exchanges between the two countries' governments, parliaments, militaries and political parties, and stressed the need for international cooperation on artificial intelligence and free trade. Putin criticized Western sanctions imposed after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, saying they had failed to stop Russia's growth. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who is also in Shenzhen, said sanctions would be stepped up as long as war continued. – **APP**

US judge sentences Asif Merchant to 27 years

DNA

WASHINGTON: A US federal judge has sentenced a Pakistani national to more than 27 years in prison for plotting to assassinate President Donald Trump and other prominent US politicians in 2024, in what US prosecutors described as an operation directed by Iran.

Asif Merchant, 48, was sentenced to 330 months by US District Judge Eric R Komitee after a federal jury convicted him in March of attempting to commit an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries and murder for hire, the US Department of Justice said on Tuesday.

Prosecutors said Merchant had attempted to recruit people in the United States to carry out the killings in retaliation for Washington's 2020 assassination of Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani. The potential targets included Trump, then-president Joe Biden and former US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, who were all presidential candidates during the 2024 election campaign, according to evidence presented at the trial. Merchant testified that he had become involved with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), but said he acted under pressure because he feared for the safety of his family in Tehran.

Pakistan and Kazakhstan eye enhanced economic cooperation

Sardar Yasir Khan welcomed the momentum generated by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's state visit to Pakistan; Highlighting Kazakhstan's economic progress since independence, the ambassador said the country has emerged as Central Asia's largest economy and leading destination for foreign investment

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator on Tourism Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, called for stronger Pakistan-Kazakhstan economic collaboration, emphasizing that enhanced connectivity is key to unlocking the vast potential between the two countries. Addressing the Kazakhstan Investment Forum in Islamabad, he said the historic Silk Route was more than a trade corridor, serving as a bridge for cultural exchange, innovation, ideas and people-to-people connections. He noted that both countries are now working to revive those links through a strategy of "trade through travel," promoting tourism, commerce and investment simultaneously.

Sardar Yasir Khan welcomed the momentum generated by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's state visit to Pakistan and the signing of multiple agreements across sectors including trade, tourism, transport, railways, maritime cooperation, agriculture, culture and digital commerce. He stressed that the focus must now shift from agreements to implementation and measurable outcomes.

Highlighting investment opportunities, he urged Pakistani and Kazakh businesses to pursue joint ventures, particularly in tourism, hospitality, retail, technology and data centres. He noted that Pakistan's expanding digital infrastructure and skilled workforce offer attractive opportunities for Kazakh investors. Khan also called for easier travel, direct connectivity and business exchange programmes to strengthen people-to-people ties, saying deeper collaboration would drive economic growth, create jobs and transform the growing strategic partnership between Pakistan and Kazakhstan into tangible benefits for both nations. Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerkin Tukumov also spoke on the occasion.

Highlighting Kazakhstan's economic progress since independence, the ambassador said the country has emerged as Central Asia's largest economy and leading destination for foreign investment, attracting nearly $500 billion in foreign direct investment. He noted Kazakhstan's growing manufacturing sector, expanding digital economy and ongoing infrastructure modernization initiatives aimed at strengthening long-term growth.

Focusing on bilateral ties, Ambassador emphasized that Kazakhstan and Pakistan are entering a new phase of cooperation following President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's recent visit to Pakistan and the agreement to establish a strategic partnership.

He identified transport and logistics as a key area for collaboration, stressing the importance of developing southern trade corridors linking Central Asia with Pakistani seaports. Improved connectivity, he said, would boost trade volumes, reduce transportation costs and create new business opportunities across the region.

The ambassador also highlighted opportunities for Pakistani investors in pharmaceuticals, agriculture, food processing, textiles, energy and digital technologies. He encouraged stronger business-to-business engagement, joint ventures and investment partnerships, noting that the private sector would play a pivotal role in translating growing political goodwill into tangible economic outcomes.

"As we approach 35 years of diplomatic relations in 2027, our shared task is to convert political commitments into real economic results," he said.

President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh, reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening economic ties with Kazakhstan and expanding bilateral trade and investment.

Speaking at the Forum, he said Pakistan views Kazakhstan as an important partner in Central Asia and is keen to deepen cooperation across trade, investment, tourism, agriculture and other sectors. He noted that enhanced connectivity and stronger business-to-business engagement would help unlock the considerable economic potential between the two countries.

Sheikh also invited Kazakh investors to explore Pakistan's growing market and diverse investment opportunities, highlighting the country's strategic location, improving business environment and access to regional markets. He stressed that greater private-sector collaboration would pave the way for sustainable economic growth and mutually beneficial partnerships between Pakistan and Kazakhstan. Representatives of Chamber of International Commerce Kazakhstan , Deputy Chairman of Kazakh Invest and Aidar Zhanturin from Astana International Financial Center also spoke on the occasion.

Aurangzeb discusses economic cooperation with Singapore

During the meeting, Finance Minister Aurangzeb highlighted the significance of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Singapore this year

DNA

SINGAPORE: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, today called on Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Energy, Trade and Industry, Mr Gan Kim Yong, in Singapore to discuss opportunities for further strengthening economic, trade and investment cooperation between Pakistan and Singapore. The meeting was held on the sidelines of Singapore Fintech Festival 2026 in Singapore which the Finance Minister is attending. High Commissioner of Pakistan to Singapore Rabia Shafiq also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, Finance Minister Aurangzeb highlighted the significance of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Singapore this year, a testament of our longstanding relations. The Finance Minister observed that bilateral engagements were gaining momentum. He recalled the recent visit of Singapore's Foreign Minister H.E. Dr Vivian Balakrishnan to Pakistan. Federal Minister Senator Aurangzeb congratulated Singapore on its forthcoming ASEAN Chairmanship in 2027, noting that Pakistan assumed the Chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). He underscored the potential for closer collaboration between the two countries in areas including finance, artificial intelligence, fintech, trade and investment. He noted that businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), need to engage directly to better understand the commercial opportunities between the two countries.

The two sides also discussed opportunities to enhance trade in Pakistani food and agricultural products, with the Finance Minister noting the potential to further expand their presence in the Singapore market. The Finance Minister also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and stability. He expressed hope for peace in the Middle East, underscoring Pakistan's continued efforts to promote peace and stability at the regional and international levels.

Kuwait, Bahrain fend off Iranian attacks

Bahrain's Civil Defense evacuated a multistory building in Souq Waqif as a precaution and extinguished a fire that broke out in the building, according to the interior ministry. It said the national ambulance center had taken the necessary measures at the scene, and investigations are ongoing to determine cause of fire

RIYADH: Kuwait and Bahrain dealt with Iranian aerial attacks early Wednesday as Tehran stepped up targeting of its Gulf neighbors, while the coalition destroyed 60 Houthi targets across Yemen. In a statement posted on X, Kuwait's general staff of the army said: "Any explosions heard are the result of air defense systems intercepting hostile attacks" and requested that everyone comply with security and safety instructions. The Iranian army said on Wednesday that its drones targeted US military equipment such as Patriot missile systems at a base in Kuwait, according to a statement carried by state television IRIB.

"Early this morning, combat and kamikaze drones belonging to the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army targeted Patriot air defense systems and drone and missile launch platforms belonging to the terrorist US military at Ali Al-Salem Air Base in Kuwait," the statement said. Kuwait has been under attack from Iranian missiles and drones during the war launched by the US and Israel on Tehran. Targets have included Kuwait International Airport, oil refineries and the Shuaiba power and desalination plant. Last week, Gulf Cooperation Council defense ministers approved the launch of an advanced command for the Unified Military Command in Kuwait and allocated appropriate forces to it.

The Bahrain Defense Force said it intercepted a number of aerial attacks from Iran, blaming Tehran for its hostile targeting of the kingdom.

Earlier, Bahrain's interior ministry issued warnings to the public to move to the nearest safe location, before giving the all-clear an hour later. The ministry then issued a second warning around 3:45 a.m. and said the danger had passed less than 30 minutes later. Bahrain's Civil Defense evacuated a multistory building in Souq Waqif as a precaution and extinguished a fire that broke out in the building, according to the interior ministry. It said the national ambulance center had taken the necessary measures at the scene, and investigations are ongoing to determine the cause of the fire. Last week, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said that their forces targeted a US early warning system in Bahrain. The US military denied the claim. The coalition carries out strikes on Houthi targets The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen said early Wednesday it had struck 60 Houthi military targets across Yemen. Spokesperson Maj. Gen. Turki Al-Maliki said the strikes were carried out on the group's locations in Sanaa, Amran, Saada, and Hodeidah. The coalition said precision strikes destroyed tunnels housing underground ballistic missile storage facilities, as well as drone assembly and storage workshops. – **APP**

14-province idea on the table, says planning minister

There has also been discussion about giving Islamabad separate provincial status, says Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal says he has heard of a plan for 14 provinces in Pakistan, with four in Punjab, four in Sindh, three in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and three in Balochistan. "I have heard of four provinces in Punjab, four in Sindh, three in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and three in Balochistan," Iqbal said. The minister said he had written to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in September, recommending the formation of a committee to examine the debate around creating additional provinces. However, no progress had been made on the matter so far. On Islamabad's governance, Iqbal said the prime minister had tasked him with developing an alternative administrative model for the capital. "After examining capital cities around the world, we presented a hybrid model of government between a local government and a provincial assembly," he said, "Islamabad needs a legislative forum and a self-governance scheme."

The model envisages a legislative forum for Islamabad, as legislation concerning the capital currently has to be taken up by parliament, comprising the National Assembly and Senate. Under the proposed arrangement, the city could have a chief minister or mayor and an assembly of around 25 members, comprising 21 general seats, three reserved for women and one for minorities. An elected third tier of government, in the form of union councils, could also be introduced at a later stage, Iqbal said. He added that he had also heard discussions about expanding Islamabad's boundaries to incorporate adjoining areas of Rawalpindi division, potentially giving the capital the status of an independent province. Iqbal also said the question of creating additional provinces would have to be resolved before the Senate elections scheduled for March 2027. The 96-member upper house currently gives equal representation to each of the four provinces. – **APP**

