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Pak natural resources worth $8-10tr at 'most conservative estimate'

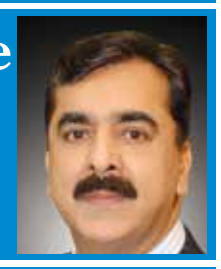
Detailed News On Page-08

Bilawal wants PM to complete five-year term



Detailed News On Page-01

Chairman Senate meets President of Thai Senate



Detailed News On Page-07

Armed forces and LEAs to decisively Defeat terrorism: COAS

During the visit, COAS & CDF was given a comprehensive briefing on the prevailing security situation, ongoing intelligence-based operations and measures being undertaken to consolidate the gains achieved through sustained counter terrorism efforts and ensure lasting peace and stability in the area



PESHAWAR: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces (COAS & CDF), visited Miran Shah, in North Waziristan. – DNA

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces (COAS & CDF), visited Miran Shah, in North Waziristan. Upon arrival COAS & CDF laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada to pay homage to the supreme sacrifices of the Shuhada of the Pakistan Army.

During the visit, COAS & CDF was given a comprehensive briefing on the prevailing security situation, ongoing intelligence-based operations and measures being undertaken to consolidate the gains achieved through sustained counter terrorism efforts and ensure lasting peace and stability in the area. COAS & CDF also interacted with officers and troops and appreciated their high level of preparedness, professionalism and unwavering commitment to the defence and

Continued on Page 06

Several terrorists killed in North Waziristan

Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists use children and women as human shields in KP, say sources

NEWS DESK

PESHAWAR: Security forces killed several terrorists who were trying to flee in a rickshaw disguised as women during an operation in the Mir Ali area of North Waziristan, sources said on Friday. The security sources said that the operation against the "Fitna al-Khawarij" was carried out in the area under the Azm-e-Istehkam vision.

The terrorists were killed while attempting to escape in a rickshaw, disguised as women, the sources added. They said the tactic was against moral values and amounted to exploitation of the sanctity of women. The sources added that the terrorists were making a "failed attempt" to save themselves through such "low and despicable" tactics. The sources further said there was evidence that the "cowardly" khwarij were hiding in mosques and civilian

Continued on Page 06

Pak, Qatar agree to expand cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Qatar have agreed to expand cooperation in police training, cybersecurity, counter-narcotics and internal security.

The agreement was reached during a meeting between Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Qatar's Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, in Islamabad.

The two sides also agreed to enhance cooperation between Qatar's National Cyber Security Agency and Pakistan's National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency.

US urged to withdraw from West Asia

DNA

TEHERAN: Major-General Mohammad Esmaeil Kowsari, a member of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, has called on the US to withdraw from West Asia and return to its own geographical sphere, 12,000km (7,500 miles) from the region, according to Al Jazeera. In remarks to Iran's Mehr news agency, Kowsari said the US can no longer confront Iran. He added that Washington sometimes talks about taking action on the ground and at other times about opening the Strait of Hormuz. He said the US threatens to attack Iran's nuclear programme, and then puts forward plans to impose an economic, land, air and naval blockade on the country.

Bilawal wants PM to complete five-year term

"I am saying this because I know that there is no consideration for the people of Pakistan. Whether one province is created or a 1,000, the only worry the public has is of having access to meals twice a day," Bilawal said

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Friday said he wanted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to become the first premier to complete a five-year term in office. Since the country came into being in 1947, no elected prime minister has ever completed their five-year term.

Addressing an event in Karachi, Bilawal, citing the economic crisis resulting from the US-Israeli war on Iran, called for "empowering" PM Shehbaz so he can present a way forward to tackle the crisis.

"My objective is that I want to strengthen the hand of the prime minister [..] usually politicians create difficulties or plot his fall and secure the seat for themselves. I will not do that [...] I am saying that I want Shehbaz Sharif to be the first prime minister [...] to complete a five-year term," Bilawal said.

Bilawal noted that the prime minister has not been "given the chance" to focus on the economic issues so far. Here, he hinted at discord among Cabinet members, stating, "What can he do? Whenever he (PM Shehbaz) makes a plan, some federal minister objects and presents their own agenda to divert the topic at hand."

The PPP chairman insisted that he wanted the premier to complete the term as he foresaw difficulties ahead for the country.

"I am saying this because I know that there is no consideration for the people of Pakistan. Whether one province is created or a 1,000, the only worry the public has is of having access to meals twice a day," Bilawal said, recalling his party's slogan of 'Roti, Kapra, Makan' as primary concerns for the public.

Briefs

Tarar for creation of new provinces

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has said the creation of new provinces should be determined by public opinion. Speaking to reporters outside the Election Commission of Pakistan in Islamabad today, he said a referendum can be held to ascertain people's views on the issue. The Minister said the Constitution has a clear provision for referendums on matters of national importance or public interest. He said new provinces should be established if people supported the idea and the proposal should not be pursued if they opposed it.

President felicitates Oman

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has extended warm felicitations to Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the country's 56th National Day. In his letter to the Sultan, the President appreciated Oman's progress in socio-economic development under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and acknowledged its constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability. The President said Pakistan and Oman enjoy longstanding bonds of friendship and brotherhood, rooted in geographical proximity, shared faith, cultural affinities and enduring people-to-people ties. Asif Ali Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation with Oman across various sectors.

FO rejects India's remarks on Pakistan's mineral resources

Afghanistan not invited to ECO moot as Islamabad does not recognise Kabul regime: FO

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office has categorically rejected the undiplomatic and irresponsible remarks made by India at the United Nations regarding Pakistan's mineral resources.

At his weekly media briefing in Islamabad on Friday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said such baseless accusations merit no attention and were instantly and effectively rebutted by the representative of Pakistan during the same meeting.

He said these remarks constitute an unacceptable interference in Pakistan's internal affairs and are antithetical to the Charter of the United Nations. The Spokesperson said that instead of addressing Pakistan's legitimate concerns with respect to India's hydro-terrorism, India has resorted to unsubstantiated insinuations about Pakistan's institutions and its leadership. India's hostility towards Pakistan's development of its mineral resources is equally evident in its persistent efforts to undermine Pakistan's stability.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan condemns Houthis attack on Saudi facilities

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday "unequivocally" condemned a Houthi attack on Riyadh's tallest skyscraper, which serves as the headquarters of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund. "This act of aggression constitutes a grave violation of the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the Foreign Office (FO) said in a statement condemning Thursday's attack, without naming the tower. Saudi state-run news agency SPA reported, citing the kingdom's civil defence, that the attack caused material damage to several floors of the building and nearby buildings, but no injuries were reported.

Continued on Page 06

ECC approves over Rs1bn for various departments, divisions

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet has approved over one billion rupees in favour of various departments and divisions. The ECC, which met in Islamabad today with Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in the chair, approved one billion rupees for the settlement of Pak-Arab Pipeline Company Limited's claim. It also approved 100 million rupees to support financial assistance, scholarships, marriage grants for orphaned minority girls, emergency relief and repair of minority places of worship. The ECC okayed 26.5 million rupees for the purchase of helicopter spare parts for Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) to meet its maintenance requirements, 100 million rupees to meet the salary requirements of the Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority and the Social Media Complaint Council for the current fiscal year, as well as 67 million rupees for the annual

Continued on Page 06

Minister insists referendum on new provinces will happen

"National consensus is very important on the issue of new provinces," the minister said, highlighting that the PTI-led opposition was also in favour of it

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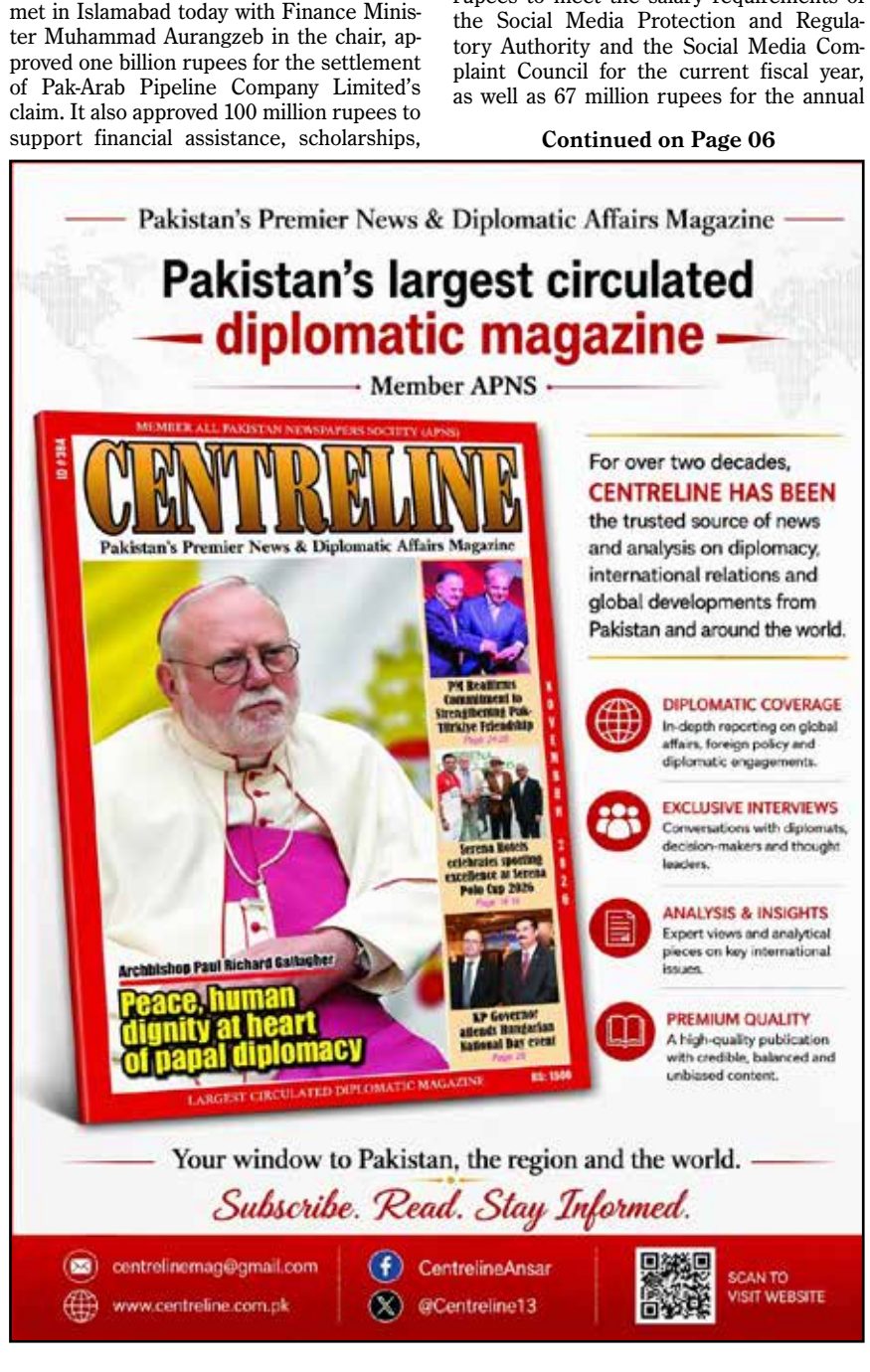
ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Friday insisted that a referendum on the formation of new provinces "will happen". The remarks come after PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari delivered a no-holds-barred speech on Tuesday that covered the question of new provinces. Bilawal had expressed his opposition to the creation of provinces and the idea of holding a referendum for such a move in his speech. He cautioned that any "forced" attempt to divide provinces, particularly in Sindh, could lead to bloodshed. However, the federal government maintains that a referendum is a legal and constitutional method of gauging public opinion on new provinces and that no political party should have reservations regarding it.

Speaking to the Geo News programme 'Naya Pakistan' on Friday, Chaudhry, when asked about the referendum, insisted that developing consensus on the matter should be a priority for the ruling coalition. "National consensus is very important on the issue of new provinces," the minister said, highlighting that the PTI-led opposition was also in favour of it.

Chaudhry said that the process of taking the public's opinion cannot be stopped if a single party opposes it. "The referendum will happen," the minister insisted, adding that the PML-N would undertake "every last effort" to convince the PPP. "A referendum is neither non-constitutional nor undemocratic; the public's opinion can be sought on any important matter," he remarked. Asked about the timeline for the proposed move, Chaudhry said it was premature to talk about it. However, he added that "things will be clarified soon". Asked if PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif was on board with the referendum, Chaudhry answered in the affirmative.

"One hundred per cent. The prime minister does not make any major decisions without his opinion," he added. On being asked if the PPP may join the opposition with the PTI and the Jamiat-Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Chaudhry maintained that the party included "mature and seasoned politicians", expressing hope that it would continue in its role as a coalition partner. "I believe matters will not reach a point where they might have to exit the coalition, as we will make sure to onboard them on the decision and vice versa," he added.

Continued on Page 06



Islamabad POST
Saturday, November 21, 2026

Terrorism incidents decline by 80pc in KP: Samar

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on information and public relations, relief, rehabilitation and settlement, Samar Haroon Bilour, said that terrorism incidents in the province had declined by 80 percent over the past five weeks as a result of the provincial government's effective strategy.

She said the government aimed to make the provincial police autonomous and self-reliant so that they could independently and effectively discharge their responsibilities in maintaining law and order.

Samar Bilour expressed these views while talking to media persons during her visit to Mardan press club. On her arrival, press club president Lutfullah Lutf and general secretary Hidayat-ur-Rehman Hoti warmly welcomed her and presented her with a bouquet. At the conclusion of the event, the press club president also presented her with a traditional shawl and a commemorative shield.

Central social media president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Khadim Ali Khan Yousafzai, Nasir Khan, Nadia Shah Bibi, Fakhar Zaman Tahirkhel and others were also present on the occasion.

Speaking to journalists, the adviser said an emergency had been imposed in view of the extraordinary security situation in the province. However, she maintained that alongside efforts to eliminate terrorism, the government would continue to perform other public and administrative functions effectively.

Commenting on Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's statement, she said the team's leader and Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would issue a clarification.

Criticising the previous provincial government, Samar Haroon Bilour claimed the incumbent administration had inherited a system in which everything had already been looted by corrupt elements. However, she said practical measures were being taken to strengthen provincial institutions and provide relief to the people.

She disclosed that a case would soon be registered in connection with alleged corruption worth Rs19 billion in the Communication and Works (C&W) Department, accusing that the former chief minister and members of his family were also involved in the scandal.

She further alleged that the previous government had released Rs9 billion without any tangible work on the ground and claimed that all relevant schemes initiated during the previous government's tenure, along with all contracts awarded by the Mines and Minerals Department, had been cancelled to ensure transparency and the judicious utilisation of public resources. Regarding healthcare reforms, the adviser said the health system had suffered from serious mismanagement during the previous tenure, alleging that one individual sitting thousands of miles overseas had been running the provincial affairs. She said the incumbent government was introducing amendments to the Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) Act to improve the healthcare system and introduce much-needed reforms. Terming independent and responsible journalism a vital pillar of a democratic society, Samar Haroon Bilour also announced a financial grant of Rs2.2 million for Mardan Press Club.–**APP**

Kundi discuss vocational training with Italian delegates

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possesses immense potential for preserving its historical and cultural heritage while equipping young people with modern technical skills and creating new employment opportunities for local communities

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday underscored the importance of strengthening Pakistan-Italy cooperation in technical and vocational education, exchange of experts, and promotion of internationally recognised skills training to create sustainable employment opportunities for youth.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the Italian development organisation ISCOS at the Governor House. During the meeting, the delegation briefed the Governor on ISCOS's ongoing development initiatives in Pakistan, collaboration with Italian institutions and experts, and projects aimed at promoting technical and vocational training, employment opportunities and sustainable development, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The delegation informed the Governor that ISCOS is implementing projects including Khyber Path, Just in Transition, RISE and other development initiatives. These projects focus on vocational training, international mobility of skilled workers, preservation and promotion of archaeological heritage, nutrition, sanitation, and economic empowerment of home-based workers, particularly women. The meeting also discussed cooperation with Italian experts to develop a modern technical training curriculum in the field of green construction as part of the green transition agenda. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possesses immense potential for preserving its historical and cultural heritage while equipping young people with modern technical skills and creating new employment opportunities for local communities. He said the province held exceptional historical and cultural significance, adding that linking the preservation of archaeological heritage with youth skills development and employment would be a major step forward. The Governor emphasised that women, youth and vulnerable segments of society should be effectively integrated into economic activities to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

Ufone, Telenor partners with Xiaomi to accelerate 5G device

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani telecom operators Ufone & Telenor Pakistan has entered into a strategic partnership with global technology company Xiaomi Pakistan to accelerate 5G smartphone adoption across the country.

Anchored by the introduction of Xiaomi's newly launched handset, Redmi 17 5G, the collaboration aims to make next-generation connectivity more accessible through affordable devices and exclusive bundled data offers.

The partnership furthers Ufone & Telenor Pakistan's ambition to tackle key barriers to 5G adoption in Pakistan, including the affordability of compatible smartphones. It aims to bridge the gap between network availability and affordable 5G-enabled devices by combining Ufone & Telenor Pakistan's dual-network capabilities with Xiaomi's smartphone portfolio.

Under the partnership, exclusive bundled 5G data plans will be available to Ufone 5G & Telenor Pakistan subscribers purchasing the Redmi 17 5G through the company's retail outlets. Distribution will take place through Ufone & Telenor Pakistan Joint Shops nationwide, as well as digital channels.

Powered by a Snapdragon 4 Gen 5 chipset, the Redmi 17 5G features a 7500mAh battery, 45W turbo charging, a 50MP AI camera, IP64 protection, NFC and Xiaomi HyperOS 3. The device will be supported by Ufone & Telenor Pakistan's sub-6GHz 5G network, with coverage across Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi. Commenting on the partnership, Syed Atif Raza, Chief Commercial Officer, PTML, said, "This partnership with Xiaomi is a defining moment for Pakistan's 5G journey. At PTML, we believe that connectivity should be a right, not a privilege.

By pairing our world-class 5G network – across both Ufone and Telenor Pakistan – with Xiaomi's exceptional and affordable device portfolio, we are enhancing 5G access for millions of Pakistanis. Together, we are not just connecting people to a network; we are connecting them to opportunity, to education, to healthcare, and to economic empowerment. We are proud to stand with Xiaomi as a partner in building the digital Pakistan of tomorrow.

Brian Shawn, Country Manager, Xiaomi Pakistan, said, "Pakistan has always been a priority market for Xiaomi, and this strategic partnership with PTML – the force behind Ufone 5G and Telenor Pakistan 5G – is a testament to our long-term commitment to this great nation.–**DNA**

Zong partners with Xiaomi to make 5G accessible

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's Leading Technology Services Enterprise, has partnered with Xiaomi Pakistan to make 5G accessible and affordable for more Pakistanis.

This long-term partnership will bring affordable, entry-level 5G smartphones to Zong customers, expanding Zong's 5G ecosystem and bringing 5G connectivity within reach of a wider, mass-market audience. By expanding the device ecosystem, this partnership marks another strategic step in Zong's journey to advance connectivity into meaningful digital experiences. By bringing 5G within reach through affordable, entry-level devices, Zong and Xiaomi are addressing a critical barrier to adoption and extending the benefits of next-generation connectivity to a wider segment of Pakistan's population. Together, they are accelerating the transition from 4G to 5G, while strengthening the convergence of connectivity, devices and strategic partnerships. The first device launched under this partnership is the Redmi 17 5G, which is available at all Zong Customer Service Centers nationwide. Along with the device, customers can access exclusive Zong bundle offers and benefit from an assisted purchase experience. The launch brings together affordable 5G devices, tailored connectivity packages and customer support, making the transition to next-generation connectivity simpler and more seamless for customers. The partnership further expands Zong's portfolio of global smartphone partners, strengthening the device ecosystem as a key enabler of Pakistan's 5G adoption. This partnership also establishes a platform for future joint device introductions and deeper collaboration between the two companies, driven by a shared commitment to digital inclusion, technological innovation and enhanced customer experience. The partnership was formalized through a signing ceremony attended by Zong's Chairman and CEO, Huo Junli, and Chief Commercial Officer, Omer Bin Tariq, alongside Xiaomi Pakistan's Country Manager, Brian Shawn, and senior leadership from both organizations, underscoring the strategic significance of the collaboration.–**DNA**

Workshop ends with Pakistan aiming for global gemstone market presence

ISLAMABAD:Pakistan is targeting $1 billion in annual gemstone exports by shifting from raw stone exports to local processing, value addition and internationally recognized certification, as the government moves to unlock the country's vast mineral potential through technical cooperation and industry reforms.

The goal was highlighted at the conclusion of a four-day international workshop on "Unlocking the Value of Indigenous Gemstones," where officials and international experts stressed the need to upgrade skills, modernize mining practices and strengthen certification systems to make Pakistan's gemstone industry globally competitive.

Addressing the workshop, Pakistan Gems and Jewellery Development Company (PGJDC) Chief Executive Officer Toufeeque Ahmed Arain said more than 70 percent of the country's gemstones had historically been exported in raw form, depriving Pakistan of greater economic returns from cutting, polishing and processing.

He said the government's priority was to formalize the sector and improve technical skills and product quality to meet international standards.

"The technology required for this sector is not very expensive, but quality skills are essential to bring Pakistan's industry at par with international standards," he said, emphasizing sustained support and cooperation with international partners.

He said the PGJDC was expected to sign a memorandum of understanding with Gem and Jewelry Institute of Thailand (GIT) in February. Discussions with Sri Lanka's National Gem and Jewellery Authority had also advanced, with an agreement expected in January. Cooperation with Cambodian partners was also under consideration.

The proposed partnerships would facilitate technology transfer, technical training and access to modern laboratory, gemstone evaluation and certification systems. He added that Pakistan had incorporated aspects of Sri Lanka's gemstone policy into its own policy framework Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhry, CEO, National Productivity Organization (NPO), thanked the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) for providing the opportunity to host the international workshop and appreciated the active participation of international experts and local stakeholders. He highlighted that Pakistan's gemstone sector holds enormous potential for value addition, foreign exchange generation and employment creation. –**APP**

RCB holds open Katcheri in Allahabad

DNA

RAWALPINDI: An Open Katcheri was organized by the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board in Ward No. 1, Allahabad, where Executive Officer Rawalpindi Cantonment Board Aamer Rashid directly listened to the issues and complaints of citizens and issued necessary instructions to the concerned officers for their immediate resolution. A large number of citizens attended the Open Katcheri, while former Cantonment Board members were also present on the occasion.

During the Open Katcheri, citizens presented complaints and applications regarding cleanliness, taxes, streetlights, and other issues. CEO Aamer Rashid attentively listened to the citizens' concerns and directed the concerned officers to take immediate action on the received complaints on a priority basis, while some complaints were resolved on the spot.

On this occasion, Executive Officer Aamer Rashid stated that the purpose of holding Open Katcheris under the Open Door Policy is to provide citizens with an effective platform to directly bring their complaints and issues to the administration and get them resolved. The Cantonment Board administration is utilizing all available resources to resolve public issues and provide better municipal facilities to citizens. Timely redressal of citizens' complaints and provision of quality facilities are among our top priorities. Chief Cantt Engineer Atiq-ur-Rehman, Assistant Cantt Engineer Naveed Hussain, Secretary Cantonment Board Imran Habib, heads of various branches, and other concerned officers attended the Open Katcheri.

Citizens appreciated the organization of the Open Katcheri and termed this initiative of the Cantonment Board administration a welcome step. They expressed hope that practical and effective measures for the resolution of their issues would continue. Citizens also appreciated the ongoing development and public welfare initiatives in the area.–**DNA**

Aurangzeb directs teams to resolve outstanding power issues

The Committee reviewed proposals for strengthening the incentive structure under the Multi-Year Tariff (MYT) framework, including mechanisms to reward improvements in operational efficiency, service quality and reduction in distribution losses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chaired a meeting of the Steering Committee on Power Sector Regulatory Regime at the Finance Division today to review progress on the proposed reforms and recommendations emerging from the Technical Working Group (TWG). The meeting continued the government's deliberations on developing a comprehensive regulatory and market framework to improve efficiency, promote competition, attract private investment and ensure affordable electricity for consumers.

The Committee was briefed on the TWG's detailed work covering tariff methodology, regulatory certainty, investment incentives, performance benchmarks and the future structure of the electricity market. Discussions focused on ensuring that the proposed framework addresses investor concerns while safeguarding consumer interests and strengthening the sector's long-term financial sustainability. A key area of deliberation was the need for clear, transparent and predictable regulatory rules for distribution network operators (DNOs) and competitive suppliers. The Committee considered proposals relating to investment approvals, monitoring of investment plans, service and performance standards, transmission and distribution losses, conflict-of-interest safeguards and the scope of ancillary commercial activities. The importance of clearly defining the respective roles of NEPRA and the Competition Commission of Pakistan, while avoiding regulatory overlaps, was also highlighted. The Committee reviewed proposals for strengthening the incentive structure under the Multi-Year Tariff (MYT) framework, including mechanisms to reward improvements in operational efficiency, service quality and reduction in distribution losses. Discussions also covered the treatment of returns on equity, inflation-related adjustments and sharing of efficiency gains, with a view to balancing commercially viable investment incentives with consumer protection.

Pindi Board issues admission schedule for SSC Exam

RAWALPINDI: The Secondary School Certificate (Matric) Part-I and Part-II (Composite) Annual Examination 2027 under the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Rawalpindi will commence on March 16, 2027, with December 11, 2026 fixed as the last date for submitting online admission forms with a single fee, while hard copy submission to the board has been abolished for private candidates.

According to a schedule issued by the board's spokesperson on Thursday, regular and private candidates may submit forms with a double fee until December 28, 2026, a triple fee until January 11, 2027, and a triple fee plus a Rs 200.0 daily fine until February 28, 2027, whereas first-time private candidates must also deposit a Rs 1,150.0 registration fee alongside admission and processing charges.–APP

CDWP clears seven projects worth Rs19.3b

ISLAMABAD:Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives/Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday chaired a meeting of the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) that approved seven development projects worth Rs19.3 billion and recommended four projects costing Rs172.4 billion to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC). The meeting considered 11 projects with a combined estimated cost of Rs191.8 billion, covering agriculture, infrastructure, governance, health, information technology, manpower and employment, power, transport and communications, and environment. In the agriculture sector, the forum recommended Punjab's Resilient and Inclusive Agriculture Transformation (PRIAT) project, costing Rs104.4 billion, to ECNEC. Financed through the World Bank and the Punjab government, the project aims to improve farmers' incomes, ensure equitable access to agricultural water and enhance water-use efficiency through improved irrigation infrastructure, solar-powered irrigation systems–**DNA**



Islamabad POST
METROLITE
Saturday, November 21, 2026

D. Watson group pledges support
NUST University students launch welfare Initiative

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of female students from the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) met with Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman of the D. Watson Group, and briefed him on their welfare initiative. The students explained that they were independently raising funds to provide free medicines to poor and underprivileged women. In this regard, they requested D. Watson Group to enter into an agreement under which patients referred by them would be provided with prescribed medicines at D. Watson pharmacies, with the students themselves bearing the cost of the medicines.

Appreciating the students' spirit of service, Zafar Bakhtawari said that it was highly encouraging to see young people coming forward to serve humanity. He described providing medical assistance to deserving and underprivileged women as a noble humanitarian cause. He further emphasized that affluent individuals and organizations in society should also play their part in supporting such welfare initiatives. He said that D. Watson Group values this spirit of humanitarian service and would extend its full cooperation to the students. Zafar Bakhtawari accepted the students' request and expressed his willingness to formalize an agreement with them to facilitate the initiative. PODA Facilitates NADRA's Birth Registration Campaign in Three Districts to Secure Every Child's Right to Legal Identity, with a Focus on Girls

On Friday, 20 November 2026, PODA facilitated the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) campaign to promote children's birth registration in connection with the observance of the



International Day of Children. As part of this initiative, PODA mobilized local communities and facilitated birth registration awareness and registration camps at three locations: Government Primary School, Chak Number 45 T.D.A., Bhakkar; Zameer Akhter Primary School, Nara Mughlan, Chakwal; and the Center of Excellence in Modern Studies, Lahore.

Through the coordinated efforts of PODA focal persons in the respective districts, community members, parents, and educational institutions were mobilized to encourage the registration of children, particularly students from primary to secondary school levels. Special efforts were made to reach children aged three years and above and facilitate their registration through NADRA's Iris biometric registration system. The initiative enabled hundreds of children to take an important step towards securing their legal identity.

Alongside the registration activities, PODA focal persons conducted awareness sessions highlighting the importance of legal identity and its connection with fundamental rights and access to essential services. Participants were informed that legal identity means the official recognition of an individual by the state through essential personal information, including their name, parents' names, date of birth, and place of birth. In Pakistan, birth registration and the Child Registration Certificate (CRC), commonly known as the B-Form, are essential documents for establishing a child's legal identity. Upon reaching the age of 18, individuals become eligible to obtain a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC).

The awareness sessions emphasized that legal identity is not merely an administrative requirement but a fundamental right and the foundation for accessing other civil, social, and economic rights. Participants learned that birth registration and identity documentation help establish a child's individual identity and support access to education, healthcare, and other government services. These documents also provide important evidence of family relationships and can help protect inheritance and property rights. Furthermore, legal identity documentation is necessary for obtaining a passport and travelling internationally, while establishing an individual's eligibility to exercise civil and political rights, including the right to vote upon reaching the legally prescribed voting age.

The focal persons also highlighted the protective importance of accurate birth registration, particularly for girls. An officially documented date of birth provides evidence of a child's age and helps prevent child marriage, age-related exploitation, and other unlawful practices. They encouraged parents to ensure that both girls and boys are registered at birth so that no child is deprived of legal recognition, protection, and opportunities because of a lack of documentation.

The campaign stressed the importance of reaching children from marginalized and underserved communities and engaging parents, schools, and local stakeholders in promoting universal birth registration. By mobilizing educational institutions from primary to secondary levels, the initiative sought to strengthen awareness and encourage families to take practical steps towards securing their children's legal identity through NADRA's registration facilities.

The initiative contributed directly to Sustainable Development Goal 16, Target 16.9, which calls for providing legal identity for all, including birth registration. It reinforced the principle that every child has the right to a legal identity and that birth registration is the first essential step towards ensuring recognition, protection, inclusion, and equal access to fundamental rights and opportunities.

DGSE celebrates Universal Children's Day with pledge for change

DNA

ISLAMABAD :The Directorate General of Special Education (DGSE), under the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, celebrated Universal Children's Day at the National Institute of Special Education (NISE) with a joyful tribute to children's rights, talents and aspirations. The event was held under the theme "Different Talents, Equal Joy, One Bright Future."

President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Mr Muhammad Zikria Akbar Zia, attended as Chief Guest with his team. Students with diverse abilities warmly welcomed him with flowers. His affectionate interaction with the children brought visible delight to the young participants and set a heartfelt tone for the celebration.

The programme showcased the creativity and abilities of DGSE students. Fawad Alam, winner of Pak Got Talent 2026, captivated the audience with a mesmerizing rubab performance. Khadija, a student who uses a wheelchair, recited thematic poetry, while Quranic recitation by Attaullah, a student with visual impairment and a naat by Kaneez Fatima, a student with developmental disabilities were warmly appreciated by the guests. **APP**

Pak bridge connecting Central Asia, South Asia, China & ME: Aleem

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan underscored the urgent need for robust regional connectivity to ensure stable trade amidst uncertain global conditions, during his virtual address to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Bangkok from November 17–20, 2026.

Addressing delegates and transport ministers from across the region, the Federal Minister stated that the primary objective of regional integration is the seamless movement of goods, people, and services. Emphasizing supply chain resilience, Aleem Khan called for the development of alternative trade routes rather than relying on a single corridor or country, noting that eliminating trade barriers will significantly strengthen regional supply chains.

Highlighting Pakistan's unique geostrategic position, the Minister remarked that Pakistan serves as the optimal bridge connecting Central Asia, South Asia, China, and the Middle East. He pointed out that Pakistan's major seaports—Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar—offer the shortest and most viable maritime access to landlocked Central Asian Republics.

Detailing flagship initiatives driving regional integration, Abdul Aleem Khan termed the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA) a vital framework for regional cargo transit. He shared that close cooperation is underway on the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan railway project, while feasibility studies for the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan rail link are actively progressing. On road infrastructure, the Minister noted that keeping the Karakoram Highway (KKH) open year-round has substantially boosted trade links with China and Central Asia, while construction work under CPEC is advancing on the Thakot–Raikot section. He added that Pakistan has secured funding from the OPEC Fund and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) for three sections of the M-6 Motorway. Briefing the conference on trade facilitation and border modernization, Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan highlighted that major reforms have been introduced in digital trade through the Web-Based One Customs (WeBOC) system and the Pakistan Single Window (PSW). Under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program, state-of-the-art facilities have been established at the Chaman and Torkham border crossings. He stated that the deployment of modern scanners and e-gates is projected to reduce border clearance times by 65 percent, while ongoing measures for cross-border passenger facilitation aim to cut processing times by up to 90 percent. Concluding his remarks, Aleem Khan reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to building a safe, sustainable, and integrated regional transport network, stating that regional connectivity is indispensable for economic resilience, regional stability, and shared prosperity.—**DNA**

IG promotes 203 cops, staff to next ranks

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Capt (R) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry has approved the promotion of 203 Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police officials and employees to their next ranks, including 90 Assistant Sub-Inspectors (ASIs), 107 Sub-Inspectors (SIs) and six Lower Division Clerks (LDCs). An ICT Police official told APP on Friday that DIG Headquarters Muhammad Jawad Tariq and DIG Law and Order Muhammad Ateeq Tahir, along with other senior police officers, pinned new ranks on the promoted personnel during a ceremony at Police Lines Headquarters. He said family members of the promoted officers and personnel were specially invited to attend the rank-pinning ceremony and share the occasion with their loved ones. IGP Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry said departmental promotion was a fundamental right of police personnel and recognition of their professional services. He said promotion also brought greater responsibilities and urged the newly promoted officials to perform their duties with increased dedication, honesty and commitment.—**APP**

Steps to enhance freight transport facilities

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Friday met with a delegation led by Mirpur Chamber of Commerce and Industries President Chaudhry Kashif Nazir Bajjar to discuss industrial development, investment promotion and improved freight transportation facilities through Pakistan Railways. The meeting, held at the Ministry of Railways, focused on industrial and commercial activities in Mirpur, the transportation needs of businesses and opportunities for strengthening freight services through the railway network. Kashif Nazir briefed the minister on the chamber's history, industrial activities and the growth of the business sector, informing him that the Mirpur Chamber of Commerce and Industries was established in 1980. He said around 115 industrial units associated with pharmaceutical, steel and other sectors were operating in Mirpur and playing an important role in the economic and industrial development of the region. The delegation discussed transportation challenges faced by the industrial sector and explored possibilities of transporting goods through Pakistan Railways. It also expressed interest in connecting industrial centres with the railway network and benefiting from rail-based freight facilities. The participants also discussed strengthening cooperation between Pakistan Railways and the industrial and business community of Mirpur, providing efficient and cost-effective transportation facilities to industries, and expanding the railway's role in freight transportation. Hanif Abbasi said Pakistan Railways could play an important role in promoting industrial and commercial activities, strengthening the national economy and providing better transportation facilities to the business community. He said steps were being taken to make the freight transportation system more efficient in line with the requirements of the industrial sector and to strengthen engagement with the business community. The minister reaffirmed his commitment to promoting cooperation with the industrial and business sectors.—**DNA**

Suspect in Albania work visa fraud held

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Islamabad has arrested a suspect for allegedly defrauding a citizen of Rs 1.15 mln on the promise of arranging an Albania work visa and overseas employment for his son. An FIA official told on Friday that the arrested suspect, Anwar Hussain, along with his accomplices, allegedly received Rs 1,150,000 from the complainant but failed to arrange the promised visa or return the money. He said a case, No. 111/2026, was registered following the completion of inquiry No. 648/2026, initiated on the complainant's application. The official said the accused was booked under Sections 18 and 22 of the Immigration Ordinance, 1979, Section 6 of the Passport Act, 1974, and Sections 420, 468, 471 and 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code.

He said further investigation was underway to determine the role of other individuals allegedly involved in the fraud.—**APP**

Tarar says public opinion should determine creation of new provinces

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday said the creation of new provinces should be determined by public opinion, adding that a referendum could be held to ascertain people's views on the issue.

Speaking to reporters outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), he said new provinces should be established if people supported the idea and the proposal should not be pursued if they opposed it.

"There is no harm in holding a referendum," he said, adding that the Constitution had a clear provision for referendums on matters of national importance or public interest.

Atta Tarar said people should be given an opportunity to express their views before any decision was taken, adding that the situation could be assessed once public opinion had emerged.—**APP**

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

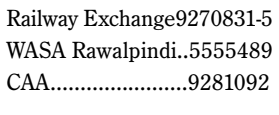
Nov 21/Bangladesh
Armed Forces Day

Nov 22/Lebanon
Independence Day

Nov 25/Suriname
National Day

Nov 28/Mauritania
National Day

Nov 28/Albania
Flags Day



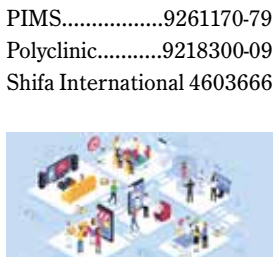
Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



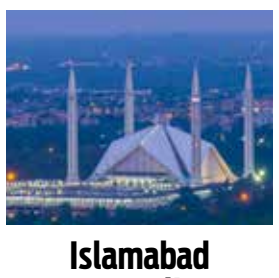
Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



Briefs

IHC restrains authorities from removing stallholder's goods

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday restrained the authorities from removing the goods of a Sunday bazaar stallholder or evicting him from his stall until the next hearing.
The court suspended the district administration's notification to the extent that it prohibited keeping goods inside the stall overnight. It directed the authorities not to remove the applicant's goods or evict him from the stall until the next hearing, while allowing them to proceed with implementing the remaining provisions of the notification.
Justice Shahrukh Arjumand issued the directions while hearing a petition filed by stallholder Abdul Rehman.
The court also issued notices to the district administration and other respondents, seeking their replies by the next week.
During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel, Adil Aziz Qazi, argued that the order to remove goods was affecting his client's livelihood. He contended that the deadline of November 22, set through the notification, was unlawful and contrary to a court decision dated January 15, 2025.–**APP**

DG NCCIA orders prompt action on public complaints

ISLAMABAD: Director General (DG) National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Friday held an E-court and an open court to directly hear citizens' cybercrime-related complaints and directed concerned officers to take immediate action for their effective resolution.
An NCCIA spokesperson said the E-courts was scheduled from 10:30 am to 12 noon, providing citizens an opportunity to directly present their complaints and seek assistance in resolving cybercrime-related issues.
He said the Director General also held an open court, during which citizens presented their complaints and grievances related to cybercrime. The spokesperson said the DG listened to the complainants and issued directions to the relevant officers for immediate action and effective redressal of their grievances. Speaking on the occasion, DG NCCIA Rizvi said listening to citizens' complaints, ensuring timely relief and providing effective solutions to their problems were among the agency's fundamental responsibilities.–**APP**

Kamal discusses proposed amendments to PIMS Act

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal was given a detailed briefing on the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Act, its legal and administrative aspects, institutional structure and proposed amendments. During the briefing, various matters relating to the implementation of the act, legal and administrative arrangements and institutional governance were discussed. The minister was apprised of the proposed changes aimed at improving the institution's administrative and operational framework. The discussion also covered the existing legal provisions and the need to address relevant institutional matters through appropriate legislative and administrative measures. Relevant officials were also present on the occasion. Consultant Ali Jan called on Federal Minister for National Health Services, Syed Mustafa Kamal to discuss measures for improving the hospital referral system and ensuring timely access to healthcare services for patients. During the meeting, discussions focused on effective patient transfers between hospitals, strengthening referral mechanisms and improving coordination among healthcare facilities to ensure that patients receive appropriate medical care without unnecessary delays.
The participants also discussed ways to make the referral system more efficient, improve linkages between hospitals and facilitate the timely transfer of patients according to their medical needs.–**APP**

Naqvi provides 20 new vehicles to SWAT Force

During the ceremony, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspected the newly provided vehicles and met with the personnel of the SWAT Force. He also decided to provide another 20 new vehicles to the force to further strengthen its operational capacity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has provided 20 new vehicles to the Islamabad Police Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Force to enhance its operational capabilities and enable it to respond promptly to emergency situations.
A ceremony was held to hand over the vehicles to the SWAT Force on behalf of the Ministry of Interior. The vehicles were formally handed over to the force to support its operational activities.
During the ceremony, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspected the newly provided vehicles and met with the personnel of the SWAT Force. He also decided to provide another 20 new vehicles to the force to further strengthen its operational capacity.
Speaking on the occasion, Mohsin Naqvi said the provision of vehicles would further enhance the operational capabilities of the SWAT Force.
He said the SWAT Force would act as the first responder in any emergency situation and take immediate action to deal with such incidents.
The minister said the additional vehicles would support the force in carrying out its responsibilities and responding to emergencies. Inspector General of Islamabad Police and other senior officers were also present at the ceremony.



Steps offered to boost Gandhara strategy

ISLAMABAD: International Buddhist monastics and scholars have offered recommendations for further strengthening Pakistan's Gandhara Strategy, emphasising improved infrastructure, greater community participation and enhanced international cooperation to preserve and promote the country's rich Buddhist heritage. The recommendations were shared during the concluding session of the four-day Gandhara Strategic Dialogue 2026, held at the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, Islamabad, which concluded on Friday. The visiting Buddhist delegates stressed that developing Gandhara as a sustainable religious and cultural destination required improved transportation, visitor facilities, meditation halls and better arrangements for Buddhist pilgrims. They emphasised that religious pilgrims had distinct requirements from ordinary tourists, which should be considered in planning infrastructure and pilgrimage-related facilities. The participants also highlighted the importance of involving local communities in heritage preservation, saying they should not only benefit economically from heritage-related activities but also understand the cultural and spiritual significance of historical sites and take pride in their legacy. They also suggested exploring ecological restoration of selected Gandhara areas to reflect aspects of their historical natural environment. Calling for stronger international engagement, the monastics emphasised diplomatic facilitation and closer connections with Buddhist communities, particularly in Laos and Bangladesh. They observed that Pakistan's Gandhara heritage offered significant opportunities to strengthen spiritual and cultural ties across South Asia, East Asia, the Himalayan region and Europe. Appreciating the Government of Pakistan for hosting the Dialogue, the visiting delegates said the engagement had broadened their understanding of the country. A monk from Thailand shared that he had dreamed of visiting Pakistan for nearly two decades, adding that his experience had given him a much more positive impression of the country than the limited references in Thai literature and perceptions formed abroad. Responding to the recommendations, Secretary National Heritage and Culture Division Asad Rehman Gillani said Pakistan was not the owner but the custodian of Gandhara's invaluable heritage, adding that its preservation for future generations was a collective responsibility. He appreciated the insights shared by international delegates and said Pakistan also had an opportunity to learn from their experience in safeguarding religious relics and sacred heritage. He assured the participants that their recommendations would be considered in further refining the national Gandhara Strategy. He said a task force constituted by the Prime Minister aimed to bring all relevant institutions, stakeholders and government departments onto a common platform to coordinate efforts relating to heritage preservation, infrastructure development, education and awareness, pilgrimage facilitation, security and international cooperation. Coordinator of the Prime Minister's Task Force on Gandhara, Imran Shauket highlighted the need to position Gandhara as a sacred Buddhist pilgrimage and spiritual destination, keeping its religious significance at the centre of future initiatives. He outlined proposals for introducing a dedicated Buddhist visa category, granting long-term multiple-entry visas to monks, simplifying NOC requirements, establishing meditation and learning facilities near heritage sites and creating Gandhara Corners at international universities. He also stressed engagement with the global Buddhist Sangha, local communities and international partners to strengthen heritage stewardship and sustainable cooperation. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Huzaifa Rahman said the four-day Dialogue had provided a valuable platform for international delegates, religious leaders, historians and cultural experts to explore Gandhara's historical, spiritual and cultural significance.–**DNA**

KP offers vast investment opportunities: Kundi

DNA

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa offers enormous investment opportunities in minerals, hydropower, tourism, agriculture, information technology and industrial development, stressing that stronger public-private partnerships, institutional coordination and investor-friendly policies are being worked out to unlock the province's economic potential and accelerate sustainable growth.
He expressed these views during his visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), where he held an interactive meeting with the Chamber's leadership and members of the business community to explore avenues for strengthening trade, investment and commercial cooperation between Islamabad and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Governor said that there was no option of retreat on the security front, reaffirming that both federal and provincial governments were committed to eliminating terrorism, while all necessary requirements of law enforcement agencies were being fulfilled on a war footing. He emphasised that lasting peace was fundamental to restoring investor confidence and accelerating economic activity in the province. Announcing a significant step towards institutional collaboration, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said that he would appoint a dedicated focal person at the Governor House to maintain close liaison with ICCI and regularly exchange information on trade and investment opportunities. He also announced that a comprehensive investment briefing would be arranged for Islamabad's business community to showcase the potential of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in tourism, mines and minerals, energy and other promising sectors. He added that the provincial government was committed to addressing the challenges and frustration of youth through education, skills development, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Welcoming the Governor, ICCI President Mohammad Zikria Akbar Zia said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possessed tremendous untapped economic potential and could emerge as a major investment destination through transparent regulations, modern infrastructure, consistent policies.



ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Mohammad Zikria Akbar Zia, along with Senior Vice President Mohammad Ashfaq Hussain Chatha and Vice President Mohammad Waqas Khan Swati, presents a commemorative memento to Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi during his visit to the Chamber. ICCI Council Members Chaudhry Masood, Mian Akram Farid and Mohammad Ejaz Abbasi, Executive Committee Members Mohammad Khurshid, Mohammad Arif, Kamran Kakakhel and Zohaib Arshad Malik, along with other members of the business community, are also present on the occasion.

PMYP raises youth loan target to Rs292.5b

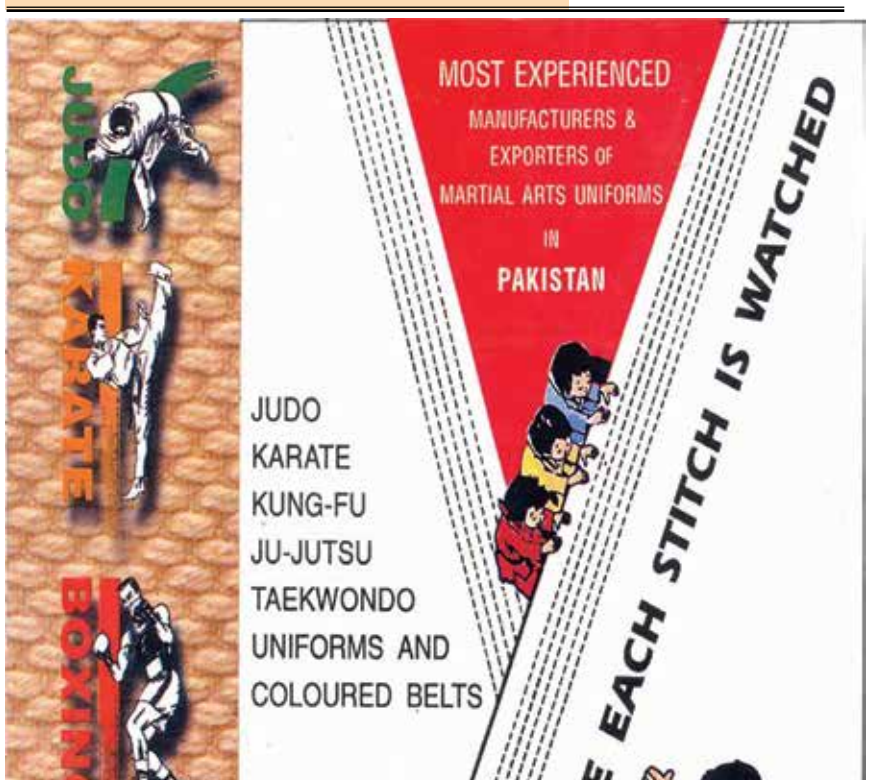
ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) has increased its youth loan target to Rs292.5 billion for the fiscal year 2026-27 and raised the maximum loan limit for business expansion to Rs25 million, as Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan and former Punjab chief minister and MNA Hamza Shehbaz Sharif discussed measures to expand youth employment, education, skills development and economic self-reliance during a meeting in Islamabad on Friday. During the meeting, Hamza Shehbaz described young people as a valuable national asset, stressing that quality education, modern technical training and equal employment opportunities were essential for Pakistan's progress and economic prosperity. He appreciated the nationwide initiatives under the PMYP, saying the programme was helping equip young people with contemporary skills and opportunities to earn sustainable livelihoods. Briefing Hamza Shehbaz on the programme's progress and targets, Rana Mashhood said the increased loan allocation was aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs and facilitating business expansion. The maximum financing limit for business expansion has been raised to Rs25 million (2.5 crore), he added. The PMYP chairman also shared details of the Digital Youth Hub, saying more than one million young people and 2,400 local and international companies had registered on the platform to connect talent with employment opportunities. On education and skills development, he said over 600,000 laptops had so far been distributed among students strictly on merit, while 217,000 young people had received technical training scholarships. The Skills Development Programme, he added, offered 8,000 courses to enhance employability and equip young people with market-relevant skills. Highlighting initiatives beyond education and employment, Rana Mashhood said that sports opportunities had been extended to 73,000 young people across the country, while 137 Green Youth Movement clubs had been activated to encourage youth participation in environmental activities.–**DNA**

PCP stresses merit-based inspection of pharmacy institutions

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Pharmacy Council of Pakistan (PCP) has directed inspection panel members to ensure merit-based, transparent and impartial evaluation of pharmacy institutions in accordance with prescribed regulatory standards.
The directions were issued during a pre-inspection meeting held here to discuss forthcoming inspection visits and ensure an effective and transparent assessment process.
The PCP President instructed panel members to strictly follow the Council's prescribed standards, regulatory requirements and established evaluation criteria while inspecting pharmacy institutions.
He emphasized that all institutions must be assessed objectively and impartially, without any undue influence or preferential treatment.
He also stressed the importance of professionalism, consistency and integrity throughout the inspection process, ensuring that each institution's performance is evaluated on the basis of its actual compliance with requirements for pharmacy education.–**APP**

Govt employees not entitled to automatic upgradation

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan (FCCP) has ruled that upgradation of pay scales is neither an automatic process nor an enforceable right of government employees, observing that courts cannot order such upgradation in the absence of a relevant policy or legal basis.
The court dismissed petitions filed by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) employees seeking upgradation of their pay scales and upheld the decision of the Islamabad High Court. Justice Ali Baqar Najafi authored the five-page judgment, observing that policy-making falls within the domain of the executive authority. Courts cannot interfere in administrative policy matters unless there is a violation of fundamental rights or an unlawful or unconstitutional action. The judgment noted that the FIA operates under the Federal Investigation Agency Act, 1974, and that comparing the grades of employees working in different government departments is not legally justified.–**APP**



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Is the UK serious about confronting Israel?

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

ED MILIBAND, the UK foreign minister, this week posted on X a video of himself denouncing Israel's activities and even issuing a threat. He said: "We will not be bystanders in the destruction of the two-state solution." Hours later, Israeli Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara halted the process of issuing tenders for construction in the E1 settlement in the West Bank until a new government is formed. The deadline for companies to submit tenders was set for Thursday but this has now been delayed. The E1 settlement would be the last nail in the coffin of the idea of a two-state solution. If construction contracts are awarded, E1 will edge closer to the point of no return. So far, the UK and many other Western countries have been condemning the building of settlements, the settler terrorism and Israel's actions, while at the same time appeasing Israel. The rhetoric has been getting harsher but, when it comes to action, no state has been firm enough to punish Israel and hinder its criminal behavior.

Too many statements have been mere theatrics. Western countries that claim to cherish human rights were embarrassed as the Gaza genocide unfolded. They made statements to show their constituencies that they did not approve of Israel's behavior but they did nothing to stop it. When it comes to action, no state has been firm enough to punish Israel and hinder its criminal behavior Gaza has driven the British public's ire. New Prime Minister Andy Burnham has said he will take a different course on Israel. After banning trade with illegal West Bank settlements in September, the British government on Tuesday announced sanctions on eight Israeli construction companies involved in building settlements in order to protect the idea of a two-state solution. It also imposed sanctions on Tzav 9, an Israeli activist group which it said had regularly blocked humanitarian aid trucks delivering food, water and fuel to the Gaza Strip.

Yet Downing Street still has to prove itself. The British government has many tests ahead. Will it force Israel to allow aid into Gaza? Everyone has seen the images and footage of hungry people being swamped by floods in the Strip this month. Will Britain twist Israel's arm and force it to allow the caravans of aid to enter? The other issue is the E1 settlement. If London does not do enough, it means it is not really serious about the two-state solution. Burnham will want to avoid making the same mistakes as his predecessor, Keir Starmer, who toed the line with Donald Trump on Israel and was cowed by Benjamin Netanyahu.



Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar described this week's sanctions as a "hostile act targeting private, law-abiding companies." He also vowed to find new ways to strengthen settlements in the West Bank. The E1 project is still going ahead. What can be done? The UK should impose sanctions on any financial institution or contractor bidding for the project. This would force them to withdraw their bids and would show that London is serious.

However, Britain must also take the US into consideration. How would Trump react if the UK were to impose genuinely punitive sanctions? Will Burnham dare to impose crippling sanctions on the companies bidding for the E1 tenders. This is the minimum the UK government should do to show it is serious about peace, about the two-state solution and everything it has talked about in the past. But – and it is a big but – will they dare to confront the US? Or, like before, will it make some big statement with only a token action and no effective execution. If the UK government does not act further, what credibility will it have, not with the Palestinians but its own citizens? One should not underestimate the influence of Israel on US politics. Many Republicans lost in this month's midterms because of the war on Iran that was instigated by Israel. Trump himself said that his party lost because of voters' "great dislike, incredibly, for Israel." Nevertheless, we do not see Trump backing down on his support for Tel Aviv. It is unlikely that the US will change its behavior, even if the UK takes a tough stance on Israel.

Also, one should not underestimate the influence of the pro-Israel lobby, not only in the US but in other Western countries, including Britain. There are many issues we can see, such as the funding of election campaigns, the pro-Israel bias of the media and the pro-Israel influence in think tanks and academic institutions. The British government has now raised the stakes. If it does not act further, what credibility will it have, not with the Palestinians but its own citizens? Burnham and Miliband will have many questions to answer in Parliament as well as in the street. The UK government has some tough choices to make. Will it choose Trump or the British public? Will it choose its own credibility or pleasing Israel? People here in London are complaining about almost everything: the price of fuel, the NHS, expensive groceries. The Labour government should think it through and make some bold choices, even if it means confronting the US and facing down Israeli blackmail.

Three Giants, One Summit, and a World Left Behind

Qamar Bashir



The second was China's diplomatic ascendancy. Xi hosted the summit and placed Beijing at the centre of international negotiations. China demonstrated that it could convene the American president and the Russian leader despite their conflicting interests. This was not merely diplomatic hospitality; it illustrated China's expanding ability to shape the agenda of great-power engagement and position itself as an indispensable participant in discussions about international security. The third was Russia's remarkable diplomatic rehabilitation. Putin participated alongside leaders of the world's two largest economies despite...

THE historic trilateral summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping, American President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Shenzhen on November 19, 2026, was presented as a defining moment in international diplomacy. The leaders exchanged extraordinary compliments, celebrated their personal relationships and spoke of their shared responsibility for global peace. Yet behind the ceremonial grandeur, diplomatic courtesies and declarations of friendship emerged an uncomfortable reality: three enormously powerful nations had assembled to discuss the future of the world without announcing a meaningful solution to the wars, humanitarian catastrophes and economic disruptions devastating millions of lives.

The meeting lasted approximately ninety minutes and produced a four-point peace declaration. International commentators, including Reuters, Associated Press and The Guardian, observed that the summit generated more diplomatic symbolism than substantive breakthroughs. The contrast between the enormous expectations surrounding the gathering and its limited publicly announced achievements raises a fundamental question: were these leaders assembling to rescue a troubled world or to consolidate their own positions within an emerging international hierarchy?.

The first takeaway was the emergence of an exclusive three-power diplomatic arrangement. China, the United States and Russia presented themselves as countries carrying exceptional responsibility for international security. Their combined military capabilities, nuclear arsenals, economic resources and political influence undoubtedly give them extraordinary weight. However, concentrating global decision-making within three capitals raises serious questions about the sovereignty and participation of nearly two hundred other countries whose futures may be affected by decisions taken without their representation.

The second was China's diplomatic ascendancy. Xi hosted the summit and placed Beijing at the centre of international negotiations. China demonstrated that it could convene the American president and the Russian leader despite their conflicting interests. This was not merely diplomatic hospitality; it illustrated China's expanding ability to shape the agenda of great-power engagement and position itself as an indispensable participant in discussions about international security.

The third was Russia's remarkable diplomatic rehabilitation. Putin participated alongside leaders of the world's two largest economies despite Russia's considerably smaller economic output and its continuing war in Ukraine. His presence demonstrated that military capabilities, nuclear weapons, energy resources and geopolitical influence can secure a place at the highest diplomatic table even when economic strength alone would not justify equal standing.

The fourth was Europe's conspicuous exclusion. Neither Britain nor France, both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, participated. Germany, the European Union and other influential European governments were similarly absent. Europe possesses immense economic resources, advanced industries and considerable diplomatic experience, yet its collective influence was missing from this extraordinary gathering. Reuters' analysis identified precisely this contradiction between Europe's economic weight and its limited ability to act as a unified geopolitical power. reuters.com

The fifth was the failure to produce a Ukrainian peace settlement. Putin acknowledged that Ukraine figured among the conflicts in which the three countries shared interests. Nevertheless, the declaration contained no ceasefire proposal, withdrawal timetable, territorial settlement or reconstruction framework. After years of destruction, displacement and economic devastation, the leaders offered no publicly identifiable mechanism capable of ending the conflict. The presence of the Russian president made this omission particularly significant. The sixth was the equally disturbing absence of an Iranian peace settlement. Trump acknowledged discussions about Iran, nuclear weapons and the Strait of Hormuz, but no agreement emerged to terminate hostilities, remove economic restrictions or restore uninterrupted international commerce. The American military confrontation with Iran has disrupted energy markets, increased transportation costs and imposed additional burdens upon vulnerable economies. Yet the summit's declaration addressed petroleum supplies without confronting the underlying conflict responsible for much of the disruption.

The seventh was the complete neglect of Palestine's humanitarian catastrophe. Gaza's displaced population continues confronting destruction, insecurity, inadequate shelter and exposure to harsh weather. Families struggling against rain, flooding, hunger and the approaching winter desperately require protection and humanitarian assistance. Yet the three leaders, possessing extraordinary political and economic leverage, announced no initiative addressing Palestinian suffering, Israeli military operations, reconstruction, humanitarian access or the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The eighth was the declaration's emphasis on nuclear security without corresponding commitments. The leaders acknowledged that nuclear war must never be fought and promised dialogue to reduce nuclear risks. However, they announced no enforceable arms-control treaty, reductions in nuclear stockpiles or verification arrangements. The three nuclear powers reaffirmed a principle universally recognized as essential while leaving the instruments capable of implementing it undefined. Their collective nuclear capabilities remain formidable, but their willingness to undertake measurable disarmament obligations remains uncertain.

The ninth concerned international institutions and political immunity. The declaration supported United Nations reform while criticizing perceived abuses of jurisdiction by the International Criminal Court. Yet it offered no institutional blueprint, implementation schedule or binding reforms. Its emphasis on the immunity of state officials raises another question: whether international legal arrangements are being reconsidered primarily to strengthen global accountability or to protect powerful political leaders from international prosecution. The distinction carries enormous implications for weaker nations seeking justice through international institutions. Yonhap News Agency +1

The tenth was the prioritization of energy supplies without comprehensive economic relief. The leaders promised increased production and availability of refined petroleum products. However, no coordinated programme emerged to address disrupted supply chains, rising living costs, sovereign debt, food insecurity or the economic vulnerability of developing countries. Their declaration recognized symptoms of international instability while leaving its principal political causes largely untouched.

These ten takeaways expose a striking contradiction. The three leaders repeatedly emphasized friendship, cooperation and international responsibility, yet their publicly announced commitments remained overwhelmingly general. Trump celebrated his relationships with Xi and Putin, while Putin emphasized their shared historical responsibilities. Personal diplomacy may facilitate future negotiations, but cordial relationships cannot substitute for enforceable agreements that protect human lives and restore economic stability. The summit also demonstrated the declining centrality of traditional Western powers outside Washington. Britain once commanded an empire over which the sun was said never to set. France retains its nuclear arsenal and Security Council veto. Japan remains a technological powerhouse, while Canada possesses substantial economic resources and international diplomatic standing. Nevertheless, none occupied a seat at this trilateral table. The symbolism was unmistakable: economic sophistication, historical prestige and institutional membership do not automatically guarantee participation in the most consequential diplomatic conversations.

The larger concern is whether an emerging three-power arrangement will concentrate international influence without accepting corresponding responsibilities. The United States and Russia are directly involved in major military conflicts, while China possesses considerable economic and diplomatic leverage over both. Together, they command resources capable of influencing peace negotiations, international trade, energy security, reconstruction and global development.

Their governments may have reached private understandings beyond the published declaration, but such possibilities cannot substitute for publicly demonstrated achievements. What the world received was diplomatic spectacle, declarations of goodwill and promises of future dialogue rather than decisive action to end suffering.

The Shenzhen summit therefore leaves behind a troubling question. If three of the world's most influential leaders can assemble around one table, celebrate their extraordinary power and acknowledge their responsibility for international peace, yet depart without ending a single major war or announcing substantial humanitarian relief, what purpose does that concentration of power ultimately serve?

A world struggling against war, displacement, hunger and economic uncertainty needs more than powerful leaders congratulating one another. It needs those leaders to exercise their enormous influence to end conflicts, restore prosperity and protect humanity. Otherwise, the emerging international order risks becoming an exclusive arrangement in which the powerful determine the world's direction while the powerless continue paying its price.

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

Could the US pull its forces from the Gulf?

Al-Majalla

As the war dragged on, costs piled up. By 16 October, cost estimates reached $47.1bn, with damage to bases adding an additional $5bn price tag. One source cited by The Wall Street Journal suggested that figure could reach $15bn. The rising cost of the war, coupled with the increasing vulnerability of US military bases and installations across the region, has revived a question that has long hung over the Gulf for years. Is America leaving? And what kind of security architecture is best suited to replace it? While a decision to completely withdraw US forces from the Gulf has yet to be made...

ON the night of 17 July 2026, an Iranian missile attack hit buildings housing American troops at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, killing three US service members and damaging at least 19 buildings in the vicinity, according to satellite imagery. The attack was part of an ongoing kinetic confrontation with Iran that began when the US attacked it on 28 February along with Israel, killing Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and several members of Iran's top-tier leadership. It showed how vulnerable US bases had become in a region put there to project American power.

As the war dragged on, costs piled up. By 16 October, cost estimates reached $47.1bn, with damage to bases adding an additional $5bn price tag. One source cited by The Wall Street Journal suggested that figure could reach $15bn. The rising cost of the war, coupled with the increasing vulnerability of US military bases and installations across the region, has revived a question that has long hung over the Gulf for years. Is America leaving? And what kind of security architecture is best suited to replace it? While a decision to completely withdraw US forces from the Gulf has yet to be made, Washington is said to be mulling troop relocation and reduction. An October report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies said US military presence in the Middle East is likely to shift towards the Eastern Mediterranean, warning that allies and adversaries alike would interpret this move as proof of a weakening US commitment to Gulf security.

And in a September podcast interview with The Christian Science Monitor, former CIA director and CENTCOM commander David Petraeus said American bases in the region were "no longer viable". For her part, Jennifer Kavanagh, director of military analysis at Defence Priorities, proposes closing American bases in Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait, while retaining access arrangements and rotational deployments and using facilities in Jordan and Oman. Gulf security researcher Kristian Alexander argues in a September study published by the Stimson Centre that the best approach would be a dispersed network of bases, retaining key hubs supported by smaller facilities and rotational deployments. Jonathan Ruhe, a researcher at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, known as JINSA, advocates relocating American military assets and missions to Israel. His argument focuses on Ovda Air Base, its infrastructure capable of accommodating US aircraft, its multilayered defences and the ease of operational cooperation. The institute has also documented the deployment of US fighter aircraft there before the war.

Because Israel's infrastructure lies farther from Iran than Gulf bases near the Iranian coast, he argues this makes it a better location to be a centre for air operations, logistical support and intelligence. But Israel is still within the range of Iranian missiles. And while greater distance from Iran may improve some aspects of defence, it doesn't make it immune from attack. The same logic applies if US bases shift to the Eastern Mediterranean. The US has three general options going forward. The first and riskiest option would be to rebuild key bases while reducing exposed troop concentrations and improving fortifications and protection. These installations would still be vulnerable to attack, but would preserve the ability to respond quickly and stay close to operational theatres.

The second option is to spread American forces across a wider network encompassing selected Gulf installations, Jordan, Israel and the Eastern Mediterranean, with more distant supply depots and logistical support facilities. This would reduce dependence on any single installation. But a wider network requires political agreements allowing those facilities to be used during a crisis and also drives up transport, maintenance, and communications costs. If troop numbers are cut faster than these alternatives can be established, redeployment could result in a genuine loss of operational capability. A US Air Force C-130 Hercules prepares for takeoff from Camp Victory on the outskirts of Baghdad International Airport on 29 September 2026. After more than a decade, the US-led coalition is ending its mission in Iraq. A US Air Force C-130 Hercules prepares for takeoff from Camp Victory on the outskirts of Baghdad International Airport on 29 September 2026. After more than a decade, the US-led coalition is ending its mission in Iraq.

The third option, with the most far-reaching political implications, would be to substantially reduce permanent deployments and rely more heavily on naval forces, long-range aviation, and reinforcements when needed. While this would leave fewer permanently stationed troops exposed to attack, the effectiveness of the US presence would diminish.

For their part, Gulf states are not only concerned about the fate of American bases on their soil, but more about Washington's diminishing ability to keep these countries secure. Even if the US provides weapons, intelligence, connectivity and reinforcements, Gulf states are coming to the realisation that they may have to assume greater responsibility for defending their own territory going forward.

Islamabad POST
Saturday, November 21, 2026

Briefs

Armed forces and LEAs to decisively...

FROM PAGE 01

security of the motherland. While appreciating the brave police forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, COAS & CDF described the KP Police as a brave frontline force and expressed pride in their resilience and sacrifices against terrorism and Fitna al Khwarij. He reaffirmed the unwavering resolve of the Security Forces, in close coordination with Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), to decisively eliminate the menace of terrorism and preserve the hard-earned peace and stability of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Upon arrival, COAS & CDF was received by Commander Peshawar Corps.

Minister insists referendum on new...

FROM PAGE 01

In response to a question over Bilawal's recent remarks and whether they were "justified", he said that the PPP chairman had the right to present the party's perspective on the formation of new provinces. However, he warned Bilawal against invoking other matters and targeting the PML-N. "Attacking us [PML-N] or invoking other matters that have nothing to do with the debate related to the provinces was uncalled for." Chaudhry was also asked whether the government's stance on the creation of provinces and the proposed referendum had been delivered to President Asif Ali Zardari in his meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi a day earlier. To this, he said that various matters had been discussed during the meeting in Islamabad. However, the main topic was the recent verbal confrontation between the coalition partners, he added. Chaudhry said that during the meeting, both President Zardari and PM Shehbaz decided to resolve all the differences through dialogue. He added that the matters between the allied parties had returned to "usual".

FO rejects India's remarks on Pakistan's...

FROM PAGE 01

He said that instead of misusing the platform of the United Nations for peddling lies, India will be well advised to implement its obligations under the UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, where Indian occupation forces continue to perpetrate gross violations of human rights for decades. Sajjad Haider said a country which is a serial violator of UN Charter, UN Security Council resolutions, sovereignty of neighboring states and binding treaty obligations that patronizes systematic discrimination against its Muslim, Sikh, Christian and Dalit minorities, engages in disinformation and terrorism as instruments of state policy and remains in occupation of a territory whose people are denied the internationally guaranteed right to self-determination, has no standing whatsoever. The Spokesperson said instead of pointing fingers, India should introspect and change its behavior. Replying to another question, Sajjad Haider Khan said nearly twenty seven hundred Sikhs belonging to India are expected to participate in the birthday celebrations of Baba Guru Nanak. Answering yet another question, the Spokesperson said Afghanistan was not invited to join the ECO meeting in Islamabad as Pakistan has not recognized the incumbent regime. He said Afghanistan's membership of the ECO Forum Secretariat remains suspended. Moreover, as per ECO procedures, participation in the ministerial level meetings is subject to the host country's discretion also. The Foreign Office Spokesperson made it clear that Pakistan attaches great importance to strong regional cooperation, connectivity and economic integration.

Pakistan beat Sri Lanka by eight wickets in second Test

Pakistan complete their first Test series win this year by reaching the slender 90-run target in 13 overs

DNA



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan lost opener Tayyab Arif for 13 and Mohammad Taha for four, but there were no hiccups as Jamal hit the winning boundary off spinner Prabath Jayasuriya to seal the win. The first Test, also in Rawalpindi, ended in a draw. Pakistan skipper Babar Azam said he was satisfied with the team's win.

"This is a new team with some new players, but they showed some good performances and winning always gives you satisfaction and confidence," he said.

"We are looking to create a positive environment so everyone has the fighting spirit alive regardless of what the match situation is." Sri Lankan skipper Kusal Mendis said the 98-run first innings hurt his team.

"We have to improve in some areas when it comes to batting and fielding, but we bowled well in patches," he said. The day began with Sri Lanka hoping to extend their 82-run lead and Milan Rathnayaka hitting a boundary, but the innings was done in the second over when Mohammad Abbas trapped Asitha Fernando lbw for two. Rathnayaka cracked 12 fours in his fighting 88-ball 66 not out.

Abbas was the pick of the Pakistan bowlers with 3-55 while Jamal took 3-67 and Razaullah 2-116. It was Pakistan's first series win in this cycle of the World Test Championship, having drawn with South Africa and the West Indies and losing 2-0 in Bangladesh and 3-0 in England. Pakistan's pace quartet exploited the green-tinged pitch to maximum effect, dismissing Sri Lanka for 98 in their first innings to get an ideal start on the first day. The home team then posted 325 to take firm control of the match. Sri Lanka staved off an innings defeat on the back of half-centuries from Rathnayaka, Sonal Dinusha and skipper Kusal Mendis but could not save the Test.

Pakistani woman takes up jiu-jitsu after frightening encounter, debuts on sport's biggest stage 8 years later

DNA

ABU DHABI: Eight years ago, Pakistani woman Anam Jangda took up jiu-jitsu following a frightening encounter on the streets of Amsterdam. Today, the 37-year-old is a purple belt athlete who has just made her debut at the Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship, where she competed alongside some of the sport's best athletes from around the world.

Representing Carlson Gracie Team Karachi, Jangda competed in the women's Masters purple belt 55kg division at the championships' 18th edition this week. Her journey to Abu Dhabi began with an incident that left her determined never to feel so frightened again.

During a visit to Amsterdam, Jangda and a friend were approached by a man as they left their Airbnb in the early morning. Both were left fearing for their safety. Fortunately, both were runners during their school days and immediately ran from the scene to find a police car. "We both used to run track in school, so we actually ran about seven, eight minutes," said Jangda. "We reached a cop car and, once I got there, I realized that I never wanted to feel that scared again."

On her return to Karachi, Jangda began looking for somewhere to learn jiu-jitsu. At the time, she says, there was only one academy offering the sport in the city. She said: "My coach [Alisha Ahmad] became later the first Pakistani black belt. He's going to compete tomorrow as well."

What began as an effort to learn self-defense soon developed into a long-term commitment to the sport. Eight years later, Jangda progressed to purple belt level and travelled to Abu Dhabi to test herself against international opponents.

Her first appearance at the Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship did not produce the result she had hoped for, but Jangda believes the experience has given her valuable lessons. "It didn't go the way I wanted, but I wanted to just put myself out there and there's a lot more to learn," she said. Despite the disappointment of her result, she said she was impressed by the standard of competition and the opportunity to meet athletes from different countries: "Amazing. It's so organized. It's so nice to see athletes from all around the world. The competition's tough but just tells us we need to put ourselves out there more, so hopefully not the last one that you guys will see me at."

Motor racing-FIA to introduce full-time Formula One stewards from 2027

LAS VEGAS: Formula One's governing body will begin introducing full-time race stewards in 2027 as part of an effort to improve consistency in officiating and strengthen oversight across its championships, the FIA said on Thursday. The governing body said it would recruit a small initial group of full-time stewards during the 2027 Formula One season, before expanding the program in 2028 and beyond. The longer-term aim is to create a department of between 12 and 15 full-time stewards, who would eventually also support other FIA single-seater series.

Stewards are responsible for reviewing on-track incidents and enforcing Formula One's sporting regulations, with their decisions often attracting scrutiny from teams, drivers and fans. The FIA said its existing part-time stewards would continue to work alongside the new full-time officials, while driver stewards — former drivers who provide racing expertise at each event — would remain part of the process The move is intended to provide greater continuity in decision-making, allow officials to identify areas where regulations may require clarification and help train future FIA personnel, the federation said. **– DNA**

Iran's Beiranvand becomes first keeper to win AFC Player of the Year award

DNA

BANGKOK: Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand was named Asian Football Confederation Player of the Year at its annual ceremony on Thursday while North Korea's Kim Kyong Yong won the women's award. The 34-year-old Beiranvand is the first keeper to win the trophy since it was introduced in 1994 and the fifth Iranian named the continent's best player, following Khodadad Azizi, Ali Daei, Mehdi Mahdavikia and Ali Karimi. He was recognized for his performances at club level with Tractor FC and for the national team

"Receiving this award is an incredibly historic, unforgettable and emotional moment in my life," said Beiranvand.

"But above all I feel an immense sense of happiness and pride in representing my country. I do not see this award as an individual achievement. It is an honor that belongs to the people of Iran." Beiranvand won the men's award ahead of Saudi Arabian duo Feras Al-Brikan and Salem Al-Dawsari and was recognized for his performances at the World Cup, where Iran narrowly missed out on a place in the knockout rounds. Kim became the second player from North Korea to win the women's award after being recognized for her performances in Naegohyang FC's title-winning campaign in the Asian Women's Champions League. "Now that I have got this award, my dream has come true," she said.

Rashid Malik Clinches ITF Pattaya Masters Title

OUR CORRESPONDENT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's tennis legend Rashid Ahmad Malik has once again proved that age is no barrier to sporting excellence, clinching the Men's 55+ Doubles title at the prestigious ITF Masters MT700 Tennis Tournament in Pattaya, Thailand. The former national champion and Davis Cupper, recipient of the Sitara-i-Imtiaz and Tamgha-i-Imtiaz, teamed up with Germany's Axel Hampe to defeat the third-seeded New Zealand pair of Philip Hempstead and Warren Lovegrove in a thrilling final, winning 6-4, 2-6, 10-3 in one hour and 40 minutes at the Royal Cliff Hotel.

The triumph was particularly impressive as Malik regularly competes in the 60+ category but stepped down to the younger 55+ division, showcasing his exceptional fitness, agility, tactical awareness and competitive spirit against younger opponents. Malik and Hampe started strongly, taking the opening set 6-4, before their opponents fought back to win the second 6-2. The Pakistani veteran, however, raised his game in the deciding match tie-break, delivering a commanding performance to seal the title 10-3.

Despite battling an elbow injury that forced him to withdraw from the Men's 60+ Singles event, Malik refused to let the setback derail his campaign. Instead, he competed in the more demanding 55+ Doubles category and emerged victorious. Earlier, Malik and Hampe had produced an equally dominant display in the semifinals, defeating top-seeded Indian duo Bal Krishan Bhatia and Jaiprakash Nishad 6-1, 6-2. Their victories over the top and third seeds highlighted the quality and consistency of their title-winning campaign. Malik's latest international success further reinforces his remarkable longevity and dedication to tennis. His ability to compete and triumph against younger players on the international Masters circuit continues to inspire Pakistan's senior tennis community and demonstrates that passion, determination and experience can overcome age and adversity.

Zefzaf returns on valuable card at King Abdulaziz Racecourse

The Red Stable of Prince Faisal bin Khaled bin Abdulaziz runner landed the trial for that race the previous month with the reopposing Sheikh Abdullah Homoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah-owned Transferred (IRE) and the White Stable of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz & Sons' Cacofonix (IRE) in behind

DNA

RIYADH: Star domestic sprinter Zefzaf (USA) returns to action at King Abdulaziz Racecourse on Saturday on a card which also features two valuable two-year-old contests including the $267,000 (SAR 1m) Prince Faisal bin Khalid bin Abdulaziz Cup.

Zefzaf faces a full field of 17 rivals in the second event over 1200m and will have his first outing since taking eighth behind international big guns such as Reef Runner (USA), Lazzat (FR) and Comanche Brave (IRE) in the Group 2 1351 Turf Sprint Presented by Qiddiya City at The Saudi Cup night in February.

The Red Stable of Prince Faisal bin Khaled bin Abdulaziz runner landed the trial for that race the previous month with the reopposing Sheikh Abdullah Homoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah-owned Transferred (IRE) and the White Stable of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz & Sons' Cacofonix (IRE) in behind.

Red Stable are further represented in the $32,000 Open by Antonin Dvorak (IRE) and Riyadh Angel (IRE), while Sheikh Abdullah Homoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah also runs Bakeel (GB), who has his first start since winning over the course and distance two years ago, and Taif Sprint Championship hero Farough (GB) who bids for a fifth consecutive success.

Saturday's card concludes with three races carrying a $267,000 prize fund and climaxes with 16 juvenile colts and geldings going to post in the Prince Faisal bin Khalid bin Abdulaziz Cup over 1600m.

Camilio Ospina is aboard White Stable's twice-raced and unbeaten Alnajim Alsati (KSA), with Muhammad Al-Daham sporting the Sheikh Abdullah Homoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah silks on recent nine-length winner Haiyahom (KSA), while Rahhabi (KSA) could be involved for Eddie Castro and is unbeaten in three starts. Twenty fillies including Excited Lady (KSA) have been declared for the $267,000 Princess Setah bint Fahad Aldamer Cup, with the top-rated having been an impressive winner of the Saud bin Salman Cup earlier in the month.

Local-bred three-year-old purebred Arabians also get their chance to chase a SAR1 million prize pot in the 1600m Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Cup in which the winner of Taif's King Faisal Cup, Sahab Alriyadh (KSA), looks a standout after maintaining her unbeaten run with a near 12-length success in that Group 3 under Abdullah Al-Hussain.

Huge prize money is also on offer in Friday's feature with a strong renewal of the $400,000 Group 3 UAE President Cup for Purebred Arabians over 1800m. The veteran Mutwakel Alkhalediah (KSA) for trainer Nasser Mutlaq holds excellent claims with the 10-year-old Group 1 Obaiyah Arabian Classic sixth back to winning ways last week in the Listed JCSA Cup. He clashes with up-and-coming four-year-old Bouchra (FR) — a near eight-length winner of the King Khaled Racecourse Championship on the final day of the Taif summer season in September.

Red Stable's JCSA Sprint Cup winner Aba Almae'aly (KSA) heads the field of nine three-year-olds in the $44,000 domestic Group 3 Ministry of Justice Cup over 1800m, while older horses do battle over the same distance in the domestic Group 3 Ministry of Interior Cup. White Stable is responsible for four of the 12 declared runners and they include this month's Abdullah bin Ibrahim Aba Al-Khail Award first and second Lelah Doroh (KSA) and Kaflahom (KSA).

Friday's sixth event, a 1600m Open, also holds plenty of intrigue with owner Sheikh Abdullah Homoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah's Al Musmak (IRE) making his re-entry. The multiple UK winner for Roger Varian scored on his first outing in Riyadh in January and ran down the field behind Forever Young (JPN) on his only outing since The Saudi Cup.

Several terrorists killed in North...

FROM PAGE 01

areas and planting explosive material there. They also said that the terrorists belonging to Fitna al-Khawarij use innocent children and women as human shields in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

ECC approves over Rs1bn...

FROM PAGE 01

repair and maintenance of helicopters used by the Frontier Corps Balochistan (North). The forum further approved modification of its earlier decision regarding the release of two billion rupees for the Daanish Schools Authority. The modification allows utilisation of 500 million rupees from the released amount to meet the operational expenses of Daanish Schools during the current fiscal year, including salaries, boarding, utilities, transport, security and maintenance.

Pakistan condemns Houthis...

FROM PAGE 01

The statement carried by the SPA did not identify the tower, but an accompanying photograph published by the agency showed the Public Investment Fund Tower. The strike blew out windows across seven to eight floors of PIF Tower, bending parts of its metal facade. It was the second time in less than two weeks that a Houthi attack damaged a landmark in Riyadh's financial district, with state oil company Aramco's building hit in a Nov 8 attack. The Houthis have been firing at Saudi airports and oil infrastructure since Yemen's frozen civil war reignited in July amid the US-Iran conflict. The renewed fighting has shattered a UN-brokered truce reached in 2022 that largely halted cross-border attacks between the Saudi-led coalition, which backs Yemen's internationally recognised government, and the Houthis, who control the capital, Sanaa. Pakistan, which is party to two defence agreements along with Saudi Arabia — the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and the Saudi Mutual Defence Agreement that empower the parties to treat an attack on any one of them as an attack on all — has expressed its solidarity with the kingdom amid the escalation. In its statement on Friday regarding Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia, the FO said: "The continued targeting of civilian infrastructure and economic facilities endangers innocent lives and poses a serious threat to regional peace and security. Such reprehensible attacks must cease forthwith."

Kompany vows to 'look forward' after Bayern return

DNA

MUNICH: Bayern Munich coach Vincent Kompany pledged to "look forward" after returning from a month out due to meningeal irritation but said he would learn from the health scare. Speaking with his arm in a sling at a press conference on Thursday, his first official Bayern media outing since returning, Kompany said he had made a full recovery since being hospitalized. "I feel very good and am happy to be back with the team. I am in very good health," Kompany said, adding he had "undergone a lot of check-ups." Bayern host strugglers Cologne in the Bundesliga on Friday, with Kompany in the dugout for the first time since their Champions League clash with Arsenal on October 21. Kompany collapsed on the training pitch two days after the Arsenal match and was hospitalized with what was later diagnosed as meningeal irritation as a result of a viral infection. The fall also caused him to dislocate his shoulder. He spent a month out, missing five Bayern matches. The former Manchester City and Belgium captain said he was pleased to get back to the day-to-day of coaching.

Islamabad POST
Saturday, November 21, 2026

Briefs

Hunza student wins 2nd place in skills competition in China

ISLAMABAD: Haider Karim, a student from Ghulkin, Gojal, Hunza, has secured second position in an international skills development and technology competition held under the Belt and Road and BRICS framework in Nanchang, Jiangxi, China.
Karim participated in the 2nd Chinese Language Vocational Skills International Digital Tools Application Competition, organised under the Belt and Road & BRICS Skills Development and Technology Innovation Competition, according to a Gwadar Pro's report on Friday.
He first secured second position in the Southwest and South China regional qualifiers before achieving the same position in the international final, marking a notable accomplishment in the international skills competition.
Currently, Karim is pursuing a three-year Diploma in Tourism Management and Hospitality at Sichuan Vocational College of Information Technology in China.
He also passed the HSK-4 Chinese language proficiency examination during his first year of studies.
His achievement has brought recognition to his hometown of Ghulkin, Gojal, Hunza, and the wider Gilgit-Baltistan community, highlighting the growing participation of Pakistani students in international skills development and vocational education programmes. His success also reflects the opportunities available to Pakistani youth through technical education, international exposure and skills-based learning._**APP**

SECP reinforces audit report verification

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has advised companies to verify the Unique Document Identification Number (UDIN) on their auditor's report before filing audited financial statements. This applies to companies required by law to file audited financial statements with SECP, said a news release. A UDIN is a unique number that helps users confirm who issued an audit report. It also helps prevent the use of forged reports. Auditors generate the number through the portal of their respective institute, either the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan or the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan. Regulation 6A of the Auditors (Reporting Obligations) Regulations, 2018 requires auditors to include a UDIN on every report they issue under the regulations. Companies can check the number through the relevant institute's portal before filing. SECP will accept filings only if the accompanying auditor's report carries a valid UDIN. **APP**

Rs 13.5t injected to maintain liquidity in market

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Friday, injected Rs 13,544.5 billion through Reverse Repo Purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) for maintaining liquidity in the market. The central bank conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7 and 14-day tenors on November 20, 2026, and injected Rs 13,156.4 billion against 44 quotes while other Rs 388.1 billion were injected through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO. The central bank, for the Reverse Repo Purchase of 14-day tenor, received 37 bids cumulatively offering Rs 12,834 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.00% to 12.09%. The SBP accepted Rs 12,400 billion against 36 quotes at 12.01% rate of return. The total amount offered at 12.01% was Rs 5,711.3 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs 5,278.3 billion on a pro rata basis. Moreover, the SBP also received 8 bids for the 7-day tenor, cumulatively offering Rs 756.4 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.01% to 12.06 %.–**APP**

Pakistan HC Tipu presents credentials to King Charles III

During his audience with The King, High Commissioner Tipu Usman conveyed the warm greetings and best wishes of the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan to His Majesty. He reaffirmed the deep respect and affection the people of Pakistan hold for His Majesty and recalled the fond memories of his previous visit to Pakistan.

DNA



LONDON: High Commissioner of Pakistan to the United Kingdom, Mr. Tipu Usman Presents Credentials to His Majesty King Charles III at St James's Palace Pakistan's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Mr. Tipu Usman, presented his Letters of Credence to His Majesty King Charles III at a formal ceremony held at St James's Palace in London.
As per tradition, the High Commissioner and Mrs. Saima Usman were escorted to St James's Palace in a horse-driven state carriage by the Vice-Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps. During his audience with The King, High Commissioner Tipu Usman conveyed the warm greetings and best wishes of the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan to His Majesty. He reaffirmed the deep respect and affection the people of Pakistan hold for His Majesty and recalled the fond memories of his previous visit to Pakistan. The High Commissioner reiterated Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its longstanding and multifaceted relations with the United Kingdom, particularly in the areas of trade, investment, cultural cooperation and people-to-people ties. His Majesty King Charles III, while welcoming the High Commissioner and Mrs. Usman, extended his good wishes to the leadership and people of Pakistan.

Could the US pull its forces from the Gulf?

KUWAIT: Al Majalla explains how the US war on Iran has changed regional power calculations and exposed how vulnerable US military installations across the region can be
On the night of 17 July 2026, an Iranian missile attack hit buildings housing American troops at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, killing three US service members and damaging at least 19 buildings in the vicinity, according to satellite imagery. The attack was part of an ongoing kinetic confrontation with Iran that began when the US attacked it on 28 February along with Israel, killing Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and several members of Iran's top-tier leadership. It showed how vulnerable US bases had become in a region put there to project American power. As the war dragged on, costs piled up. By 16 October, cost estimates reached $47.1bn, with damage to bases adding an additional $5bn price tag. One source cited by The Wall Street Journal suggested that figure could reach $15bn. The rising cost of the war, coupled with the increasing vulnerability of US military bases and installations across the region, has revived a question that has long hung over the Gulf for years. Is America leaving? And what kind of security architecture is best suited to replace it? While a decision to completely withdraw US forces from the Gulf has yet to be made, Washington is said to be mulling troop relocation and reduction. An October report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies said US military presence in the Middle East is likely to shift towards the Eastern Mediterranean, warning that allies and adversaries alike would interpret this move as proof of a weakening US commitment to Gulf security. And in a September podcast interview with The Christian Science Monitor, former CIA director and CENTCOM commander David Petraeus said American bases in the region were "no longer viable". For her part, Jennifer Kavanagh, director of military analysis at Defence Priorities, proposes closing American bases in Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait.–**APP**

PSX, UNICEF, Pakistan Business Council ring the bell for children

KARACHI: Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), in collaboration with UNICEF and the Pakistan Business Council (PBC), hosted a Ring the Bell for Children ceremony at PSX on World Children's Day, calling on businesses to put children's rights at the heart of their decisions, policies and practices. The bell-ringing ceremony marked Pakistan's participation in the global campaign led by UNICEF and the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges (UN SSE) initiative, bringing together stock exchanges across 25 countries and five continents to encourage businesses and investors to consider children's rights in their decisions and practices. The event also marked the launch of the report, Making Children Count: Sustainability Reporting in Pakistan, presenting a first-ever assessment of the reporting of 98 companies listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange against 29 indicators related to children's rights and business. The assessment found out that 78% of the companies reviewed reported community investments benefiting children, while children remain less visible in reporting governance, human rights due diligence, workplaces practices, supply chains, products and services, and climate and environmental considerations. Only 3% of the assessed companies explicitly disclose a commitment to respecting children's rights. The report highlights an opportunity for businesses to build on this foundation by integrating children's rights more systematically into core business and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practices. This comes at a time when the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) is moving towards phased mandatory ESG reporting requirements beginning in 2029, creating an important opportunity to strength children's visibility in Pakistan's evolving sustainability reporting landscape. "Pakistan is home to 112 million children, who are the employees, entrepreneurs, consumers and business leaders of tomorrow. But business impacts their lives long before they enter the workforce. From their parents' working conditions to the products they use, the food they consume, the digital environments they navigate, and the communities in which they grow up, business decisions influence their health, development and opportunities," said Pernille Ironside, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan. "Capital markets have an important role in encouraging transparency, responsible corporate conduct and long-term value creation. Recognizing children's rights within the sustainability agenda is an important part of this responsibility. Through the PSX Sustainability Index and our engagement with listed companies, we see an opportunity to encourage greater awareness and progressively strengthen the integration of child-rights considerations into corporate sustainability practices," said Farukh H. Sabzwari, CEO, Pakistan Stock Exchange. The report calls on businesses to build on existing investments in children by integrating children's rights more systematically into core business strategies and ESG practices. It also highlights the role of regulators, stock exchanges and investors in providing guidance, strengthening accountability and encouraging companies to identify and address their impacts on children. The ringing of the bell on World Children's Day brought businesses, markets and other stakeholders together around a shared message: children's rights are everyone's responsibility. From decisions made in boardrooms to policies shaping workplaces, supply chains and investment, every sector has a role to play in putting children first and building a better future for every child.–**DNA**

Gillani meets President of the Senate of Thailand in Bangkok

Chairman Gillani said that Pakistan and Thailand enjoy longstanding, close and friendly relations, as well as strong cooperation in regional and multilateral forums

DNA

BANGKOK: Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani, held a warm and cordial meeting with his counterpart, the President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Thailand, H.E. Mongkol Surasajja, in Bangkok.
At the outset, Chairman Gillani thanked the President of the Senate of Thailand for meeting him on short notice. He said that although his visit to Thailand was short and firmed up very quickly, he was keen to have a brief exchange with his counterpart even within this limited window. Chairman Gillani said that Pakistan and Thailand enjoy longstanding, close and friendly relations, as well as strong cooperation in regional and multilateral forums. He expressed Pakistan's keen interest in further strengthening and diversifying relations with Thailand, both in the bilateral context as well as in the context of ASEAN. He noted that Pakistan and Thailand this year are celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations - a milestone that reflects the depth and warmth of the friendship between the two peoples. Recalling the historic bonds between the two countries, Chairman Gillani said the people of Pakistan vividly remember and cherish the landmark visit of the Late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the Great, and Queen Mother Sirikit to Pakistan in 1962. He also recalled that His Majesty King Vajiralongkorn visited Pakistan on three occasions - in 1991, 1998 and 2006 - in his capacity as Crown Prince. Chairman Gillani said that after the memorable visit of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn to Pakistan in 2012, the President of Pakistan had again extended an invitation to Her Royal Highness in 2025. Pakistan looks forward to welcoming HRH Princess Sirindhorn, and hopes that the Palace would soon share a set of dates for the visit. He noted that the last Prime Minister-level exchanges between Pakistan and Thailand took place in 2013, when former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra visited Pakistan in August and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Thailand in November 2013.
Chairman Gillani further informed that the Prime Minister of Pakistan on 20 October 2026 has extended an invitation to H.E. Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul, Prime Minister of Thailand, to visit Pakistan. He expressed hope that this visit could take place soon.
Chairman Gillani noted that parliamentarians of the two countries tend to regularly interact on the sidelines of multilateral forums such as the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) or the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA). He stressed the need to also increase bilateral engagement between parliamentarians of the two countries. He informed that he has established a dedicated Thailand-Pakistan Friendship Group in the Senate of Pakistan. He expressed happiness to learn that Thailand too has recently established a Joint Executive Committee of Thailand-Pakistan Parliamentarians Friendship Group, comprising eight members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. He expressed confidence that the two friendship groups will now engage regularly, not only with each other but also with respective embassies, as parliamentary diplomacy is an important element of overall bilateral relations.
He availed himself of the opportunity to invite the President of the Senate of Thailand, along with a senatorial delegation, to visit Pakistan soon. Chairman Gillani said Pakistan is Thailand's second-largest trade partner in South Asia and Pakistan looks forward to further strengthening and enhancing bilateral trade ties with the Kingdom.
He noted that bilateral trade in 2025-26 stood at USD 1.59 billion, heavily tilted in favour of Thailand - Pakistan's exports were recorded at USD 297 million while imports from Thailand were USD 1.31 billion. He said that businesses in Thailand will find several possibilities of investment and joint ventures in Pakistan's food processing, seafood, gems and jewelry, and tourism sectors.
He added that by establishing its industrial units in Pakistan, Thailand can get easy access to the Central Asian, Middle East, African, and even European markets. Pakistan serves as a natural gateway to these regions - offering Thai investors access to vast regional markets, a large consumer base, and a strategic location at the crossroads of Asia. Chairman Gillani said that Pakistan understands that following recent clashes with Cambodia and withdrawal of Cambodian workforce, Thailand is facing labour shortages in manufacturing and construction sectors. He said Thailand can meet its human resource requirements by opening its job market to Pakistan's low-skilled and semi-skilled workforce. Chairman Gillani said Pakistan's rich Gandhara heritage serves as an important historical connection as well as a significant factor for rapidly augmenting cultural and people-to-people ties between the two countries.
He informed that Pakistan's Embassy in Bangkok is working closely with the Thai Ministry of Culture to hold an Exhibition of the Buddhist Gandhara Artifacts in Bangkok in 2027. He said this exhibition will give a chance to the Thai people to experience Pakistan's rich Buddhist heritage first-hand. Chairman Gillani also briefed his Thai counterpart in detail on the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC) - a forum founded on the idea of promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy. He informed that the ISC has successfully held two Conferences - the first in Pakistan and the second in Cambodia - and has emerged as an important platform for Speakers and Presiding Officers to work together for peace, cooperation, and prosperity. He expressed hope for Thailand's active participation and support for the ISC in the future. The President of the Senate of Thailand appreciated Chairman Gillani's vision for parliamentary diplomacy and the ISC, and expressed interest in further strengthening cooperation between the two Senates. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to work together for peace, regional stability, and shared prosperity. The meeting was followed by a lunch hosted in honour of Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani. The President of the Senate of Thailand accepted Chairman Gillani's invitation to visit Pakistan.

Philippines looks into hosting Elon's SpaceX launch site

MANILA: The Philippines is exploring the possibility of hosting a launch facility for Elon Musk's SpaceX, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Friday.
Musk, the world's richest person and head of SpaceX and Tesla, was reportedly in Manila earlier this week as part of US President Donald Trump's Asia tour delegation. Marcos said the Philippines has begun early discussions with Musk to position the country as a location for planned expansion of launch sites for the trillionaire's space transport company. "He is expanding the launch sites for SpaceX. And maybe the Philippines can look into it," he told reporters on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Shenzhen.
"We're not trying to be NASA, we're not trying to send a man to the moon or to Mars. What we're trying to do is ... to get into the business of launch sites."
According to Marcos, the Philippines' geographical location makes it suitable to host a launch facility. "The science behind it is very clear. You always launch eastwards, and because the Philippines is at the western edge of the Pacific, when they launch, should there be a problem, it would fall into the sea. It will not fall into populated areas," he said.–**APP**

EU, UK agree 'landmark' deal

BRUSSELS: UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham and the EU's top officials on Friday sealed deals to ease trade and youth mobility at a summit in Brussels, billed as a first step in a push to rebuild ties after Brexit. A decade after Britain voted to leave, the mood was upbeat as a string quintet played the anthems of both sides and Burnham shook hands with EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa. A potential dampener emerged as the 27-nation bloc and London jostled over linking ultimate implementation of the deals to Britain agreeing to cut university fees for EU students – but as the talks kicked off, both sides cast the day as a win. "This is a good day for Britain. This is a good day for Europe," Burnham told the gathering, hailing a "landmark" agreement – while the EU's von der Leyen called it a "turning point" in relations. On the table in Brussels were three main agreements: a deal cutting red tape for food exports, another linking the two sides' emissions-trading schemes and a third on a "youth experience scheme." Burnham argues those moves – in the pipeline long before he entered Downing Street – will help fix some of the damage Brexit inflicted. British firms will export to Europe more easily again and 100,000 under-30s from each side will be allowed to reside for up to three years in each other's territory for work, study or travel.–**APP**

Syria to launch vaccination drive against polio

DAMASCUS: Syria's health ministry is preparing a vast vaccination campaign, with UN backing, to protect children in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor against polio, following the detection of three cases. Polio, which mainly affects children under five, is an infectious disease. One in 200 infections leads to irreversible paralysis, and among those paralyzed, five to 10 percent die. Thanks to immunization efforts, the disease has mostly been eradicated globally. "The ministry is preparing to launch a comprehensive vaccination campaign against polio targeting more than 371,000 children under five in the province of Deir Ezzor," said Yasser Al-Farouh, who heads the ministry's department for communicable and noncommunicable illnesses. The campaign is expected to begin on November 30, he said, according to state news agency SANA. It follows the detection of three cases of polio, with authorities putting the risk of an epidemic outbreak as "high." Syria has emerged from a long civil war that has put great strain on the health system._**APP**

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Briefs

South Korea confirms its first case of cholera in 10 years

SEOUL: South Korea on Friday reported its first case of cholera in 10 years, with health authorities urging people to take precautionary measures, use only safe water and wash their food properly. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said health workers confirmed cholera from test samples of a person who had visited a hospital emergency room in the southeastern port city of Changwon earlier this month, showing symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea.
The agency said the unidentified person, who recovered and was discharged on Tuesday, had not traveled overseas in the past two months. It said health workers were trying to trace the source of infection and the people the person had been in contact with. It was the country's first case of cholera since 2016, when authorities identified three cases suspected to be caused by contaminated seafood. At least 162 people got sick in a larger outbreak in 2001.
Cholera spreads mostly through contaminated water and food and can also spread through contact with an infected person's stool or vomit, according to the agency. Diarrhea is the most common symptom, and severe illness can lead to dehydration or shock that could potentially be fatal if treatment is delayed. – **APP**

Spanish PM Sanchez admits mistakes

MADRID: Spain's Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez acknowledged making "mistakes" as he faced off with his main conservative rival in a key debate on Thursday before an election next week that could leave the far right on the cusp of power.
The pair clashed over the economy, housing, immigration, corruption, foreign policy, as well as policies toward women, repeatedly interrupting each other during the live televised showdown. "My government has not been perfect, I have made mistakes. But I am also fully aware that we have always governed in the right direction," Sanchez said at the outset. Pointing to economic growth and employment figures, he argued Spain was in better shape than when he took power in 2018, a claim rejected by the leader of the mainstream right-wing Popular Party (PP), Alberto Nunez Feijoo. "Having a job does not guarantee you can make ends meet. Having a job does not guarantee you can afford a home either. You have crushed the middle class," he told Sanchez. "The Spanish economy is posting growth figures, but many families are still having to perform financial gymnastics to make ends meet." – **APP**

DPM reaffirms Pak commitment to partnership with Türkiye

The Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the longstanding bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Türkiye and welcomed cooperation between Turkish Petroleum and Pakistan's national energy companies



DNA

KARACHI: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to a long-term partnership with Türkiye in offshore exploration, minerals and renewable energy. He was addressing a welcome ceremony for the Turkish seismic research vessel Oruç Reis in Karachi today. Ishaq Dar assured the Turkish partners of the Government's full support for the mission and underscored the importance of maritime safety and environmental protection as Pakistan develops its blue economy.
The Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the longstanding bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Türkiye and welcomed cooperation between Turkish Petroleum and Pakistan's national energy companies. He noted that the seismic survey would provide valuable data to guide future offshore exploration in Pakistan.
Following the welcome ceremony, Ishaq Dar also visited the Turkish seismic research vessel Oruç Reis and interacted with Pakistani and Turkish officials on board. He was accompanied by Türkiye's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Alparslan Bayraktar, Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Governor of Sindh Syed Nehal Hashmi and Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Irfan Neziroglu.

Sydney man charged with car bomb plot

MELBOURNE: Australian police on Friday arrested a man in the greater Sydney area on charges of researching how to build a car bomb and downloading violent material inspired by the Daesh group. Police stressed they found no evidence of a link to the upcoming first anniversary of an IS-inspired attack at Sydney's Bondi Beach. Two gunmen opened fire on a Dec. 14 Hanukkah celebration, leaving 15 people dead and 40 wounded.
Nowroz Rayed Amin, 35, from Ingleburn on Sydney's southwestern outskirts, was charged with collecting documents likely to facilitate terrorist acts and possessing violent extremist material obtained online, Australian Federal Police Deputy Commissioner Hilda Sirec said.
"It will be alleged in court that the man was researching how to build a vehicle-borne, improvised explosive device, which we allege, for use in a potential terrorist act," Sirec told reporters.
Amin appeared in the Campbelltown Local Court later Friday on the two charges, which carry a potential combined maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. – **APP**

Musadik Malik in New Delhi to attend SCO dialogue forum

News Desk

NEW DELHI: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik arrived in New Delhi on Friday to attend the SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum. His visit is a first by a Pakistani minister since former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari attended the SCO meeting in the Indian state of Goa in May 2023, and two years after India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar attended the bloc's meeting in Islamabad in 2024.
Musadik was received at the airport by Pakistan's Chargé d'Affaires Saad Waraich, according to the Pakistan High Commission in India. Dr Malik will lead the Pakistan delegation at the forum, being held from Nov 20 to Nov 22. The gathering will bring together representatives from Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states to discuss issues related to civilisational dialogue and cultural understanding, the Foreign Office said in an earlier statement.
"The government of Pakistan remains committed to promoting dialogue among civilisations and fostering people-to-people contacts within the SCO framework in a spirit of mutual respect," the statement said.
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also scheduled to address the "Civilisational Dialogue Forum" of the 10-member regional bloc. The forum was proposed by Modi at the SCO Council of Heads of State summit in Tianjin, China, in September 2025. Recent high-level engagements between Pakistan and India have largely taken place under the SCO framework; for instance, Bilawal's visit in 2023 and Jaishankar's in 2024. But neither visit had featured formal bilateral talks. More recently, India's SCO National Coordinator Alok Dimri visited Islamabad in late September for a preparatory meeting ahead of the next SCO Council of Heads of State summit.

Court's genocide ruling 'not fair': Myanmar

NAYPYIDAW: A historic ruling by the top UN court that Myanmar committed genocide against its Rohingya minority was "not fair," the country's presidential spokeswoman said Friday.
The International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Thursday laid out searing evidence of Myanmar's atrocities against the mostly Muslim Rohingya during a 2017 crackdown in western Rakhine state. Myanmar's security forces killed thousands of Rohingya civilians, committed "widespread sexual violence" against women and "extreme violence" against children, the court's president said.
Asked about the ICJ decision at a press conference in the capital Naypyidaw, spokeswoman Khaing Khaing Soe called it unfair. "Despite efforts from our side, when we look at the result, not all 15 judges agreed with the decision," she said, noting the 9-6 vote. "So this was not a unanimous decision," she added. "I would say it is not fair." Myanmar had always denied genocide, arguing that its actions targeted a military uprising from insurgents after a series of attacks left a dozen security personnel dead. But the ICJ ruling dismissed Myanmar's argument that it was carrying out counter-insurgency operations. – **APP**

Malaysia says it will resettle 10,000 Rohingya refugees

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia said on Friday that it will resettle 10,000 Rohingya refugees in Turkiye through a structured skills training program, in what would be one of the biggest resettlement initiatives involving the Rohingya since a military crackdown on their native Rakhine state in 2017. The plan announced by Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi came a day after the International Court of Justice ruled that the killings and widespread sexual violence against the Rohingya people by Myanmar's security forces in 2017 amounted to state-sponsored genocide.
The proposal is part of the government's efforts to address the Rohingya refugee situation in Malaysia in a more "coordinated, effective and humane manner," Ahmad Zahid said in a statement. "I welcome the government of Turkiye's agreement to receive 10,000 Rohingya refugees. This marks an important step in Malaysia's efforts to find a long-term solution to an issue that has long posed challenges for migration management and national security," he said.
Ahmad Zahid said the initiative with Turkiye could serve as a model for how countries can work together to manage refugee resettlement. "The Government will work with the Turkish authorities, UNHCR and relevant agencies to coordinate participant selection, training, documentation and resettlement. Implementation will take into account industry needs, the consent of the individuals concerned and applicable international rules," he said. The Turkish foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Malaysia has come under pressure to send Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar amid rising tensions with local communities. According to UNHCR, Malaysia had about 193,000 registered refugees from Myanmar at the end of February, around two-thirds of them Rohingya. Malaysia has sent more than 10,000 Myanmar nationals back to their country since January. – **DNA**

Russia is 'comfortable' with NATO-like security guarantees for Ukraine



BERLIN: US envoy Jared Kushner said Thursday he believes Russia is "comfortable" with NATO-like security guarantees for post-war Ukraine, while Kyiv's European allies expressed concerns about President Donald Trump's meeting in China with the Kremlin leader. President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, vowed to retaliate against Ukraine for the "seriously damage" it caused with three aerial attacks this week on the vital Kerch Bridge, which links occupied Crimea with the Russian mainland.
"We will respond to these attacks, and I want everyone to be clear about that," Putin told reporters in Shenzhen, China, where he attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.
Kushner and fellow US envoy Steve Witkoff were in Berlin to reassure nearly 40 European leaders about Trump's discussions on ending the nearly 5-year-old war at his historic trilateral talks with Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping.
Ukraine has long sought entry into NATO, particularly for its common defense guarantee under the alliance's Article 5, in which an attack on one member is considered an attack on all. It was not immediately clear what form potential security guarantees would take, and whether Russia and Ukraine would ultimately accept them. Trump signals support for security guarantee for Ukraine The Berlin meeting was convened to explore Ukraine's postwar security arrangements with Kyiv's European backers. – **APP**

Indian govt targeting Muslim citizens in voter roll revisions

India's Election Commission says it was removing duplicate, deceased, shifted and otherwise ineligible voters and that anyone excluded in error can pursue appeals

DNA

WASHINGTON: India has escalated its targeting of religious minorities during a voter list revision that struck off tens of millions of names nationwide, a US panel on religious freedom said on Thursday. "The Indian gov't is targeting Muslim citizens by removing them from voter rolls, calling them 'foreigners,' and now illegally deporting them," Asif Mahmood, the chair of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, said in a statement. India's voter list revision removed 130 million names, roughly the population of Mexico, in the largest deletion of voters in the country's history.
Data shows the omissions disproportionately affect Muslims, India's largest minority, who have faced what rights groups describe as exclusionary policies and rising discrimination since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party took power in 2014.
India's Election Commission says it was removing duplicate, deceased, shifted and otherwise ineligible voters and that anyone excluded in error can pursue appeals.
The revision has become entangled with a separate drive to identify and expel suspected illegal immigrants, even though removal from the rolls does not itself establish that someone is a foreigner. "The Indian government's expulsion of its own citizens based on their Muslim faith is a shocking escalation of tactics that target religious minorities," said Gene Mills, a commissioner on the US panel.
Mills urged the State Department to designate India as a "country of particular concern."
USCIRF is a bipartisan body of the US government that monitors religious freedom around the world and makes policy recommendations, which are not binding. Washington has not acted on its recent recommendations on India. India's foreign ministry has cast USCIRF as biased. New Delhi has repeatedly dismissed such criticism and called it interference in the country's internal affairs. The Indian embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment. The voter roll revisions sparked protests in recent weeks, with opposition groups and student demonstrators saying the revisions affected those unlikely to vote for the Hindu nationalist BJP. Rights experts condemned India's crackdown on the protests.
US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said last month the issue was a "domestic political matter" and Washington would not comment on it. UN experts and human rights groups say abuse of minorities has risen under Modi. They point to rising hate speech, a religion-based citizenship law that the UN calls "fundamentally discriminatory," the demolition of Muslim-owned properties, the removal of Muslim-majority occupied Kashmir's autonomy and anti-conversion legislation that challenges freedom of belief.

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