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Information minister takes Punjab CM, JUI chief to task

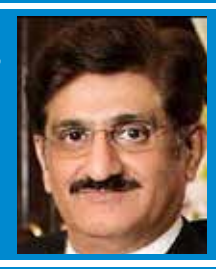
Detailed News On Page-08

Interior minister shortage of nurses to be overcome



Detailed News On Page-04

Sindh CM says development top priority



Detailed News On Page-02

Makkah Pact meeting

Pak, KSA, Turkiye reaffirm resolve to collective defence

Three countries pledge stronger defence cooperation and regional security coordination

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye have reaffirmed their commitment to collective defence, mutual solidarity and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity during a high-level meeting of the Makkah Defence Alliance in Islamabad, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said on Friday. Addressing a press conference after the second meeting of the alliance's Strategic, Political and Defence Committee (SPDC), Dar said the three countries reviewed the evolving regional security situation and reiterated their determination to work collectively towards regional peace, security and stability.

The meeting was attended by Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir from Pakistan. Saudi Arabia was represented by its defence and foreign ministers, Prince Khalid bin Salman and Prince Faisal bin Farhan, respectively, while Türkiye's delegation included Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and National Defence Minister Yaşar Güler.

Dar said the three sides reviewed progress on decisions taken during the previous meeting and expressed satisfaction over efforts to establish and operationalise the Alliance Secretariat in Saudi Arabia. He added that the countries had agreed to continue consultations to enhance cooperation and coordination on matters of mutual interest, support efforts to de-escalate regional tensions and encourage the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and diplomacy.

The three countries also strongly condemned, Dar said, the persistent attacks by the Houthi militia targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure in Saudi Arabia. They reaffirmed their collective resolve to continue and intensify efforts to support the Kingdom in safeguarding its security, sovereignty and territorial integrity under the collective defence

Continued on Page 06

Erdogan approves Makkah Agreement

The Turkish Parliament approved the agreement on November 5, paving the way for Ankara to send military support to Riyadh amid attacks by the Houthis in Yemen against the Kingdom

DNA

ISTANBUL: The Turkish official gazette reported, Friday, that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has officially approved the Makkah Agreement on Joint Defense with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, completing Turkiye's ratification process after it was approved by Parliament earlier this month.

The three countries signed the joint defense agreement in Makkah in August amid rising concerns over the US-Israeli war against Iran, and the three nations are scheduled to hold meetings in Islamabad on Friday and Saturday.

The Turkish Parliament approved the agreement on November 5, paving the way for Ankara to send military support to Riyadh amid attacks by the Houthis in Yemen against the Kingdom.

Under the agreement, any attack on one party is considered an attack on all. A deputy from the ruling Turkish party told Reuters last month that Turkiye would also present a proposal to Parliament for a mandate to deploy military personnel in Saudi Arabia under the agreement. Turkiye has the second-largest army in NATO.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with participants of the 2nd meeting of the Strategic Political and Defense Committee (S-PDC) in PM House in Islamabad on 27 November 2026. – DNA

President meets Shujaat

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday visited the residence of former Prime Minister and PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain in Lahore and inquired after his health.

During the meeting, the President expressed his best wishes for Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain's early recovery. The two leaders also exchanged views on national matters and the overall political situation in the country.

President Zardari arrived in Lahore earlier in the day for a two-day visit and was received at the airport by Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan.

The meeting with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain formed part of his engagements in the provincial capital. Also present at the meeting were Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, Federal Ministers Mohsin Naqvi and Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Provincial Minister Chaudhry Shafi Hussain,

Continued on Page 06

PM for simplification of bank financing procedures for SMEs

Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the need to consider export data available through Pakistan Single Window, as well as participation in supply chains through Exim Insurance and digital invoicing, as alternative collateral for extending loans to eligible SMEs

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed to simplify procedures for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to access bank financing. He was chairing a meeting regarding SME Financing in Islamabad today. The Prime Minister said SMEs are the backbone of the economy and facilitating them will boost economic activity, employment and business opportunities.

He further instructed to provide effective guidance and support to SMEs in accessing financial resources, preparing business documentation and exploring opportunities in the export sector. Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the need to consider export data available through Pakistan Single Window, as well as participation in supply chains through Exim Insurance and digital invoicing, as alternative collateral for extending loans to eligible SMEs.

Continued on Page 06

Hanif Abbasi calls on prime minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad today. During the meeting, they discussed ongoing and proposed railway development projects across the country, progress on their implementation and other matters related to the Ministry of Railways. The Prime Minister directed that the projects be completed on time and that effective measures be taken in this regard. Minister for Power Sardar Awais Leghari also called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad today. The Federal Minister briefed the Prime Minister on

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

JUI-F claims Fazl arrested in Lahore

DIG Operations Faisal Kamran denies Fazl's arrest, says JUI-F chief returned home with his convoy

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE:Conflicting claims emerged over the reported arrest of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman near Thokar Niaz Baig, with a party official claiming he had been detained while Lahore police denied the arrest. JUI-F Deputy Secretary Information for Lahore Hafiz Zain claimed that party chief Fazl had been arrested near Thokar Niaz Baig, alleging that Lahore CCPO Bilal Siddique Kamyana and DIG Operations Faisal Kamran had detained him. However, the DIG Operations rejected the claim, saying Fazl had not been arrested as he had returned to his residence along with his convoy.

ADB approves $468 million in loans

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Friday approved two loans totalling $468 million to improve water and agriculture management in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. According to the bank, the financing will strengthen community resilience to shocks related to the changing climate, boost rural livelihoods and enhance food security for about 728,000 people. In a statement, the ADB said these included a $208m concessional loan for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Resilient Irrigated Agriculture Livelihoods Development Project that will help scale up agricultural productivity and increase incomes for smallholder farmers in Nowshera.

Pakistan seeks deeper cooperation with IAEA on nuclear security

In the concluding session, the Chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) underscored the importance of sustained international cooperation

FAISAL SHEIKH

Islamabad: The 15th Annual Meeting of the International Network for Nuclear Security Training and Support Centres (NSSC Network) concluded in Islamabad on November 26 after four days of technical sessions, expert discussions, and bilateral exchanges.

Hosted by Pakistan in collaboration with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) from 23–26 November, the gathering brought together delegates to address evolving nuclear security challenges, institutional sustainability, human resource development, and the future of international cooperation in nuclear security training.

The meeting opened on its first day at the Pakistan Centre of Excellence for Nuclear Security (PCENS). Senior officials from Pakistan and the IAEA delivered opening remarks, and a commemorative plaque was unveiled marking ten years since Pakistan first hosted the Network's Annual Meeting in 2016.

On the second day, a special event at the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) Headquarters commemorated 20 years of Pakistan–IAEA cooperation in nuclear security. The programme included an exhibition of indigenous nuclear security technologies developed by Pakistan's national industry, allowing local developers to engage directly with IAEA officials and international delegates. The event also highlighted the contributions of PCENS and the National Institute of Safety and Security (NISAS)—an IAEA Collaborating Centre—to professional training, research, and capacity building.

Delegates later visited the Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (PIEAS) in Islamabad, where they received briefings on Pakistan's nuclear engineering,

Continued on Page 06

'Security of Chinese projects priority'

DNA

BEIJING: Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has sought zero-tariff access for Pakistani goods to the Chinese market with the aim of increasing Pakistan's annual exports to China from about three billion dollars to 20-25 billion dollars.

During a meeting with Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee (IDCPC) Liu Haixing, he pointed to tariff concessions China has extended to African countries as a possible model for improving the competitiveness of Pakistani exports.

Continued on Page 06

Hackers breach US Air force flagship cloud one computing platform

Investigators have called in Cyber Command, US military's cyber force, to assess damage, says source

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Hackers have breached the US Air Force's flagship cloud computing platform, three people familiar with the matter told Reuters, in a development that could jeopardise a vast swathe of sensitive tactical, personnel and logistics data. The intrusion at Cloud One was discovered within the past month or so during work to upgrade the system, two of the people said, adding that the discovery has led to disruption across the platform. Reuters could not establish the identity of the hackers, the full scope of

Continued on Page 06

UN chief condemns deadly drone attack in Kuwait

Guterres is "deeply concerned by the continued escalation in the region" and called on all parties to "refrain from any actions that could further undermine regional peace and security

DNA

NEW YORK: UN chief Antonio Guterres condemned a drone attack blamed on Iran that killed two Italians in Kuwait, calling on "all parties to exercise restraint". AFP reports. The secretary general expressed solidarity with Kuwait and offered his condolences to the families of the victims, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Guterres is "deeply concerned by the continued escalation in the region" and called on all parties to "refrain from any actions that could further undermine regional peace and security". "Renewed hostilities would have devastating consequences for the region and beyond," his spokesman added.

Iran's military has denied that it was behind the deadly attack on Kuwait. Kuwait's foreign ministry says it has summoned Iran's ambassador over "continued Iranian attacks", media reports, after a drone attack a day earlier killed two Italians in the first fatal strike in the Gulf state for months.

The ministry "summoned His Excellency Ambassador Mohammad Totonji, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the State of Kuwait, and handed him a note of protest over the continued Iranian attacks on the State of Kuwait, most recently the drone attack that yesterday, Thursday, targeted a vital site in the country, killing two Italian nationals," it wrote on X.

Meanwhile, the US military said it disabled a commercial ship in the Gulf of Oman on Thursday after its crew attempted to run the US blockade of Iran.

Military aircraft launched precision munitions that struck the stern of the Palau-flagged M/V Pacific Archer after it departed from the port city of Bandar Abbas, and the ship's propulsion was disabled while the civilian crew was unharmed, US Central Command said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian says the US and Israel bear responsibility for an attack on a school in Minab, which claimed the lives of 168 children.

"No agony is greater than a father burying the child he should still hold in his arms. The US government and Israeli regime bear responsibility for Minab's 168 murdered children," he wrote in a post on X.

"We will never forget. This atrocity exposes the hypocrisy of those who claim to defend human rights."



Islamabad POST
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ANF seizes over 676 kg of narcotics

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Friday seized 676.8 kilograms of narcotics in three intelligence-based operations in Peshawar and arrested three suspects, including the alleged kingpin of an inter-provincial drug trafficking network.

According to an ANF spokesperson, the recovered narcotics comprised 660 kg of hashish and 16.8 kg of opium. Preliminary investigations revealed that the suspects were attempting to transport the drugs from Peshawar to Karachi. In the first operation, the ANF intercepted an oil tanker on Ring Road near Motorway Chowk, Peshawar, and recovered 270 kg of hashish concealed in specially fabricated compartments. The driver was arrested on the spot.

Information provided by the arrested driver led the force to intercept a car on Ring Road, from which 286.8 kg of narcotics, including 270 kg of hashish and 16.8 kg of opium, were recovered and arrested a Afghan national driver, identified as Atiqullah. Further investigations revealed that Atiqullah was allegedly the kingpin of the inter-provincial trafficking network and was wanted in several narcotics cases. The spokesperson added that he had allegedly obtained a Pakistani national identity card through forged documents. During subsequent investigations, the ANF officials identified another associate and intercepted an SUV on University Road, Peshawar, recovering 120 kg of hashish from its trunk. The driver was also arrested. The spokesperson said links established among the arrested suspects indicated their alleged involvement in an organised drug trafficking network operating from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Punjab and Sindh.

Further investigations were underway to identify other members of the network, including its financial backers and facilitators. The ANF reiterated its commitment to combating drug trafficking through intelligence-based operations and surveillance to bring all those involved to justice.—**APP**

CDA, NUST agree to joint efforts to tackle smog

The understanding was reached at a meeting chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Sohail Ashraf at CDA Headquarters on Friday. Member Environment Abdullah Khurram Niazi, Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Dr Anam Fatima, NUST senior faculty member Prof Dr Muhammad Fahim Khokhar and other officials attended the meeting



ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) have agreed to collaborate on measures to combat smog and environmental pollution in Islamabad, including research initiatives, improved road infrastructure and stricter monitoring of pollution sources.

The understanding was reached at a meeting chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Sohail Ashraf at CDA Headquarters on Friday. Member Environment Abdullah Khurram Niazi, Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Dr Anam Fatima, NUST senior faculty member Prof Dr Muhammad Fahim Khokhar and other officials attended the meeting. The meeting agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the CDA and NUST to promote research and development, strengthen environmental protection measures and develop an effective strategy to address smog in the capital. It was also decided to establish a dedicated fund for smog mitigation, environmental improvement and research projects. A committee comprising representatives of NUST and the CDA's Environment Wing will oversee the initiatives and submit fortnightly progress reports. The participants also discussed changes to road infrastructure to minimise dust pollution. The design of newly constructed roads and kerbstones will be revised to improve water drainage and prevent the accumulation of soil and debris along roadsides. The meeting also considered measures to promote electric vehicles, identify and take legal action against waste-burning sites, and issue smog alerts through mobile applications. Other proposed steps included water sprinkling at construction sites to control dust and camera-based monitoring of industrial units in sectors I-9 and I-10 and other areas.The meeting further discussed enforcing Euro-5 fuel standards, modernising solid waste management, establishing modern landfill sites, expanding the environmental monitoring network and shifting brick kilns to zigzag technology. Speaking at the meeting, Sohail Ashraf said smog and environmental pollution had become a national challenge and required a coordinated and effective response. He said the CDA would promote environmentally friendly designs in new roads and infrastructure projects to improve the city's environment, adding that providing citizens with a clean and healthy environment was an important responsibility of the authority.—**DNA**

Seminar on combating antimicrobial resistance held

DNA

PESHAWAR: The College of Veterinary Sciences, in collaboration with the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organized an awareness seminar and walk titled "One Health, One Action: Prevent AMR Now."

The event aimed to raise awareness regarding the growing global threat of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and its impact on human health, animals, agriculture, and the environment.

Professor Dr. Murad Ali Khan, Principal of the College and the focal person for the seminar, welcomed the participants and highlighted the significance of the "One Health" vision.

He emphasized that collaborative efforts are essential for safeguarding human and animal health, as well as ensuring a secure environment.

He noted that, according to the vision of Vice-Chancellor Dr. Imran Khan, improved public health and economic stability can only be achieved through food self-sufficiency and the sustainable development of the livestock sector. During the technical session, Dr. Asad Ali, former Director of Animal Health and an FAO representative provided a detailed overview of the scientific mechanisms and the evolution of antimicrobial resistance in microorganisms. Kiyal Akmatbek, Country Director for the FAO, highlighted the organization's pivotal role in curbing AMR within food-producing animals, a crucial step toward protecting public health.

In his concluding remarks, Professor Dr. Abdul Rehman, Dean of the Faculty of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences, commended the organizers, the FAO team, and ORIC for their efforts in successfully conducting the event.

Dr. Hamid Sattar emphasized the importance of responsible use of antibiotics, prevention of unnecessary medication use and necessity of collaborative measures to safeguard both human and animal health.

Subsequently, the participants took part in an awareness walk, expressing their commitment to collective responsibility and to playing an effective role in combating antimicrobial resistance.

Zong secures mandate to develop unified super app

ISLAMABAD: Zong has secured the mandate to develop and deliver Pakistan's National Unified Super App under the Digital Economy Enhancement Project (DEEP), marking a significant milestone in the country's digital transformation journey.

The initiative aims to bring more than 100 services offered by federal ministries and government bodies onto a single, secure digital platform, paving the way for more integrated, intelligent and citizen-centric public service delivery. Leveraging China Mobile's global technological expertise and developed in partnership with Alibaba, the solution combines international technology capabilities with Zong's local infrastructure, enterprise expertise and understanding of Pakistan's digital landscape. The collaboration is expected to provide a strong foundation for delivering scalable digital solutions at the national level. Moving beyond fragmented government portals and standalone applications, the National Super App aims to transform how citizens access and interact with public services. Through a unified interface and social messaging suite, citizens will be able to chat, share images and videos, access government services, submit applications, make payments, track requests and communicate with relevant departments. The platform is designed to reduce administrative hurdles, minimise physical visits and make public services more accessible, convenient and transparent. Available round the clock across devices and in multiple regional languages, it will also seek to improve inclusivity and bring government services closer to citizens. At the core of the initiative is an integrated technology ecosystem combining secure digital communication, intelligent service delivery, seamless payments and artificial intelligence (AI)-powered capabilities. Zong will provide secure messaging, real-time service tracking and a dedicated payment gateway to facilitate transparent and traceable government transactions. Integrated with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA)'s digital identity system, these capabilities will bring together connectivity, intelligent applications and digital transactions to establish a secure and integrated public service ecosystem. AI-powered assistance and intelligent analytics are also expected to enhance citizen engagement, streamline service delivery and improve operational efficiency. Commenting on the development, Farooq Raza Khan, Executive Director and Country Head of Government and Corporate Sales at Zong, said the company's technological advancement and growing enterprise capabilities had positioned it as a key technology partner in Pakistan's digital transformation.—**DNA**

Welfare facilities at Police Lines HQs reviewed

DNA

RAWALPINDI City Police Officer (CPO) Dr Sardar Ghias Gul conducted a detailed visit to Police Lines Headquarters and inspected various facilities provided to police officers and personnel.

During the visit, he inspected the Virtual Women Police Station, Constable Altaf Hussain Shaheed Mess, recreation hall, gymnasium, library, barber shop and auditorium.

At the Virtual Women Police Station, the CPO reviewed arrangements for the prompt redressal of women's complaints and the use of modern technology to facilitate them.

At Constable Altaf Hussain Shaheed Mess, he inspected the quality of food, cleanliness and overall arrangements. He also reviewed the facilities available at the recreation hall, gymnasium and library. The CPO directed the concerned officials to ensure the provision of quality facilities for police officers and personnel.

He said the welfare of the police force was a top priority and that all possible measures would be taken to ensure the provision of better facilities and welfare services.

Nadeem assures full support to PPAF

GILGIT:Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Imran Nadeem Shigri has assured full support and cooperation to the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) for expanding development initiatives across Gilgit-Baltistan, particularly in climate resilience, environmental protection, renewable energy, hydro-power, agriculture and technical skills development. He gave the assurance during a high-level meeting in Skardu attended by PPAF Chief Executive Officer Nadir Gul Barech, provincial ministers and representatives of various government departments, including the district administration, Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority, Forest Department and Agriculture Department. The meeting discussed key regional development priorities, including climate change impacts, glacier-related risks, disaster management, women's empowerment, youth engagement, vocational training and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Speaking on the occasion, PPAF CEO Nadir Gul Barech reaffirmed the organization's commitment to poverty alleviation, inclusive economic growth and community-driven development. He highlighted the importance of strengthening local institutions and civil society organizations while empowering women and youth through sustainable livelihood initiatives. He said Gilgit-Baltistan's unique geographical and environmental conditions required innovative and community-based development solutions, adding that PPAF was committed to working with the provincial government, local institutions and communities to strengthen climate resilience, protect mountain ecosystems, promote renewable energy and improve agricultural livelihoods.

He also highlighted PPAF's nationwide Dukhtaran-e-Pakistan Campaign, scheduled from November 25 to December 10, 2026, under the theme "Strong Families Make Strong Societies.—**APP**

Dialogue only way to resolve political differences: Musadik

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Dr Musadik Malik said that dialogue was the only way to resolve political differences and address the issues facing the country. Speaking to a private television channel, he urged the Opposition to engage in dialogue to resolve political issues. He said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) should play its role as an Opposition party and discuss matters of public interest. He said the government had offered talks to PTI leaders, but they were reluctant to move forward. Dr Musadik Malik stressed that political parties should sit together and work collectively for the prosperity and well-being of the people of Pakistan.—**APP**

PDMA Balochistan showcases climate resilience initiatives

QUETTA: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan marked a significant presence at the 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as Director General and Relief Commissioner Jahanzaib Khan Ghorezai represented the province at the global climate summit being held in Antalya, Türkiye. Director General Jahanzeb Khan Ghorezai highlights disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies at Pakistan Pavilion, said a news release. Addressing an international audience at the Pakistan Pavilion, Jahanzaib Ghorezai delivered a presentation during a panel discussion titled "Building Climate-Resilient Frontlines: Institutionalizing Disaster Risk Reduction and Anticipatory Action in Balochistan." The session brought together country delegates, development and humanitarian organizations, climate experts, researchers, and policymakers from across the world. The presentation highlighted Balochistan's ongoing efforts to strengthen resilience against climate-related disasters through its integrated climate resilience and disaster preparedness programme, a comprehensive initiative designed to enhance preparedness, response capabilities, and community resilience in one of Pakistan's most climate-vulnerable regions. Speaking at the event, the PDMA delegation showcased several key components of the programme, including the modernization of emergency operations centres, which are aimed at improving coordination and response during emergencies and natural disasters. A major focus of the presentation was the development of multi-hazard early warning systems and the promotion of anticipatory action mechanisms, enabling authorities and communities to take preventive measures before disasters strike. Officials emphasized that proactive preparedness can significantly reduce the human and economic impacts of climate-induced emergencies. The presentation also highlighted efforts to strengthen Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capacity, ensuring that emergency responders are equipped with the skills, training, and resources necessary to effectively manage disaster situations.—**DNA**

Allama Iqbal conference held at Governor House

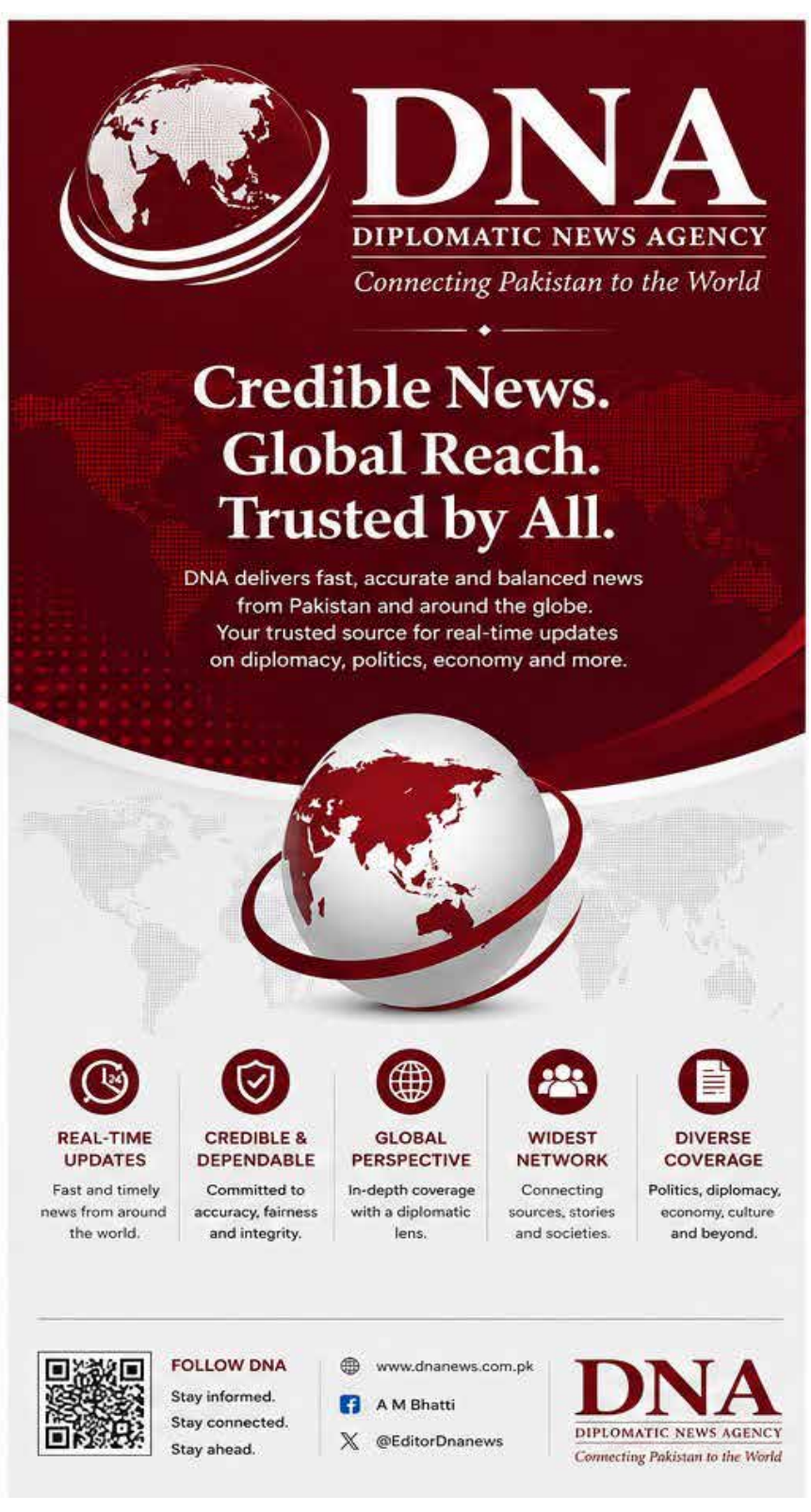
DNA

PESHAWAR, Nov 27 (APP):Vice Chancellor of FATA University Professor Mohsin Nawaz attended an Allama Muhammad Iqbal Conference organized by the Muslim Institute at Governor House here Friday.

The conference brought together prominent intellectuals, scholars, researchers, political and social figures, and vice chancellors of various universities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to discuss the philosophy, poetry and vision of Allama Iqbal. Speakers highlighted Iqbal's concept of selfhood, philosophy of life, national consciousness and the relevance of his teachings in the contemporary world. The conference aimed to promote Iqbal's message, particularly among the younger generation, and highlight its significance in shaping society. At the conclusion, the participants stressed the need for further efforts to spread Iqbal's philosophy and ideas among youth and promote his message across society.

Sindh CM interacts with participants of National Security Workshop

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that Karachi remains one of the country's most progressive, inclusive and economically vibrant cities, offering employment and livelihood opportunities to people from across Pakistan. He said improved law and order, expanding infrastructure, healthcare facilities and industrial development reflected the provincial government's performance, despite attempts by political opponents to create a negative perception of the city. "If Karachi were underdeveloped, life difficult and employment opportunities scarce, why would people continue to settle here? This shows that Karachi is meeting people's essential needs and providing employment opportunities," he said. The Chief Minister was speaking during an interactive session with more than 105 participants, including 25 women, of the 28th National Security Workshop, led by Major General Muhammad Raza and accompanied by eight faculty members, at the Chief Minister's House on Thursday. Responding to questions, Mr Shah highlighted Sindh's development achievements, improved security, investment opportunities, religious harmony and youth empowerment. He said Karachi's ranking among the world's most dangerous cities had improved from sixth in 2013 to 138th, reflecting sustained efforts to improve law and order. He cited Thar coal power generation, Shahrah-e-Bhutto, improved drainage and road infrastructure, free cancer treatment through CyberKnife and extensive cardiac treatment facilities at NICVD as major achievements. He said international donor agencies had confidence in the provincial government and were partnering in its development initiatives. "Donor agencies have confidence in the provincial government, which is why they are partnering with us in the province's development. Our PPP unit has successfully completed and undertaken projects that previous governments could not," he said. Rejecting attempts to divide Sindh, the Chief Minister recalled that Hyderabad Division had been divided into four districts in 2005, creating administrative complications and political fiefdoms. He said the people of Sindh would not allow similar attempts to divide the province. On the recent building collapse in Karachi, he termed the incident tragic and said the government had taken strict action, removing the Secretary Local Government and the Director General of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA). He said the construction was illegal, but the builder had obtained a stay order against the SBCA's action. Acknowledging institutional failures, he directed the Chief Secretary to conduct a comprehensive audit of the SBCA's manpower, expertise and efficiency. The government was also considering engaging third-party experts to approve building layout plans and issue no-objection certificates, while retaining the SBCA's regulatory role. "We are working on it and will introduce meaningful reforms in the SBCA," he said. Highlighting Sindh's inclusive character, Mr Shah said Muslim voters had elected Hindu representatives, including Dr Mahesh Malani from Tharparkar and Hari Ram Kishori from Mirpurkhas, demonstrating the province's commitment to religious harmony.—**DNA**



Islamabad POST
METROLITE
Saturday, November 28, 2026

National Days and Armed Forces Days

NOVEMBER

Nov 01/Algeria
National Day

Nov 04/Italy
Armed Forces Day

Nov 07/Russian Federation
Socialist Revolution

Nov 09/Cambodia
National Day

Nov 11/Poland
Independence Day

Nov 14/Jordan
Birthday of King Hussein

Nov 15/Belgium
Kings Day

Nov 15/Brazil
Republic Day

Nov 15/Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
National Day

Nov 18/Oman
National Day

Nov 18/Morocco
Independence Day

Nov 21/Bangladesh
Armed Forces Day

Nov 22/Lebanon
Independence Day

Nov 25/Suriname
National Day

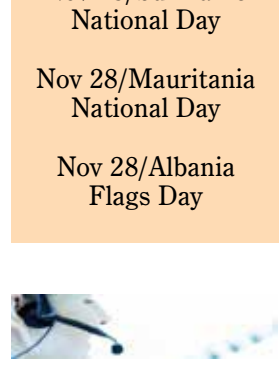
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National Day

Nov 28/Albania
Flags Day



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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
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RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Lok Mela opens with rich cultural diversity

Federal Secretary for National Heritage and Culture, Asad Rehman Gilani said preparations for Lok Mela 2026 had been improved in light of previous experiences and public feedback

ISLAMABAD: A vibrant celebration of Pakistan's cultural diversity, folk traditions and indigenous craftsmanship opened in Islamabad on Friday, bringing together hundreds of artisans and artists from across the country at Lok Mela 2026, inaugurated by Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi. With 522 stalls and around 1,500 artisans and artists participating over 10 days, the festival at the National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) offers a national platform for showcasing the country's rich cultural heritage, traditional skills, regional identities, folk music, dance and indigenous crafts.



Held under the theme "Naqoosh-e-Watan: Our Heritage, Our Future," the festival features representation from Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, alongside participants from friendly countries. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Federal Minister Aurangzeb Khan Khichi described Lok Mela as an expression of Pakistan's cultural identity and national cohesion, saying it provided artisans and artists with valuable opportunities to demonstrate their talent and promote traditional skills.

He said Pakistan possessed immense talent and craftsmanship, adding that the need was to provide skilled people with opportunities to showcase their abilities and improve their livelihoods.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for National Heritage and Culture Huzaifa Rehman said Lok Mela brought together the cultural colours of Pakistan, from Khyber to Kashmir and Gwadar to Peshawar, under one roof.

He described the festival as an effective means of introducing younger generations to the country's cultural heritage and traditions, while promoting national harmony and unity through cultural diversity. He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had issued special instructions to the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture to highlight Pakistan's soft image through the promotion of its rich cultural heritage. The minister of state said most of the suggestions and directions received during last year's festival had been incorporated into this year's arrangements. Federal Secretary for National Heritage and Culture, Asad Rehman Gilani said preparations for Lok Mela 2026 had been improved in light of previous experiences and public feedback. He said improvements had been made in the arrangement of stalls, accessibility, security and parking facilities to facilitate participants and visitors. He added that the festival also aimed to provide artisans and craftspeople with maximum opportunities for employment and income generation by promoting their traditional products and skills. Director General Lok Virsa, Dr Waqas Saleem said 522 stalls had been established at the festival, with more than 250 artists participating from different parts of the country. He said over 100 artists would perform daily, while approximately 1,500 artisans and artists would showcase their skills and talent during the 10-day event. A special feature of the inaugural ceremony was the recognition of outstanding contributions to traditional arts and crafts. The federal minister honoured Sakina Bibi, an artisan from Khuzdar district with 35 years of experience, through the traditional Chadar Poshi ceremony.–**DNA**

Pakistan's leadership committed to uplift: Syedaal

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasar received warm welcome from prominent members of the Pakistani community, including political, social, business and media personalities, local parliamentary representatives and other distinguished figures, upon his arrival in Toronto, Canada on Friday. A reception and dinner were hosted in his honour by senior journalist and host Tauseef Shah. The event was attended by Irfan Siddiqui and Mian Azeem from New York, along with senior journalists from the United States and Canada and representatives of electronic, print and digital media.

Another dinner was hosted in his honour by social leader Chaudhry Joya. Local parliamentary representatives, business personalities, civil society members and prominent Pakistani political and social figures attended the event.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Chairman Senate said that Pakistan's current political leadership was actively working towards national development, prosperity and stability. He said that Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to promote peace and resolve international conflicts were being appreciated worldwide.

Referring to the Makkah Agreement, he said that it would be an important development not only for the region but also for the wider international community, paving the way for peace and stability. He emphasized that Pakistan was playing a constructive role through diplomacy and mediation to promote global peace. Highlighting the contributions of overseas Pakistanis, he said that the Pakistani community in Canada was playing a significant role in projecting Pakistan's positive image and strengthening bilateral relations. He urged the business community to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan and contribute to trade, economic cooperation and national development. Syedaal Khan Nasar thanked the Pakistani community, hosts and journalists for their warm welcome and hospitality. He expressed confidence that bilateral, parliamentary, economic and people-to-people relations between Pakistan and Canada would continue to strengthen.–**APP**

NUML startup idea contest champions student innovation

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages, through its Business Incubation Center (BICON), in collaboration with the Department of Accounting & Finance, successfully organized the Startup Idea Contest 2026, providing a dynamic platform for students to transform innovative ideas into promising business ventures.

The competition attracted 135 teams, of which 35 teams were shortlisted for the final pitching rounds. A total of 27 teams presented their business ideas before a distinguished jury comprising professionals from banking, industry, entrepreneurship, corporate leadership and the business sector. The pitching sessions provided students an opportunity to showcase their creativity, problem-solving skills, entrepreneurial thinking and business potential while receiving valuable feedback and professional insights from experienced industry experts.

Team Kicks secured first position, followed by Team RepSight, while Team PlantCare secured third position. The winning teams were recognized for the quality of their ideas, innovation and presentations.

In addition to the official prizes, jury members extended special appreciation awards to promising ventures, reflecting their encouragement and commitment to nurturing the entrepreneurial potential of NUML students.

The event was graced by the presence of the Worthy Rector NUML, Maj Gen, Shahid Mahmood Kayani HI(M) (retd) whose participation and encouragement reaffirmed the University's commitment to fostering innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship among its students. Members of the jury also shared valuable perspectives, constructive feedback and professional guidance, enabling participating teams to identify areas for improvement and further develop their ideas.

The Startup Idea Contest 2026 also highlighted the pivotal role of BICON in strengthening NUML's entrepreneurial ecosystem by connecting students with industry professionals, facilitating mentorship and creating opportunities for innovative ideas to progress beyond the competition.

The event concluded with the presentation of souvenirs to the distinguished jury members in recognition of their valuable contribution, time and professional guidance to the participating students.

Startup Idea Contest 2026 marks another significant step in NUML's efforts to cultivate an innovation-driven and entrepreneurial culture, empowering students to transform ideas into meaningful opportunities and future ventures.–**APP**

Road safety seminar held

RAWALPINDI: National Highways & Motorway Police (NHMP) organised a road safety awareness seminar at Fatima Girls Cadet College Murree on the directions of DIG North Zone Muhammad Haroon Joyia to promote traffic awareness and safe road practices among students. Sector Commander SP Adeel Shehzad attended the seminar as the chief guest. Addressing students and college faculty, SP Adeel Shehzad highlighted the importance of obeying traffic rules, crossing roads safely, protecting pedestrians and adopting precautionary measures to prevent road accidents. He said special teams had been formed to deal with snowfall-related emergencies in Murree, while additional police personnel would also be deployed to ensure the safety .–**APP**

ECP rules out role in allocation of tickets to women

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has clarified that political parties have the exclusive authority to allocate tickets to women candidates on general seats under existing electoral laws, and the commission cannot intervene in their internal decisions or direct them to award tickets for constituencies where women have better chances of winning. In a clarification issued on Friday, the ECP spokesperson responded to a news report published in an English-language newspaper regarding directions allegedly issued by a parliamentary committee, asking the commission to ensure that political parties allocate the mandatory five per cent quota for women under Section 206 of the Elections Act to general constituencies where their victory is more likely. The reported directions also called on the ECP to make arrangements for filling 563 vacant seats in various local governments. The spokesperson said the commission had already informed the parliamentary committee that, under the existing electoral framework, the allocation of party tickets to women candidates rested solely with political parties. The ECP was neither authorised to interfere in this process nor empowered to decide which constituencies should be allocated to women candidates, the spokesperson added.–**DNA**

1.4b nation panicked by one Pakistani drama

Netflix boycott threats expose India's cultural fear

ISLAMABAD: India's self-appointed culture police are on the move again as the All Indian Cine Workers Association gives Netflix a December 4 deadline to remove Pakistani series "Jo Bachay Hain Sang Samait Lo" under threat of a nationwide boycott, protests outside Netflix offices and a subscription cancellation campaign.

Far from a spontaneous reaction, the threat forms another link in an organised, state-backed campaign aimed at silencing voices, faces, and stories linked to Pakistan, driven by growing anxiety in Indian media over Pakistani family dramas winning over viewers while stale, recycled Indian content loses appeal.

Netflix India earned revenue of ₹3,769 crore and a net profit of ₹85 crore in FY2025, a 63% jump on the previous year, while Netflix's Indian production unit posted revenue of ₹4,207 crore with its profit doubling to ₹181 crore.

According to an analyst, attempting to hold hostage a platform generating billions over a single Pakistani drama amounts to commercial blackmail rather than legitimate business competition. The latest coercion follows a broader pattern of digital and cultural censorship in India. In April 2025, the Modi government banned 16 Pakistani YouTube channels with more than 63 million subscribers combined, building on the shutdown of 35 Pakistani channels at once in 2022. Entertainment networks including ARY Digital, Har Pal Geo, and Hum TV were subsequently targeted, and the Instagram accounts of more than 20 prominent Pakistani artists were blocked. Even non-political family dramas such as Parizaad were cast as threats to India's "national security." The AICWA has repeatedly resorted to intimidation and hostility against Pakistani talent, labelling an actor a "terrorist" and declaring over the mere presence of a Pakistani actress that a film would not be allowed to release in India. Across decades, Indian prejudice has persisted alongside admiration for Pakistani art—targeting figures ranging from Atif Aslam, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Mahira Khan, and Fawad Khan to legends and stars including Mehdi Hassan, Ghulam Ali, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Ali Zafar, and Saba Qamar.

Netflix itself has faced repeated mob pressure in India from "IC 814" to "Maharaj", underscoring a climate where threats replace dialogue and boycotts replace tolerance.

This pattern unfolds alongside Indian media's credibility crisis, including its May 2025 embarrassment over fabricated claims such as the "destruction of Karachi port," and a wave of propaganda films that have drawn global ridicule while leaving Indian audiences weary of formulaic offerings. Pakistani dramas and performers continue to stand out for superior quality, storytelling, and acting. When a country of 1.4 billion people claiming superpower status is rattled by a single drama serial, its vulnerability is unmistakable.

Art transcends borders and requires no permission from New Delhi; India's unease reflects the collapse of its false narrative as Pakistani storytellers hold the upper hand.–**APP**



Islamabad POST
Saturday, November 28, 2026

Briefs

Students hail Pakistani astronaut's historic space mission

RAWALPINDI: Students across the twin cities of Rawalpinid and Islamabad on Friday paid glowing tribute to Pakistan's first astronaut, Squadron Leader Zeeshan Ali, hailing his historic space journey as a defining symbol of national pride, scientific excellence and youth inspiration.

Sharing her views with APP, Myra Malik a student of Software Engineering at Ibadat International University, Islamabad described the space mission as a major psychological and academic breakthrough for Pakistan's younger generation. She pointed out that students often view space exploration as the exclusive domain of developed nations, a mindset that this landmark event has decisively shattered.

Myra highlighted that the astronaut's poise and professionalism under extreme conditions exemplify the highest standards of Pakistani talent and capability.

"Truly, Squadron Leader Zeeshan Ali has become a living role model whose legacy will inspire future generations of scientists and explorers", she remarked, adding that his achievement has sparked renewed curiosity in classrooms and laboratories, motivating students to aim higher in research and innovation.

Muhammad Abdullah, a Pahrm-D student from CUST, expressed confidence that Pakistan's talent could match global benchmarks if provided relevant platforms. "Increased opportunities and enabling environment remain vital for exploring new avenues of success among the youth", he said demanding enhanced institutional growth with research and development opportunities in universities. Abdullah added that Pakistan's access to space for the first time was a significant moment of pride for whole nation. He further said that SL Zeesgan was a reflection of not only a courage and dedication, but also a symbol of practical maneuver in space. A group of students from various disciplines at Fatima Jinnah Women University expressed that Pakistani astronauts entry in space is an honour for the nation. Hiba Nawaz termed the achievement a watershed moment in the country's scientific trajectory that has elevated Pakistan's standing on the global stage. –**APP**

ICT child protection policy launched

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik formally launched the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Child Protection Policy at the ceremony held here.

In his address, he underscored the importance of safeguarding children's fundamental rights and ensuring that every child grows up in a safe, healthy and dignified environment. He emphasized that child protection is a collective responsibility requiring strong institutional coordination, effective legal frameworks and sustained commitment from all relevant stakeholders.

He highlighted the importance of strengthening child protection mechanisms, preventing violence and exploitation against children, and ensuring their access to protection, care and opportunities for healthy development.

The launch of the ICT Child Protection Policy marks an important step towards strengthening the child protection framework in the Islamabad Capital Territory and reinforcing the government's commitment to children's rights and welfare.

The initiative, undertaken by the Ministry of Human Rights, Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with UNICEF Pakistan, reflects a shared commitment to building a safer, more inclusive and child-friendly society.

Barrister Aqeel Malik reaffirmed the government's resolve to work towards ensuring that every child enjoys the right to a safe, healthy and dignified childhood.–**APP**



ISLAMABAD: Girls taking interest in Charkha (traditional spinning wheel) in the Sindh Pavilion during opening day of Lok Mela 2026 at Lok Virsa.

Naqvi for early resolution of nurses' shortage

He stressed that patients should have access to treatment facilities without delay. The minister's visit included an assessment of the emergency department, other wards, patient care services and the issues raised by doctors and nursing staff

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday visited CDA Hospital to review medical facilities for patients, inspect hospital wards and discuss issues faced by doctors and nursing staff. During the visit, the interior minister inspected the emergency department and other wards and met patients receiving treatment. He inquired from patients about the medical facilities available at the hospital and asked about the treatment being provided to them. The patients expressed satisfaction with the healthcare services and facilities available at the hospital. Mohsin Naqvi also met doctors an nurses and asked about the issues they were facing while performing their duties. During his interaction with the nursing staff, nurses informed the minister about a shortage of nursing staff at the hospital and highlighted the need to address the issue. The interior minister assured them that the shortage of nurses would be addressed at the earliest. He also directed the hospital administration to improve cleanliness arrangements and ensure proper sanitation across the hospital. During the visit, the minister reviewed the arrangements for patient care and treatment and sought information about the facilities being provided in different departments.

Mohsin Naqvi said providing the best possible medical treatment to patients in a timely manner was the right of every patient. He stressed that patients should have access to treatment facilities without delay. The minister's visit included an assessment of the emergency department, other wards, patient care services and the issues raised by doctors and nursing staff. He also issued directions to improve cleanliness and assured nurses that steps would be taken to overcome the shortage of staff. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday visited the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Fire Brigade Station to review firefighting arrangements and assess the response time of emergency vehicles. During the visit, the interior minister inspected the vehicles available at the fire brigade station and reviewed their operational readiness. He also visited the station's call centre and appreciated the staff for being present on duty.

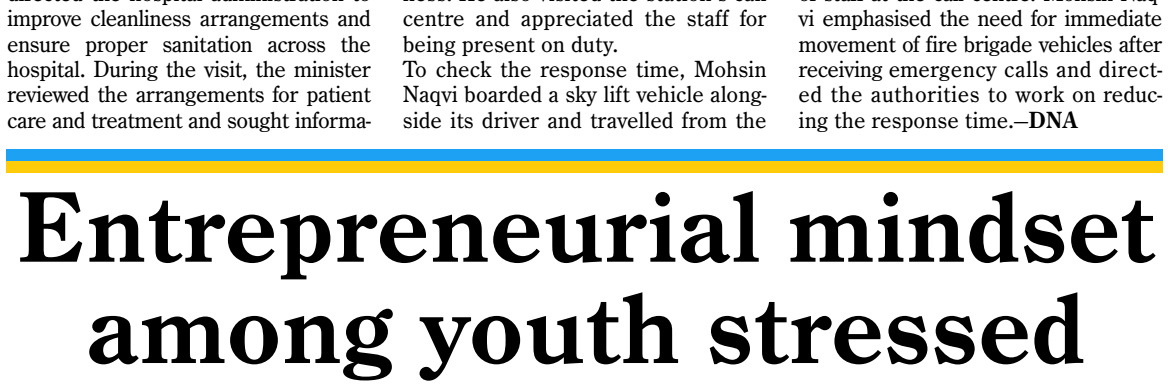
To check the response time, Mohsin Naqvi boarded a sky lift vehicle alongside its driver and travelled from the fire brigade station to F-11 Markaz. The minister personally assessed the time taken by the sky lift vehicle to reach F-11. The vehicle completed the journey from the fire brigade station to F-11 in approximately 12 minutes. After reviewing the response time, Mohsin Naqvi directed the authorities to ensure that firefighting vehicles move immediately from the station whenever an emergency call is received. He said fire brigade vehicles should be dispatched without delay to respond to fire incidents and other emergencies. The interior minister stressed that the response time needed to be reduced further to ensure that firefighting teams could reach affected areas as quickly as possible. He said a faster and immediate response during emergencies could help prevent major losses. The minister also reviewed the working arrangements at the station and observed the availability of firefighting vehicles and the presence of staff at the call centre. Mohsin Naqvi emphasised the need for immediate movement of fire brigade vehicles after receiving emergency calls and directed the authorities to work on reducing the response time.–**DNA**

Entrepreneurial mindset among youth stressed

State Minister for Finance & Revenue Mr. Bilal Azhar Kayani attended the ceremony and in his address he appreciated RCCI's efforts to promote an entrepreneurial mindset, innovation and self-employment among young people and assured full support from his ministry for initiatives aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI) successfully held the closing ceremony of Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) 2026 at a local hotel in Islamabad. The event brought together government officials, business leaders, industrialists, young entrepreneurs, academicians and other distinguished guests to promote entrepreneurship, innovation and youth empowerment.



Federal Minister for the Board of Investment Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, in his address, appreciated RCCI's efforts to strengthen linkages between universities and industry. He emphasised that providing students with opportunities to interact with successful entrepreneurs and industrial organisations helps them understand the practical challenges and requirements of running a business.

State Minister for Finance & Revenue Mr. Bilal Azhar Kayani attended the ceremony and in his address he appreciated RCCI's efforts to promote an entrepreneurial mindset, innovation and self-employment among young people and assured full support from his ministry for initiatives aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship. He highlighted that while young people frequently seek government employment, true global progress is built on entrepreneurship, not job seeking. Emphasizing Pakistan's strategic global proximity, he pointed out that the nation sits at a pivotal crossroad of world trade with immense, untapped potential. RCCI Patron-in-Chief Mr. Sohail Altaf and RCCI President Mr. Nosherwan Khalil Khan highlighted the Chamber's initiatives to identify and nurture young entrepreneurial talent and provide them with opportunities to contribute effectively to economic activities.

They also expressed gratitude to participating universities, partner organisations, sponsors and the organising team, particularly Chairman of the Event Mr. Qazi Muhammad Ahsan and Vice Chairman Mr. Faizan Rafiq, for their dedication and hard work in making GEW 2026 a success.

Preparations for Sustainable Futures gain momentum

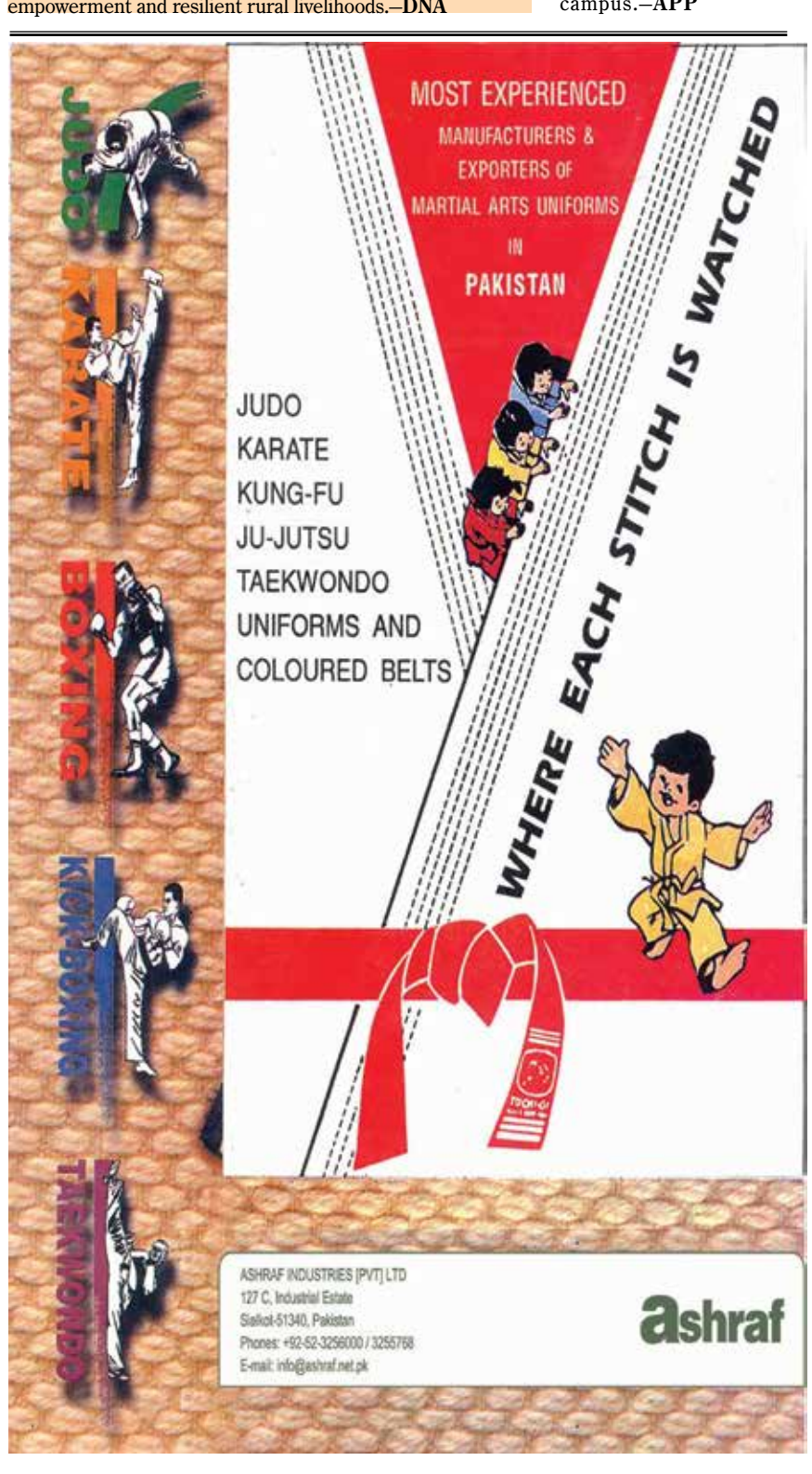
ISLAMABAD: Preparations for the International Conference on Sustainable Futures 2026 have gained momentum, with the organisers stepping up arrangements for the two-day event scheduled to be held in Islamabad on December 2–3. The Institute of Rural Management (IRM), in collaboration with the Climate Action Forum (CAF), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) and United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), is organising the conference under the theme "Building Resilience in a Changing World." Talking to APP, an IRM spokesperson said that preparations had entered their final stages, with teams constituted and regular meetings being held to review progress and assess on-ground arrangements. She said the meetings were also aimed at incorporating consultations and constructive suggestions while reviewing key arrangements, including the conference brochure, publicity and advertising strategy, programme schedule, speakers and administrative and operational matters. The spokesperson said all arrangements were being made to ensure the conference was organised in a transparent, fair and competitive manner. She added that the conference brochure and other relevant information were available on the official website. The two-day event is expected to bring together policymakers, international experts, development partners, researchers, civil society representatives, private-sector stakeholders, youth leaders and innovators to discuss solutions to pressing climate and development challenges. The conference will provide a platform for knowledge exchange, partnership-building and exploring practical approaches to emerging challenges. Scheduled to follow COP31, the conference will also provide an opportunity to link global climate commitments with national priorities and translate international ambitions into practical action. The event will feature six thematic areas, covering climate-resilient economies, green growth and sustainable development; disaster risk management, nature-based solutions, resilience financing readiness and climate-resilient communities; and clean energy transition and sustainable infrastructure. Other key areas will include youth leadership, technology and development initiatives, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), ecosystems, the Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus, women's empowerment and resilient rural livelihoods.–**DNA**

Makkah Accord means peace and stability: Prof Saad

ISLAMABAD: The Acting Rector and President of the International Islamic University Islamabad, Prof. Ahmed Saad Alahmed, reaffirmed the university's commitment to exploring avenues of cooperation in education with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He expressed these views as Islamabad hosts the third meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee of the Makkah Accord on Friday. The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement reflects the wise leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, said Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed. In a statement, Prof. Alahmed said the agreement carries profound significance for the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan signed the agreement on August 7, 2026, at Al-Safa Palace in Makkah Al-Mukarramah. The signing took place during the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Summit for Joint Defence, hosted by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince.

Prof. Alahmed said the agreement's principle of treating an armed attack on one member as an attack on all was an expression of solidarity. Welcoming the pact, he congratulated the leadership and people of the three brotherly nations. He said it was a matter of pride that Islamabad was hosting the third meeting of the agreement's Strategic Political and Defence Committee on November 26 and 27, calling it an important step towards turning shared commitments into practical cooperation. "The meeting reflects the confidence placed in Pakistan and its constructive role in regional peace," he said, wishing the visiting delegations success. The committee brings together the foreign and defence ministers and military chiefs of the three countries. At its inaugural meeting in Istanbul in August, the three countries agreed to set up a permanent secretariat in Riyadh. The committee's second meeting was held in the Kingdom. Prof. Alahmed said IIUI remained a symbol of Saudi-Pakistani friendship, adding that the Kingdom's support and scholarly cooperation had enriched the university's academic mission over the decades. IIUI manages Islamabad's Faisal Mosque, which was built with Saudi government funding and is home to the university's Faisal Mosque campus.–**APP**



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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com
Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960
Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Stronger defense ties will benefit both NATO and Gulf

A PACKED agenda awaits foreign ministers from the 32 NATO countries when they meet in Brussels on Dec. 2. First and foremost, the US is expected to brief its allies on the future of US forces in Europe. There will also be discussions about progress toward meeting the defense spending targets agreed at the 2025 NATO summit in The Hague and the defense industrial cooperation pledged during the most recent alliance summit in Ankara in July. There is another area, however, that, considering current geopolitical circumstances, deserves more attention: NATO's relations with the Gulf states.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was established at the 2004 NATO summit in Istanbul to serve as the alliance's main platform for engagement with the Gulf states. Currently, only four of the six GCC countries — Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE — formally participate in the initiative, although Saudi Arabia and Oman take part in selected ICI activities.

Perhaps the most notable accomplishment of this initiative has been the establishment of the NATO-ICI Regional Center in Kuwait in 2017, which serves as a tangible link between NATO and the Gulf states. There have also been numerous high-level exchanges, simulated war games and training exercises in the two decades since the ICI's creation.

Real-world cooperation between NATO and several Gulf countries has also taken place in Afghanistan and Libya, as well as on maritime security off the Horn of Africa and in the Gulf. Bahraini and Emirati forces contributed to NATO-led operations in Afghanistan, while Qatar and the UAE took part in NATO's operation in Libya in 2011. However, in recent years, the alliance has failed to realize the full potential of this format. This might now be changing.

At the NATO summit in Ankara in July, foreign ministers from the alliance and ICI countries met on the sidelines of the forum for the first time since the initiative's inception in 2004. They launched four flagship projects for multilateral cooperation between NATO and ICI partners: maritime security; countering unmanned aerial systems; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense; and counterterrorism. Considering the current security situation involving Iran, these four areas of cooperation should come as no surprise. Since then, there has been a steady drumbeat of NATO engagement with the Gulf. In October, the regional center in Kuwait hosted a four-day crisis management and disaster response course involving more than 30 civilian and military personnel from Gulf states.

Earlier this month, NATO held its Southern Neighborhood Security Dialogue in Athens, with more than 100 representatives taking part, including those from ICI countries and Iraq. Notably, Saudi Arabia took part for the first time. Discussions focused on identifying shared security priorities and developing practical ways to cooperate. Last week, GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi met with NATO's Special Representative for the Southern Neighborhood, Javier Colomina, in Naples to discuss closer regional cooperation. Looking ahead to next year, Kuwait has proposed hosting a joint ministerial meeting between NATO and ICI countries.



Closer cooperation between NATO and the Gulf states can benefit both the Middle East and the transatlantic community. There is considerable overlap in terms of shared security concerns. Furthermore, decades of Western military involvement in the Middle East have helped build strong relationships between the militaries of the transatlantic community and the Gulf. Looking ahead, both sides should focus on practical areas of cooperation that deliver tangible benefits to their people. First and foremost is air defense. Europeans and Gulf states know all too well the importance of air defense in modern warfare. Just last week, three Russian cruise missiles landed in Poland during a large-scale Russian attack on Ukraine. Drones from Russia's war against Ukraine have repeatedly entered NATO airspace. Meanwhile, the Gulf states bore the brunt of Iran's drone and missile retaliation during the conflict earlier this year. In both regions, Ukraine has played a positive role in helping countries defend against unmanned systems and improve their air defense capabilities. One area of focus for the ICI could be bringing together NATO, Gulf and Ukrainian experts to explore ways to deepen cooperation in the field of air defense.

Second, as the transatlantic community does more to bolster its defense industrial base, it should work with Gulf countries to explore ways to include them in various projects. Research and development is not inexpensive, and the more customers there are for a particular military capability, the lower the unit cost can become. Greater defense industrial cooperation between Europe and the Gulf could help make both regions more secure while making military equipment more affordable for taxpayers.

Finally, there needs to be more regular engagement between the two sides. While the engagement between NATO and the Gulf states over the past several weeks has been encouraging, it needs to become normalized and formalized. NATO should consider appointing a special envoy for the Gulf who can serve as a single point of contact between the region and the alliance. When NATO foreign ministers meet next week, they will understandably focus on the issues that matter most to the alliance and the defense of the transatlantic community. However, they cannot afford to lose sight of the bigger picture. Many of the security challenges facing Europe and the Gulf are interconnected, and there is much that both can learn from each other. NATO already has an established framework for cooperation with the Gulf states through the ICI. What is needed now is the political will to realize its full potential, not only for the security of the transatlantic community but also for the wider Middle East.

How the USA and the West Interpret Pakistan's Astronaut in Space

Qamar Bashir



Military influence could help secure continuity and resources for a strategically valued programme. The corresponding responsibility is to ensure that funding reaches scientific work and that civilian expertise carries authority. Parliamentary scrutiny, competitive research grants and access for universities would strengthen public confidence. Scientists need room to question assumptions, report failures and revise designs...

WHEN Muhammad Zeeshan Ali entered China's Tiangong space station, Pakistan acquired a place in orbital human spaceflight, while China gained a demonstration of its expanding international influence. For Pakistanis, the moment carried pride, possibility and relief from relentless domestic turmoil. For Western observers, it raised a broader question about who will provide developing countries access to the technologies shaping this century. Ali's arrival aboard Shenzhou-24 on November 25 made him the first Pakistani in orbit and the first foreign astronaut aboard China's station. His journey brought a country frequently discussed through terrorism, political instability and financial distress into an altogether different international conversation. Pakistan appeared as a participant in scientific exploration, with a citizen entrusted to conduct research beyond Earth.

This achievement emerges from a deeply troubled domestic setting. Pakistan confronts insurgency, political polarization and strained relations with Afghanistan. Islamabad accuses Afghan authorities of sheltering militants responsible for attacks across the border, an accusation Kabul rejects. Imran Khan remains imprisoned, with his continued incarceration reinforcing the confrontation between his supporters and the state. These pressures shape the environment in which scientific ambitions must survive.

The controversy surrounding Maulana Fazlur Rehman further illustrates this unsettled political atmosphere. He alleged that state forces surrounded his Lahore residence and prevented his participation in a lawyers' gathering. Authorities denied placing him under house arrest, and the matter reached the Lahore High Court. The competing accounts expose the distrust surrounding political freedom, administrative authority and the exercise of state power.

Behind these disputes lies the persistent question of military predominance. Its influence across security, foreign relations and economic decision-making leaves civilian institutions struggling to establish authority. Space development now enters that contested institutional landscape. A successful mission may attract funding and official attention, but the national value of that investment will depend on whether universities, researchers and industry can meaningfully shape its direction. Western interpretations already reflect several perspectives. Reuters emphasizes space diplomacy and Pakistan's scientific ambitions. Associated Press presents the mission as a milestone in bilateral cooperation. Nature highlights the research opportunities available to Pakistani scientists. These accounts convey recognition of the achievement alongside attention to China's growing capacity to organize international participation in space.

A specific public American government response to Ali's flight has yet to emerge in the reporting examined. Washington's likely strategic calculations therefore require interpretation. The most immediate calculation concerns influence. China has offered Pakistan something exceptionally prestigious, technically demanding and emotionally powerful. Such opportunities can create relationships that endure through political disagreements because they connect institutions, professional communities and national aspirations.

This is diplomacy with measurable substance. Training an astronaut requires shared procedures, technical instruction, linguistic preparation and operational trust. Pakistani personnel become familiar with Chinese systems, while Chinese institutions become indispensable partners in advancing Pakistani ambitions. Cooperation then gains its own constituency among scientists, engineers, students and administrators whose professional futures become connected to its continuation. For American policymakers, the wider implication is that Beijing can increasingly offer participation in advanced technological projects. Countries seeking scientific progress can enter Chinese partnerships and acquire experience unavailable within their domestic resources. Pakistan's flight provides a visible example of that proposition. Other governments may examine the opportunity and ask what cooperation with China could deliver for their own citizens. The timing strengthens this message. Tiangong's opening to foreign astronauts comes as the International Space Station approaches its anticipated retirement. Western coverage places these developments within the changing structure of international space cooperation. The competition extends to research opportunities, technical standards, institutional relationships and the ability to attract partners whose participation gives a programme international legitimacy.

Western scientific observers also have reason to welcome Pakistan's participation. Scientific talent is widely distributed, while access to orbital laboratories remains exceptionally scarce. Nature's reporting describes the mission as an opportunity for Pakistani universities to undertake biotechnology research. Cooperation can help scientists develop experimental discipline, understand conditions in microgravity and establish relationships that support future investigations. For Pakistan, Ali's greatest contribution may unfold after his return. His experience could help universities develop practical training, guide researchers preparing experiments and encourage students to consider careers in aerospace engineering. His public standing could also draw attention to laboratories that struggle for resources. These benefits require an organized programme connecting his knowledge with institutions capable of using it.

Pakistan's dependence on Chinese infrastructure will remain central to external assessments. Its astronaut trained in China, travelled aboard a Chinese spacecraft and worked within Chinese operational systems. Pakistan still relies on foreign partners for orbital launches. The challenge is to use access repeatedly and productively, gradually increasing the domestic contribution to instruments, spacecraft components, software and research design. India offers a relevant regional reference. Its first astronaut travelled through Soviet cooperation, while decades of institutional investment produced substantial domestic launch and exploration capabilities. Pakistan can study that progression without assuming an identical timetable. Independent capability requires sustained engineering, testing facilities, dependable procurement, industrial suppliers and budgets that survive changes of government and strategic fashion.

Military influence could help secure continuity and resources for a strategically valued programme. The corresponding responsibility is to ensure that funding reaches scientific work and that civilian expertise carries authority. Parliamentary scrutiny, competitive research grants and access for universities would strengthen public confidence. Scientists need room to question assumptions, report failures and revise designs without institutional pressure to manufacture success. Economic stability matters equally. Pakistan cannot build an enduring space sector through occasional announcements surrounded by funding interruptions. Research programmes require predictable support over many years. Their public justification becomes stronger when satellite applications improve agriculture, disaster response, communications and environmental monitoring. Such benefits give citizens a practical stake in scientific investment and help protect programmes from political neglect.

The American and Western assessment will ultimately evolve with Pakistan's performance. Repeated missions, credible research and stronger domestic institutions would demonstrate a growing scientific partner. Continued dependence with limited local development would produce a more restrained judgment. China has supplied an extraordinary opening. Pakistan's responsibility is to turn the experience into knowledge, that knowledge into capability, and that capability into lasting national progress.

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

Iran's role in Arab allies' underground warfighting

Iran's missile programme was born out of desperation during the 1980–1988 war with Iraq. Saddam Hussein's forces were attacking Iranian cities with missiles, while Tehran lacked the means to respond in kind. For the Islamic Republic's military commanders, the lesson was straightforward: without a credible retaliatory capability, Iran would remain vulnerable to its enemies. The programme began modestly. According to Ali Bilali, a veteran of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) missile programme, Iranian commanders travelled to Syria and Libya and eventually secured two launchers and approximately 30 missiles

WHEN it comes to Iran and its Arab non-state allies, the conventional wisdom is that Tehran is the all-giving mothership, supplying the money, weapons, training and know-how and ideological direction that guide their every move. There is considerable truth to Iran's central role, but the notion that Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza and the Houthis in Yemen are merely extensions of Iranian power overlooks an important part of their history. Take the extensive underground military infrastructure these groups have built. The resemblance to Iran's own underground missile cities is striking. All four have invested in tunnels, concealed weapons facilities, and protected military positions to survive attacks by enemies with overwhelming air superiority. But does this mean Iran exported its underground warfare doctrine to its Arab allies? The answer is more complicated. Tehran has helped these movements acquire weapons, technical expertise and military capabilities. Yet the history of underground warfare in Gaza, Lebanon and Yemen shows that each had compelling reasons of its own to go underground. In fact, the Iranian model itself was partly inspired by foreign experiences.

Iran's missile programme was born out of desperation during the 1980–1988 war with Iraq. Saddam Hussein's forces were attacking Iranian cities with missiles, while Tehran lacked the means to respond in kind. For the Islamic Republic's military commanders, the lesson was straightforward: without a credible retaliatory capability, Iran would remain vulnerable to its enemies. The programme began modestly. According to Ali Bilali, a veteran of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) missile programme, Iranian commanders travelled to Syria and Libya and eventually secured two launchers and approximately 30 missiles. North Korea subsequently became another important supplier. Bilali recalls that Iran's first missile operations in 1984 involved just seven or eight men who travelled from Tehran to Kermanshah close to the Iraqi border in a Toyota station wagon. They would launch a missile and return to Tehran. The equipment needed for the operation could fit into the vehicle.

Four decades later, Iran's missile force had become the centrepiece of its deterrence strategy. But accumulating missiles was only half the challenge. The other was ensuring they would survive an American or Israeli attack.

The Palestinian experience is perhaps the clearest challenge to the argument that Tehran invented and exported a common underground warfare doctrine. The origins of Gaza's tunnel networks can be traced to Rafah in the early 1980s, when the border between Egypt and the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip divided Palestinian families and communities. Some of the first tunnels were reportedly dug to reconnect people and facilitate the movement of goods.

Smuggling subsequently became a major activity, particularly as restrictions tightened. By the time Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups began turning tunnels into instruments of warfare around the turn of the century, the practice was already established. The Second Intifada accelerated the military transformation. Tunnels offered Palestinian militants ways to move weapons and personnel, evade Israeli surveillance and attack fortified positions. Following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, and especially after the blockade imposed following Hamas's takeover in 2007, underground infrastructure became increasingly important to the movement's survival.

Iran certainly helped Hamas develop its military capabilities. Tehran supplied weapons, training and technical assistance, including knowledge related to missile and rocket production. Iranian officials have themselves acknowledged the importance of transferring manufacturing expertise to allies rather than simply supplying finished weapons.

There are also claims that Iranian assistance extended to the rebuilding and improvement of Hamas's tunnels. But the available evidence is considerably stronger concerning weapons development than the origins or design of Gaza's underground network. Palestinian militants did not need Iranian instruction to recognise the military advantages of tunnels. Their circumstances made the logic almost unavoidable. Against an Israeli military enjoying overwhelming technological superiority, concealment underground offered one of the few means of maintaining an organised fighting force.A picture taken on 3 June 2019 during a guided tour with the Israeli army shows the interior of a tunnel on the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon in northern Israel.

A picture taken on 3 June 2019 during a guided tour with the Israeli army shows the interior of a tunnel on the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon in northern Israel.

Lebanon presents a different picture. Hezbollah's underground infrastructure grew out of its long confrontation with Israel, particularly during the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon from 1982 to 2000. The rugged terrain offered opportunities for concealed positions, while Israel's airpower encouraged Hezbollah to protect its fighters, weapons and communications. After Israel withdrew in 2000, Hezbollah expanded its network of fortified positions and underground bunkers across the south. By the 2006 war, Israeli forces encountered an adversary that had spent years preparing defensive positions and weapons-storage facilities. Here, the evidence of Iranian involvement is stronger. Hezbollah has enjoyed a much deeper and longer military relationship with the IRGC than either Hamas or the Houthis. Iranian funding, training and technical support helped transform it from a guerrilla movement into an organisation capable of sustained military confrontation with Israel. One Iranian figure illustrates how civilian reconstruction and military cooperation could overlap. Hassan Shateri, an IRGC engineer who operated under the name Hessam Khoshnevis, had spent years working on military engineering projects during and after the Iran-Iraq War. According to former Iranian police chief Esmail Ahmadi Moghaddam, he tried to recruit Shateri as his engineering deputy in 2005. But Qasem Soleimani intervened, explaining that Shateri had already been assigned to engineering work for the IRGC's Quds Force, the IRGC's arm for external operations.

Following the 2006 war, Shateri headed Iran's reconstruction operations in Lebanon, overseeing projects ranging from roads and bridges to public buildings. But his activities had a security dimension. In 2010, the US Treasury sanctioned him and the Iranian Committee for the Reconstruction of Lebanon, alleging that they provided engineering expertise and other support to Hezbollah, including assistance with its private communications network.

Israeli researchers have gone further, identifying Shateri as a possible figure behind Hezbollah's expanding underground infrastructure, potentially with North Korean technical assistance. This specific claim remains unproven, but Shateri's career demonstrates that Iran possessed both the expertise and organizational networks to assist Hezbollah with major engineering projects.

In August 2024, Hezbollah released footage of its underground Imad-4 facility, showing what appeared to be a sophisticated complex accommodating vehicles transporting missile launchers. The similarities with Iranian missile cities were difficult to miss. But even here, influence did not necessarily travel in one direction. Iranian military planners studied Hezbollah's performance during the 2006 war, particularly its capacity to withstand Israeli airstrikes and maintain military operations. Hezbollah was not simply a recipient of Iranian military ideas; its battlefield experience also offered lessons to Tehran.A journalist takes pictures in a tunnel that was dug underneath a neighbourhood close to the residential compound of Yemen's former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, in Sanaa on 16 August 2014.

– Arab News

Islamabad POST
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Pakistan seeks deeper cooperation with IAEA...

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research, education, and training capabilities. In the concluding session, the Chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) underscored the importance of sustained international cooperation. He noted that hosting the NSSC Network meeting for the second time—ten years after Pakistan convened the first Annual Meeting held outside Vienna—demonstrated the value of continued partnership. He added that Pakistan looked forward to further deepening cooperation with the IAEA and international partners to support sustainable nuclear security. From the IAEA side, the Unit Head of the Division of Nuclear Security commended Pakistan for hosting the meeting and described the 15th Annual Meeting as an important milestone in international nuclear security cooperation. He observed that the Islamabad gathering had shown the benefit of bringing Member States together to exchange expertise, strengthen national capabilities, and identify future priorities, and expressed appreciation for Pakistan's longstanding partnership with the Agency and its ongoing contribution to the NSSC Network's objectives.

PM for simplification of bank...

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He also called for considering cash flows of SMEs as an alternative benchmark for loan guarantees. The Prime Minister directed to review prudential regulations governing bank lending to SMEs and ensure banks' access to relevant data held by government institutions to expedite the financing process. He said banks should facilitate SMEs not only through loans but also by helping them obtain Letters of Credit and bank guarantees. He added that the banks achieving their lending targets for SMEs would be encouraged. The meeting was informed that banks are taking steps to strengthen their institutional capacity to accelerate lending to SMEs. Banks expressed their commitment to extending loans worth two trillion rupees to SMEs and increasing the number of borrowers to seven hundred and seventy-five thousand by June 2028. The target includes extending new loans worth eight hundred and eighty-six billion rupees and providing financial facilities to four hundred and forty-nine thousand new borrowers.

Hackers breach US Air force...

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the intrusion or whether any data had been stolen. In a statement to Reuters, the Air Force said it "does not comment on the security posture, vulnerabilities or operational status of specific networks and systems. We continuously take prudent measures to protect Department (of the Air Force) information, systems and mission capabilities." Initiated in 2017, Cloud One was meant to serve as a one-stop shop for the Air Force's IT needs, combining the resources of four operators – Microsoft, Amazon, Oracle and Alphabet – to power scores of applications including ones that manage personnel data and pay or logistics and maintenance. Among them are the Air Force's Cloud-Based Command and Control, which collates air defence radar and other data feeds from across North America, and the Theatre Integrated Combat Munitions System, which tracks bombs and missiles across more than 200 US Air Force locations around the world. SAIC was the prime contractor for Cloud One until 2025, when Leidos took over. SAIC did not respond to a request seeking comment. Leidos referred questions to the Air Force.

PCB unveils women's central contracts for 2026-27 season

Fatima Sana and Sadia Iqbal secure Category A places in PCB's 2026-27 central contracts

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday announced central contracts for eight women cricketers for the 2026-27 season, with national captain Fatima Sana and left-arm spinner Sadia Iqbal placed in Category A. The contracts, which will remain in effect until 30 June 2027, feature three categories, with two players each in Categories A and B and three in Category C. Fatima and Sadia headline the list in Category A, while wicketkeeper-batter Muneeba Ali Siddiqui, left-arm spinner Nashra Sundhu and batter Sidra Amin have been placed in Category B.

Meanwhile, experienced batter Ayesha Zafar joins opening batters Gull Feroza and Sadaf Shamas in Category C.

Fatima has been rewarded for her consistent contributions with both bat and ball across formats. The all-rounder has continued to establish herself as a key figure in Pakistan's women's team and recently became the first Pakistani woman cricketer to feature in both England's The Hundred and Australia's Women's Big Bash League (WBBL). Sadia, meanwhile, has retained her position among Pakistan's leading performers, having consistently delivered impressive performances with the ball.

The left-arm spinner has previously reached the top of the ICC Women's T20I Bowling Rankings, underlining her standing among the leading bowlers in the shortest format.

Category B features three experienced campaigners in Muneeba, Nashra and Sidra, whose consistent performances and contributions across formats have earned them places in the second tier of the central contracts.

In Category C, Ayesha, Gull and Sadaf have been recognised for their recent performances at domestic and international levels, with their inclusion also reflecting the team's future requirements.

According to the PCB, the categorisation was determined after assessing players' recent performances, form and fitness.

The board has also emphasised the importance of maintaining fitness standards throughout the contract period. Regular fitness assessments will be conducted, with all centrally contracted players required to meet the prescribed benchmarks.

Pakistan women's central contracts for 2026-27 season

Category A
- Fatima Sana
- Sadia Iqbal

Category B
- Muneeba Ali Siddiqui
- Nashra Sundhu
- Sidra Amin

Category C
- Ayesha Zafar
- Gull Feroza
- Sadaf Shamas

Pak, KSA, Turkiye reaffirm resolve...

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provisions of the Makkah Agreement for Joint Defence, he said. Dar further said the countries had reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in defence industries, joint technological development, training and capacity building to enhance the collective capabilities of their armed forces. Describing the meeting as a reflection of the longstanding friendship and solidarity among the three countries, Dar said it also represented Pakistan's continued efforts towards regional and international peace and security.

Pakistan brokered a June accord that led to a brief halt in fighting between the United States and Iran and set a roadmap for further agreement on reopening the crucial Strait of Hormuz and for negotiations on Tehran's nuclear programme.

But the truce collapsed, with Washington and Tehran accusing each other of violating the agreement, prompting months of shuttle diplomacy to resuscitate the ceasefire, led principally by mediators Qatar and Pakistan. On the sidelines of the SPDC meeting, Dar held a meeting with his Turkish counterpart, where both sides expressed satisfaction at the growing momentum in bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade, investment, defence and energy. "They reaffirmed their support for each other on matters of mutual interest," a statement from the Foreign Office said.

The two leaders, it added, agreed to translate their strong political ties into tangible economic dividends and maintain close coordination under the Makkah Agreement for Joint Defence to promote dialogue and de-escalation. Foreign Minister Fidan thanked Pakistan for its warm hospitality and commended its active diplomacy in advancing regional peace and stability, he added.

JOINT STATEMENT

Second Meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee (S-PDC) of the Makkah Alliance for Defence (Joint Statement)

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Republic of Türkiye convened the Second Meeting of the Strategic Political and Defence Committee (S-PDC) of the Makkah Alliance for Defence in Islamabad on 27 November, 2026. The Committee reviewed the evolving regional security situation and reaffirmed the determination of the three countries to continue working collectively towards regional peace, security and stability. The Parties reiterated their commitment to the principles and objectives of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, including collective defence, mutual solidarity, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each Party.

The Committee recalled the outcomes of its inaugural meeting in Istanbul on 31 August 2026 and the emergency meeting held in Riyadh on 5 October 2026. It reviewed progress in implementing the decisions taken at these meetings, particularly those relating to the institutionalization of the Alliance and the practical implementation of collective defence commitments, in line with their national legislation.

The Committee praised the pace of progress towards the establishment and operationalisation of the Secretariat in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and underscored its importance in supporting the institutional work and effective coordination of the Alliance.

The Committee also reviewed the outcomes of ongoing political and military consultations and agreed to continue consultations aimed at enhancing cooperation and coordination on matters of mutual interest, supporting efforts towards de-escalation of regional tensions, and encouraging the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and diplomacy.

The Committee reiterated its strong condemnation of persistent and heinous attacks by the Houthi militia targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and reaffirmed their collective resolve to continue exerting and accelerating efforts to support the Kingdom in safeguarding its security, in accordance with the collective defence provisions of the Agreement.

The Parties reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation in defence industries, joint technological development, training and capacity-building, with a view to enhancing the collective capabilities and cohesion of their armed forces, in order to address mutual security concerns and contribute to peace and security in the region.



Upgrade work under way at Gwadar's Jannat Bazaar

GWADAR: Work is under way to upgrade Jannat Bazaar under Gwadar Development Authority's (GDA) Old Town Rehabilitation Project. The first phase includes the removal of encroachments, debris clearance, earthworks and landscaping. This will be followed by the installation of pavers and tuff tiles, with market sheds to be built in the next phase, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday.

Payments have also been made to the Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO) to relocate electricity poles and overhead wires. GDA plans to expedite construction in consultation with shopkeepers, traders' associations and other stakeholders to minimise disruption to businesses and inconvenience to shoppers, particularly women. The projects aim to improve facilities in Gwadar's historic commercial centres. – **APP**

Trump supports Iraqi leader

"We support Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's efforts to assert state authority throughout Iraq, stop smuggling of Iraqi oil, end corruption

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said Friday he supported Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's move to put Kurdistan's border crossings and several oil fields under federal control in an effort to curb smuggling. "We support Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's efforts to assert state authority throughout Iraq, stop the smuggling of Iraqi oil, end corruption, and bring all weapons under the exclusive control of the state," he wrote in a post on Truth Social. – **DNA**

Chinese were invited to invest in agriculture and food processing

BEIJING: Sindh province is seeking Chinese investment in food processing, agricultural machinery, seed production and cold storage facilities to diversify farming and improve the use of underproductive land. Sindh Agriculture Minister Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Khan Mahar invited Chinese investors to explore joint ventures at a dinner hosted by International Multi Group of Companies (IMGC) for a Chinese delegation in Karachi, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. Mahar said Chinese buyers were already purchasing rice and seeds from Pakistan, while Sindh was exploring ways to expand castor bean cultivation. He said the provincial agriculture department had initiated a castor cultivation programme and IMGC had expressed willingness to support additional planting. Mahar said waterlogging and salinity limited the suitability of some agricultural land for conventional crops. He said commercially viable alternative crops could help farmers diversify their incomes and improve land use. He also highlighted sesame production, saying fair prices and reliable market access would encourage farmers to grow alternative crops. – **APP**

Azlan Shah hockey: Pakistan out of final race

SPORTS DESK

IPOH (Malaysia): Malaysia secured a place in the final of the 2026 Sultan Azlan Shah Cup after battling Pakistan to a dramatic 5-5 draw in their final group-stage match at the Sultan Azlan Shah Stadium on Thursday. The high-scoring encounter kept fans on the edge of their seats as both teams traded goals throughout the match. The result proved enough for Malaysia to advance to the final on goal difference, while Pakistan's hopes of reaching the title match came to an end. Malaysia's star performer was Faizal Saari, who delivered a hat-trick and provided an assist in a standout display. His decisive contribution came in the 57th minute when he converted a penalty stroke to level the score at 5-5 and secure the crucial point for the hosts. Pakistan also produced an impressive attacking performance. Ahmad Nadeem scored twice, while Sufyan Khan added a penalty-corner goal as Pakistan repeatedly challenged the Malaysian defense.

Pakistani student wins prizes in e-commerce competitions

BEIJING: A mixed team of international students from Hohai University, including Pakistani student Sikander Masood, has been making its mark in China's e-commerce innovation competitions, with the team taking part in the final of the 3rd Jiangsu Province College "Silk Road E-Commerce" Innovation Challenge held at Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

The challenge drew 247 teams and 1,060 students from 41 universities across the province, with the international student short-video track attracting participants from 63 countries, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The event, guided by the Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education, the Provincial Development and Reform Commission, the Provincial Department of Commerce and other provincial authorities. It was aimed to cultivate trade professionals with global vision and digital skills while supporting the expansion of products and brands through e-commerce.

Sikander Masood's team drew on artificial intelligence in its e-commerce project and won a second prize at the competition. His engagement with China's e-commerce ecosystem extends beyond this competition.

Earlier, another team he was part of competed in the final of the international track of the 16th National E-commerce "Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship" Competition for College Students, held in Lingshui, Hainan in July. The team's project, "Yi Embroidery Going Global · Splendid Embroidery Across Thousands of Miles — Global Dissemination and Sales of Yi Ethnic Intangible Cultural Heritage Embroidery," was awarded second prize. – **APP**



Sandpapergate forum scope to cover entire 2017-18 season, including Ashes

Six-week forum, to be overseen by Australian barrister Fiona McLeod, will include all four Tests of 2018 SA tour

CRICKET Australia's forum into Sandpapergate will consider "ball-management practices" during the entire 2017-18 season, including the Ashes series, in the lead-up to the tour of South Africa, according to its terms of reference published on Friday.

The ball-tampering scandal was reignited this month after former Australia batter Usman Khawaja said the whole team had known about the cheating in South Africa and not just the three players found culpable by CA's integrity unit.

CA announced on November 18 it would open an independent forum for players and staff to give their accounts of what happened in 2018 without fear of sanction.

The six-week forum, to be overseen by Australian barrister Fiona McLeod, will include all four Tests of the 2018 South Africa tour but also extend to ball-management practices during the 2017-18 season.

That season included the five-test Ashes series, which Australia won 4-0. There were no reports of Australia manipulating the ball illegally during the series.

The forum will also include the conduct and scope of the 2018 integrity investigation, which found only three players culpable - former captain Steve Smith and opening batters David Warner and Cameron Bancroft.

Smith and Warner were banned for 12 months, with Bancroft suspended for nine.

Khawaja's former teammates Warner, Bancroft and Chadd Sayers have supported his comments that the wider playing group and staff were aware of the ball-tampering.

However, captain Pat Cummins and bowlers Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood have strongly denied any prior knowledge.

CA backed Cummins to remain captain of the test and one-day international sides last week and rejected any suggestion his integrity had been compromised amid the renewed furore. McLeod will provide a report of findings from the forum to CA's board but will not share the underlying accounts given by participants, the terms of reference said. The report will be made public.

"This forum is the best opportunity for people to speak and be heard, and for CA to listen and learn," CA Chair David Boon said in a statement. Participation in the forum will be voluntary and it will not make any adverse findings or determine the responsibility of any individual involved.

"Its purpose is to support the welfare of those impacted and to provide Participants with an opportunity to be heard and to have their experience acknowledged and understood without fear of retribution or disadvantage," the terms said.

The Australian players' union said it had not been consulted on the development of the terms of reference. "As such we don't yet have a position on whether we support it and have advised all relevant players of this as well as the fact that we are currently reviewing these terms and will update them once we have formed views," Australian Cricketers' Association boss Paul Marsh said in a statement.

Bancroft has said he will participate in the forum and former head coach Darren Lehmann told local media he would be open to it, saying he had nothing to hide.

Sayers said last week he was not sure whether he would participate, while Warner declined to confirm whether he would.

President meets Shujaat

FROM PAGE 01

former Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Senator Saleem Mandviwala, and Dr. Asim.The interaction is being viewed as significant in the context of ongoing political consultations, given Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain's longstanding advocacy for political reconciliation, dialogue, and consensus-building in national politics.

Hanif calls on prime minister

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the proceedings of the 11th Session of Pakistan-Russia Intergovernmental Commission held during his recent visit to Russia. Matters pertaining to the Ministry of Power were also discussed during the meeting.

'Security of Chinese projects..

FROM PAGE 01

The Minister for Planning also sought support for a proposed Pakistan–China Knowledge Corridor that would help about ten thousand Pakistani scholars pursue doctoral studies and specialised research over ten years. The proposal envisages scholarships, partnerships with leading Chinese universities and co-financing, with priority fields including artificial intelligence, engineering, advanced manufacturing, modern agriculture, biotechnology and mineral sciences. Turning to the second phase of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Ahsan Iqbal highlighted industrial and agricultural cooperation, business partnerships, technology transfer, minerals and green development as priorities. He said the first phase had attracted about twenty five billion dollars in investment, added more than 8,000 megawatts of generating capacity and delivered 888 kilometres of highways and motorways, while creating an estimated 236,000 direct and indirect jobs. He linked the next phase to Pakistan's URAAN development programme and China's 15th Five-Year Plan, underscoring the importance of policy continuity. Ahsan Iqbal reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the security of Chinese personnel and projects. Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal held a meeting with Vice Chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Zhou Haibing in Beijing. The Minister for Planning sought early completion of the financing agreement for the 102-kilometre Thor Nullah–Raikot section of the Karakoram Highway. He discussed Chinese participation in upgrading the ML-1 railway beyond Karachi–Rohri, for which Pakistan is exploring Asian Development Bank financing.

Chinese firm signs $50m deal for Paki donkey products

ISLAMABAD: A US$50 million annual purchase agreement for Pakistani donkey meat, hides and bones was signed between Hangeng and Zhongchen International at the FoodAg Pakistan 2026 exhibition. Hangeng acknowledged the support of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and the Government of Pakistan in facilitating efforts to bring Pakistani products from Gwadar to Chinese market, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The agreement was concluded during the fourth edition of FoodAg Pakistan 2026, held from November 23–26 at the Expo Centre Karachi. Organised by TDAP under the theme "Harvesting Innovation, Cultivating Sustainability," the four-day exhibition brought together 400 Pakistani exhibitors and around 820 international delegates from 72 countries. – **APP**

Islamabad POST
Saturday, November 28, 2026

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Gold prices surge by Rs11,500 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a sharp increase in the local market on Friday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola surging by Rs11,500 to settle at Rs390,136, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.
Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs9,859 to Rs334,478, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs9,037 to Rs306,615.
In the international market, the price of gold increased by $115 to $3,676 per ounce, the association reported.
Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs277 to Rs4,906, while the price of 10 grams of silver rose by Rs238 to Rs4,206.
The price of silver in the international market also increased by $2.77 to $44.28 per ounce, the association added.–**APP**

PSX turns bearish, loses over 396 points

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Friday, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index losing 396.79 points, a negative change of 0.22 percent, to close at 177,663.90 points against 178,060.69 points recorded in the previous trading session. The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 717.779 million shares, compared to 618.812 million shares traded in the previous session. The traded value of the ready market stood at Rs19.515 billion, up from Rs18.204 billion a day earlier. Meanwhile, total market capitalisation decreased to Rs19.299 trillion from Rs19.363 trillion recorded in the previous session. Out of 495 companies that traded in the ready market, 156 posted gains, 309 suffered losses, while 30 remained unchanged. Pervez Ahmed Co led the volume chart with 83.811 million shares, followed by Yousuf Weaving with 57.716 million shares and Agha Steel Industries with 52.734 million shares. Among the top gainers in the ready market, Tandlianwala Sugar Mills Limited surged by Rs48.41 to close at Rs532.55, while The Premier Sugar Mills advanced by Rs36.32 to settle at Rs486.33. On the losing side, Sitara Chemical Industries Limited declined by Rs56.05 to close at Rs517.62, while Pakistan National Shipping Corporation fell by Rs29.89 to Rs620.51. –**APP**

EU wheat extends gains on Black Sea disruption

PARIS: Euronext wheat prices climbed to one-month highs on Friday as ongoing war disruption to Black Sea trade maintained expectations of strong demand for European Union supplies. Gains on broader financial markets as AI-related investor worries subsided also helped to underpin Euronext as participants awaited the reopening of Chicago grain markets after Thursday's Thanksgiving holiday.
March wheat, the most active position on Euronext, was up 1.5 percent at 241.25 ($264.89) a metric ton at 1220 GMT. The contract earlier reached 242 for its highest since October 20 and above a previous one-month peak of 239 on Wednesday.
Front-month December wheat rose 1.4 percent to 247.25 a ton after touching another one-month high at 248.25. A Russian attack on two cargo ships carrying more than 100,000 tons of grain near the Ukrainian Black Sea port of Odesa this week has kept the focus on disruption to grain trade. The strike further dampened hopes of a shipping truce in Russia's war with Ukraine and raised the prospect of more demand shifting toward European Union exporting countries. Weather forecasts projecting a cold spell in the Black Sea zone from next week could also curb exports because icy conditions complicate logistics, traders said.
Winter conditions could also hamper Russian efforts to ship grain on alternative routes via the Baltic Sea and the Arctic.–**APP**



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema in meeting with Imad N. Fakhoury, Regional Vice President for the Middle East and Central Asia at the International Finance Corporation (IFC)

125 leading Pakistani brands to be honoured

The annual awards ceremony will bring together leading corporate figures, business executives, brand representatives and other stakeholders to celebrate the achievements of Pakistani enterprises that have demonstrated a strong commitment to quality, innovation and customer satisfaction, said a release issued here on Friday

ISLAMABAD: The 18th Brand of the Year Awards 2026 (Northern Edition) will be held in Islamabad on Sunday, November 29, to recognize 125 of Pakistan's most popular, preferred and trusted brands for their excellence in quality, innovation and consumer confidence.
The prestigious ceremony, being organized by Brands Foundation under the banner "An Honour Like No Other," will take place, Islamabad, according to a press release issued by the foundation.
Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi will grace the occasion as chief guest and deliver the keynote address, while Coordinator to the Prime Minister Ikhtiar Wali Khan will address the gathering as a distinguished guest speaker.
The annual awards ceremony will bring together leading corporate figures, business executives, brand representatives and other stakeholders to celebrate the achievements of Pakistani enterprises that have demonstrated a strong commitment to quality, innovation and customer satisfaction, said a release issued here on Friday.
The 18th edition of the awards will recognize 125 leading brands across various sectors, highlighting their contribution to strengthening consumer confidence, promoting business excellence and enhancing Pakistan's commercial standing.
Brands Foundation, the organizer of the event, holds the distinction of being Pakistan's only organization with Accredited Permanent Observer Status at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialized agency of the United Nations. The foundation is also affiliated with the World Fair Trade Institution, reflecting its engagement with international platforms promoting intellectual property rights, fair trade practices and responsible business development. The foundation maintains that its international affiliations and accreditation reinforce the credibility of its brand-recognition platform and its commitment to transparent evaluation standards.
Speaking ahead of the ceremony, Brands Foundation Founder and Chief Executive Officer Shaikh Rashid Alam said strong and credible national brands were essential for sustainable economic growth and international competitiveness. "For nearly two decades, the Brand of the Year Awards have served as Pakistan's gold standard for corporate trust and market leadership," he said. He added that recognizing 125 leading brands in the 18th edition reflected the resilience, innovation and consumer-focused approach of Pakistani enterprises that were contributing to the country's commercial stature at home and abroad.
The awards ceremony will commence with guest registration and a red-carpet media photo session, followed by formal award citations and addresses by dignitaries.
Trophies will subsequently be presented to the 125 winning brands, while mementoes will be given to distinguished guests. The event will conclude with an official networking luncheon, providing an opportunity for corporate leaders and business representatives to interact and explore avenues for cooperation.
The ceremony is expected to highlight the role of trusted brands in promoting business confidence, encouraging innovation and strengthening Pakistan's position in domestic and international markets.–**DNA**

SBP injects over Rs 651b to maintain liquidity

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Friday, injected Rs 651.8 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 27, 2026, and injected Rs 375.9 billion against 10 quotes while other Rs 275.9 billion were injected through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO.
The central bank, for the Reverse Repo Purchase of 14-day tenor, received 8 bids cumulatively offering Rs 970.7 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.06% to 12.09%. The SBP accepted Rs 360 billion against 7 quotes at 12.07% rate of return. The total amount offered at 12.07% was Rs 751 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs 290 billion on a pro rata basis. Moreover, the SBP also received 3 bids for the 7-day tenor, cumulatively offering Rs 15.9 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.04% to 12.07 %. The SBP accepted all the 3 quotes with the entire amount at 12.04% rate of return. Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah-based Open Market Operation for the 7 and 14-day tenors. The central bank received 4 bids for the 7-day tenor, offering Rs 93.9 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.06% to 12.07%. SBP accepted all the 4 quotes with the entire amount at 12.06% rate of return. The central bank, for the 14-day tenor, received 6 quotes offering Rs 257.8 billion at rate of return ranging between 12.06% to 12.07%. SBP accepted an amount of Rs 182 billion against the 6 quotes at 12.06% rate of return. The total amount offered at 12.06% was Rs 255.8 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs 180 billion on a pro rata basis.–**DNA**

inDrive outlines safety measures for passengers

ISLAMABAD :Global ride-hailing platform inDrive has outlined a comprehensive range of safety measures aimed at protecting passengers and drivers in Pakistan, highlighting the role of artificial intelligence, advanced technology, real-time monitoring and human oversight in ensuring safer journeys. Passenger and driver safety remains a top priority as ride-hailing services continue to expand across Pakistan. The platform is implementing safety measures at every stage, from booking and journey completion to handling emergency situations, said a news release issued here on Friday. The indrive said drivers must undergo mandatory verification procedures before being allowed to accept rides. These include verification of official documents, vehicle inspections and facial recognition technology to match the photograph on the driver's national identity document with their profile picture. Artificial intelligence is also used to identify fake and duplicate accounts. Driver verification continues even after registration. If potential risks are identified, drivers may be asked to complete additional selfie verification and submit vehicle photographs to ensure that only verified drivers use approved vehicles. Before confirming a booking, passengers can view the driver's name, profile photograph, user ratings and number of completed rides. Similarly, drivers can review a passenger's profile picture, rating, previous ride history and complete destination details before accepting a trip, enabling them to make informed decisions.
To protect users' personal information, inDrive keeps passengers' and drivers' phone numbers private and provides secure in-app calling and messaging facilities. The platform also uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to monitor profile names, photographs, comments and chat messages to detect abusive language, inappropriate behaviour, sexually explicit content and other prohibited activities. Accounts involved in serious violations may be restricted, while cases are referred to human safety specialists for further review. Another key safety feature is "Share Your Ride", which allows passengers to share a live trip link with family members and friends. The feature enables real-time monitoring of a vehicle's location, route and journey status through GPS technology. According to the indrive internal data, 8.8 million users in Pakistan shared their trip details through this feature between April and September 2026. The indrive said it continues to combine advanced technology, artificial intelligence, real-time monitoring and human accountability to strengthen passenger and driver safety and promote secure and reliable ride-hailing services across Pakistan.

Iran's role in Arab allies' underground warfighting

TEHRAN: When it comes to Iran and its Arab non-state allies, the conventional wisdom is that Tehran is the all-giving mothership, supplying the money, weapons, training and know-how and ideological direction that guide their every move. There is considerable truth to Iran's central role, but the notion that Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza and the Houthis in Yemen are merely extensions of Iranian power overlooks an important part of their history.
Take the extensive underground military infrastructure these groups have built. The resemblance to Iran's own underground missile cities is striking. All four have invested in tunnels, concealed weapons facilities, and protected military positions to survive attacks by enemies with overwhelming air superiority. But does this mean Iran exported its underground warfare doctrine to its Arab allies?
The answer is more complicated. Tehran has helped these movements acquire weapons, technical expertise and military capabilities. Yet the history of underground warfare in Gaza, Lebanon and Yemen shows that each had compelling reasons of its own to go underground. In fact, the Iranian model itself was partly inspired by foreign experiences.
Iran's missile programme was born out of desperation during the 1980–1988 war with Iraq. Saddam Hussein's forces were attacking Iranian cities with missiles, while Tehran lacked the means to respond in kind. For the Islamic Republic's military commanders, the lesson was straightforward: without a credible retaliatory capability, Iran would remain vulnerable to its enemies. The programme began modestly. According to Ali Bilali, a veteran of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) missile programme, Iranian commanders travelled to Syria and Libya and eventually secured two launchers and approximately 30 missiles. North Korea subsequently became another important supplier. Bilali recalls that Iran's first missile operations in 1984 involved just seven or eight men who travelled from Tehran to Kermanshah close to the Iraqi border in a Toyota station wagon. They would launch a missile and return to Tehran. The equipment needed for the operation could fit into the vehicle. Four decades later, Iran's missile force had become the centrepiece of its deterrence strategy. But accumulating missiles was only half the challenge. The other was ensuring they would survive an American or Israeli attack. Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, often described as the father of Iran's missile programme, was central to its early development. Another figure, Amir Ali Hajizadeh, who later commanded the IRGC Aerospace Force, became closely associated with its underground infrastructure.
According to Nasser Kaveh, a former colleague of Hajizadeh, it was Hajizadeh who pioneered the construction of what became known as Iran's missile cities. The project began with a few young engineers building rudimentary tunnels and storage facilities.
One detail in Kaveh's account is particularly revealing. During a visit to North Korea, Hajizadeh reportedly encountered underground missile-launching silos and returned determined to develop something similar in Iran. Without detailed engineering plans, he assembled a team to design an Iranian version. The larger transformation came from the late 1990s onward. According to Bilali, Iran began dispersing missile units from their concentration around Tehran to locations across the country. The assumption was that a future confrontation with the United States or Israel was likely, and that Iran needed to preserve its fighting capacity after an initial attack. The result was an expanding network of protected facilities, some reportedly hundreds of meters underground. In October 2015, the IRGC publicly revealed one of its missile cities, turning what had been a secret military project into an instrument of political messaging. The purpose was not simply to hide missiles. It was to convince potential adversaries that Iran could absorb devastating attacks and still retaliate. This logic complemented the IRGC's broader emphasis on decentralized, or mosaic, defense, ensuring that military operations could continue even if major commands or installations were destroyed.–**DNA**

Thousands protest as Baghdad moves to seize Kurdish oil, border control

IRBIL, Iraq: Thousands of demonstrators gathered Thursday in Irbil, the capital of Iraq's semiautonomous northern Kurdish region, protesting a move by the federal government to take control of oil operations and border crossings previously run by Kurdish authorities.
Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Al-Zaidi announced the measures Tuesday, describing them as steps to address oil smuggling.
The decision marked a new escalation in a long-running power struggle between the central government and Kurdish authorities and spurred rival Kurdish parties to come together in opposition to Baghdad.
Al-Zaidi – who took office earlier this year with the backing of US President Donald Trump – has been trying to assert authority on several fronts, including sending security forces into an area long controlled by a powerful Iran-backed militia last week.
Tuesday's decision brings official and unofficial border crossings in the Kurdish region under federal government management. It places approval for oil exports from the region under the authority of the federal oil ministry and transfers the management of oil fields in Diyala, Kirkuk, Salahuddin and Nineveh provinces to it.
Al-Zaidi also dismissed Kirkuk's operations commander and police chief and the head of the Border Ports Commission. He said the measures reflect Iraq's "independent national will.–**APP**

Yemeni army reports 767 operations against Houthi forces, claims 117 killed

ADEN: Yemen's armed forces said they carried out 767 operations against Houthi forces in recent hours, claiming that 117 of the group's field commanders and fighters were killed. In a statement, the military spokesperson said the operations were conducted as part of the "Dawn of Yemen" campaign, with support from the Popular Resistance, and targeted Houthi positions, gatherings, vehicles and weapons depots across several fronts. The operations included 30 airstrikes, 665 artillery strikes, 39 drone attacks and 33 rocket-launcher strikes, according to the statement. The spokesperson added that 87 military vehicles and pieces of combat equipment had been destroyed or disabled. Government forces continued operations on fronts in northern and western Marib, as well as in Al-Jawf, Taiz, Lahj, Shabwa and Midi in Hajjah province, targeting Houthi formations and defensive positions, the spokesperson said.–**APP**

France seeks German man in Channel migrant boat probe

LILLE, France: France has issued an arrest warrant for a German national it suspects of involuntary manslaughter as part of an investigation into a series of clandestine migrant crossings to Britain, a prosecutor has said. According to a joint investigation by several media outlets including French daily Le Monde and the BBC, the managing director of a small firm in western Germany, Marvin Reuter of MaRe Boote, is suspected of being one of the main suppliers of inflatable boats to people smugglers organizing journeys across the Channel. The prosecutor in the northern city of Lille, Samuel Finielz, confirmed late on Thursday that five people had been arrested and a German national was briefly detained in his country as part of a probe since May last year into illegal Channel crossings and sinkings. The five individuals, now held in pre-trial detention, were suspected of offenses including assisting illegal entry and residence as part of an organized criminal group, involuntary manslaughter, involuntary injury and endangering the lives of others, Finielz said in a voice note to AFP and other media.–**APP**

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Trump urges Putin to end 'military aggression' in Europe

Trump said he had made the request to Putin when they met in China last week, adding that he thought it would help lead to a deal to end Moscow's grinding war in Ukraine

DNA

WEST PALM BEACH: US President Donald Trump said Thursday he had asked Vladimir Putin to "pull back all military aggression" against Europe, in a fresh shift in tone toward the Russian leader he called his friend just last week. Trump said he had made the request to Putin when they met in China last week, adding that he thought it would help lead to a deal to end Moscow's grinding war in Ukraine.

Trump's comments come a day after he hosted NATO chief Mark Rutte in Florida, after which the two leaders issued a joint statement calling on Russia not to expand the Ukraine war. "During my conversations in China with President Vladimir Putin, of Russia, I spent a lot of time talking about the fact that I would like to see President Putin pull back all Military aggression against territories throughout Europe," Trump said on his Truth Social network.

Trump said he had done so "in the hopes that a Deal can be made between Russia and Ukraine, and made quickly." "I really believe this is a strong possibility," he added. The statement did not specify which territories Trump meant – and did not specifically include Ukraine, which Russia invaded in February 2022, kicking off the largest war in Europe since World War II.

European nations have been increasingly concerned by what they regard as Russian provocations, including three Russian



cruise missiles landing in NATO-member Poland last week. In their joint statement on Wednesday, Trump and Rutte said they "discussed the importance of Russia avoiding any actions that intentionally, or unintentionally, expand the war." In a notable contrast with Trump's recent criticisms of Ukraine for striking targets deep inside Russia, the US leader made no call for Kyiv to show similar restraint.

Speaking to reporters at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida on Thursday, Trump said he was unsure if Putin would be coming to the G20 summit next month in Miami, but "but if he wanted to come, he certainly can."

Trump's tone appeared markedly different to when Trump met Putin in the Chinese city of Shenzhen last week, both face-to-face and together with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Trump warmly greeted Putin and called him his "friend" at the summit, renewing concerns in Kyiv and European capitals that he was once again pivoting toward the Russian leader. Asked Thursday about the apparent firmer tone this week, he said: "I don't know if I was tougher. I mean, I think I'm the one that gave them the anti-tank busters, right?" Trump often cites his approval of Javelin missile sales to Ukraine during his first term as saving the country from Russia's initial assault.

The US envoys on the Ukraine war, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and business friend Steve Witkoff, have been accused of a similar willingness to take Moscow's side. In an interview with the German MD Meets Podcast on Wednesday, Kushner said that Putin had "showed restraint" because he had "agreed not to use nuclear weapons." Kushner also described the Russian leader, whom he has met several times, as a "grandmaster of politics" – while calling the Ukraine conflict "a proxy war where Europe is funding and arming Ukraine against Russia." But he acknowledged that the issue of territory in eastern Ukraine claimed by Moscow remained a sticking point with Putin.

Briefs

Boat capsizing off Libya involving Pakistanis yet to be verified, says FO

Foreign Office says Pakistan embassy in Tripoli pursuing matter with Libyan authorities and IOM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday said reports of a boat carrying Pakistani migrants capsizing off the coast of Libya had yet to be independently verified, adding that the Pakistan embassy in Tripoli is actively pursuing the matter to ascertain the facts.

In a statement, FO Spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said the embassy had contacted the relevant Libyan government authorities, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and other stakeholders to establish whether Pakistani nationals were among those on board. "We have seen some media stories pointing to a reported boat capsizing incident off the coast of Libya. There has been no independent verification of such reports so far. We hope and pray it is not true," he said.

According to the reports, the boat carrying migrants attempting to reach Europe capsized in the Mediterranean Sea near Libya on November 21. Families of those on board reportedly received information about the deaths from agents who had arranged their journeys. At least 25 people from Bajaur are feared dead or missing in the incident, although the exact number of casualties and circumstances surrounding the reported tragedy have yet to be officially confirmed. Meanwhile, police and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) have launched investigations into suspected human smuggling networks allegedly involved in arranging the migrants' journeys. The FO spokesperson said further information would be shared as soon as verified details became available.

Arab states, regional bodies condemn Daesh attack in Syria's Hasakah

RIYADH/DAMASCUS: Arab governments and regional organizations have rallied behind Syria following a Daesh-linked attack on an Interior Ministry facility in Hasakah that killed two security personnel and wounded five others, amid concerns over the militant group's ability to exploit security vulnerabilities during the country's fragile postwar transition. Saudi Arabia was among the countries condemning Wednesday's assault, with the Kingdom expressing solidarity with the Syrian government and people as they work to preserve the country's security and stability, the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported.

In a statement, the Saudi Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the attack and reiterated the Kingdom's rejection of violence, terrorism and extremism in all forms. Riyadh also extended condolences to the families of those killed. Jordan joined the condemnation, expressing full support for the Syrian government and people and reaffirming its commitment to Syria's security, stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Bahrain, Egypt, the UAE, Qatar and Yemen also issued statements denouncing the attack, rejecting terrorism and extremism and expressing solidarity with Syria as it confronts security challenges. Regional organizations also voiced support. The Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab Parliament condemned the assault and reaffirmed their backing for Syria's efforts to combat terrorism, safeguard its sovereignty and maintain security.

The Arab Parliament called for stronger Arab and international cooperation to confront terrorist organizations, cut off their sources of support and counter extremist ideologies. Coordinated assault on security facility The attack targeted an Interior Ministry facility in the Al-Mushairifah neighborhood, west of Hasakah city, on Wednesday evening.

Hasakah Internal Security Commander Brig. Gen. Marwan Al-Ali said four Daesh militants on motorcycles carried out the assault. One attacker detonated explosives at the facility's entrance, triggering clashes with security personnel. Security forces killed two of the assailants during the confrontation, while the other two detonated explosive belts, authorities said. Preliminary investigations indicated that the attackers belonged to a Daesh cell operating in the region. – **APP**

Karachi building collapse death toll rises to seven

Police nominate 10 people in connection with incident; four suspects arrested so far

Nazir Siyal

KARACHI: The death toll from the collapse of an under-construction six-storey building in Karachi's Admin Society has risen to seven, with 12 people still missing and 14 injured, rescue officials said on Friday.

Rescue teams are continuing the search for people trapped beneath the rubble near Baloch Colony, with rescuers prioritising manual searches over heavy machinery amid concerns that the use of equipment could damage bodies and destabilise the remaining structure. Rescue 1122 said teams were exercising caution during the operation and had created pockets in the debris to access areas where people could be trapped.

Officials said manual searching was being prioritised because heavy machinery could damage bodies buried beneath the rubble and potentially cause further collapse of the building's structure. According to the spokesperson, 13 of the injured were discharged after receiving medical treatment, while one person remains under treatment at the hospital.

Police registered a case over the building collapse, invoking charges related to murder, negligence and carelessness, among other offences. Ten people have been nominated in the case, four of whom have been arrested, police said. Provincial emergency services had said in a statement on Wednesday they had "retrieved three bodies and 14 injured people from the rubble", after AFP journalists saw huge piles of wreckage and twisted metal at the site of the collapse in Karachi's Baloch Colony area. At the scene in the densely populated area of eastern Karachi, the mound of rubble reached several floors high. Crowds of people gathered and dozens of rescue personnel were working to move bricks and debris, and recover people believed trapped beneath the smashed piles of concrete. At an information desk set up nearby, people showed pictures of those missing on their phones to officials.

Building collapses are frequent in Pakistan, largely due to inadequate safety standards and poor construction materials in the South Asian nation of more than 240 million people. Karachi, a sprawling metropolis of more than 20 million people, is plagued by shoddy construction, unauthorised building extensions, deteriorating infrastructure, overcrowding and weak enforcement of building codes.

In February, a building collapse caused by a gas explosion in the megacity killed 16 people and in July last year, 27 people were killed after a five-storey building collapsed in Karachi's impoverished area of Lyari.

The latest incident triggered a major reshuffle in the province's administrative structure, with the Sindh government ordering the removal of Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) Director General Waseem Shamshad. The decisions were taken during a high-level meeting chaired by Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah at the CM House to review the matters related to the incident.

Australia sanctions two alleged Iranian agent

SYDNEY: Australia on Friday placed counterterrorism financing sanctions on two people it said orchestrated antisemitic arson attacks in Sydney and Melbourne on behalf of Iran.

Zohair Hassib and Kazem Hamad used a "complex chain of proxies" to attack a kosher restaurant in Sydney and the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne in 2024, Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in a statement.

In August 2025, Australia ordered Iran's ambassador to leave the country, the first expulsion of its kind since World War Two. It also suspended operations at its Tehran embassy and listed the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization. Wong said the new counterterrorism financing sanctions would restrict the individuals' access to funds and disrupt their ability to recruit, plan and conduct attacks. – APP

Seoul repatriates six North Koreans

SEOUL: South Korea repatriated six North Koreans on Friday after they were found drifting in international waters on a fishing boat earlier this month, Seoul's unification ministry said.

The announcement came following heightened tensions along the heavily fortified border, after a recent mine blast that injured three South Korean soldiers in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

The boat, initially carrying seven North Koreans, was found drifting in international waters off South Korea's Ulleungdo island on November 3 and towed by the military and coast guard.

Authorities decided to repatriate six on humanitarian grounds after confirming their wishes through a series of inquiries involving government agencies and the United Nations Command, according to authorities. One of the North Koreans expressed a wish to stay and will remain in the South, according to the ministry. The fishing boat carrying the six North Koreans on Friday crossed the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the de facto maritime border, in the East Sea – also known as the Sea of Japan – under its own power at 8:33 KST (2333 GMT), the ministry said. – **APP**



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman H.E. Fahad Sulaiman Khalaf Al Kharusi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on 26 November 2026. – DNA

Attaullah Tarar criticises Fazl, Bilawal over protests

Info Minister describes JUI-F's protest as a minor issue and urged the JUI-F chief to step back

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has criticised Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman over his party's call for protests that disrupted traffic in several cities, while also questioning Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's opposition to a referendum on the creation of new provinces. Speaking in a Geo News programme 'Aaj Shazeb Khanzada Kay Saath' on Thursday, Tarar downplayed the disruption caused by the JUI-F protests, urging Fazlur Rehman to avoid confrontation and find a way forward rather than block roads.

He alleged that the JUI-F chief was seeking confrontation despite efforts by members of his own party to persuade him otherwise. Tarar also made a sharp remark about the JUI-F, likening its conduct to that of a militant organisation and questioning whether Fazlur Rehman stood with Pakistan or Afghanistan and the Taliban.

"He (Fazl) will have to decide whether he wants to stand with Pakistan or with Afghanistan and the Taliban. He is behaving like a militant group," he said. The minister urged the JUI-F leadership to take a step back with a view to seeking new avenues. "The maulana should step back and find a way forward. If he does not close the channels (of communication), matters can improve," he noted.

Traffic was disrupted in several cities following the JUI-F's call for protests and road closures, although most affected routes had reportedly reopened. The information minister also criticised Bilawal over his opposition to holding a referendum on the creation of new provinces, arguing that the PPP chairman should not be reluctant to seek public opinion on the matter. Tarar questioned Bilawal's reservations about a referendum and said the public should be allowed to express their views on the issue.

He also challenged Bilawal's description of PTI founder Imran Khan as a political prisoner, saying the PPP chairman should make a case in court if he believed Imran was being imprisoned for political reasons. Tarar said Bilawal was mixing political arguments with legal matters, using political reasoning where legal arguments were required and vice versa. The minister, however, said disagreements with the PPP over political issues did not mean relations between the two parties had broken down.

He added that if the proposal to create new provinces came before parliament, the PTI could also be consulted. Bilawal has opposed holding a referendum on the creation of new provinces, arguing that parliament could address the matter through constitutional and democratic procedures. Speaking in Multan on November 26, the PPP chairman described a referendum on new provinces as potentially the most controversial in Pakistan's history and said the matter could be resolved through parliament without a public vote.

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