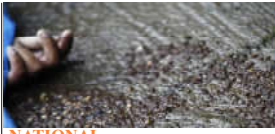




**BALUCHISTAN**  
Mumin Ahmed Khan Kakar Elected to Pakistan Bar Council...  
Page No 5



**NATIONAL**  
Three boys martyred in KP's Bannu as quadcopter crashes  
Page No 3



**INTERNATIONAL**  
Thailand vows to keep fighting Cambodia after Trump...  
Page No 8

**SPORT**  
McCullum admits England have been 'now here near' their best  
Page No 7



First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan Editor: Asim Khan.

# QUETTA VOICE

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## Quality Education and Character Building Key to Nation's Future: CM Balochistan

### Our Correspondent:

**SUI:** Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that quality education, character building, and holistic training are the pillars on which strong nations are built, emphasizing that military cadet colleges play a vital role in shaping disciplined, responsible, and patriotic youth.

Addressing the annual Parents' Day ceremony at Military College Sui, the chief minister stated that such insti-

tutions not only ensure academic excellence but also instill discipline, leadership qualities, patriotism, and a sense of national duty among students. He said Military College Sui is providing Balochistan's youth with modern education, practical training, and positive values, preparing them for future leadership roles.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti paid tribute to parents, acknowledging their guidance, sacrifices, and continuous support as key factors in the academic and moral success of children. He

noted that Parents' Day events help strengthen coordination and trust between parents and educational institutions.

Commending the cadets for their outstanding academic results, discipline, and achievements in co-curricular activities, the chief minister said that the youth of Balochistan possess immense potential which can be transformed into a valuable national asset through proper guidance and a conducive environment.

He reaffirmed that the Balochistan government

places top priority on youth education, training, and personality development, and is taking practical measures to further strengthen Military College Sui and similar institutions.

Highlighting the need for modern facilities, he said that advanced educational resources, sports infrastructure, and basic amenities are essential for students' all-round development.

In this regard, he announced that second-year students of Military College Sui will be provided laptops.

The chief minister also announced solarization of the college,

construction and rehabilitation of internal roads, development of an outdoor sports complex, and construction of a new parade ground to improve campus facilities.

Earlier, Commandant Brigadier Muhammad Aamir Ejaz briefed the chief minister on the college's performance, academic standards, and future development plans, and thanked the provincial government for its support.

## 'We will together seize Haqiqi Azadi': CM Afridi asks PTI supporters to be ready in case call for protest is made

### NEWS DESK:

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi asked PTI supporters on Sunday to "be ready" in case a call was made for a protest, adding that "we will together seize [our] Haqiqi Azadi (true freedom)" from the country's current rulers.

Afridi's intimation came during a PTI rally in Kohat, where he reminded the crowd that incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan, had delivered the message from jail of "freedom or death".

"So if we go this time around, we will either return in shrouds or after getting freedom," he said, adding that Imran had given the responsibility of making decisions — be it about talks with the government or protests — to Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Chairman Mehmood Khan Achakzai and Senator Ailiama Raja Nasir Abbas.

The two leaders are part of the opposition alliance Tehreek-i-Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) along with the PTI, which has also nominated them as the opposition leaders in the National Assembly and Senate.

"For my part," Afridi said, "I met them and assured them of any kind of support."

He added, "So whenever a call comes from them, you have to be ready. And we will together seize Haqiqi Azadi from them (country's current rulers)."

The CM claimed that "all institutions and the government want to eliminate the PTI".

Even the judiciary did not heed PTI's grievances, he said. Without naming anyone, the CM further stated:

"Those supposed to protect us turn into our killers, and those raised to protect our mandate, stole it. Tell me then, what solution do we have?"

He said Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz had been issuing advice to him lately but she should focus on her province instead.

"I will listen to them now," he remarked, adding that "our leader is Imran, and we will listen to only him."

There will be only Imran's policy and rule here."

He said Maryam should focus on her province, where, according to a recent survey, police had turned out to be the most corrupt department in the country.

## Snowfall likely to disrupt traffic in northern regions, says NDMA

### NEWS DESK:

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has forecast rain and snowfall in the country's upper regions from December 13 to 18, and has issued an advisory in this regard.

According to the NDMA's National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), rain and snowfall are expected in upper Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Kohistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and parts of Balochistan. A westerly wind system is likely to affect northern and western Pakistan between December 13 and 15.

The advisory says the expected weather conditions may lead to dense fog, with light to moderate rain in the plains and snowfall in mountainous and upper areas.

Heavy snowfall is likely in Kohistan, the upper Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the higher areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, and the mountainous regions of Azad Kashmir.

The NDMA warned that snowfall could disrupt traffic on mountain roads and may lead to road closures at some locations.

## 78,000 Intelligence-Based Operations Conducted in Balochistan This Year: Home Department

### Syed Muhammad Qassem:

Balochistan has witnessed an extensive crackdown against terrorism during the current year, with 78,000 intelligence-based operations carried out across the province. Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Muhammad Hamza Shafigat revealed on Friday.

Addressing a joint press conference along with DIG Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Balochistan Aitzaz Goraya, he said that 707 terrorists have been killed or arrested in various security operations, reflecting intensified counter-terrorism efforts in the province.

Muhammad Hamza Shafigat stated that the ongoing war against terrorism has claimed significant sacrifices, as 202 security personnel embraced martyrdom this year. To further strengthen internal security, the provincial government has allocated Rs 2 billion for the fortification and upgradation of police stations across



Balochistan.

He also confirmed the arrest of three terrorists involved in the murder of City SHO

Kharan, Qasim Baloch, following a successful operation. Highlighting international developments, he said the US State

Department has declared the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Majed Brigade as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, term-

ing it a major diplomatic and security breakthrough.

To pursue terrorists operating from abroad, the Home Department has established a special "Red Notice Cell", aimed at facilitating international coordination and action against suspects involved in terrorism in Balochistan.

DIG CTD Aitzaz Goraya, while briefing the media, disclosed that the arrested suspects belong to the banned outfit BLF and had received terrorist training in Afghanistan.

He said the accused planned to kidnap SHO Qasim Baloch, torture him, and record propaganda videos, but the officer resisted the abduction attempt and was shot dead.

The DIG added that government-issued SMGs and the vehicle used in the crime have been recovered from the suspects. He further revealed that the same group was also involved in planning the attack on the FC Headquarters in Noshki. The arrested terrorists will be produced before the court for further legal proceedings.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

## How Long Will Quetta Pay the Price for SSGC and Federal Negligence?



**Editorial:** Quetta is once again at the mercy of a winter crisis that has become all too familiar: low gas pressure, unannounced load shedding, and complete administrative silence. Every year, citizens are told to "bear with the situation" as temperatures fall and heaters, stoves, and geysers turn useless. Yet the authorities responsible — Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and the federal energy managers — continue to operate without accountability.

A City Freezing While Authorities Look Away

The people of Balochistan are right to ask: Why must Quetta suffer the same crisis every winter while no structural reforms are introduced? Why are consumers forced to pay heavy bills for a service that barely exists? And why do officials in Karachi and Islamabad continue to treat Balochistan's gas issues as a seasonal inconvenience rather than a governance failure?

Despite Balochistan being an energy-producing re-

gion, its residents struggle every winter for the very resource extracted from their own soil. This contradiction reflects a deep-rooted policy imbalance in the federation, where Balochistan remains last on the priority list — not because of a shortage of resources, but because of a shortage of political will.

SSGC's Repeated Excuses and Decades of Mismanagement

The SSGC's performance adds another layer of frustration. Each year, the company offers the same explanations — "excessive demand," "pipeline pressure issues," "technical challenges." Yet no one explains why these problems remain unresolved despite decades of complaints. Why have there been no significant infrastructure upgrades? Why has the company failed to introduce a clear winter management plan for Quetta? Why is communication with consumers absent? The unannounced nature of the load shedding exposes a complete disregard for public convenience. When outages are not

scheduled or announced, families cannot plan meals, heating, or even basic daily routines. Hospitals and clinics struggle to maintain warm environments for patients. Small businesses suffer. And in a city where temperatures can drop below freezing, such negligence is not just inconvenient — it is dangerous.

Federal Oversight and Balochistan's Low Priority

The federal government cannot escape responsibility either. Energy management is a national issue, and the pattern of winter mismanagement in Balochistan reflects weak oversight, poor planning, and an unfair allocation of resources. The silence of policymakers during these crises sends a clear message: Quetta's suffering is not a priority.

What Quetta needs is not another round of hollow statements. It needs a transparent winter gas plan, proper infrastructure investment, honest communication with the public, and real accountability for SSGC.

## Hereditary Politics vs. Self-Made Leaders: Why Privilege Fails the People

**Qaseem Shah:** Politics in Pakistan has long been dominated by dynastic families, where power is inherited rather than earned. While such politicians often claim experience and continuity, their record exposes a harsh truth: hereditary leadership breeds entitlement, detachment, and compromise, leaving ordinary citizens' struggles ignored. Born into privilege, raised in opulent homes, and educated in elite institutions, dynastic leaders are often insulated from the harsh realities of poverty, unemployment, and social injustice. For them, bungalows, luxury cars, armed convoys, and protocol parks are luxuries but assumed necessities. Over time, these comforts transform into entitlement, making public service a secondary concern.

Worse, dynastic politicians are bound by political debts, family obligations, and elite alliances, which forces them to compromise on issues critical to national interest. Challenging corruption, confronting anti-political elements, or addressing systemic inequality often takes a backseat to protecting their personal and family power. This creates a leadership class that is cautious, compromised, and frequently unwilling to act decisively for the public good.

In contrast, self-made leaders emerge from struggle, not inheritance, often from humble or poor backgrounds. They are intimately familiar with the hardships of ordinary citizens, and their leadership is grounded in empathy, accountability, and courage. Free from the constraints of dynastic obligations, self-made politicians are able to

Abraham Lincoln, born into poverty, pre-served the United States during its gravest crisis and abolished slavery — proving that real leadership grows from struggle, not comfort.

Pakistan's political landscape has its share of self-made leaders equipped to address pressing social and economic challenges. As long as politics is dominated by inherited privilege, the needs of the poor and marginalized remain sidelined, and reforms remain superficial.

In the end, self-made leaders rooted

ture. More recently, Imran Khan, initially a political movement emphasizing accountability and reform, rooted in public engagement rather than family power. These leaders exemplify that real leadership is earned, not inherited.

who contrasted sharply with dynastic elites. Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan), born into modest means, dedicated his life to nonviolence, education, and the rights of the Pashtuns. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, though from a relatively well-off family, rose through political activism and mass mobilization rather than relying solely on inheritance, leaving a profound imprint on Pakistan's political cul-

challenge entrenched interests, fight corruption, and prioritize public service over personal gain.

History provides numerous examples of such leaders. Globally, Nelson Mandela, imprisoned for decades under apartheid, led South Africa to justice and reconciliation. Lula da Silva, a former factory worker, became Brazil's president and implemented programs that lifted millions out of poverty.

and it demands courage, integrity, and connection with the people.

Dynastic politics, in contrast, remains a structural barrier to progress in Pakistan. Leaders born into privilege often see public service as an entitlement rather than a responsibility. Their compromised independence, obsession with status and perks, and reluctance to confront entrenched interests make them ill-

in struggle, empathy, and public service are the only hope for meaningful change. True leadership requires more than a family name; it requires vision, courage, and the willingness to put the people above privilege, comfort, and a personal gain. For Pakistan, the challenge is clear: move away from dynastic entitlement and empower leaders who have earned the right to lead.

## Illegal Israeli Attack on Gaza Hospital Sparks Outcry over Violation of Human Rights

By Samiullah:

In recent years, the Israel-Palestine conflict has witnessed numerous escalations, resulting in the tragic loss of countless lives and extensive damage to infrastructure. Among the most shocking incidents in this ongoing conflict is the illegal Israeli attack on a hospital in Gaza, which has sparked international outrage and underscores the pressing need for international intervention to protect the most vulnerable individuals caught in the crossfire.

## The Inhuman Act: Targeting Hospitals:

War, even when waged between states with longstanding conflicts, is subject to rules and conventions. The fundamental principle of international humanitarian law is to protect civilians, including the wounded, children, and the elderly. Hospitals are meant to be sanctuaries in times of conflict, places where the injured can receive medical care without fear of attack. Yet, the attack on a hospital in Gaza flagrantly violated these principles and sent shockwaves through the international community.

## The Impact of the Attack:

The repercussions of the attack on a hospital in Gaza were catastrophic. Innocent civilians, including chil-



dren, the wounded, and the elderly, were directly affected by this grave violation of international law. Lives were lost, and the injured faced dire circumstances with limited access to medical care. Moreover, such actions fur-

ther fuel the cycle of violence in the region, making it increasingly difficult to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

## International Responsibility:

The United Nations and other international organizations must step up and play a pivotal role in addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict. The concept that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" has been a longstanding principle

in international relations. In this context, it should translate into a resolute commitment to safeguard the rights and safety of the most vulnerable. Powerful nations should exert diplomatic pressure on the conflicting parties

to adhere to the rules of war and peace.

## Thucydides' Insights: Rules of War and Peace:

The ancient Greek historian Thucydides,

element of the international order. The attack on a hospital in Gaza stands as a blatant violation of these principles and underscores the necessity of enforcing them.

## To Sum Up:

The illegal Israeli attack on a hospital in Gaza serves as a stark reminder of the tragic consequences that the Israel-Palestine conflict continues to impose on innocent lives. It is imperative for the international community to unite in its efforts to promote peace, protect the most vulnerable, and ensure the principles of war and peace are upheld.

As Thucydides noted, these principles are not a sign of weakness but the cornerstone of a just and humane world order.

It is high time for the United Nations and powerful nations to take proactive measures to end the suffering and work towards a lasting solution in the region.

## About the Author:

The author, Mr. Samiullah, holds an M.Sc. in International Relations from Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad and is also a law graduate. He currently serves as the Public Relations Officer for the Ministry of Information and Public Relations in Balochistan. His unique perspective on international relations and conflict resolution adds depth and authority to this article.





## Three boys martyred in KP's Bannu as quadcopter crashes

**NEWS DESK:** Three young boys were martyred and another injured after a quadcopter crashed in a residential area of Mamand Khel in Bannu on Saturday, residents said.

Also, the Sheikh Landik police post in Bannu came under attack, where terrorists carried out assaults using quadcopters and sniper fire on Friday, according to police.

They said terrorists dropped two quadcopter bombs, while sniper firing was also carried out from another direction. Both quadcopter bombs exploded after landing near the police post building. However, no loss of life was reported.

On Saturday, however, locals said the quadcopter crashed in the Pattona Mamand Khel area of Bannu, killing Faisal, 16, Ahrar, 20, and Muhammad, 12, and injuring nine-year-old Muhammad Aiman.

An Afghan girl killed in

Lower South Waziristan IED blast soon after the crash, rescue and security personnel reached the site as locals reached the spot. Security forces cordoned off the area and launched an investigation to ascertain the nature and origin of the drone.

Police claimed the Sheikh Landik police post had been targeted repeatedly, with at least 14 terrorist attacks within a month.

A minor Afghan girl was killed and a bridge was destroyed after a powerful IED blast occurred on the Wana-Karikot Road in Lower South Waziristan on Saturday, police officials said.

Lower South Waziristan DPO Muhammad Tahir Shah Wazir said the explosion took place near a bridge, causing severe structural damage.

According to sources, the bridge collapsed due to the intensity of the blast, disrupt-

ing traffic in the area. The explosion also caused partial damage to a nearby house and a private vehicle parked close to the site.

Police said that at the time of the blast, the minor Afghan girl was present on the roof of her house. The force of the explosion caused a portion of the roof to collapse, leaving her critically injured.

Local residents rushed to the scene and shifted the injured girl to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Wana for emergency treatment. Hospital officials said she was in a critical condition upon arrival and later succumbed to her injuries despite efforts by doctors to save her.

Following the explosion, police cordoned off the area, collected evidence from the site, and launched an investigation to trace the perpetrators and determine the nature of the explosive device.

## Justice Jahangiri likely to appear as defendant in his own court

**NEWS DESK:** Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri is likely to appear as a defendant before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to face accusations that surfaced on Monday (tomorrow).

In a detailed written order issued on Dec 9, the IHC held that the question regarding the validity of Justice Jahangiri's law degree fell squarely within the scope of a writ of quo warranto — his right to hold public office.

The two-member

bench ruled that the petition was maintainable and set aside the office objection earlier raised by the registrar.

The bench also granted Justice Jahangiri the right to respond to the facts unearthed till date.

The registrar's office served the notice at the judge's chamber due to time constraints.

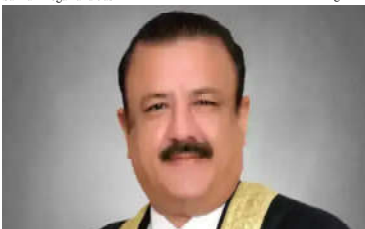
Sources said court staff of Justice Jahangiri re-

ceived the notice and submitted it to his chamber. They added that Justice Jahangiri decided to appear before the bench at the next hearing. While Justice Jahangiri along with four other IHC judges — Justices Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Babar Sattar, Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, and Saman Rafiq Intiaz — had earlier appeared before the Supreme Court as well on the same matter, it is not yet clear whether his fellow judges will accompany him in the IHC on Monday.

However, lawyers are expected to attend the proceedings to express solidarity with him. According to former president of the Islamabad High Court Bar Association Riasat Ali Azad, he, along with scores of lawyers, will be present in the courtroom during the hearing.

The petition, filed by Advocate Mian Dawood under Article 199 of the Constitution, seeks a judicial determination on whether Justice Jahangiri lawfully holds the office of a high court judge in view of allegations concerning his LLB degree obtained from the University of Karachi (KU).

According to the order, the bench ob-



number had already been issued to another student, Intiaz Ahmed, in 1987. The report further stated that the transcript for LLB Part-I was issued in the name of 'Tariq Jahangiri', while the inquiry revealed that the judge had also been assigned a separate enrolment number (7124) for the same degree programme. The committee observed that this violated university rules, which allow only one enrolment number for the entire duration of a degree. According to the inquiry findings, the existence of multiple identities, duplicate enrolment numbers, and conflicting transcripts rendered the academic credentials 'invalid', although the committee stopped short of declaring the degree 'bogus'.

The report also noted that the candidate had been debarred for three years in 1988 on grounds of using unfair means but later appeared in examinations under a different name.

The university alleged collusion with staff and impersonation of other enrolled students, following which the results were cancelled and a three-year ban was imposed, effective until 1992.

He further said that the 'Pakistan-first' approach, which asserted that no

platform would be allowed entry in the country without 'disclosures and verifications'.

Moreover, he said, the process of licensing would be initiated for entities after they would 'move forward in line with Pakistan's law and with its oversight'.

Saqib said this model was not unique to Pakistan and the world's leading financial centres had been approaching new industries in a phased manner.

Reiterating that a 'Pakistan-first' approach was being employed in the crypto

sector, he said, 'We will first control this industry and then scale it.' He said Pakistan ranked among the world's top three 'crypto-adoption countries', adding that it was estimated that there were 30 to 40 million crypto users in the country.

They have adopted this industry without any regulatory framework, classroom and education. He said, 'The good thing here is that this shows that our youth is world class. But, our systems world class? Are our regulations world class?'

Saqib further questioned whether it would be wise for the state to stay out of a sector in which people were involved on an extensive scale.

'You cannot ignore innovation,' he said, stressing that not introducing the 'right policies will weaken the country and make people unsafe'. Keeping this in view, he continued, 'our country's leadership has tried to narrow this gap'.

Stressing the need for regulation, he said countries that would take an early initiative in this regard would be able to attract capital.

'Few countries have the opportunity that Pakistan has,' he said, adding, 'We are not trying to promote crypto but to regulate it safely. We have already adopted it.'

'Our country is the fifth-most populous country with tech-savvy youth and where digital adoption is growing fast. But, the country will be able to benefit from this talent when they have a legal, structured path [to follow]. When they will have a framework. Otherwise, they will leave.'

He said Pakistan ranked among the world's top three 'crypto-adoption countries', adding that it was estimated that there were 30 to 40 million crypto users in the country.

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## 8 suspects part of extortion network arrested during raid at Sunni Tehreek chief's residence in Karachi: police



**NEWS DESK:** Karachi police said on Sunday that eight suspects, 'involved in running an extortion network', were arrested during a raid at the residence of Pakistan Sunni Tehreek (PST) chairman Muhammad Sarwat Ejaz Qadri in Karachi.

Special Investigation Unit (SIU) Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Imran Khan confirmed Saturday night's development during a press briefing in Karachi today.

At the same time, he also clarified that Qadri was neither wanted by police nor had he been arrested. Moreover, the official said police had no evidence of the suspects' association with any party.

The SSP also clarified that police had found no evidence of the involvement of the PST chief or any other member in the extortion network.

SSP Khan said multiple cases had been registered against the arrested suspects, who were associated with an

extortion network run by two men, who he identified as Wasimullah Lakho and Abdul Samad Kathiawari.

These two 'most-wanted' suspects were reportedly 'in hiding abroad', the official said, adding that three other suspects had been playing a key role in running the extortion network.

SSP Khan said multiple cases had been registered against the arrested suspects, who were associated with an

The SSP said the Karachi additional inspector general had constituted a special task force for action against extortion last week. The team comprised west zone deputy inspector general (DIG), Crime Investigation Agency (CIA), central SSP and SIU/SP, he added.

Two days ago, he continued, the SIU arrested a suspect Rehanuddin in an injured condition. 'He is named in a case of extortion and firing at a car

showroom, which was registered at the Jamshed Quarters police station a month ago.'

'During initial interrogation, the suspect revealed the names of other members and heads of the (extortion) group', the official said, adding that based on the information shared by him, the SIU and central police conducted a joint raid in the jurisdiction of Rizvia police station on Saturday night.

Seventeen people were detained during the

showroom, which was registered at the Jamshed Quarters police station a month ago.'

'During initial interrogation, the suspect revealed the names of other members and heads of the (extortion) group', the official said, adding that based on the information shared by him, the SIU and central police conducted a joint raid in the jurisdiction of Rizvia police station on Saturday night.

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## Apex court overrules DNA test order to determine parentage



**NEWS DESK:** Overturning a lower court order for a DNA test to ascertain the parentage of a petitioner, the Supreme Court has ruled that the right to privacy — recognised as an entitlement to personal sanctuary — requires protecting individuals from undue intrusion into their private lives.

The unnecessary public challenge to the paternity of a person inherently results in social embarrassment, humiliation, and severe psychological stigma,' observed Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar while accepting an appeal filed by petitioner Khalid Hameed. On Nov 3, 2022, a special judge of the Anti-Corruption Court, Pakistan, had ordered the respective circle officer to conduct DNA tests of the petitioner and one Mohammad Hameed, holding that the real dispute in an inheritance matter centred on the petitioner's paternity.

The directive was challenged through a revision petition before the Lahore High Court, which rejected the plea on Dec 6, 2022.

The controversy involved several res-pondents allegedly

involved in forgery and corruption pertaining to material alteration of the petitioner's parentage in educational records, purportedly to deprive him of his rightful inheritance.

The Supreme Court said challenge to paternity must not be taken lightly, as compelling a DNA test without adequate grounds in-herently casts serious aspersions on the character and moral integrity of the mother — a course of action previously declared impermissible. Such judicial directives, when lacking proper legal basis, amount to an unwarranted intrusion into the sanctity of family life and a woman's reputation, which should never be tolerated under the

guise of legal process, observed Justice Kakar, who was heading a two-judge bench.

'This protection extends to personal data, communications, family life, and all facets of the personal sphere against un-warranted interference by the state or pri-v-a-te entities', the six-page judgement said.

Justice Kakar observed that any de-m-and for a DNA test, particularly to determine parentage, encroaches upon fundamental privacy rights, as genetic information con-tains comprehensive data about lineage and physical characteristics. These fundamental rights, the judg-ment said, safeguard bodily integrity and ensure an individual's autonomy

to refuse unsolicited medical procedures.

The right conferred under Article 14 does not concern any pre-mises, home or office, but the person — the man or woman wherever he or she may be, Justice Kakar underscored.

He said that obtaining someone's DNA without due process fundamentally violates rights to privacy, autonomy and liberty, as it involves extracting extremely sensitive personal information.

While intrinsically linked to the rights to existence and autonomy, the right to privacy has evolved into an independent fundamental guarantee under Article 14, representing the ultimate honour of the human person and the

essence of individuality, the judgement stated. It protects a zone of choice and self-determination, enabling individuals to make intimate decisions without fear of surveillance or unauthorised disclosure.

'The inviolability of privacy is directly linked with the dignity of man,' Justice Kakar remarked, adding that preserving human dignity requires safeguarding privacy from inva-sion and unlawful intrusion.

The judgement warned that such encroachment carries the serious risk of misuse or unauthorised dissemination of an individual's genetic blueprint, potentially causing grave personal and professional harm. The right to liberty under Article 9, it said, goes beyond protection from physical detention and encompasses freedom from arbitrary or purposeless restraints on personal autonomy that are inconsistent with public interest or statutory provisions.

A judicial order for DNA testing without adequate legal basis, therefore, is not a mere procedural flaw but one that causes profound adverse effects on an individual's life and dignity.

## NOCs to Binance, HTX not 'blanket approvals' but first step under supervised entry framework: Bilal bin Saqib

**NEWS DESK:** Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) Bilal Bin Saqib has said that the no-objection certificates (NOCs) issued to global cryptocurrency exchanges Binance and HTX were not a 'blanket approval' but the 'first step under a risk-mitigated, phased, supervised entry framework'.

Saqib's video statement, televised on Sunday, comes after Pakistan gave initial clearance for Binance and HTX on Friday to register with regulatory bodies and set up local subsidiaries and begin preparations for full exchange licence applications.

The clearances allow the exchanges to register on the Anti-Money Laundering system, set up local units and prepare full applications.

Speaking about the development, Saqib said the issuance of the NOCs to Binance and HTX was the 'first practical step' that reflected a 'new mindset'.

He further said that the 'Pakistan-first' approach, which asserted that no



platform would be allowed entry in the country without 'disclosures and verifications'.

Moreover, he said, the process of licensing would be initiated for entities after they would 'move forward in line with Pakistan's law and with its oversight'.

Saqib said this model was not unique to Pakistan and the world's leading financial centres had been approaching new industries in a phased manner.

Reiterating that a 'Pakistan-first' approach was being employed in the crypto

sector, he said, 'We will first control this industry and then scale it.'

He said Pakistan ranked among the world's top three 'crypto-adoption countries', adding that it was estimated that there were 30 to 40 million crypto users in the country.

They have adopted this industry without any regulatory framework, classroom and education. He said, 'The good thing here is that this shows that our youth is world class. But, our systems world class? Are our regulations world class?'

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## Sindh CM monitors under-construction Redline BRT project

KARACHI (INP): Sindh's Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Sunday said that development projects will bring revolution in the economic and social life of Karachi.

Sindh's CM visited various points to monitor the under-construction Red Line Bus Rapid Transit Project.

Murad Ali Shah said that the Red Line has been a key strategic public transport project, meant to provide rapid, safe and environment friendly travel facility to citizens adding that no compromise will be made over the quality of development projects.

"The People's Party has fulfilled the promise of providing a rapid, safe and modern travel facility to citizens of Karachi. "Flyovers, underpasses, bus stations and service roads are gift to general

public," CM Shah said. "The Red Line project will bring down traffic congestion and enhance travel facility," Murad Ali Shah said.

He said the quick completion of Redline and Shahrah-e-Bhutto projects is necessary for providing modern civic facilities in the city.

Murad Ali Shah was informed in a briefing over the BRT project that the Redline Corridor is comprises of two phases. The Phase-I of the project has been from Moosmait to Malir Halt. "In first phase over all seven modern bus stations are being constructed including

Kings Cottage, Safora, Race Course, Malir Cantt, Tank Chowk and Tipu Sultan stations," chief minister briefed. Tipu Sultan station has been added to the project as additional facility.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the launching ceremony of National Regulatory Reforms.

## State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) exempts Gwadar Free Zones from FEPE, undoing dollar role

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a major development, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has finally exempted Gwadar Free Zones from Foreign Exchange Policy Framework (FEPE), a significant move that will allow all companies working in Gwadar South Free Zone and Gwadar North Free Zone to directly convert RMB into Pakistani rupee eliminating the role of currency of dollar once for all.

Since the operationalization of Gwadar Free Zone in 2023, companies were unable to run RMB currency account and retain RMB currency, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday.

As per previous

rules, they had to convert RMB into dollar and then into Pakistan Rupee. Owing to deduction on currency exchange rate, companies had to suffer financial loss.

Finally, on December 11, a high-level follow-up meeting chaired by Additional Secretary Ministry of Maritime revealed that under SBP's order, Chinese companies and foreign companies in both Gwadar Free Zones are exempted from FEPE and they will be able to maintain special foreign currency accounts.

(SFCAs) with retention of 50 percent earnings in foreign currency for trade payments and

remittances. Senior representatives from State Bank of Pakistan.

Federal Bureau of Revenue, China Overseas Ports Holding Company, Gwadar Port Authority and Finance Division participated in the meeting.

Earlier in June this year, the federal government had proposed to Gwadar Free Zone Company (GFZC) to consider retention of 50% in Special Foreign Currency Accounts (SFCAs). GFZC had agreed to this proposal as a short-term solution.

The committee explored other mechanisms to increase this retention policy from 50% to 100% to bring

it in par with Export Processing Zones (SEZs).

The committee also proposed a comprehensive Act for Gwadar Free Zone to incorporate all regulations, incentives and exemptions in line with SEZ Act 2012. The federal government has already issued the GFZ Tax Rules in 2022. However, the said rules do not include the exemptions from Foreign Exchange Regulations Act of 1947.

The committee plans to propose long-term solutions within the week. In the meanwhile, GFZC will consult legal advisory to identify particular amendments in FERA 1947.

## Ayaz congratulates independent group on success in PBC elections

ISLAMABAD (INP): Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has extended heartfelt congratulations to Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Ahsan Bhoon, and other members of the Independent Group on their remarkable success in the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) elections.

NA Speaker also conveyed his best wishes to all lawyers elected in the Pakistan Bar Council elections. He said that the role of the legal fraternity in strengthening democracy and promoting democratic values is highly commendable. Ayaz Sadiq emphasized that the lawyers' community plays a pivotal role in safe-

guarding citizens' rights and ensuring the delivery of justice.

He said that lawyers are the custodians of constitutional supremacy and the rule of law in the country. Ayaz assured the newly elected members of the Pakistan Bar Council of his full support in addressing the issues faced by the legal fraternity.

He stressed that close coordination and cooperation between the Bench and the Bar are essential for the effective dispensation of justice.

Ayaz Sadiq prayed for the success of the newly elected members and expressed hope that they would continue to serve the cause of justice with dedication and integrity.

## KP CM directs Food Department to beef up actions against profiteers

PESHAWAR (INP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi here Saturday directed the Food Department to beef up actions against profiteering and hoarding of essential commodities. He emphasized that the availability of food items at officially notified prices must be ensured across the province. Chairing an important meeting of the Food Department at the Chief Minister's Secretariat, Peshawar, the Chief Minister also directed that field visits be increased to enhance public relief and facilitation, and that a comprehensive plan be devised to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains.

He further directed the department to take effective measures to enhance wheat storage capacity, stressing the adoption of modern

technology and world best practices for storage. The meeting was briefed on the province's wheat supply and demand situation and was informed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's annual wheat requirement stands at 5.3 million metric tons. Of this, 1.4 million metric tons are met through local production, while the remaining 3.8 million metric tons are procured from other provinces. It was further informed that over the past six months, the Food Directorate carried out 186,312 inspections of food-related businesses. During these inspections, 8,802 shops were challenged and fines amounting to Rs. 31,408 million were imposed.

Briefing the meeting on the performance of the Food Safety and Halal Food Authority, it was informed that from January to December,



MULTAN/MAZAFFARGARH: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani speaks to the media at the dera of former federal minister Mehr Irshad Sial.

## Pakistan looks to Chinese Investors as It launches Tea commercialisation strategy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan on Thursday formally launched its Domestic Tea Cultivation and Commercialisation Strategy, but officials and experts made clear that the plan's success will depend heavily on attracting international investors, with Chinese investment under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) seen as the most promising and transformative option.

Supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the strategy aims to reduce Pakistan's USD 650 million annual tea import bill by initiating large-scale tea cultivation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Gwadar Pro reported on Friday.

The roadmap targets 600 acres of privately operated tea gardens in Manshehra by 2030, expected to produce 2,500 metric

tons of green leaf annually and serve as the foundation for a fully integrated tea industry by 2040. Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiative Ahsan Iqbal said the country's broader agricultural modernization, reinforced by China's training of 1,000 Pakistani agricultural scientists, has positioned Pakistan to diversify into high-value crops.

"Effective measures in tea processing, packaging, and branding will enable Pakistan tea to secure a distinguished position in the global market," he said. FAO's National Tea Policy Consultant Dr. Muhammad Khurshed underscored that investor confidence is rising, but Chinese partners remain uniquely aligned with Pakistan's needs. "One Chinese investor tested Manshehra's soil here

and in China came back ready to begin commercial work. If the Chinese are involved, they will make it happen," he said, adding that bringing such investors under CPEC would ensure stronger institutional backing from both governments.

International Tea Consultant Dr. Jhon Snell also stressed the critical role of external financing. "There are CPEC partners interested in investment in tea production from plantation to consumer-packaged goods," he said, noting that official approval of the programme has opened up external funding sources immeasurably. FAO officials emphasized that the long-term success of Pakistan's tea sector will hinge on sustained foreign investment, robust extension services and globally

competitive processing standards, areas where Chinese collaboration has already begun. FAO KP Head of Office Mujiyur Rahman highlighted the strategic urgency: Pakistan consumes 252,000 tons of tea annually and imports 99% of it.

He added that tea cultivation can also fuel tea tourism, with potential integration with CPEC connectivity projects and as well as other major routes including Kalam and Malam Jabba in Swat.

By 2040, the strategy envisions a workforce of 10,000 in KP's tea fields, supporting an estimated 70,000 rural residents. The plan includes distributing proven Chinese and Sri Lankan tea clones through national nurseries and offers investment opportunities via smallholder, cluster-farm and plantation models.



ISLAMABAD: Hon'ble Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, Chief Justice of Pakistan / Chairman Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan chairing the 56th meeting of National Judicial Policy Making Committee at Supreme Court of Pakistan.



# Munir Ahmed Khan Kakar Elected to Pakistan Bar Council

**Staff Reporter:**  
**QUETTA:** Senior lawyer Munir Ahmed Khan Kakar has been elected as a member of the Pakistan Bar Council, drawing widespread congratulations from the legal fraternity across Balochistan. Lawyers' bodies, bar associations and senior advocates have hailed his victory as a significant achievement for the province's legal community.

Members of the legal fraternity said that Munir Ahmed Khan Kakar's success reflects his long-standing professional services, principled stance and consistent struggle for the rights of lawyers.

He has remained actively engaged in promoting the rule of law, constitutional supremacy and collec-



tive interests of the legal community.

It may be mentioned here that Munir Ahmed Khan Kakar is regarded as one of the senior and experienced lawyers from Balochistan, with decades of association with the legal profession.

He has played a leading role in guiding young lawyers and in organising professional lawyers on key legal and constitutional issues.

Legal experts expressed hope that his representation in the Pakistan Bar Council would effectively highlight the issues faced by lawyers from Balochistan and contribute positively to judicial reforms, protection of lawyers' rights and strengthening democratic and legal institutions in the country.

## Governor Balochistan Attends Desert Challenge 2025 in Jhal Magsi



**JHAL MAGSI:** Governor Balochistan, Ameer Khan Magsi, arrived in Jhal Magsi via helicopter to attend the Desert Challenge 2025 jeep rally. He was warmly welcomed by Federal Minister Nawabzada Khalid Magsi and Member National Assembly Nawabzada

Ameer Khan Magsi. The event marked the 21st Jhal Magsi Desert Challenge, with 56 vehicles registered in various categories, including professional and stock classes.

The rally featured four categories, including a women's category, showcasing

speed, skill, and endurance in the desert landscape.

The Desert Challenge is a historic racing event that highlights Balochistan's rich cultural heritage, and the governor's presence underscored the importance of promoting tourism and sports in the region.

## MPA Nawab Changiz Mari Initiates Development Projects in Kohlu

**KOHLU:** Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Nawab Changiz Mari has directed the acceleration of development projects in Kohlu, focusing on providing basic facilities and improving the quality of life for the people.

Various projects are underway, including road construction, electricity supply, water filtration, and healthcare facilities. The MPA has emphasized transparency, quality, and timely completion of these projects.

The development initiatives aim to address daily problems, promote economic and trade activities, and ensure environmental improvement.

The people of Kohlu appreciate the efforts of MPA Nawab Changiz Mari and the district administration for their people-friendly policies. The projects are expected to bring overall development, improved facilities, and public welfare to the district.



## Balochistan Agriculture Minister Stresses Importance of Agricultural Development



**QUETTA:** Provincial Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, has emphasized that the agriculture sector is the backbone of Balochistan's development and prosperity. He stated that all ongoing development projects in the department should be completed on time to benefit the province's farmers.

Addressing a review meeting on the progress of development projects, Zehri said that agriculture is the main source of livelihood for most people in the province.

He stressed that modernizing the agriculture department is a top priority.

Secretary Agriculture and Cooperatives, Noor Ahmed Parakani, briefed the minister on the department's overall performance and decisions taken in previous meetings.

The DGs of the agriculture department also provided detailed briefings on their respective sectors.

Zehri emphasized that agricultural development is crucial for the province's economic growth and that the sector is linked to

every individual in the province, directly or indirectly.

He stated that the vision of President Asif Ali Zardari is to make Balochistan a developed and prosperous province, and that removing obstacles to development is essential.

The minister urged all stakeholders to work together to modernize the agriculture department and make it compatible with current demands, saying that collective efforts are necessary

to develop the sector and benefit the people of the province.

## 5.0 Magnitude Earthquake Hits Balochistan, Pakistan



**Asif Kareem Khetran:** A moderate earthquake with a magnitude of 5.0 struck Balochistan, Pakistan, on December 13, 2025, at 20:53 PST. The quake's epicenter was located 30 kilometers east of Barkhan, with a depth of 25 kilometers and coordinates of 29.90°N latitude and 69.83°E longitude.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), tremors were felt in Barkhan, Musakhel, and surrounding areas, causing panic among residents. However, no immediate reports of casualties or damage have been reported.

The earthquake is a reminder of the region's seismic vulnerability, with frequent tectonic activity. Authorities are monitoring the situation, and emergency services are on high alert.

Affected Areas: Barkhan, Musakhel, Quetta, Ziarat, Harnai, Muslim Bagh. Earthquake Details: Magnitude: 5.0

Depth: 25 km. Epicenter: 30 km East of Barkhan, Balochistan. Time: 20:53 PST, December 13, 2025. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) is coordinating with local authorities to assess damage and provide relief to 5.0 Magnitude Earthquake. Hiss Balochistan, Pakistan.

## Sabzal Road Flyover: Rumours Baseless, Major Traffic Relief Soon



**Web Desk:** QUETTA: Authorities have strongly refuted viral social media rumours claiming that the CPEC-aligned Sabzal Road is being demolished or abandoned, labelling the reports "completely baseless and misleading".

Deputy Project Director of the Chief Minister's Quetta Development Package, Engr. Abid Mahmood, confirmed on Thursday that

the project is progressing exactly on schedule. "Asphalt removal on the designated portion has been completed, and piling work for the Sabzal Road-Samanghi Road flyover will start tomorrow," he stated.

The upcoming flyover is a flagship component of Quetta's new North-South Corridor under the Quetta Development Package and the broader China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

(CPEC) framework. Once completed, it will dramatically reduce travel time from Sarhab Custom to Quetta International Airport from over an hour to just 20 minutes by bypassing the congested Red Zone and Zarghoun Road.

Currently, the city depends on only two heavily overloaded North-South routes, Sarhab Road (passing through Zarghoun Road and high-security zones)

and the Western Bypass. The new elevated corridor is expected to redistribute traffic and substantially ease chronic congestion on both arteries.

Engr. Abid Mahmood urged citizens to ignore misinformation and rely solely on official updates. "This project will bring long-term transformation to Quetta's traffic system," he added.

## IMF targets dubbed 'new' benchmarks do not represent 'imposition of abrupt conditions': finance ministry

**NEWS DESK:** The finance ministry said on Sunday that the 11 targets, being categorised as "new conditions" under the ongoing programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), represented "continuity, sequencing, and deepening of Pakistan's agreed reform agenda" rather than the "imposition of abrupt or unprecedented conditions".

The ministry's clarification follows reports of the government agreeing to 11 new targets, including additional tax measures and expenditure cuts from early next month, to make up for rising revenue shortfalls and to keep the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) on track. This was revealed in documents released by the IMF earlier this week, according to which commitment to the new or revised structural benchmarks, together with completion of two "prior actions", enabled the conclusion of a staff-level agreement on the second review of the EFF and its approval by the IMF Executive Board for the disbursement of about \$1.2bn for Pakistan on December 9.

A press release issued by the finance ministry today said that it had "clarified the intent, context, and continuity of reform measures under Pakistan's IMF Extended Fund Facility programme, particularly in response to recent commentary regarding so-called 'new conditions'".

It said that the purpose is to reaffirm that the measures referenced are part of a phased, medium-term reform agenda agreed with the IMF, many of which are extensions or logical progressions of reforms already initiated by the Government of Pakistan," the press release read.

It said that the EFF was designed to support countries in implementing medium-term reforms aimed at achieving agreed policy objectives.

"These reforms are implemented in a sequenced and step-by-step manner over the duration of the programme," it said.

"Each review builds upon prior actions to ensure that the ultimate policy goals agreed at the outset of the program are achieved."

"Accordingly, actions under the EFF are structured as logical steps, with additional measures incorporated as each successive review."



view."

The press release said the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) are derived from reforms already undertaken or initiated by the government of Pakistan, rather than being externally imposed or newly introduced conditions."

The ministry issued clarifications for each of the 11 measures characterised as "new conditions".

Regarding the public disclosure of asset declarations of civil servants, it said that this reform had been part of the EFF programme since the initial MEFP in May 2024.

The current structural benchmark repre-

sents the second step, following the successful legislative amendment to the Civil Servants Act, 1973," it said.

Commitments to strengthening the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) operational effectiveness and independence were also agreed during earlier reviews, it said, including coordination with provincial anti-corruption establishments.

"The development of action plans for high-risk agencies is a continuation of this commitment and runs parallel to, rather than stemming from, the Governance and Corruption Diag-

nostic Assessment Report," the ministry added. On empowering provincial anti-corruption establishments, it said that allowing these bodies access to financial intelligence aligned with the ongoing Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) reform agenda, which had been "integral to the EFF since its inception".

The ministry further said that strengthening remittance inflows was "critical to Pakistan's external stability".

"Following measures to curb informal channels, remittances increased by 26 per cent year-on-year from FY24 to FY25, with a further increase of 9.3 per cent projected for FY26."

The government, in coordination with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), has been working to remove structural bottlenecks in cross-border payments. The IMF has built upon these efforts by incorporating them into the MEFP," it added.

The ministry also said that the IMF staff report that had been published in May 2025 had recommended a comprehensive study to identify bottlenecks in the local currency bond market to broaden the investor base. This recommendation has now been formalised as a structural benchmark, according to the press release. On the deregulation of the sugar industry, it said that the initiative originated from the government. "A task force, notified by the prime minister's office and chaired by the minister for power, has been mandated to recommend full liberalisation of the sugar market and propose a national policy in consultation with provinces. Given its alignment with the EFF objective of reducing government intervention in phases"

ing up to 60pc, along with interest rates that remain elevated compared to regional peers. Industrialists are demanding tax reductions and a 100 basis point cut in the policy interest rate. The current policy rate stands at 11pc, while inflation was recorded at 6.1pc in November.

"We have yet to develop economic policies in line with the global economic shift. China is replacing the old model of global economic dominance."

Pakistan must read this change and revise its trade and industrial policies to remain connected to the new economic world order," said S.S. Iqbal, an expert on

the economy and money markets.

Pakistan's trade with China has expanded significantly, making it the country's largest trading partner. However, Pakistani exporters have struggled to gain meaningful access to Chinese markets.

Mr Iqbal said foreign investment typically follows domestic investment, adding that without local investment momentum, foreign inflows are unlikely.

An independent economist said Pakistan's biggest economic failure is not inflation, debt, or even governance, but the lack of consensus on long-term direction, timelines, and measures.

This, he said, is what economist Atif Mian refers to as "reform-for-Fifty" — achieving 5pc GDP growth every year for the next 50 years. The concept was coined by Faizal Mamsa, CEO of Treasmak, who said the goal is achievable but requires a collective national decision to prioritise growth, even when it clashes with comfort, technology, or short-term political interests.

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## Cotton exchange building 'vacated'

**NEWS DESK:** The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) have claimed to have "recovered" and "vacated" the Karachi Cotton Exchange Building situated on L1 Chumam Road in a "joint operation" declaring it a federal trust property.

In a joint statement, the FIA and ETPB said that the Karachi Cotton Exchange Building is a trust property as per federal government's gazette notification and hence the title of this property is vested in the federal government.

During the operation, the statement said, it was found that the Karachi Cotton Association had been illegally occupying the premises, keeping multiple tenants inside the building and charging them rent without any lawful authority.

The two agencies said the premises were secured in the presence of FIA and ETPB officials and representatives of the Karachi Cot-

ton Association (KCA). "All occupants and tenants were afforded an opportunity to safely retrieve their personal belongings before the premises were sealed under their lock and key," the statement said, adding that the classification of the building as an evacuee or trust property, asserting and claimed that the property was purchased by the Karachi Cotton Association Ltd through a registered conveyance deed on May 1936, prior to 1947, and therefore cannot be treated as abandoned or evacuee property under the law.

"The KCA takes serious objections to the unlawful act of the Evacuee Trust and the FIA calls upon them to forthwith withdraw the sealing notice if any, and to de-seal the building immediately, failing which the KCA reserves the right to take appropriate action against them as provided by law for the unlawful action, losses to them," added the KCA statement.

"An unlawful raid was conducted on the Cotton Exchange Building, jointly by the Evacuee Trust and the FIA despite the fact that

Association terms operation by FIA, Evacuee Trust as "illegal". The FIA and ETPB reiterated that they are "fully cognisant that valuable and records may be lying inside" and reaffirmed their commitment to protecting federal assets and taking action against illegal occupation.

However, the KCA strongly condemned the operation, terming it illegal and without lawful authority.

"An unlawful raid was conducted on the Cotton Exchange Building, jointly by the Evacuee Trust and the FIA despite the fact that

KCA is in lawful possession of the property under a valid lease issued by the Karachi Municipal Corporation, extending up to the year 2081," said a KCA statement.

Trade and industry have repeatedly urged the government to improve the investment climate by addressing political uncertainty and terrorism.

How is it possible to invest in a country where uncertainty has a strong grip and is clearly reflected in declining foreign investment? asked Aamir Aziz, a textile finishing manufacturer and exporter.

He said domestic textile groups have begun investing abroad, citing Interloop and Artistic Milliners as examples. As a result, jobs are effectively being outsourced. For the first time in the country's recent history, domestic investors are actively securing their investments outside Pakistan.

Experts cite political uncertainty, terrorism as main barriers.

A senior banker described the situation as grim for both the

## Investment-to-GDP ratio may fall below 13pc

**NEWS DESK:** Both domestic and foreign investment are at the lowest levels and could set an unwanted record by falling below a 13 per cent investment-to-GDP ratio during the current fiscal year (FY26), analysts and bankers warn.

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A senior banker described the situation as grim for both the

economy and the public, saying job creation is very possible through higher investment, both domestic and foreign.

The Investment Policy announced in 2023 set a target of raising the investment-to-GDP ratio to 20pc through local and foreign inflows. To attract foreign investment, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was established, but so far it has failed to deliver tangible results.

"Look at the ground realities. Two provinces are facing severe terrorism, while tensions with India and Afghanistan persist along the borders. Under these circumstances, no govern-

ment can convincingly attract domestic or foreign investors," said an industrialist, explaining the low level of investment.

Pakistan's investment-to-GDP ratio is almost half that of competing regional economies, where it ranges between 25pc and 30pc.

The ratio fell to its lowest level in FY24 at 13.1pc, later revised to 13.8pc, and edged up slightly to 14.1pc in FY25.

The long-term average from 1960 to 2024 stands at 15.9pc, indicating that conditions have steadily worsened.

Another major concern is the very high tax burden, with rates reach-

ing up to 60pc, along with interest rates that remain elevated compared to regional peers. Industrialists are demanding tax reductions and a 100 basis point cut in the policy interest rate. The current policy rate stands at 11pc, while inflation was recorded at 6.1pc in November.

"We have yet to develop economic policies in line with the global economic shift. China is replacing the old model of global economic dominance."

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## FBR to move against private clinics, hospitals over tax evasion, underreporting

**NEWS DESK:** The Federal Board of Revenue has decided to tighten the noose around private-practice doctors, clinics and private hospitals allegedly involved in tax evasion amounting to billions of rupees. The decision has been taken in light of the latest statistics obtained during FBR's data analysis, which revealed large-scale alleged tax evasion by doctors across the country. Despite having taxable income, more than 73,000 registered doctors were found to have not filed income tax returns.

According to FBR officials, the latest data shows that there are 130,243 registered doctors nationwide. However, during the current year, only 56,287 registered doctors filed income tax returns, while over 73,000 medical professionals did not submit any returns at all despite being engaged in one of the country's highest-earning professions.

The findings highlight stark discrepancies between the visible



scale of private medical practices and the income declared to the FBR. The data shows that in 2025, as many as 31,870 doctors declared zero income from private practice, while 307 doctors reported losses, even though their clinics in major cities remain consistently crowded with patients. Only 24,137 doctors declared business income.

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The press release said the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) are derived from reforms already undertaken or initiated by the government of Pakistan, rather than being externally imposed or newly introduced conditions."

The ministry issued clarifications for each of the 11 measures characterised as "new conditions".

Regarding the public disclosure of asset declarations of civil servants, it said that this reform had been part of the EFF programme since the initial MEFP in May 2024.

The current structural benchmark repre-

sents the second step, following the successful legislative amendment to the Civil Servants Act, 1973," it said.

Commitments to strengthening the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) operational effectiveness and independence were also agreed during earlier reviews, it said, including coordination with provincial anti-corruption establishments.

"The development of action plans for high-risk agencies is a continuation of this commitment and runs parallel to, rather than stemming from, the Governance and Corruption Diag-

nostic Assessment Report," the ministry added. On empowering provincial anti-corruption establishments, it said that allowing these bodies access to financial intelligence aligned with the ongoing Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) reform agenda, which had been "integral to the EFF since its inception".

The ministry further said that strengthening remittance inflows was "critical to Pakistan's external stability".

"Following measures to curb informal channels, remittances increased by 26 per cent year-on-year from FY24 to FY25, with a further increase of 9.3 per cent projected for FY26."

The government, in coordination with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), has been working to remove structural bottlenecks in cross-border payments. The IMF has built upon these efforts by incorporating them into the MEFP," it added.

The ministry also said that the IMF staff report that had been published in May 2025 had recommended a comprehensive study to identify bottlenecks in the local currency bond market to broaden the investor base. This recommendation has now been formalised as a structural benchmark, according to the press release. On the deregulation of the sugar industry, it said that the initiative originated from the government. "A task force, notified by the prime minister's office and chaired by the minister for power, has been mandated to recommend full liberalisation of the sugar market and propose a national policy in consultation with provinces. Given its alignment with the EFF objective of reducing government intervention in phases"

ing up to 60pc, along with interest rates that remain elevated compared to regional peers. Industrialists are demanding tax reductions and a 100 basis point cut in the policy interest rate. The current policy rate stands at 11pc, while inflation was recorded at 6.1pc in November.

"We have yet to develop economic policies in line with the global economic shift. China is replacing the old model of global economic dominance."

Pakistan must read this change and revise its trade and industrial policies to remain connected to the new economic world order," said S.S. Iqbal, an expert on

the economy and money markets.

Pakistan's trade with China has expanded significantly, making it the country's largest trading partner. However, Pakistani exporters have struggled to gain meaningful access to Chinese markets.

Mr Iqbal said foreign investment typically follows domestic investment, adding that without local investment momentum, foreign inflows are unlikely.

An independent economist said Pakistan's biggest economic failure is not inflation, debt, or even governance, but the lack of consensus on long-term direction, timelines, and measures.

This, he said, is what economist Atif Mian refers to as "reform-for-Fifty" — achieving 5pc GDP growth every year for the next 50 years. The concept was coined by Faizal Mamsa, CEO of Treasmak, who said the goal is achievable but requires a collective national decision to prioritise growth, even when it clashes with comfort, technology, or short-term political interests."

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## Seed watchdog cutbacks spark yield fears

**NEWS DESK:** The federal government's decision to send nearly 70 per cent of the staff of the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD) to the surplus pool has triggered alarm nationwide, with experts warning of serious disruption to certified seed production and a possible record fall in per-acre yields of key crops, including cotton, wheat and rice.

For decades, the FSC&RD has been recognised for registering seed companies, regulating and monitoring certified seed production, and taking action against the sale of sub-standard seed.

Operating under the federal government, it maintained offices in most major agricultural centres and played a crucial role in ensuring farmers' access to quality seed despite limited resources.

Experts say the sharp staff reduction, part of a broader move to downsize or abolish departments, has left

FSC&RD offices severely understaffed. Although the department has not been formally shut down, the transfer of most of its workforce has effectively paralysed operations, raising fears that farmers will be forced to rely on low-quality seed.

This, they warn, could result in a record decline in per-acre yields of cotton, wheat, rice and oilseed crops, directly hurting farm incomes and pushing Pakistan towards costly imports running into billions of dollars.

Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsanul Haq said Rahim Yar Khan held a unique position in the seed sector, producing at least 70pc of the country's certified seed. Previously, the local FSC&RD office had a deputy director.

Four seed certification officers and 14 technical and junior staff were sent to the surplus pool, leaving only one officer and one clerk have been sent to the

surplus pool, virtually halting certified seed production in the district.

Around 1,150 public and private seed companies operate across Pakistan, more than 200 of them in Rahim Yar Khan, producing certified seed of cotton, wheat, rice, mustard, mung bean and sesame. The absence of effective regulatory oversight,

Mr Haq cautioned, poses serious risks to the national agricultural economy.

He said reports that the federal government was considering two or three alternative models for certified seed production had failed to ease concerns, as the lack of clarity had already created uncertainty.

Farmer Farhan warned, could face acute shortages of certified cotton and rice seed in the current season.

Mr Haq also noted that the government had decided to introduce a three-tier monitoring system — Green, Yellow and Red — for imported seeds, including cotton.

increased by 26 per cent year-on-year from FY24 to FY25, with a further increase of 9.3 per cent projected for FY26."

The government, in coordination with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), has been working to remove structural bottlenecks in cross-border payments. The IMF has built upon these efforts by incorporating them into the MEFP," it added.

The ministry also said that the IMF staff report that had been published in May 2025 had recommended a comprehensive study to identify bottlenecks in the local currency bond market to broaden the investor base. This recommendation has now been formalised as a structural benchmark, according to the press release. On the deregulation of the sugar industry, it said that the initiative originated from the government. "A task force, notified



## McCullum admits England have been 'nowhere near' their best

**N E W S**  
**DESK:** Defiant England coach Brendon McCullum brushed off concerns Sunday that his job was on the line heading into the third Test against Australia, while admitting the team have been "nowhere near" their best.

The tourists were crushed in the first two Ashes Tests in Perth and Brisbane by eight wickets and only a win at Adelaide Oval this week will be enough to keep the five-match series alive.

McCullum confirmed they would stick with the same seven, keeping under-fire Ollie Pope at number three rather than bring in Jacob Bethell.

"Knee-jerk reactions and chopping and changing settled batting line-ups is not re-

ally our way," he said. "We know we haven't got enough runs so far in the series.

But for us to go on and win the series it's not about throwing out what's been successful for us over the past few years."

England's lack of fight and questionable preparations have drawn scrutiny, while McCullum's claim that they "trained too much" prior to Brisbane was met with disbelief by former greats.

A decision for the team to lounge on the beach in tourist playground Noosa this week before heading to Adelaide was also panned.

But McCullum was unfazed, dismissing talk that his job could be threatened by another defeat.



"I don't know, but it doesn't really bother me, to be honest," he said.

"I mean professional sport, it's not easy, right? You do the job to the best of your

ability. You have conviction in what you're doing, and whatever happens, happens."

McCullum admitted England must improve to keep the series alive, but suggested they would not change their gung-ho approach.

"We knew when we came here that we had to win three Tests to win the series, and the

fact we're 2-0 down has made it harder on ourselves, but it doesn't stop the belief that you have within the dressing room," he said.

"I don't think we've been anywhere near our best so far in these last two Tests ... but what's been has been.

Now, it's focusing on the one that's coming.

"I firmly believe that if we play our best cricket, we're a massive chance in this Test match. We do that, and the narrative changes in the series," he added.

that if we play our best

cricket, we're a massive chance in this Test match. We do that, and the narrative changes in the series," he added.

McCullum defended the decision to take a beach break rather than train after two heavy defeats.

"Noosa for us was excellent. It was planned, obviously a year ago," he said, adding that it was about spending "time away from the heat of the battle".

"And I think now the freshness which we come into this Test match with will hopefully pay off.

"There's no guarantees, but that's the plan, and I think the boys are excited to get back to training and look forward to the next few days."

## Algeria include son of Zinedine Zidane in AFCON squad

**N E W S**  
**DESK:** Goalkeeper Luca Zidane, a son of France football icon Zinedine Zidane, was named on Saturday in the Algeria squad for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), which kicks off on December 21 in Morocco.

The 27-year-old plays for Spanish second-tier club Granada and represented France at youth level before switching his international allegiance to Algeria.

He debuted for Algeria in a World Cup qualifier against Uganda two months ago and is one of three goalkeepers chosen. The others are Oussama Benbot (USM Alger) and Anthony Mandrea (USM Alger).

Speaking after his debut, Zidane said: "It is an honour for me, and I will give 100% to make the Algerian people proud."

"I'm sure the players will arrive highly motivated and ready to play in this AFCON," said Algeria coach and former Switzerland coach Vladimir Petkovic after announcing the squad.

"The main objective is to get past the first round... with the ambition to go as far as possible in the tournament."

Algeria start their Group E campaign against Sudan on December 24, then face Burkina Faso and Equatorial Guinea.



against Sudan on December 24, then face Burkina Faso and Equatorial Guinea.

Group winners and runners-up automatically qualify for the round of 16. The best four of the six third-placed nations also advance to the knockout stage.

Senegal coach Pape Thiaw selected six Premier League players in his squad for the AFCON, where they face Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Benin in Group D.

"The main objective is to get past the first round... with the ambition to go as far as possible in the tournament."

Algeria start their Group E campaign against Sudan on December 24, then face Burkina Faso and Equatorial Guinea.

wards Ilman Ndiaye (Everton) and Ismaila Sarr (Crystal Palace).

"We are among the favourites and we accept that. I want a dominant team," said Thiaw, who was in the Senegal squad that reached the 2002 World Cup quarter-finals.

Zidane (Granada/ESP), Oussama Benbot (USM Alger), Anthony Mandrea (Caen/FRA) Defenders: Rafik Belghali (Verona/ITA), Rayan Ait-Nouri (Manchester City/ENG), Youcef Atal (Al-Sadd/QAT), Mehdi Dorval (Bari/ITA), Jaouen Hadjam (Young Boys/SW), Zinedine Belad (US Kabylie), Rami Bensetini (Borussia Dortmund/GER), Samir Chergui (Paris FC/FRA), Aissa Mandi (Lille/FRA), Mohamed Touga (Esperance/TUN)

Midfielders: Ismael Bennacer (Dinamo Zagreb/CRO), Rami Zerrouki (Twente/NED), Adam Zorgan (Union Saint-Gilloise/BEL), Hicham Boudaoui (Nice/FRA), Houssam Aour (Al-Ittihad/KSA), Ibrahim Maza (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Fares Chaibi (Eintracht Frankfurt/GER)

Forwards: Mohamed Amoura (Wolfsburg/GER), Ilan Kebbal (Paris FC/FRA), Riyad Mahrez (Al-Ahli/KSA), Anis Hadj Moussa (Feyenoord/NED), Adil Boulbina (Al-Duhail/QAT).

## Pakistan Army takes top spot with 353 medals as National Games closing ceremony held in Karachi

**NEWS DESK:** The closing ceremony of the 35th National Games was held in Karachi on Saturday, with Pakistan Army taking home the highest number of medals.

Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir was the chief guest at the ceremony, which was also attended by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari.

Pakistan Army came in first, taking home 353 medals, out of which 200 were gold, 97 were silver and 56 were bronze.

Wapda came in second with 232 medals, out of which 85 were gold, 73 were silver and 74 were bronze.

Pakistan Navy came in third with 110 medals, 36 of which were gold, 39 were silver and 35 were bronze.

Hosts Sindh finished with 96 medals, out of which 11 were gold, 26 were silver and 59 were bronze.

After the distribution of the medals, CDF Field Marshal



Munir, wearing a pair of black sunglasses and a Sindh ajrak around his neck, officially declared the games closed.

Addressing the ceremony, Bilawal said, "These National Games were not merely a competition of speed, strength or skill; they were a celebration of Pakistan itself."

"From Gilgit-Baltistan to Gwadar, from Khyber to Karachi, from Lahore to Larkana, every athlete who competed here carried the colours of their province but stood united under one flag," he said.

"Sport teaches us teamwork, courage, respect for rules and resilience in the face of challenge. These are not just sporting

values, they are national values," Bilawal said.

Talking about the May conflict with India, the PPP Chairman said that the army, airforce and navy demonstrated professionalism, coordination and strength.

"Pakistan emerged victorious with its sovereignty defended and its honour upheld. This victory was not only a military victory, it was a national one. It reflected the unity of our people, the discipline of our forces and the unbreakable bond between the nation and those who stand guard over it," he said.

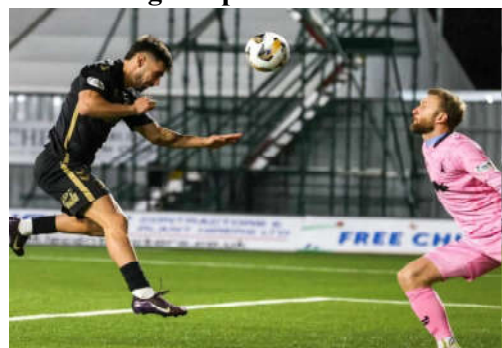
He said that Sindh was "proud" to have hosted the sporting event.

"To our athletes, you are the pride of Pakistan. Whether you return home with medals or memories, you return as ambassadors of discipline, perseverance and national unity."

"You have shown us what Pakistan's youth can achieve when given the opportunity and encouragement," he said.

"Sport teaches us teamwork, courage, respect for rules and resilience in the face of challenge. These are not just sporting

## Scottish leaders Hearts beat Falkirk to go six points clear



**NEWS DESK:** Hearts went six points clear at the top of the Scottish Premiership as Claudio Braga and Stephen Kingsley were on target in a 2-0 win at Falkirk on Saturday.

Victory opened up a gap over second-placed Celtic after Hearts beat the Scottish champions last week to end a four-game run without a win.

But the Glasgow giants, who face St Mirren in the Scottish League Cup final on Sunday, have two games in hand.

Edinburgh club Hearts, however, have a

plus seven advantage on goal difference.

Hearts needed just 66 seconds to take the lead on Saturday with a powerful Lawrence Shankland shot was parried by Falkirk goalkeeper Scott Bain.

Amid fierce wind and rain, both teams had further chances to score before substitute Kingsley gave Hearts breathing space with a fierce strike from substitute Kingsley in the 77th minute.

Falkirk, aiming to get back into the top six,

came close to equalising shortly before half-time when Kyrell Wilson rounded goalkeeper Alexander Schwoolow, only for his goal-bound shot to be blocked by the arm of Harry Milne.

The home side appealed for a penalty but were denied a spot-kick when the referee ruled Milne's arm was tucked into his body and in a natural position.

Hearts' manager Derek McInnes praised his side's resilience, telling the BBC: "We had to play to the conditions. We had

two quality moments for the goals. We get off to the perfect start. Good combination play, great strike from Lawrence and Braga following in."

He added: "We did what needed to be done, especially second half. We're just thankful for that second goal. It's a magnificent strike from Stephen.

A lot of teams would have struggled back by one week to December 22, to accommodate the surge in inquiries.

"Witnessing growing interest from Europe,

## PCB extends bid deadline for new PSL franchises amid international interest



**NEWS DESK:** Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi announced on Friday an extension of the deadline for the two new franchises in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), citing growing interest from investors in Europe, the United States, and beyond.

In a post on X, Mohsin said the original deadline of December 15 had been pushed back by one week to December 22, to accommodate the surge in inquiries.

"Witnessing growing interest from Europe,

USA, the Middle East and beyond in acquiring new HBL PSL teams, we have decided to extend the bid submission deadline by one week to 22 December 2025," he wrote, while quoting an earlier PSL announcement about a promotional roadshow in New York.

"Good luck to everyone excited to welcome our new franchise owners to the HBL PSL family," Mohsin added.

The announcement came on the very day the PCB hosted a high-profile PSL roadshow in New York City, featuring current Pakistan players in-

cluding T20 captain Salman Ali Agha, Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Saim Ayub, Shan Masood and Saud Shafeel, along with legends Wasim Akram and Ramiz Raja, and singer Ali Zafar.

He said Pakistan's Interior Minister, who has been vocal about elevating the PSL's global standing, including recent pledges for transparent bidding and infrastructure development.

The league's expansion is seen as a step towards enhancing its commercial appeal and competitiveness on the international T20 circuit.

2018, when Multan Sultans joined as the sixth team.

The auction for the new teams is expected to follow shortly after the bidding process concludes.

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## 3 US military personnel killed in suspected Islamic State attack in Syria

**NEWS DESK:** Three United States military personnel, two soldiers and a civilian interpreter, were killed on Saturday by a suspected Islamic State (IS) attacker who targeted a convoy of American and Syrian forces, the US military said.

Three other US soldiers were wounded, the US military's Central Command said.

In a statement, Central Command said the attack by a lone gunman occurred "as the soldiers were conducting a key leader engagement in the central Syrian town of Palmyra."

"Partner forces" killed the attacker, US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth wrote in a social media post.

IS did not immediately claim responsibility, but a senior US official said initial as-



sessments indicate the militant group probably carried out the attack. It took place in an area not controlled by the Syrian government, the official said.

The soldiers' names will be withheld until 24 hours after the next-of-kin notification, the US military said.

Syrian state news agency SANA quoted a security source as saying two Syrian service personnel were injured, without providing further details. The source told SANA that American helicopters evacuated the injured to a US base in Syria's Al-Tanf region near the Iraqi border.

US ambassador to Turkey and special envoy to Syria, condemned the attack.

"We mourn the loss of three brave US service members and civilian personnel and wish a speedy recovery to the Syrian troops wounded in the attack," Barrack said in a statement.

"We remain com-

mitted to defeating terrorism with our Syrian partners."

The attack came barely a month after Syria announced it had signed a political cooperation agreement with the US-led coalition against IS, which coincided with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa's visit to the White House.

The coalition has carried out air strikes and ground operations in Syria targeting IS suspects in recent months, often with the involvement of Syria's security forces. Syria last month also carried out a nationwide campaign arresting more than 70 people accused of links to the group.

The US has troops stationed in northeastern Syria as part of a decade-long effort to help a Kurdish-led force there.

## Guterres marks end of UN mission in Iraq

**NEWS DESK:** UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Saturday marked the end of the United Nations political mission in Iraq, which supported the country's transition following the US-led invasion.

At Baghdad's request, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) will shut down its operations after 22 years of assisting the country in its transition following the 2003 invasion and occupation that toppled longtime ruler Saddam Hussein.

"UNAMI was honoured and humbled to walk side-by-side with the Iraqi people," Guterres said at the mission's closing ceremony. But "while a mission may conclude, the United Nations will always walk alongside the people of Iraq on

the path toward peace, sustainable development and human rights," he added.

UN agencies and programmes will continue to operate in Iraq. During a press conference earlier with Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, Guterres said "there is one thing the world must understand, Iraq is now a normal country."

"Relations between the UN and Iraq will become normal relations with the end of UNAMI," Sudan meanwhile said that the end of the UNAMI mandate "marks the beginning of a new chapter of cooperation."

"Our relationship with the United Nations through UNAMI was pivotal and effective in meeting Iraq's needs and supporting it until it reached the stage of full self-reliance," he added.

UNAMI was established by a UN Security Council resolution at the request of the Iraqi government before being expanded four years later.

Shortly after it was formed, a truck bomb struck the UN headquarters in Baghdad on August 19, 2003, killing the UN's first special representative in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, along with 21 others.

UNAMI's tasks included advising the government on political dialogue and reconciliation, as well as helping with elections and security sector reform.

But with Iraq regaining a sense of normalcy in recent years, authorities say there are no longer grounds for a UN political mission.

## US releases redacted warrant for tanker seized off Venezuelan coast

**NEWS DESK:** US authorities on Friday unsealed the warrant for an oil tanker seized off the coast of Venezuela deemed as "international piracy" by Caracas.

President Donald Trump's administration has been piling pressure on Venezuela for months, with a major naval buildup in the region that has been accompanied by deadly strikes on alleged drug-trafficking boats, killing nearly 90 people. In a dramatic raid this week that Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said was aimed at President Nicolas Maduro's "regime", Washington took control of the tanker, with US forces roping down from a helicopter onto the vessel.

The warrant, signed by a magistrate judge on Nov 26, was carried out on Wednesday by the US Coast Guard.

The US Treasury Department said the vessel, dubbed the Skipper and formerly called the Adisa, was used to transport the sanctioned oil "in an oil shipping network supporting Hezbollah" and a unit of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard. The agency also imposed sanctions on relatives of the Venezuelan leader and six companies shipping the South American country's oil.

"The FBI's Counterintelligence Division and our partners will

impose costs on the governments of Venezuela and Iran."

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told journalists that the seized tanker "will go to a US port and the United States does intend to seize the oil."

"We're not going to stand by and watch sanctioned vessels sail the seas with black-market oil, the proceeds of which will fuel narco-terrorism of rogue and illegitimate regimes around the world."

Venezuela's foreign ministry said it "strongly denounces and condemns what constitutes blatant

violation of the free trade of its oil around the world," he added.

A video released earlier this week by US Attorney General Pam Bondi showed American forces descending from a helicopter onto the tanker's deck, then entering the ship's bridge with weapons raised. Bondi said the ship was part of an "illicit oil shipping network" that was used to carry sanctioned oil.

Washington has accused Maduro of leading the alleged "Cartel of the Suns", which it declared a "narco-terrorist" organisation last month, and has offered a \$50 million reward for information leading to his capture.

Trump told Politico that Maduro's

guarantee the free trade of its oil around the world," he added.

US media reported that the seized tanker had been heading for Cuba — another American rival — and that the ship was stopped by the US Coast Guard.

Washington has accused Maduro of leading the alleged "Cartel of the Suns", which it declared a "narco-terrorist" organisation last month, and has offered a \$50 million reward for information leading to his capture.

Trump told Politico that Maduro's



continue to enforce US sanctions and cut off our adversaries from financial markets and critical technology," FBI Director Kash Patel said in a statement.

"The seizure of this vessel highlights our successful efforts

to impose costs on the governments of Venezuela and Iran."

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## Police hunt for gunman who killed 2 Brown University students, injured 9 people in US

**NEWS DESK:** Police in Rhode Island were searching for a suspect late on Saturday after a shooting at Brown University in Providence left two students dead and eight others critically wounded at the Ivy League school, officials said. A ninth person was hurt by bullet fragments, the mayor said.

Streets around campus remained blocked and packed with emergency vehicles hours after the shooting and law enforcement officials heightened security around the city as police continued their manhunt.

The individual responsible is still at large, Mayor Brett Smiley told reporters at a 9:30pm (7:30am PKT) press conference. Deputy Police Chief Timothy O'Hara said the suspect had not been identified.

Officials said they are looking for a male dressed in black and were releasing a video of the suspect, who O'Hara said may have been wearing a mask.

He said officials had retrieved shell casings from the scene of the shooting, but that police were not prepared to release details.

Officials said the gunman escaped after shooting students in Brown's Burris & Holley engineering building, where exams were taking place at the time.

"We are a week and a half away from Christmas. And two people died today and another eight are in the hospital," Smiley said earlier in the evening. "So please pray for those families."

Brown is on College Hill in Providence, Rhode Island's state capital. The university has hundreds of buildings, including lecture halls, laboratories and dormitories.

"This is the day one hopes never happens, and it has," Brown's president Christina Paxson told reporters, confirming all or nearly all of the victims were students. As news of the

he saw the text about the active shooter situation a block away. They waited under desks for about two hours, he said.

Rhode Island Governor Daniel McKee vowed that the shooter would be brought to justice.

"We're going to make sure that we catch the individual that brought so much suffering to so many people."

The search for the suspect was hampered in part because downtown Providence was crowded with holiday shoppers and thousands of people attending concerts, local media said. Federal law enforcement and police from surround-

Trump told reporters at the White House that he had been briefed on the situation, which he called "terrible."

"All we can do right now is pray for the victims and for those that were very badly hurt."

Compared to many countries, mass shootings in schools, workplaces, and places of worship are more common in the US, which has some of the most permissive gun laws in the developed world.

The Gun Violence Archive, which defines mass shootings as any incident in which four or more victims have



shooting spread, the school told students to shelter in place.

Brown student Chiang-Heng Chien told local TV station WJAR he was working in a lab with three other students when

ing cities and towns were assisting in the search, officials said. According to local news reports, venues across the city were bringing in extra security.

President Donald

been shot, has counted 389 of them this year in the US, including at least six such shootings at schools. Last year the US had more than 500 mass shootings, according to the archive.

## Thailand vows to keep fighting Cambodia after Trump ceasefire claim

**NEWS DESK:** Thailand's leader vowed on Saturday to keep fighting on the disputed border with Cambodia as fighter jets struck targets hours after US president Donald Trump said he had brokered a new ceasefire.

Caretaker Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said the Southeast Asian nation would "continue to perform military actions until we feel no more harm and threats to our land and people."

Trump, who brokered a ceasefire in the long-running border dispute in October, spoke to Anutin and Cambodian premier Hun Manet on Friday and said they had agreed to "cease all shooting"

Neither mentioned any agreement in statements after their calls with Trump, and Anutin said there was no ceasefire.

"I want to make it clear. Our actions this morning already spoke," Anutin posted on Facebook.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment on the continued fighting. Hun Manet, in a statement on Saturday on Facebook, said he welcomed a proposal by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who has been a mediator in peace talks, to cease hostilities from Saturday evening.

Anwar, chair of the 10-nation ASEAN grouping, in a Facebook



post urged both sides to "refrain from any further military actions including the use of force or forward movement of armed units" starting at 1500 GMT.

He said an ASEAN observer team led by the Malaysian chief of defence forces would be deployed to the border and the US government would provide satellite monitoring capabilities. Anutin said "there has been no agreement on halting anything," when asked by reporters about the Malaysian proposal.

Thailand's foreign minister told a press conference the country would cooperate with the observer team, but any ceasefire would need to be preceded by Bangkok, says were newly laid by Cambodia.

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