

**High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri felicitates Pakistanis as PTV broadcast begins**  
**Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week felicitated the Pakistanis as Pakistan Television (PTV) News started transmissions through the SBS platform. "Watch Pakistan's national TV channel PTV now on Australia's SBS Urdu," he** (Page-5)

**Portugal: €522 scholarship for immigrant tourism trainees** **NewsWire**  
 Lisbon: Tourism Schools in Portugal will train immigrants who want to work in the sector, in a program that starts in January. Those selected will receive a monthly scholarship of €522.50 and travel assistance. The training program for immigrants who want to work in the tourism sector – (Page-8)

# Henan embracing 'seaport' for prosperity



**Henan Daily**  
 Zhengzhou: Without borders or seas, Zhengzhou is also thriving towards the ocean by leveraging its inland port to go out to the sea. On November 26, the China Railway United Logistics Zhengzhou Center Station in the Zhengzhou Economic and Technological Development Zone was bustling. Looking down from the sky, the container yard was densely packed with cars waiting to be shipped. On that day, 99 passenger vehicles produced at the SAIC Passenger Vehicle

Zhengzhou Base "boarded" the "Zhengzhou-Qingdao-Greece" direct rail-sea transport automotive train, embarking on the journey. This marks the first time Henan Province has exported goods to Greece through the mode of "land-sea linkage, direct rail-sea transport". Previously, the province had launched many direct rail-sea transport automotive trains to countries and regions such as Italy. What exactly is the "land-sea linkage, direct rail-sea transport" model? What benefits can it bring to enterprises going overseas?

It is reported that this model was first implemented in Zhengzhou, China, regularly operating rail-sea intermodal trains from Zhengzhou to Qingdao and other ports. The model facilitates the automated transfer of export goods and seamless customs clearance through the integration and information sharing between railway ports and seaport systems; export enterprises can complete customs inspection procedures right at their doorstep. Goods are cleared at the Zhengzhou Railway Port, with "one declaration, one inspection, one release," and are directly loaded onto ships at coastal ports, achieving "boarding the train means boarding the ship." This endows inland railway ports with the frontline functions of coastal terminals, effectively leveraging both the efficiency of inland ports and the economic advantages of coastal ports. "Logistics time has been shortened, and



costs have also been significantly reduced," said the chief official in charge of the customs of Zhengzhou station. According to previous practices, enterprises needed to transport export goods to the coastal port yard and wait for customs clearance before they could be consolidated for shipping. Thanks to the innovation in logistics model, the transportation time for goods has been reduced by more than one day, saving about 1,000 yuan in logistics costs per container compared with road transportation. With the model of "land-sea linkage, direct rail-sea transport and global cargo transportation", Henan has brought the "seaport" to its "doorstep." "This new regulatory model not only enhances Henan's logistics transportation efficiency and service quality but also further opens up the Yellow River land-sea corridor, promoting economic exchange and cooperation between inland and coastal ports," said Qi Shuang, an assistant researcher at the Research Institute of Reform, Opening-up and International Economy of the Henan Academy of Social Sciences. In the era of "Internet + institutional" opening up, there are no borders. Not long ago, the economic development of Zhengzhou Port again welcomed favorable national policies, and Zhengzhou Railway



Port was successfully included in the scope of the departure port tax refund policy. As a national first-class port, Zhengzhou Railway Port is a main platform for expanding international train services, developing cross-border trade, and multimodal transport. "With the implementation of a series of favorable policies, it will help attract more foreign trade companies, multimodal transport enterprises, and import and export service companies to gather in Zhengzhou, further strengthen business cooperation with coastal ports and border ports, and develop the hub economy and expand development advantages," said Liu Jie, chairman of Zhengzhou New Silk Road International Port Investment Co., Ltd.

## The five-minute city: Inside Denmark's revolutionary neighbourhood

**Steve Rose**  
 Copenhagen: It's not often that the worlds of town planning and traffic management become mired in controversy, but in recent years the innocuous concept of the "15-minute city" has sparked outrage in online forums, among cynical politicians and on the streets of British cities such as Oxford. The originator of the concept, urban planner Carlos Moreno, has even received death threats. All of this has hinged on the spurious conspiracy theory that 15-minute cities were part of some shady global population-control agenda, rather than a desire to simply create more pleasant neighbourhoods. If the concept of having all your basic amenities within 15 minutes' distance was enough to provoke such hostility, what would the conspiracy theorists make of a five-minute city? Fortunately, they have failed to notice that Denmark has already built such a place: Nordhavn, an emerging new neighbourhood of Copenhagen. If they visited today they might be disappointed, or perhaps converted. You could possibly see Nordhavn as some sort of new-world-order dystopia, where people are only pretending to be happy because they are being brainwashed by the 5G towers, or something. But a more likely explanation is that this is what city-making looks like when you get everything right: human-scaled, pedestrian-friendly, architecturally diverse, environmentally standard-setting, lots of waterfront. A place people are happy to hang around, even on a chilly winter's day: shopping, cycling, walking their dogs, jogging, even cold-water swimming at the public beach. It does feel pretty quiet here, but that's not because there are no people; it's because there are hardly any cars – and those that do glide by are electric. This is the real underpinning of the five-minute city concept. "Cars are not welcome here," says Lars Riemann of the planning consultants Ramboll, which won the competition to design Nordhavn in 2008, along with the architects Cobe and Sleth and other partners. Nordhavn was a former industrial landscape: a 2 sq km peninsula to the north-east of the city centre that operated as a freeport for more than a century. But with Copenhagen's population and popularity on the rise, the city decided to redevelop these docklands, providing homes for 40,000 people and workplaces for another 40,000 over the next 40 years.



Today, Nordhavn's population is about 6,000. "If you go back in time, when you did city planning, you would say: 'Where do the roads go? How do the cars get from A to B?' That was your main priority," says Riemann. "Then we'd put bike lanes next to the roads, pedestrian areas next to that and so on. Here, we did the opposite. We said: 'What does a walkable city look like? What do the streets look like? What do people like to experience as they are walking?' Transport-wise, they started with a new metro line, then cycle routes. "At the end, it was like: 'OK, so now that we have all this infrastructure for walking, biking and public transit, is there still some room for cars?' " The "five-minute" tag (which was coined long before 15-minute cities became popular) stemmed from this. Around each of the metro stations, the planners drew circles of 400 metres radius. "That's what you can walk in five minutes," says Cobe's project director, Rune Boserup, from his office – a converted warehouse in Nordhavn, as it happens. (Architects love it round here: the Danish superstar Bjarke Ingels has also built his new headquarters just up the quay.) "Within a circle like that, you would have a mix of residential areas and office buildings, social infrastructure such as schools and kindergartens, retail, cafes – everything that you would need in your daily life."

## Aseefa Bhutto launches anti-polio campaign in Nawabshah



**Liaquat Ali**  
 Islamabad: First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari this week launched an anti-polio campaign in Nawabshah on Monday. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader and PPP Women's Wing Central President Faryal Talpur chaired a meeting to inaugurate the anti-polio campaign in Nawabshah and distributed certificates among the members of anti-polio team. Aseefa Bhutto also administered polio vaccine drops to children and strongly condemned the attacks on polio teams in Karak and Bannu. She said that these cowardly

acts against health workers and security personnel will not deter nation's resolve to eradication of polio virus. She called upon the authorities to take action strict action against those behind attacks, saying violence cannot stop nation's fight against polio. Expressing shock over the rising number of polio cases, she urged the parents and stake holders to vaccinate their children every time during the polio campaign. "Create awareness among friends, family, and neighbours about the polio campaign and ensure that children under the age of 5 are vaccinated," she said.

# Heyin county's pomegranates: Thin-skinned, juicy, and seedless

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: As autumn arrives, the Heyin pomegranates are entering their harvest season, with large and red pomegranates hanging abundantly on the branches. When you pick a handful of crystal-clear red pomegranate seeds and savor them, their crisp texture and sweetness are sure to make your mouth water. Recently, the 20th Heyin Pomegranate Culture Festival took place at the Pomegranate Square in Liugou village, Gaocun township of Xingyang city, with related picking activities continuing until late October. Visitors from all regions are invited to experience the renewed charm of pomegranate culture. The pomegranates from Heyin (now known as Xingyang) are a local specialty. The region's fertile soil, combined with irrigation from the Yellow River, significant temperature differences between day and night, and long sunlight hours, produces pomegranates with thin skins, large seeds, and an exceptionally sweet and refreshing taste. When chewed, they are delicate and free of any grit, making it possible to "eat pomegranates without spitting out the seeds", a feature that is deeply loved by gourmets.

In 2007, Heyin pomegranates were recognized as a national geographical indication product by the former State Administration for Quality Supervision and Inspection. In 2008, they received certification as a pollution-free agricultural product from the former Ministry of Agriculture of China, and their cultivation techniques were listed as part of Zhengzhou's intangible cultural heritage. In 2015, they were included in the fourth batch of Henan province's intangible cultural heritage.

To enhance the reputation of "Heyin Pomegranate" as a national geographical indication product, the Market Supervision and Regulation Bureau of Xingyang City has, in recent years, organized special initiatives for intellectual property and trademark protection on important dates such as World Consumer Rights Day and World Intellectual Property Day, conducting inspections and providing guidance for farmer cooperatives and individual businesses.

"Encouraging and supporting planting enterprises to follow Heyin pomegranate production standards, guiding business entities to legally use geographical indications, and protecting the intellectual property rights of

Heyin pomegranates are key measures to promote the high-quality development of the Heyin pomegranate industry," said an official from the Market Supervision and Regulation Bureau of Xingyang City. The bureau will continue to promote the "Local Standards for Heyin Pomegranate," strictly enforce the standards, focus on improving pomegranate quality, protect the reputation of Heyin pomegranates, and expand sales channels to increase revenue. Currently, the planting area for Heyin pomegranates in Xingyang covers over 60,000 acres, with this year's production estimated at nearly 100,000 tons. A variety of processed products, such as pomegranate wine, pomegranate tea, and pomegranate bonsai landscapes, have already been developed.



# Pakistani Embassy in China organizes education forum in Beijing

Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: Pakistani Embassy in Beijing this week hosted the inaugural China-Pakistan Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Forum as a ground-breaking initiative to promote bilateral cooperation in education and human resource development. Titled as "Fostering a Skilled Workforce: Forging a Brighter Future," the Forum brought together policy makers, high-level government officials, renowned TVET service-providers, representatives of enterprises and leadership of technical and vocational institutes from across the breadth of China, a statement issued here by the embassy said. The keynote speakers emphasized the pivotal role of TVET in equipping individuals with practical skills, fostering employability, and driving innovation in modern industries. They also underscored China Pakistan TVET cooperation as a shining manifestation of iron-clad friendship between the two countries. In his welcome remarks, Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China, de-

scribed the Forum as a vital milestone in Embassy's efforts to support the process of industrialization in Pakistan. Ambassador Hashmi expressed the hope that the Forum would contribute to building a productive workforce equipped with essential skills to deliver on CPEC projects in its next phase. He appreciated the exceptional support rendered by ITMC, China in introducing high-quality TVET programs in Pakistan. In a pre-recorded message, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Pakistan underlined the critical role of TVET in achieving sustainable economic growth. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to working with China to expand TVET programs as part of five E's development framework of Pakistan. In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi expressed determination to make the Forum part of annual calendar of major events organized by Pakistan Embassy in Beijing.



# Taste geographical indication products in Henan province



Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: Geographical indications play a significant role in fostering regional economic growth, supporting rural revitalization, preserving traditional culture, and promoting opening up to the world. Since they emphasize the importance of origin, geographical indications are naturally tied to food, with genuine regional flavors

leaving a lasting impression. During China's National Day holiday, the Henan International Communication Center (HICC) launched a special report series titled "Taste Geographical Indication Products in Henan Province", exploring different original locations across central China's Henan province to showcase the region's culinary delights. Pour beaten eggs into a hot oil pan and fry until both sides are golden brown. Add winter-stored Chinese cabbage and stir-fry together. Then, add water to the pan and boil the noodles. A bowl of steaming hot cabbage and egg noodles will instantly awaken your taste buds. Qi Qi, a Chinese media professional, has seldom returned to his hometown of Huangchuan county in Henan province since starting his career. Every time he goes back, the first meal he enjoys is Huangchuan hollow gongmian (tribute noodle) cooked by his mother. "It

still tastes just like it did when I was a child—warm and comforting, especially with the soup," Qi said. Today, Huangchuan hollow gongmian is more than just a simple noodle dish. On April 20, at the 2024 National Intellectual Property Publicity Week, Henan branch event, the Huangchuan Hollow gongmian (Kwangchow gongmian) Geographical Indication Product Protection Demonstration Zone was officially inaugurated. As early as 2013, Huangchuan hollow gongmian (Kwangchow gongmian) had already gained national geographical indication product protection. "This is not just an honor," said a representative from the Market Supervision and Regulation Bureau of Huangchuan County, "it elevates Huangchuan's 'local specialty' into a 'golden calling card', driving the upgrading of the gongmian industry and boosting local economic development." With noodles as thin as silk, a tubular core, and a aldenteyet smooth texture, hollow gongmian leaves a lasting impression. Originating in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and flourishing during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), this noodle has a history of over 1,300 years and was once a tribute to the imperial court. From small family workshops to large-scale, standardized production facilities, the Huangchuan hollow gongmian industry has become an important driver of local prosperity. Driven by leading production enterprises, the market share and brand recognition of Huangchuan hollow gongmian have steadily increased.



A good bowl of noodles can bring prosperity to a city. Just two months ago, construction began on the Huangchuan Hollow Gongmian Industrial Park in Fudian town, Huangchuan county. Once completed, this comprehensive industrial park—integrating production,

intangible cultural heritage experiences, product displays, and warehousing logistics—will promote coordinated development across related industries, elevating Huangchuan hollow gongmian from a mere "strand of noodle" into a "golden thread".

# Italy: Europe's first borderless Capital of Culture



My grandma was born in Austria-Hungary. My father was born in the Kingdom of Italy. I was born in Yugoslavia. If I had kids, they'd be born in Slovenia – Evelin Bizjak  
Evelin Bizjak, a local tour guide, gave me an example as we stood outside the Slovenian smuggling museum, Muzej na Meji (MM). "We live in a house near Solkan," she said, naming the world's longest stone arch bridge, built in 1905, that spans the Soca River. "My grandma was born in Austria-Hungary. My father was born in the Kingdom of Italy. I was born in Yugoslavia. If I had kids, they'd be born in Slovenia."



**H.E. Marilina Armellin**  
ambassador of Italy to Pakistan

**Newsire**

Rome: In 1947, Gorizia was abruptly split between Italy and Slovenia. In 2025, the two towns will reunite as the first transnational European Capital of Culture. Right now, I'm standing in Nova Gorica – a modest but beautiful planned Modernist town in Slovenia with a population of 30,000. But if I take just a few steps, I can cross an invisible border into Italy to the medieval town of Gorizia, without even showing my passport. Once upon a time, Nova Gorica and Gorizia were one; the two cities were created – and separated – in 1947 after World War Two when the Treaty of Paris established Europe's new borders, restricting travel between Italy and the former Yugoslavia. An Allied commission determined that Gorizia should belong to Italy and the less-developed part of town should be part of the Slovenian republic within the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia. The new town was to be called Nova Gorica (New Gorizia), and from that moment on, Nova Gorica and Gorizia have existed as two towns split across two countries. But with Slovenia's entry into the EU in 2004, the border between them was dissolved, allowing a cross-cultural exchange for the first time in generations. And in 2025, Gorizia/Nova Gorica will reunite as the first transnational European Capital of Culture, in a project called GO!2025. Because of this accolade, between two and five million visitors are expected to descend upon the two towns in 2025, compared to the usual 250,000 annual tourists. That's a big leap for an otherwise under-touristed, out-of-the-way destination, even if Gorizia was dubbed "the Austrian Nice" from 1867 to 1918 when it was part of Austria-Hungary. To celebrate the honour, a robust calendar of cultural events, including musical and dance performances and art exhibits, has been launched. And I'm here to explore. Though cut from the same cloth, the two towns couldn't be more different. Medieval Gorizia is old-worldly, cobblestoned and lined with lively cafes, dominated by an imposing castle that features an expansive museum packed with interactive exhibits and high-tech installations that portray life in the castle through the ages. By contrast, Nova Gorica – designed to show the world that Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia was capable of large-scale urban development – is Modernist, and its relative newness, with concrete architecture laid out in lines, is the most obvious clue that you've crossed a border. As I wander around this planned town, once known mostly as a centre of casinos and nightlife for Italians, I'm not surprised that it has not been on my radar, despite the fact that I have lived in Slovenia for more than a decade. However, although Nova Gorica seems unglamorous on first sight, I soon discover hidden gardens, crumbling palaces and tucked-away Social Realist frescoes – all relics of its turbulent history.

With any luck, the status of European Capital of Culture will offer millions a chance to be charmed and intrigued, as I soon am. The European Capital of Culture is awarded by the EU each year to two towns (the other 2025 selection is Chemnitz, Germany). Towns apply nearly a decade in advance for this status, which provides many benefits, including EU funding

connect and cooperate, navigating multiple languages and political systems, feels ideal for our time. Administratively Gorizia and Nova Gorica are two towns, but in practice almost everyone who lives here speaks both Slovenian and Italian, and locals live and work on whichever side of the border they prefer. Tomaž Gržeta, for instance, is a Slovenian music journalist born in Nova Gorica but lives in



When the new border was drawn at the Paris Peace Conference, the Allied powers drew a straight line in pencil with a ruler on a map and instructed soldiers to paint along it. The line cut through fields, sometimes even houses. A photo from that year shows a cow with its hind legs in Italy and its front end in Slovenia. A few steps from where that photo was taken in the direction of Gorizia is Lasciapassare, the Italian smuggling museum. A hop, skip and a jump in the other direction is Muzej na Meji, its Slovenian counterpart. Each was built in their respective customs house, and the two miniature museums offer complimentary exhibits – the point is to visit both and cross the border, walking about 200 steps, in doing so.

for programming and new infrastructure like monuments and bridges, as well as touristic promotion. As the first transnational application for the title, the joint bid was particularly engaging; it's refreshing to have a Capital of Culture that contains an intentionally open border and that celebrates the cultures on each side of it. The idea of a "borderless" capital, a laboratory on how nations can better

Gorizia because he likes the vibe. You won't always be aware of when you cross between the countries; since 2004 there has been no checkpoint and no barrier. However, the border is celebrated at Piazza Transalpina (Transalpine Square) in front of the main train station (technically in Slovenia), where tourists line up to have their photos taken standing half in Slovenia, half in Italy. This is where the most expansive intervention has taken place as part of the GO!2025 programme, with the square newly transformed into a cultural, performance and museum space that includes both an underground art gallery and amphitheatre-like seating that rise up like wings on either side of the border point. Gorizia/Nova Gorica's very borderlessness means that its history is complicated, to say the least, as it passed so frequently into different political hands: it was owned by the Habsburgs, the Counts of Gorizia, Napoleon, Austria-Hungary, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Kingdom of Italy, Yugoslavia, and now by Italy (Gorizia) and Slovenia (Nova Gorica).

The museums reveal what life was like along a border. Yugoslavs could cross with a special booklet that functioned as a day pass to travel a maximum of 30km. It contained vouchers that allowed you to buy goods unavailable in Yugoslavia to bring back home. Coffee, laundry detergent, bananas and chocolate were the hottest commodities for Yugoslavs, while Italians crossed the other way for meat and homemade schnapps. You had to smuggle anything more than what your vouchers permitted, and it was a common practice. A T-shirt sold by the Slovenian smuggling museum features a Yugo car with various illicit goods hidden in the panelling. "When the border was drawn, families had two months to decide if they wanted to be Yugoslav or Italian," said Alex Tamer, a docent at Lasciapassare. "Everyone around here has family on both sides." Those who chose to be Yugoslav became the first residents of Nova Gorica, a municipal project that turned the cluster of houses and farms that had existed in the outskirts of Gorizia into a new town proper. The design was entrusted to modernist architect Edvard Ravnikar, and thousands of residents of far-flung Yugoslav territories were invited to build the town in exchange for free housing and jobs in the new factories. But only about a quarter of it was built to Ravnikar's design. The rest was erected piecemeal, prioritising budget over liveability, leaving the feel of Nova Gorica less a complete thought than an

unfinished notion. The final stop on my tour of town is Kostanjevica, a 16th-Century hilltop Franciscan church covered with scent-heavy Bourbon roses and gnarled chestnut trees. The church was nearly levelled in World War One but lovingly restored after bombs tore apart all but the floor and the presbytery. But the main attraction is in the whitewashed crypt: six polished marble coffins that contain the remains of the French king Charles X Bourbon (1757–1836) and members of his family. His heart was removed and interred with him, like something out of a horror movie. Charles X was the last Bourbon king of France and the only French king to be buried outside of France. He died here of cholera, but his reign was so unpopular that France didn't want his body. So Charles' family buried him beneath the local church in a coffin that stands on a plinth containing French soil. Perhaps a transnational town is a fitting resting place for a Franco-Austrian royal family with no kingdom to rule. As I step out of the cool darkness of the marble-lined crypt, the Mediterranean sunlight pours over me. I can see both Gorizia and Nova Gorica from this hilltop. The Adriatic is just 30km away to the south, the Alps just 40km to the north. This is where these climates meet and where two cultures and nationalities have coexisted almost entirely in harmony. It's the perfect place to see how borderlessness can function smoothly in practice, and GO!2025 offers an ideal chance to explore and celebrate one of the true transnational places in Europe.



# Can US' strategy to sideline China in Africa succeed?

**Ding Gang**

My trip to Africa this past August gave me a deeper understanding of the continent. Behind every rickety minibus speeding through muddy roads, every flickering light bulb, and every village surrounded by dusty dirt roads lies a story of resilience and strength that is nothing short of awe-inspiring.

At the same time, every African nation, especially those rich in resources yet trapped in poverty, seems to silently convey a stark truth to the outside world: the lack of infrastructure is choking the future of Africa's development.

The Americans arrived just as I reflected on the glaring infrastructure gaps across the continent.

They came with the Lobito Corridor railway project, a shiny package wrapped in 5G, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things. They also brought a savior-like attitude, as if they were here to deliver Africa from the quagmire of transportation paralysis and economic stagnation. Such a high-level modern engineering project does not even exist in the US.

Washington has hyped this railway, connecting Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zambia, as something that could even "reshape the economic landscape" of the region. It certainly sounds like an ambitious and grand narrative.

But when I examined the railway's plans more closely and listened to the perspectives of a few African friends, I realized that this is far from a

straightforward American success story. There are layers of complexity and ulterior motives beneath the surface.

The Lobito Corridor is touted as a flagship railway project incorporating cutting-edge technologies like 5G, cloud computing and IoT. Its purpose is to link the DRC's mineral-rich regions to Angola's Lobito Port for export. One of its stated goals is to reduce Africa's dependence on foreign-dominated supply chains, while also claiming to help African nations process their own resources.

This railway has been packaged as the future of African industrialization. But if you underline the words "mineral resources," you'll uncover the story's real focus: who gets to control Africa's minerals.

These minerals, whether cobalt or copper, are essential for the green energy revolution. From this perspective, the Lobito Corridor could indeed be described as a "golden corridor." But the Americans have carefully hidden another side to this story. This railway is designed to make Africa's mineral resources flow faster, cheaper and reliably to Western countries.

The US didn't just secure cooperation among three African nations for the Lobito Corridor. It also played a geopolitical game. The Americans have openly intended to push China out of Africa's supply chains. For the US, this project is nothing more than a geopolitical pawn. It's part of a broader strategy to "reassert its influence" in Africa and "liberate" the continent from China's so-called control.

In contrast, China's infrastructure projects in Africa - whether roads, railways, or ports - are often designed to connect landlocked nations to coastal regions, fostering industrial growth and market activity.

For example, Kenya's Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) has finally provided modern rail transport services for local industries. Many of China's projects focus on connectivity and even help African



nations move up the value chain by encouraging local resource processing.

By comparison, the Lobito Corridor feels much more limited in scope. It carries a strong whiff of colonialism, reminiscent of the old playbook where railways were built to extract resources and funnel them to ports for export to Western countries, the old colonists. The only difference is that the colonialists have been replaced by AI, IoT and 5G.

It is not about creating a cooperative platform but building a supply chain aimed at competing with China. For years, China has been deeply committed

to fostering cooperation with Africa and has established strong connections within Africa's development framework. If Washington's strategy is to sideline China in Africa through strategic pressure, can such a project truly succeed?

African nations need railways, roads, electricity and communication networks. However, this infrastructure must serve Africa's development, not just as a lifeline for international capital or a battleground for global power struggles that force African nations to pick sides.

Africa truly needs partners who can help it build a future on its own terms - not "saviors" in new

clothes who see Africa as their strategic resource to control the world.

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# Why practice of One Country, Two Systems in Macao has become a recognized model

**Global Times**

The moving melody of "Song of the Seven Sons" sounded again, as Friday marked the full 25 years since the return of Macao to the motherland. A grand celebration and inaugural ceremony for the sixth-term government of the Macao Special Administrative Region were held on Friday morning at the Macao East Asian Games Dome. President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, attended the celebration and the ceremony and delivered a speech.

In the 25 years since its return to the motherland, Macao has achieved social harmony and stability and rapid economic development in accordance with the great concept of One Country,

Two Systems, vividly demonstrating to the world the significant institutional advantages and strong vitality of One Country, Two Systems.

In the past 25 years, Macao has become "bigger" in every sense. The land area has expanded from 21.45 square kilometers in 1999 to 33.3 square kilometers today. Per capita GDP has more than quadrupled from \$15,000 to \$69,000, and continues to grow. In 2023, the proportion of Macao's gambling industry to its GDP decreased by 14 percent compared to 2019. The moderate diversification of the economy has begun to bear fruit. The total number of entries and exits at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Port and the Hengqin Port in 2024 have both exceeded 20 million. A new model of development between Hengqin and Macao featuring "Macao platform + international resources + Hengqin space + achievement sharing" has gradually taken shape. Macao's relationship with the mainland and the world is closer, with its vision and opportunities becoming

greater.

The important reason for the stable and long-term development of One Country, Two Systems in Macao is that all sectors of society highly recognize One Country, Two Systems, firmly safeguarded the legal order constituted by the Constitution and the Basic Law, and implemented "patriots governing Macao." "Love the country, love Macao" has become mainstream social values. With the gathering of positive forces at home and abroad, the support for One Country, Two Systems has become wider.

A recent survey shows that 92.2 percent of the respondents believe that the practice of One Country, Two Systems in Macao has been successful, and 93.9 percent of the respondents are confident in Macao's implementation of One Country, Two Systems and "Macao people governing Macao." The mutual integration of the mainland and Macao shows the vitality and unique charm.

Xi stressed in Macao on Friday that developments in Hong Kong and Macao since their return to the motherland tell us that to sustain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao and further advance the cause of One Country, Two Systems, it is imperative to observe the following four principles: first, we should stay committed to the fundamental policy of One Country and fully deliver the benefits of Two Systems. We should place our country's sovereignty, security and development interests above everything else; we should implement the overall jurisdiction of the Central Authorities; and we should not deviate from this commitment under any circumstances. At the same time, we should respect the differences between the two systems, fully ensure a high degree of autonomy of the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao, and continue to fully, faithfully and resolutely implement the policy of One Country, Two Systems, under which the people of Hong Kong administer Hong Kong and the people of Macao administer Macao, both with a high degree of

autonomy. These four points are exactly the experience of One Country, Two Systems in achieving success in Macao, and also point out the direction for continuously creating a new situation for the high-quality development of the One Country, Two Systems.

Macao's rapid development in a relatively stable and relaxed environment can be attributed to the unwavering commitment of the SAR government to safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development interests, as well as the full guarantee of Macao's high degree of autonomy.

While preserving its unique systems and way of life, Macao also benefits from the mainland's unique advantages of the super-sized market, a comprehensive industrial system, robust infrastructure, and institutional and talent strengths.

This unified yet diverse institutional arrangement has laid a solid foundation for Macao's long-term prosperity and stability. The successful implementation of the One Country, Two Systems policy in Macao fully demonstrates the advantage of the Chinese system and provides a valuable example for China's path to modernization.

There is no doubt that Macao's development has been and will continue to be closely intertwined with the great historical process of Chinese modernization, which also represents an important mission in the new era of practicing One Country, Two Systems.

With its "golden name card" as an international metropolis, Macao will further promote China's overall opening-up and internationalization. It will fully leverage its unique advantages as a free port for international trade, a sepa-

rate customs territory, and a "precise intermediary" for cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. In contributing to China's modernization, Macao is poised to achieve a remarkable transformation of its own.

Macao, a pearl set along the southern coast of China, shines brightly under the practice of One Country, Two Systems. In Macao, One Country, Two Systems has gone from being an institutional arrangement to becoming the cornerstone and source of economic development, improvement of people's livelihood and social stability.

This is also the reason why the practice of One Country, Two Systems with Macao's characteristics has been highly praised by the international community and has become a recognized model.

Looking ahead, as long as Macao follows the right path, implements sound policies, and fosters unity, it will undoubtedly resonate with Chinese modernization. Hand in hand with the Greater Bay Area and connected to the world, Macao will surely write a more glorious new chapter of One Country, Two Systems and play a more prominent role in the process of Chinese modernization.



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# High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri felicitates Pakistanis as PTV broadcast begins

**Covert Report** Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week felicitated the Pakistanis as Pakistan Television (PTV) News started transmissions through the SBS platform. “Watch Pakistan’s national TV channel PTV now on Australia’s SBS Urdu,” he posted on X. The SBS earlier reported that

the PTV News from Pakistan was being “shown on SBS Two daily at 5.50 AM. The same PTV News is available for viewing any time of the day at SBS Urdu Website [www.sbs.com.au/urdu](http://www.sbs.com.au/urdu) also.” SBS TV World Watch Manager Paul Williams also said that the increase in service from once a week to daily service is due to the fact that the Urdu Community has grown in a big way in Australia.



# Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad welcomes PIA operation to Paris



**Covert Report** Paris: Pakistani Ambassador to France Asim Iftikhar Ahmad this week welcomed the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) operation to Paris. “Good news - Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to resume operation to Paris. Direct flights between Pakistan and France will facilitate travel & contribute towards enhancing business, tourism, family visits and people-people contacts,” the envoy on posted on X. The PIA flights will be operational in January 2025. Earlier the PIA said it will resume flights to Europe in January, starting with Paris, after the EU aviation regulator lifted a ban on the national flag carrier. PIA’s has also opened new tab authorisation to operate in the EU was suspended in June 2020 over concerns about the ability of Pakistani authorities and its Civil Aviation Authority to ensure compliance with international aviation standards. “We have got approval for the first flight’s schedule we had filed,” PIA spokesperson Abdullah Hafeez Khan said, adding that the airline would be opening bookings on Dec. 9 for its planned January 10 flight of a Boeing 777 to Paris. The European Union Aviation Safety Agency and Britain suspended PIA’s permission to operate in the region after Pakistan began probing a scandal over the validity of pilots’ licences in the wake of a plane crash that killed 97 people.



**PIA to Resume Direct Flights Paris in January 2025 for Business and Tourism Boost**

# Pakistan, Kazakhstan agree to set up display centres for enhanced trade

**Celina Ali** Islamabad: In a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan this week, it was decided to establish Display Centres for products and machinery to promote bilateral trade between Kazakhstan and Pakistan. It was also agreed to showcase products of textiles, surgical equipment, sports, goods, handicrafts, leather and agricultural equipment. The meeting was attended by Kazakhstan Ambassador to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin and Pakistan’s Ambassador to Kazakhstan Nouman Bashir Bhatti who expressed deep interest in establishing display centres in Pakistan and Kazakhstan, assuring their full cooperation for which both countries will immediately start work and these centres will be made functional as soon as possible. Aleem Khan, while talking at the meeting, said that both Pakistan and Kazakhstan will provide all possible facilities to the business community of their sides under one roof on a large scale. He added that the volume of bilateral trade with Kazakhstan will be increased by 100 percent in the next three years. He said that instead of going to different cities and places the

needs of foreign investors will be addressed at one center and under one roof. Aleem Khan indicated that common business strategy will be adopted for Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries to boost trade in this region. The minister said that Pakistan wants to increase its exports for Kazakhstan by 20 percent in one year for which Pakistan will also establish Exhibition Centres for its products in Almaty, Baku and other cities of Central Asia while policy will be formulated for Display Centers according to the demand of each product in that country. Aleem Khan said that Display Centers will be built at important locations where the business community can easily access and do not face any difficulties. Ambassador of Kazakhstan in Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin expressed his thanks to Aleem Khan for taking a keen interest in bilateral cooperation and assured his all possible support. Federal secretaries and senior officers attended this high-level meeting and briefed on important departmental matters. It is mentionable that in Pakistan the first Display Centre will be established at Islamabad and for this purpose Board of Investment, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the Ministry of Trade will start coordinated efforts.



# IRR chief Ali Rehman Malik to establish Senator Rehman Malik Memorial Library at AIMS

**Abdullah Jan** Islamabad: Ali Rehman Malik, Chairman of IRR International and the Rehman Malik Foundation, this week announced the establishment of the Senator Rehman Malik Memorial Library at the Al Fajar Institute of Modern Sciences (AIMS) in Islama-

bad. This initiative, dedicated to honouring the legacy of his late father, Senator A. Rehman Malik, was made during a visit to the institute. During the visit, Ali Rehman Malik commended AIMS for its outstanding work in providing education to stu-

dents from terrorism-affected regions and orphaned children. He praised the institute's dedication to fostering hope and creating opportunities for a brighter future. Speaking at the event, Ali Rehman Malik said, "The Institute of Research and Reforms (IRR) Interna-

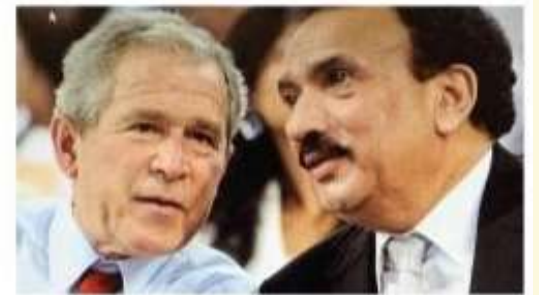
tional and the Rehman Malik Foundation are committed to empowering deserving students by providing access to quality education and modern resources. The Senator Rehman Malik Memorial Library will be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities to help students excel and meet the demands of the modern world."

He emphasized that the library would support academic research and personal growth. Additionally, the Rehman Malik Foundation plans to organize seminars, workshops, and knowledge-sharing events at AIMS to further enrich the educational experiences of students. Ali Rehman Malik was accompanied by Riaz Ali Turi, Director of IRR International and an activist and said "This initiative is a testament to the unwavering commitment of IRR and the Rehman Malik Foundation to uplift communities affected by terrorism and deprivation." He said that education is the key to rebuilding lives, and this library will serve as a beacon of hope for countless students.

Expressing his gratitude, Syed



Sibtain Al Hussaini, Head of AIMS, said, "We are immensely grateful to Ali Rehman Malik, IRR International and the Rehman Malik Foundation for their generous support. The Senator Rehman Malik Memorial Library will have a profound impact on our students, particularly those who have lost their parents, ensuring they have the resources needed to succeed." This initiative reflects the Rehman Malik Foundation's dedication to using education as a transformative tool to uplift marginalized communities and foster a brighter future.



# Bulgaria and Romania will be in the Schengen zone from January. What will change for travellers?



months to “prevent any serious threat to public policy and internal security” – a decision likely made to appease Austria.

This means if you are driving or arriving by train or bus into Romania and Bulgaria, you will still need to carry your passport. Travellers arriving by air or sea from other Schengen countries will no longer have to show passports upon arrival, however. Meaning, passengers on flights, cruises and ferries will not be subject to passport checks. Travellers without EU citizenship should remember that stays in Bulgaria and Romania count towards time spent in the Schengen zone, which cannot be longer than 90 total days within 180 days.

If a traveller spends 30 days in Bulgaria or Romania and enters another Schengen country such as Greece, for example, those 30 days will count toward the 90-day maximum stay in the Schengen Area. The latest country to join the Schengen zone was Croatia in 2022. Every year, 1.25 billion trips take place within this area and 3.5 million people cross the borders of its member countries every day. Now, including Romania and Bulgaria, the Schengen zone comprises 29 states. 25 belong to the EU and four are associated states of the European Free Trade Association: Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

The Schengen Area was created in 1995 following the signing of the Schengen Agreement 10 years earlier between five member states of the European Economic Community: Germany, Belgium, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Several other agreements followed until the 2007 enlargement, integrating nine additional countries into the free movement area.



## NewsWire

Sofia: It’s been a rocky road to Schengen membership for both eastern European countries.

As of 1 January 2025, Romania and Bulgaria will officially become full-time members of the Schengen Area, which allows free movement between member states for 450 million citizens.

The two countries have been members of the European Union (EU) since 2007, but as they were not part of the border-free area, travellers were still required to show passports upon entry.

Now, border controls for the two countries will be simplified.

Here’s what travellers to Romania and Bulgaria need to know about the changes.

Back in 2011, the European Commission (EC) determined both eastern European countries were ready to become Schengen members.

Despite the pronouncement, neither were immediately granted entry into the group. Fellow EU members, including Germany and

France, denied their joint candidacy over governance and immigration issues, delaying their Schengen accession year after year. But the opposition gradually eased.

Last year, the Netherlands – one of the last two holdouts – lifted its veto, leaving Austria as the only country still in opposition. They lifted their veto in November, leaving the path free for Romania and Bulgaria to enter.

Despite Austria’s resistance to Romania and Bulgaria’s Schengen membership, the EC lifted air and sea checks earlier this year, signalling bigger changes to come.

When Romania and Bulgaria join the Schengen zone in the new year, it will be easier for travellers to visit the two countries. At least in principle.

Citizens of Schengen countries do not need to show their passports when flying between countries in the Schengen zone, although not always when travelling by road.

But while Romania and Bulgaria will be fully-fledged members, the EC isn’t ready to pull all border checks yet.

The EC anticipates maintaining checks at land borders between Hungary and Romania and between Romania and Bulgaria for “at least” six



# Bulgaria, Greece fine-tune details to lift border controls

## NewsWire

Sofia: Bulgaria and Greece have agreed on the details on how to completely abolish border controls between them, according to a communique by the Bulgarian interior ministry published on Wednesday (11 December).

The two countries declared their readiness to lift border controls on 1 January 2025, at a meeting between their police services at the largest common border crossing point Kulata-Promachon.

The complete abolition of border controls between

Bulgaria and Greece will become a reality if, at Thursday’s Justice and Home Affairs Council, EU interior ministers rubber-stamp the full accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen area.

The expectations are more than optimistic, after Austria officially announced two days ago that it was officially lifting its veto.

The Netherlands, the other country that stood in the way of Sofia and Bucharest, also gave the “green light” for the full admission of Bulgaria and Romania to Schengen. The Parliament in The Hague supported the government’s decision taken a few days ago, but not without some resistance.

Earlier on Wednesday, the largest party in the Dutch governing coalition, Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party, tried to pass a declaration insisting that the government vote against Bulgaria and Romania.

However, the declaration was rejected by a majority of lawmakers. Some of the other parties in the ruling coalition in the country also voted against it.

Thus the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to Schengen by land is the first agenda item at the ministerial meeting. The draft decision, unanimously approved by EU ambassadors at the end of November, states that the controls will be abolished as of 1 January 2025. Bulgaria and Romania have accepted a number of conditions to smoothen the process of lifting the borders, as announced at a recent meeting of the interior ministers of Bulgaria, Romania, Austria and Hungary in Budapest.

With the full accession of Bulgaria to Schengen, a joint group of 100 police officers from Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria will be deployed at the border with Turkey, and participate in the controls there. The deployment of the joint group was one of Austria’s



main conditions for lifting its veto against Sofia and Bucharest.

Also upon Vienna’s request, random border controls will be in place at the Bulgaria-Romania border for at least another six months. The controls will be similar to

those border checks re-introduced by some Schengen area countries.

Conversely, the borders between Bulgaria and Greece won’t be subject to such controls, the ministry of interior in Sofia explained.



# Portugal: €522 scholarship for immigrant tourism trainees

## Newsire

Lisbon: Tourism Schools in Portugal will train immigrants who want to work in the sector, in a program that starts in January. Those selected will receive a monthly scholarship of €522.50 and travel assistance.

The training program for immigrants who want to work in the tourism sector – which the Government announced as one of the measures to “accelerate the economy” – will start in January, a Government source told ECO.

Among the 60 measures designed by the government in the summer to boost the national economy, the creation of an integration and training program for migrants and refugees in the tourism sector was already planned, with a view to “improving the conditions of integration” of these people in the country.

As explained by the Executive in July, the program will involve an investment of 2.5 million euros from the Tourism of Portugal budget, with the Ministry of Economy informing the Public that the training will be carried out by the Tourism of Portugal schools.

According to ECO, a government source now explains that the training – which will last a total of around



three months, plus a month of internship – will not only be technical and practical but will also include knowledge of languages ??and socio-

cultural training. Trainees will be entitled to a monthly scholarship with a value corresponding to the Social Support Index, that

is, 522.50 euros paid by Turismo de Portugal. They will also have support for travel costs, points out the same source.

Interested immigrants will need to signal their availability to AIMA, and this agency will then transmit this information to Turismo de Portugal.



### €522 scholarship for immigrant tourism trainees

Tourism Schools in Portugal will train immigrants who want to work in the sector, in a program that starts in January. Those selected will receive a monthly scholarship of €522.50 and travel assistance.

**Good news, If you are free and you want to take the 3 months tourism training you will get 522 euro per month and travel allowance .**



# Japan provides generous funds for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



health outcomes. These improvements will enhance care quality, increase patient trust in the healthcare system, and ensure equitable access to high-quality health services for all in Hazara. Through targeted interventions and alignment with local and national health priorities, the project is set to make a substantial impact on health outcomes in KP province particularly in Hazara Division. Under Disaster Management, the project will install 45 hydrological and hydraulic observation network in KP and Punjab and rehabilitate the river structures in KP. The objective is to reduce the Pakistan's economic loss by improving the quality and quantity of fundamental data needed for future river management and enhancing the strength of river structures against flash floods in the

Indus River and its tributaries. The project will also incorporate the concept of "Build Back Better". Charge d' Affairs ad interim Mr. TAKANO said "with the two projects, Japan has almost fulfilled the pledge of \$77 million, which was made at the Geneva conference in January 2023. I hope for the safety of the people involved in the projects, their successful completion, and their contribution to improving social welfare for the vulnerable population in the region." Chief Representative Mr. Miyata said "I am confident that the health project will improve the health facilities and will achieve its goal of reducing the maternal and child mortality and better accessibility to quality health care." And through Flood Management Enhancement Project, it is expected to reduce the risk of human sufferings and economic losses in future floods. The Government of Japan and JICA continues to enhance its cooperation for improved health services and disaster risk reduction to build back better assistance to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: The Government of Japan this week decided to provide grant of 1,503 billion JPY (approx. USD 9.91 million) for the Project for the Recovery of Maternal and Child Health Equipment in Flood-Affected and Surrounding Areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 2,831 billion JPY (approx. USD 18.67 million) for The Project for Flood Management Enhancement in the Indus Basin under Grant in Aid assistance.

The Exchange of Notes was signed and exchanged between Mr. TAKANO Shuichi, Charge d' Affairs ad interim of Japan and Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs on December 17, 2024. On the same occasion, Grant Agreement of both the projects were signed and exchanged today between Mr. Naoaki Miyata, Chief Representative of JICA Pakistan Office and Mr. Muhammad Yahya Akhunzada, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Under Health grant aid, the project will procure and install essential medical equipment in 21 health facilities of Hazara Division to enhance maternal and child health (MCH) services by reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates in KP province, particularly in the Hazara division. By 2029, the project's expected outcomes include increased institutional deliveries, caesarean sections, and ultrasound examinations that will significantly contribute to the reduction in maternal deaths and improving

# USAID, HEC to support research offices in Pakistani universities



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its Higher Education System Strengthening Activity, this week organized a four-day training workshop on proposal writing and grant management for public sector universities in Pakistan.

It was hosted by Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), this event aimed to enhance the effectiveness of Offices of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORICs) at select universities across the country, said a press release.

The workshop was attended by 60 faculty members and officials from 16 universities. The closing session was chaired by Noor Amna

Malik, Managing Director, National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), Higher Education Commission, alongside Kate Somvongsiri, Mission Director for USAID/Pakistan, and Dr Bushra Mirza, Vice Chancellor of FJWU. Noor Malik highlighted the importance of strengthening the relationship between academia and research. "Pakistan must close the gap between academia and industry by enhancing research and development facilities to support both local and international industries," she stated.

USAID/Pakistan Mission Director Kate Somvongsiri emphasized the agency's commitment in strengthening research initiatives, particularly in building knowledge in environmental management. "We are proud that our partnership with all 16 universities and the

Higher Education Commission is laying the foundations for continued economic growth and development in Pakistan," she said.

Dr Michael Barber, Professor at the University of Utah, encouraged greater collaboration among Pakistani faculty researchers. "It is essential to support local researchers in conducting applied research and engaging with both local and international peers to secure research

funding," he explained. "Pakistan's higher education sector can play a leading role in advancing research and innovation."

The Higher Education System Strengthening Activity, implemented by the University of Utah, supports the HEC and 16 partner universities across Pakistan to enhance institutional capacity for market-driven education and research.



# 28,000 Pakistanis applied for 'protection' in EU in a year: report



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Pakistanis lodged 28,000 applications for international protection in the European Union Plus countries between October 2023 and October this year, the EU's Agency for Asylum (EUAA) said in a Pakistan-specific report. The monthly figures have followed a downward trend since reaching a peak in October last year, when Pakistanis lodged around 3,400 applications. The number for October this

year stands at 1,900. Italy was the main receiving country for asylum applications by Pakistanis, followed at a distance by France, Greece and Germany. According to the "Country Focus on Pakistan Report", EU Plus countries issued around 20,000 decisions at first instance on Pakistani applications, with just 12 per cent of the applicants being granted refugee status or subsidiary protection. At the end of October this year, there

were nearly 34,000 decisions pending at first instance, according to the report. The report outlines the political and security context in Pakistan, the main actors involved in shaping it, the role of the judiciary, as well as the treatment of certain groups of the country's population. It provides an overview of the political and security context of the country, the treatment of certain profiles and groups of the country's popula-



tion and the situation of Afghan refugees. With an estimated 2.4 million people experiencing forced labour or forced marriage, Pakistan is rated as one of the countries with the highest vulnerability to modern slavery in the region.

The country is located on a major trafficking route, including trade in human organs. Despite having laws in place to combat trafficking in human beings, the country's fragile democracy and poor state of accountability were said to have hindered an effective enforcement of those laws. As of 2023, Pakistan did not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, although the government has made significant efforts to this end. However, corruption and complicity of state officials in trafficking crimes have hampered law enforcement action and created a culture of impunity.

The main human trafficking issue in Pakistan is bonded labour (or debt-bondage). Estimates of people affected by this evil range between three million and 4.5m. The system of debt-bondage is based on a traditional practice of giving 'Peshgi', or Begar, a loan given to a labourer. Repayment of such loans is said to be virtually impossible due to high interest rates and exploitative practices of creditor-employers. Due to weak implementation of the law, authorities have failed to protect individual victims of bonded labour. The report says that violence in Pakistan has escalated since October last year, particularly in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Groups such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) have intensified their "insurgent activities". The Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKAP), an offshoot of the militant Islamic State (IS) group, has also intensified its activities and dissemination of propaganda. It even makes use of artificial intelligence (AI) to spread its narrative. By September this year, there were over three million Afghans residing in Pakistan. The government's Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP) has led to the return of 738, 583 Afghans and resulted in arrest, harassment, and an increasingly hostile environment for Afghans.



At least 28,000 Pakistanis seeks asylum in EU countries: Report



# Pakistan-UK relations enter a new era: High Commissioner Jane Marriott highlights deepening ties, shared vision



The lecture also highlighted the importance of educational exchanges between the two countries. Marriott emphasised the significant number of Pakistani students who choose the UK as their destination for higher education. She underscored the value of these transnational exchanges, which enable Pakistani students to gain world-class education and expertise, with the expectation that they will return to Pakistan and contribute to the country's development. Education was framed as a critical solution to some of Pakistan's pressing challenges, including the alarming statistic that 26 million children remain out of school. The High Commissioner also addressed the UK's ongoing support for health initiatives in Pakistan, particularly in areas such as immunisation

and family planning. She highlighted the importance of these initiatives in improving public health outcomes, noting that a stable and healthy population is key to Pakistan's continued development. One of the most urgent issues discussed was the impact of climate change, which poses an existential threat to Pakistan despite the country contributing less than 1% of global emissions. Marriott outlined the severe risks Pakistan faces from climate-related disasters, including the potential for agricultural disruption and the uninhabitability of parts of the country due to rising temperatures. She emphasised the need for both countries to adopt coordinated strategies to mitigate the

effects of climate change, with a focus on adaptation and resilience building. In her closing remarks, Marriott reinforced the notion that Pakistan and the UK share a common commitment to addressing global challenges, from the situation in Afghanistan to the pressing issue of climate change. She stressed the importance of continued collaboration between the two nations, not only to confront these challenges but also to prevent future conflicts from arising. She expressed confidence in Pakistan's role as a key player in regional and global peacebuilding efforts and highlighted the shared values of democracy, human rights, and governance that underpin the relationship between the two countries.

**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) this week hosted a distinguished lecture titled "Pakistan-UK Relations in a New Era", marking a significant moment in the evolving partnership between the two countries.

The event, which took place at IPRI, was addressed by British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, and drew a wide audience of diplomats, scholars, policymakers, and business leaders.

The lecture focused on strengthening bilateral ties, discussing key areas such as economic cooperation, defense collaboration, shared security challenges, and the growing importance of addressing global issues like climate change. In her address, Jane Marriott emphasised the enduring importance of Pakistan-UK relations, underscoring the deep-rooted ties both nations share despite the shifting global landscape and rising international competition. She reaffirmed that Pakistan remains one of the UK's most strategic partners, with both countries committed to expanding cooperation in a variety of areas, including trade, defense, education, climate change and healthcare. The High Commissioner highlighted the growing military and defense collaboration, with a particular focus on counterterrorism efforts and peacekeeping missions. She commended Pakistan's significant contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations, stressing the country's critical role in maintaining peace and stability in conflict-affected regions worldwide. Marriott spoke about the significant contributions of the Pakistani community to British society, particularly in business, politics, and culture, and that individuals of Pakistani heritage have risen to influential positions within the UK's political landscape. This has not only enhanced cultural and social connections between the two nations but also facilitated greater collaboration, with the diaspora serving as a bridge between Pakistan and the UK.



**“Imperfection is beauty, madness is genius and it’s better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring.” - Marilyn Monroe**

**“It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.” – J K Rowling**

# Don't take orders from anyone: Italy PM Giorgia Meloni

## Newsire

Rome: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni this week defended her friendship with tech billionaire Elon Musk, affirming that her relationship with anyone does not interfere with her leadership role or Italy's policy. PM Meloni made the remarks while speaking in a parliamentary session ahead of the European Union summit in Brussels.

During her address, Meloni said that she makes her choices independently adding that she would not be influenced by Elon Musk's business or take any orders from anyone. "I can be a friend of Elon Musk and at the same time the head of the first Italian government that made a new law to regulate private activity in space," media quoted Meloni as saying.

She further clarified that while she maintains "good relationships with many people," but does not "take orders from anyone."

Taking a swipe at her predecessors, she said previous Italian leaders "who thought they had a good relationship, even a friendship, with a foreign leader, they had to slavishly follow what the others did."

Meloni, whose far-right coalition formed the government in 2022, has met with Musk on several occasions. The two have reportedly been meeting for discussion to foster the growth of Italy's progressing space sector, a field where Italy is looking to raise its presence.

Earlier this year, the Italian government approved a new framework designed to encourage foreign space companies, including Musk's SpaceX, to operate in Italy. Recently, a viral photo of Meloni and Musk at a New York event in September sparked widespread speculation, with some social media users jokingly wondering if the two were "dating."

During the event, Musk heaped praises on the Italian PM calling her "authentic, honest, and truthful."

Despite the speculations surrounding their relationship, the Italian leader maintained that her relationship with the Tesla CEO was strictly professional.



# France: Most powerful nuclear reactor finally comes on stream

## Covert Report

Paris: France this week connected its most powerful nuclear power reactor to the national electricity grid in what leaders hailed as a landmark moment despite years of delays, budget overruns and technical setbacks.

The Flamanville 3 European Pressurized Reactor in Normandy started providing electricity to French homes at 11:48 am (1048 GMT) Saturday, the EDF power company's CEO Luc Remont said in a statement.

"Great moment for the country," President Emmanuel Macron said in a statement on social network LinkedIn, calling it "one of the world's most powerful nuclear reactors."

"Re-industrialising to produce low-carbon energy is French-style ecology," he added. "It strengthens our competitiveness and protects the climate."

The French-developed European Pressurised Reactor project, launched in 1992, was designed to relaunch nuclear power in Europe after the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe in Soviet Ukraine, and is touted as offering more efficient power output and better safety.

The EPR, a new generation pressurised water reactor, is the fourth to be finished anywhere in the world. Similar design reactors in China and Finland came online ahead of it.

The launch is welcome news for the heavily indebted state-owned energy company EDF after multiple problems extended construction to 17

years and caused massive budget overruns. Remont of EDF called the event "historic."

"The last time a reactor started up in France was 25 years ago at Civaux 2," he said, referring to the Civaux power plant in southwestern France. The connection was initially scheduled to take place Friday. It is the most powerful reactor in the country at 1,600 MW. Ultimately, it should supply electricity to upwards of two million homes.

The connection to the grid "will be marked by different power levels through to the summer of 2025" in a months-long testing phase, the company has said.

EDF said that starting up a reactor was "a long and complex operation."

The plant will be shut down for a complete inspection lasting at least 250 days, probably in the spring of 2026, the company added.

Construction of the Flamanville reactor began in 2007 and was beset by numerous problems. The start-up comes 12 years behind schedule after a plethora of technical setbacks which saw the cost of the project soar to an estimated 13.2 billion euros (\$13.76 billion), four times the initial 3.3 billion euro estimate.

The start-up began on September 3, but had to be interrupted the following day due to an "automatic shutdown". It resumed a few days later.

Generation has been gradually increased to allow the reactor to be connected to the electricity network.

Nuclear power accounts for around three-fifths of French electricity output and the country boasts one of the globe's largest nuclear power programmes.

That is in stark contrast to neighbouring Germany, which exited nuclear power last year by



shutting down the last three of its reactors. "This morning marks the culmination of a titanic effort that has finally paid off," Agnes Pannier-Runacher, the outgoing minister for ecological transition, said on X. "We are drawing all the lessons from this to make a success of the nuclear revival that we

decided on with the President of the Republic." Macron has decided to ramp up nuclear power to bolster French energy sustainability by ordering six new-generation reactors and laying options for eight more, that could cost tens of billions of euros. In 2022, he called for a "renaissance" for the

country's nuclear industry to transition away from fossil fuels. "What we have to build today is the renaissance of the French nuclear industry because it's the right moment, because it's the right thing for our nation, because everything is in place," Macron said at the time.