

**Portugal records hottest-ever November Newswire**

Lisbon: Portugal has experienced its hottest-ever November, the country's meteorological agency said this week, the average air temperature 2.69C higher than the average for 1981-2010. The average temperature for November was 15.14C, the Portuguese Institute for Sea and Atmosphere (IPMA) said. **(Page-8)**

**EASA lifts ban on PIA for flights to Europe Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Aviation Minister Khawaja Asif this week announced that the European Commission and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) have lifted the ban on Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) for flights to Europe. In 2020, after a PIA plane crash in **(Page-10)**

# ZAEZ welcomes first return China-Europe Railway Express train



"This return trip marks a significant step in advancing the Land Silk Road and represents a new milestone in Henan's effort in building a 'four-road-coordinated' opening-up framework," said Zhang Yi, Director of the Planning and Development Department at Zhengzhou International Land Port Development and Construction Co., Ltd. As of now, the number of China-Europe freight train trips operated by Zhengzhou International Land Port Development and Construction Co., Ltd. has surpassed the total number of



**Henan Daily** Zhengzhou: To enhance its new advantages for opening-up, China Railway Express (Zhengzhou) has reached a significant milestone. On December 1 at 9:50 AM, a train loaded with 52 containers arrived at the West Station of Zhengzhou International Land Port in Zhengzhou Airport Economy Zone (ZAEZ). This marks the first return trip of

China Railway Express to ZAEA, signalling that ZAEZ is now fully capable of operating China Railway Express trains. This train, identified as service number 75096 and operated by Zhengzhou International Land Port Development and Construction Co., Ltd., a subsidiary of Zhongyu Port Group, entered China via the Manzhouli port in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and arrived at ZAEZ after a 18-day journey.



trips made in 2023, in line with its annual targets. This year, four new direct stations have been added to the China Railway Express network and the route crossing the Caspian and Black Seas has been successfully opened. These developments have further strengthened the cooperation with ASEAN rail services, and significantly boosted the industrial momentum and international competitiveness of Henan's China Railway Express service.

## Queen Mary of Denmark marks her first year as monarch by unveiling a spectacular tiara created from a historic diamond belt

**Covert Report**

Copenhagen: Queen Mary of Denmark has celebrated her first year as monarch in spectacular fashion, unveiling a dazzling tiara repurposed from a historic diamond belt.

The Australian-born royal, 52, known for her penchant for heirloom diadems, has breathed new life into the unique accessory.

In a video shared by Amalienborg Palace on Tuesday, Mary is seen bare-faced and casually styled, meeting the jeweller to try on the reimagined Rose Stone Tiara.

The glittering transformation is a nod to tradition, with the Danish Royal Family continuing its centuries-old practice of reshaping crown jewels to suit the times.

"The frame on which the rose stones in the new diadem are mounted was created by jeweller Matias Hasbo Dinesen in consultation with the Queen and the Royal Danish Collection," the Instagram caption read.

"The rose stone set was created in 1840 as a chain that is mounted around a corseted waist with the large pendant, the corsage, in the middle. The pendant can be divided and used separately as independent brooches."

Indeed, Queen Lovisa, wife of Frederik VIII, is depicted wearing the 'belt' in a portrait from 1911, displayed at the National History Museum at Frederiksborg Castle.

The Crown Jewels available to Mary, as Queen, include four parures that are considered among the most significant treasures of the monarchy. These jewels, which must remain in Denmark, comprise the brilliant-cut diamond set, the emerald set, the pearl-ruby set and the rose-cut diamond set. Each parure is surprisingly versatile and can be separated to mix and match individual pieces.

Of the four, only the emerald set includes a matching tiara. Mary debuted the emerald tiara in gala portraits, released in April, pairing them with a green gown by Birgit Halstein.

Mary's new tiara was crafted using the largest stones from the rose-cut diamond set, which has been the least-worn parure by previous Danish Queens.

One notable occasion was in 1991, when Queen Margrethe wore elements of the set during a state visit by the Norwegian royals.

She shortened the necklace and pinned the four brooches from the set to her dress.

In 1840, Queen Caroline Amalie commissioned C.M. Weisshaupt to create the rose-cut parure, incorporating diamonds that once belonged to Princess Charlotte Amalie, the sister of King Christian VI.



It includes a long chain originally designed to be worn as a belt around the Queen's corseted waist, a style popular in the 1840s. However, the waist chain fell out of fashion and was rarely used by subsequent monarchs. The term 'rose-cut' refers to a style of diamond cutting that was popular before the invention of the brilliant-cut in the late 1800s. The rose-cut technique involves crafting multiple facets, ideally 24, on the upper surface of the diamond, creating the appearance of a rounded rosebud.

The back of the diamond is flat, enhancing its vintage charm. By contrast, the brilliant diamond has 33 cut facets on the top side and 24 on the lower side.

Today, all four parures are safeguarded in the treasury at Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen.

They can be traced back to Queen Sophie Magdalene, consort of Christian VI, who bequeathed them to the Danish monarchy.

Mary's innovative approach reflects the Danish royal tradition of adapting the palace's treasures to ensure they remain both contemporary and personal.

In the behind-the-scenes video, the chain is seen being carefully set onto its frame as the Queen prepares to try on the transformed tiara.

The casual elegance of her messy bun, paired with the diadem, adds a relatable touch to this regal moment.

The palace wrote: "The new diadem is designed as a so-called bandeau - a headband for mounting in the hair consisting of a single row of the rose stone cut diamonds."

"By this simple form, the expression from the belt is continued, where the diamonds are also mounted in a row."

The Danish Crown Jewels are owned by the state, but remain at the disposal of the Queen. They must stay in Denmark and are not permitted to accompany the monarch on visits abroad.

When not being worn, these magnificent jewels are displayed in the treasure chamber at Rosenborg Castle, where they can be admired by the public.

## Bilawal Bhutto praises Kundi's multi-party moot

**Liaquat Ali**

Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari this week praised a multi-party conference (MPC) held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to discuss the deteriorating law and order situation in Kurram while calling out the PTI-led provincial government for "practising their extremist politics at the expense of the people".

KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi along with representatives of different political parties had criticised the PTI for what they said was the party's "rhetoric centred on violence and conflict", as the party skipped the conference which was hosted by Kundi.

The moot was attended by representatives of major political parties including the PPP, JUI-F, ANP, PML-N, QWP, JI and others. A declaration issued after the conference, held at the Governor House in Peshawar, revealed that over 70 security personnel were martyred in 2024, with more than 200 lives lost in armed clashes in the Kurram district.

The PPP Chairman said in a post on X that he welcomed Kundi's initiative to "engage all political parties in an effort to create political consensus and address the difficulties faced by the people of Pakhtunkhwa."

Dialogue between political forces is the most effective means to not only address political, economic and security challenges but also forge the political consensus and stability required to achieve results, Bilawal said.

"It is unfortunate that the government with executive authority & primary responsibility to address these issues have not even spent



one day since they formed government doing what they are meant to. Sever the people of their province. They have been busy practising their extremist politics at the expense of the people of Pakhtunkhwa.

"Despite having been invited they refused to attend or contribute to this APC (all parties conference) as well," he said, referring to the PTI being in power in KP.

"The people of Pakhtunkhwa deserve their problems to be addressed," he said, adding that "with or without the help of the KP government, we will continue to fight for the real rights of the people of all provinces."

# Over 200 ancient tombs discovered in Luohe, Henan

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: A joint archaeological team formed by Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and Luohe Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology excavated a tomb complex dating from the Warring States Period to the Han Dynasty in Luohe city of Central China's Henan province recently, according to Luohe Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology. The densely but orderly arranged tomb complex was a chance discovery during the construction of the Pingdingshan-Luohe-Zhoukou High-speed Railway, dating from the Warring States Period to the Han Dynasty, lasting about 400 years. The majority of the tombs are well-preserved with abundant burials. So far, over 200 tombs have been discovered, with more than 1,000 artifacts unearthed, including bronze swords and daggers of the Warring States Period and the pottery, iron wares and jade articles of the Han Dynasty. Cultural relics unearthed in this area are in great variety. Previously, important remains such as the walls, roads and large architectural foundations of the Warring States Period as well as the coins and pottery workshops of the Han Dynasty have been found in its surrounding area. It indicates that during the Warring States Period and the Han Dynasty, Yancheng (the present-day Luohe) had been well-developed, attaining a considerable scale, which is of great significance for studying the urban development of Luohe in history.



# Henan issues government bonds totaling 70.8 billion yuan

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: Henan issued government bonds totaling 70.8 billion yuan, all of which are refinancing bonds, according to the Henan Provincial Department of Finance on December 2. These funds are designated for swapping existing hidden debts, repaying outstanding obligations, and covering the principal of matur-

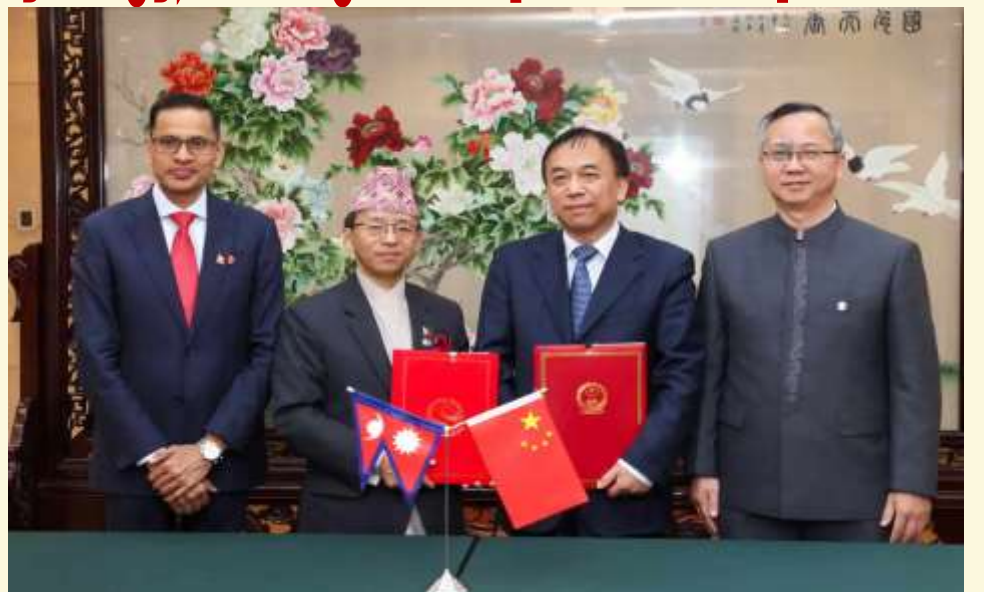
ing local government bonds. The bonds issued include 5-year refinancing general bonds, 5-year refinancing special bonds, 15-year refinancing special bonds, and 30-year refinancing special bonds, with respective amounts of 45 billion yuan, 12.1 billion yuan, 25.9 billion yuan, and 28.3 billion yuan. The issuance interest rates are 1.74%, 1.74%, 2.21%, and 2.29%, respectively.

# China, Nepal forge stronger development synergy, vowing to deepen BRI cooperation

NewsWire

Beijing: China and Nepal have agreed to strengthen the synergy of their development strategies, and pursue deeper and even more concrete high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, according to a joint statement between the two countries issued during Nepali Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's visit to China. The joint statement said that both sides agreed to ensure timely and swift implementation of the agreements signed, consensus reached, and decisions made as well as completion of the programs, projects and activities carried out jointly by the two countries. According to the National Development and Reform Commission, China and Nepal also signed a framework agreement for advancing Belt and Road Initiative cooperation, Global Times reported. According to the framework agreement, the two sides will adhere to the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, strengthen practical cooperation in key areas such as economy,

finance, transportation, logistics, trade, industrial investment and customs. Both sides also expressed their commitment to strengthening connectivity between the two countries in such areas as ports, roads, railways, aviation, power grids and telecommunication, and to help Nepal transform from a land-locked country to a land-linked country, the joint statement reads. The joint statement also details various concrete cooperation projects that China will work on with Nepal. The two sides agreed to jointly advance the fourth phase of the China-aided Araniko Highway maintenance project and the Hilsa-Simikot Road project, implement the second phase of the Kathmandu Ring Road Improvement Project, and welcome the signing of the Letters of Exchange for the Approval of the China-aid Project of Feasibility Study for the Tokha-Chhahare Tunnel.



# Italy: World's most beautiful ship 'Amerigo Vespucci' docks in Karachi



**Celina Ali**  
Islamabad The World's most beautiful Italian ship 'Amerigo Vespucci' this week docked first time at the port of Karachi, the city of lights. The visit of 93-year-old Amerigo Vespucci to Pakistan is part of a two-year voyage 2023-25, across 30 countries, marking a significant milestone in bilateral relations between the two nations.



The Amerigo Vespucci is considered a masterpiece of Italian naval architecture. During its stay in Karachi, the ship will be accompa-

nied by Villaggio Italia, a mini expo showcasing modern Italian art, fashion, and technology.

**The Italian ambassador, consul general and Pakistan Navy's officers welcomed the ship upon its arrival at Karachi Port.**

Italian sailors on board called the ship an "Italian floating embassy" sailing to strengthen relations with the world. Sailors of the Amerigo Vespucci will meet with the senior officials of Pak Navy while they will also visit the different places of Karachi.

The Amerigo Vespucci embarked on the world tour on July 1, 2023, under the "World Tour - Villaggio Italia" initiative, by the Italian government.

The Amerigo Vespucci's itinerary includes visits to various ports across five continents, with stops in 30 ports of 20 countries.

Earlier, on October 15, the Italian Navy's Carrier Strike Group comprising an aircraft carrier and a frigate had arrived in Karachi for a three-day visit to enhance regional maritime security and defense cooperation between the two countries.

The group was welcomed by Pakistan Navy's senior officials and Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Marilina Armellini upon their arrival. The visit marked the first ever by an Italian aircraft carrier to Pakistan.



# Reflecting on the 'spiritual plunder' of colonialism

**Ding Gang**

Thirty years ago in Brussels, the Cinquantenaire Park became my preferred spot for evening walks. The majestic triumphal arch initially captivated me with its grandeur. Still, after learning its history, this symbol of Belgian colonial power seemed to silently remind me of a past built on cruel exploitation and plunder. This architectural marvel carries a dark legacy, constructed with wealth accumulated through the brutal exploitation of labor in the Congo Free State under King Leopold II (1835-1909). These grandiose structures were funded with the proceeds of Congolese rubber, a fact well-known at the time. According to an article published in The Guardian last November, one Belgian socialist politician spoke of "the arch of severed hands," a reference to the horrifying fate that awaited Congolese workers who failed to meet their rubber quota.

This realization added a layer of complexity to my memory of evening strolls, prompting me to reflect on the darker aspects of colonial history.

But was wealth the only thing the colonizers plundered?

This historical reflection gains new significance in light of the recent landmark ruling by Belgium's Court of Appeal. The court found the Belgian state guilty of crimes against humanity for forcibly separating five mixed-race children from their mothers in colonial Congo.

This ruling is a significant step toward acknowledging and rectifying the deep-seated psycho-

logical and cultural violence of colonialism.

The court awarded €50,000 to each of these five women, now in their seventies. These women were systematically kidnapped between 1948 and 1953, sent to Catholic institutions hundreds of kilometers from their homes, stripped of their identity and registered as "children of sin."

The psychological impact of such policies extends far beyond the immediate victims. These children were not only physically separated from their mothers but were also forced to internalize a value system that deemed their very existence problematic.

They were made to feel ashamed of their mixed heritage, demonstrating how colonial power operated not just through physical control but through psychological domination. This psychological domination involved imposing a value system that denigrated colonized cultures and identities, leading to deep-seated shame and inferiority among colonized populations.

This legal recognition of colonial crimes against humanity represents a crucial step in the decolonization process. It acknowledges that colonial injustice wasn't merely about economic plunder, exploitation or political control. It also involved deep-seated psychological and cultural violence that continues to reverberate through generations.

This ruling not only provides justice to the immediate victims but also establishes a precedent for addressing colonial injustices across Europe. It highlights that even though European colonizers have left the historical stage, we still need a more com-



prehensive understanding of decolonization's long-term impacts.

The ongoing process of decolonization requires us to understand that healing colonial wounds involves more than material reparation, it is a long journey that demands a deep acknowledgment of cultural trauma, restoration of stolen identities and reconstruction of dam-

aged psychological landscapes.

Recognizing the "colonized and plundered mind" is also an important step in the cultural reconstruction of developing countries, especially for South-South cooperation, where exchanges on the shadow of colonialism play an important role in deepening understanding and promoting the development of common interests. This is not to better pursue the accounts of the former colonial powers, but

rather to gain a deeper understanding of how to enhance the responsibilities and roles of the South in the restructuring of the global order.

**The writer is a senior editor with People's Daily, and currently a senior fellow with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China**

# A new layer of unique significance is attached to Spring Festival

**Global Times**

The Spring Festival, a Chinese cultural symbol that has long been well-known around the globe, has gained a new title this week. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added "Spring Festival, social practices of the Chinese people in celebration of the traditional New Year" to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on Wednesday. With this, China now has 44 items on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list, continuing to be the most enlisted country in the world. The successful inscription of the Spring Festival is not only another important milestone of the world's embrace of Chinese civilization, but also provides a new starting point for exchanges and mutual understanding among different civilizations.

The Spring Festival's inscription can appropriately be described as "well-earned." The Spring Festival is not only a collection of Chinese folk culture filled with the quintessence of Chinese culture, but also a unique spiritual and emotional code of the Chinese nation. Whether it is the poetic verses "In the sound of firecrackers an old year is gone" or "New charm will always replace the one that's worn," it is full of the ceremonial sense of saying goodbye to the old year and welcoming the new one. One of the aspects of the Spring Festival that is significant to Chinese society and to the safe-

guarding of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage around the world is that it is a good example of how traditional culture and social development can complement each other. As the text of China's application to UNESCO emphasizes, celebrating the Spring Festival provides "a sense of identity and continuity for the Chinese people." Regarding the Spring Festival, China has seen the largest cyclical migration in human history over the past few decades, as it has transformed from an agricultural to an industrial country. The traditional culture represented by the Spring Festival has become an internal dynamic and a representational form of Chinese modernization.

Pursuits such as "family reunion" and "going back home for the Spring Festival" essentially embody the resilience and perseverance of the Chinese people, as well as the aspiration and pursuit of a better life. In addition to personal happiness, this extends to the concepts and values of family harmony, national prosperity and world peace. This is also the reason why the Spring Festival is a cultural symbol that resonates with the world. It is consistent with the global hope for peace and harmony, providing inspiration for solving the many dilemmas and problems caused by the realpolitik mind-set of playing zero-sum games where one side must lose if the other wins.

Before being included in the UNESCO Intangible



Cultural Heritage list, nearly 20 countries around the world had already designated the Chinese New Year as a public holiday, highlighting the extraordinary influence of Spring Festival culture in a globalization era. Today, approximately one-fifth of the world's population celebrate the Chinese New Year in various forms. Many national leaders visit local Chinese communities and deliver greetings during the festival, demonstrating that as China's international status and influence rise, the global recognition of Chinese culture has also grown. Last December, the United Nations officially designated the Lunar New Year as a UN floating holiday. This shows that the Spring Festival is no longer merely a cultural heritage of China. It has also transcended national and ethnic boundaries to become a cultural symbol that is widely accepted, recognized, and appreciated around the world.

The significance of the Spring Festival's successful inclusion as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity goes beyond this achievement. As a cultural name card of China, it bridges the diverse cultures and values of East and West. While offering the world a more comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of China, it also fosters cross-cultural understanding and exchange. The world needs more examples of this kind to shape its perception of China. Fortunately, the vast land of China is blessed with a rich history and profound civilization. Many other Intangible Cultural Heritages, like the Spring Festival, which builds bridges between ancient and modern times, the East and the West, are worth

exploring, preserving and promoting.

Apart from the Spring Festival's successful inscription, three Chinese heritage projects - traditional Li textile techniques, traditional Chinese wooden arch bridges, and Qiang New Year festival - were transferred from the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This signifies that through concerted efforts, these heritage projects have seen fundamental improvements in their preservation status, moving out of the endangered category and establishing a foundation for inheritance and development.

In recent years, China's achievements in cultural heritage protection have been widely recognized. A wealth of systematic practical experience has been accumulated in areas such as

government leadership, social participation, and education and inheritance, providing valuable models for other countries to draw upon. From delving into Mayan civilization to studying human origins in Africa and exploring ancient Egyptian civilization, China, together with its Belt and Road partners, has launched over 30 cultural heritage protection projects. These efforts have yielded positive results, adding significant contributions to fostering cultural exchange and mutual learning among civilizations worldwide.

"Delicious soup is made by combining different ingredients." The diversity of civilizations is a fundamental characteristic of human society. While walking on the path to building a community with a shared future for mankind, China is willing to work with countries around the world to promote cultural exchange and mutual learning with a more open and inclusive attitude.

As the latest representative of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the Spring Festival is now attached with a new layer of unique significance. Rooted in Chinese civilization and integrated into world civilization, it plays an increasingly vital role in fostering dialogue between Chinese and other civilizations in the world. This enables the world to find greater resonance and harmony within its diversity of civilizations.

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# Tech webinar unlocks frontiers for Pakistan-Australia IT collaboration High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri underscores significance of strengthening bilateral trade relations



**Covert Report**

Canberra: The High Commission for Pakistan, in collaboration with the Consulate General of Pakistan in Sydney and Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), organized a webinar titled “Exploring Opportunities in the Australian Tech Industry”. The event drew significant participation from IT professionals, industry experts, and entrepreneurs from both Pakistan and Australia, emphasizing the mutual potential for collaboration in the thriving tech sectors of both the countries. In his remarks, High Commissioner, H.E. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, underscored the significance of strengthening trade relations between the two countries. “The tech sector is a critical area where Pakistan and Australia can foster robust partnerships. By leveraging Pakistan’s immense IT talent and Australia’s dynamic market, we can create win-win opportunities,” he added. Mr. Abu Bakar, CEO of PSEB, outlined Pakistan’s burgeoning tech potential, showcasing the country’s thriving IT export capabilities, skilled workforce, and government initiatives supporting

the tech ecosystem. “Pakistan is on the path to becoming a global IT hub, and Australian markets present a promising avenue for expansion and collaboration,” he remarked. Mr. Farooq Fasih Ghauri, Regional Director Asia at NETSOL Technologies, shed light on specific opportunities in the Australian market. “Australia offers a highly receptive environment for cutting-edge tech solutions, from financial technologies to AI-driven innovations. Pakistani IT firms can establish a strong foothold here,” he remarked. Addressing the key challenges of operating in Australia, Mr. Rafay Kazi, Country Director for Australia & New Zealand, provided practical advice on understanding and navigating the Australian corporate culture. He identified key challenges for Pakistani IT professionals and businesses entering the market and shared actionable strategies to overcome them. Mr. Qamar Zaman, Consul General of Pakistan in Sydney, commended the active participation of stakeholders and the invaluable insights shared during the session. “This webinar



is a testament to the collaborative potential between Pakistan and Australia in the tech domain. We look forward to facilitating more such initiatives,” he said. This event reaffirmed the commitment of the High Commission, PSEB, and the Consulate General to facilitating dialogue, fostering partnerships, and creating opportunities for Pakistan’s IT sector in the Australian tech sector. The event was broadcasted live on the Facebook account of the High Commission and Consulate General.

# NADRA participates in TRUSTECH 2024 exhibition, Paris Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad appreciates NADRA services



**Covert Report**

Paris: Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar, Chairman National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) is representing Pakistan at the TRUSTECH 2024 exhibition that opened in Paris today and will continue till December 5, 2024. Ambassador of Pakistan to France Asim Iftikhar Ahmad visited NADRA’s pavilion at TRUSTECH and interacted with the Chairman and delegation. Chairman NADRA briefed the various technological innovations being undertaken by the organization - all aimed towards greater technological self-reliance, operational efficiency, improved service and maximum coverage. On display at the Pakistan pavilion were indigenous biometric and identity documents applications processing devices including Self Service Kiosk, All-In-One Enrollment Kits, Handheld Tablets for Authentication and IRIS Cameras. All these devices are reliable and provide efficient performance that is crucial for robust identity verification processes. NADRA since its establishment in 2000 has built Pakistan’s digital public infrastructure in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) inclusive of: ID documents (national identity card, overseas card; etc.), financial systems (mobile/branch-less banking, remittances, pension disbursement; etc.), e-governance

(online visa, taxation system, e-passport, legal inheritance; etc.), health & education (vaccination system, scholarship programs; etc.) and social protection (disaster relief programs, subsidy programs; etc.). The Ambassador appreciated the tremendous work and the broad range of services of NADRA noting that digital identity was empowering people and connecting them across the globe. Chairman NADRA and the Ambassador took a round of the exhibition and met with various exhibitors from different countries. TRUSTECH is the annual meeting place for professionals of the Cards and Digital Trust technologies industries, attracting visitors from across the globe. This year TRUSTECH is likely to

attract some 8000 participants, 200 exhibitors and sponsors and 30 international partners. The participation of Pakistan in this exhibition will provide NADRA with an opportunity to hold important meetings with key stakeholders and explore new avenues for growth in future. The officers of the Embassy were also present at the occasion.



# Kazakhstan, Pakistan synchronize key industries

**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: The Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin this week met with the Federal Minister of Commerce of Pakistan, Jam Kamal Khan and the Secretary of Ministry of Economic Affairs of Pakistan, Humair Karim. During the talks, the parties expressed satisfaction with the positive dynamics that have emerged in bilateral cooperation in various fields, primarily in the field of trade.

The issues of preparation for the upcoming meetings of the Kazakh-Pakistani Intergovernmental Joint Commission, Joint Working Groups and a Business forum scheduled for early 2025 in Pakistan were also discussed in detail. Special attention was paid to the development of regional interconnectivity, increasing cooperation in the transport and logistics sector, establishing direct banking communication channels

and air services, including air freight, and synchronizing the activities of customs, veterinary and phytosanitary departments of the two countries. Following the meetings, Jam Khan and Humair Karim expressed full support for the announced plans and intention to provide all possible assistance to strengthen and diversify cooperation across the entire spectrum of the Kazakh-Pakistani agenda.



# Umar Rehman Malik greets govt, people of UAE on National Day



We extend our warmest greetings and sincere congratulations to the leaders and people of the United Arab Emirates on the occasion of the UAE's 53rd National Day.

May this momentous day be a reminder of the remarkable progress and prosperity achieved by the nation, and may the UAE continue to thrive in unity, strength, and success for many years to come.

Happy UAE National Day!



**Abdullah Jan**

Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Umar Rehman Malik this week felicitated the government and people of the United Arab Emirates on their National Day. "Heartiest felicitations to the government and people of the @UAEmediaoffice on National Day," he posted on X. Umar Rehman Malik said the UAE's extraordinary progress reflects the visionary leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and his illustrious predecessors. "Their dedication to innovation, unity, and prosperity has transformed the nation into a global symbol of success. Pakistan deeply values its historic friendship with the UAE, strengthened by shared goals and the contributions of 1.6 million Pakistanis to its remarkable growth. Wishing the UAE and His Highness continued success, peace, and prosperity," he added. Every year United Arab Emirates National Day is marked on December 2. Dubbed the Spirit of the Union, the date marks the unification of all seven Emirates into one nation. From dazzling firework displays to elaborate parades and glittering ceremonies, UAE National Day is a time when locals and expatriates gather together to celebrate. It was on 2 December 1971 that the rulers of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Al-Ain, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain agreed to unite as one country. Under the guidance of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the nation's first president, the United Arab Emirates emerged. Later in February 1972, Ras Al Khaimah decided to join and become the seventh Emirate. Each year since, UAE National Day has been celebrated across the Gulf nation in a riot



of joyful festivities. From homes and streets to people and cars, the colours of the national flag are everywhere you turn in the run up to UAE National Day. Shades of red, white, black and green bedeck every aspect of Emirati life, while flags flutter from atop landmarks across the nation. Being a public holiday, UAE National Day brings families and friends together in a day of celebration and contemplation. In each Emirate the local corniche is always at the heart of the action.

Vibrant carnivals wind their way along the waterfront as colourful floats resplendent with images and effigies of Sheikh Zayed draw cheers. Often, beaches turn into outdoor galleries for the day with sand sculptures. To round up a day of celebrations, locals take to the streets to watch fireworks light up cities across the Emirates. Taking place annually in Abu Dhabi at Zayed Sports City Stadium, the official UAE National Day celebration is a theatrical extravaganza. A powerful show complete with aerobic displays, rousing performances and inspirational speeches; all imbued with a sense of national pride and courage. Underpinning the immersive event is the legacy of the UAE's founders, and their spirit that endures still today.

The Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates Islamabad-Pakistan H.E. Ibrahim Salem Alzaabi



# Bulgaria's full Schengen accession to bring in an annual €833mn

**NewsWire**

Sofia: Bulgaria would benefit to the tune of BGN1.63bn (€830mn) annually as a result of full accession in the Schengen border-free area, according to the Bulgarian Economic Research Institute (ERI). Bulgaria and Romania have been accepted into Schengen but only via sea and air, while the removal of their land borders was vetoed by Austria. However, Vienna agreed last month to lift its veto. A final

decision should be taken by the Council of the EU on December 12.

The two industries that would enjoy the biggest financial benefits are the producers and exporters of goods (BGN845mn annually) and cargo sector (BGN545mn). Another positive outcome of lifting the land borders would be the elimination of direct and potential losses for Bulgarian citizens when



crossing land borders with Romania and Greece to the amount of 242,437 days.

Citizens of Romania and Greece who visit Bulgaria will also benefit from joining the land Schengen with a total of 217,998 days saved. This would bring financial benefits estimated at BGN71mn for Bulgarian tourism. A fourth benefit, according to ERI, would be related to the

overall environmental effect of the extended time for crossing border controls by land. The institute has assessed that the volume of harmful CO2 emissions generated as a result of vehicles queueing at the borders of Bulgaria and Romania amounts to 46,162 tonnes per year. These carbon emissions are also expected to decrease significantly.

# Greece Unveils Nationwide Smart Traffic Cameras System



**NewsWire**

Athens: The smart traffic cameras aim to curb violations, reduce accidents, and boost overall road safety in Greece.

Greece has announced the rollout of an ambitious nationwide smart traffic camera system, in a bid to further enhance road safety and reduce traffic violations in a country notorious for its dangerous drivers and roads.

The plan was unveiled by key government officials, including the Ministers of Infrastructure and Transport, Citizen Protection, Digital Governance, and the Regional Governor of Attica, said ERT.

Christos Staikouras, Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, emphasized the priority of upgrading road safety to reduce accidents and improve the quality of life, saying "The digital management of violations, coupled with the activation of traffic cameras, will build a culture of compliance with road rules."

He highlighted the broader European vision of zero traffic fatalities by 2050, calling it challenging, but worth striving for. Greece's moves come on the heels of new road safety and license regulations passed by the European Parliament in the spring of 2024.

Citizen Protection Minister Michalis Chrysochoidis described the system as part of a broader strategy of "smart policing." Acknowledging that human oversight alone cannot address all traffic violations, he noted that technology, including traffic cameras and advanced applications, offers a scalable solution. "This is a crucial step toward reducing the loss of human

lives, particularly among the young," he added.

The first phase of the project will see 388 smart cameras installed at 100 strategic locations in Attica, Greece's most populous region. The cameras will operate around the clock, even in low-light conditions, focusing initially on detecting red-light violations. According to Regional Governor Nikos Hardalias, this will encourage compliance and prevent dangerous infractions.

Critics of the plan have voiced concerns that the cameras are a violation privacy. In an attempt to address privacy concerns, Hardalias said the system adheres to strict data protection protocols and will only record the rear of vehicles.

Additionally, all violation data will be transmitted via automated processes to a central server that will be managed by the Hellenic Police.



# Portugal records hottest-ever November

**Newsire**

Lisbon: Portugal has experienced its hottest-ever November, the country's meteorological agency said this week, the average air temperature 2.69C higher than the average for 1981-2010. The average temperature for November was 15.14C, the Portuguese Institute for Sea and Atmosphere (IPMA) said. "November has been the hottest month recorded" since the institute began collecting such data in 1931, a spokesman said. The institute is due to publish its complete figures for the month in the coming days. On Monday the meteorological agency in neighbouring Spain announced that it had recorded its warmest November since records began, coming on the heels of deadly floods in October. In Spain, November's average temperature was 12.4C, 0.5C higher than the previous record for November, in 1983. Both countries experienced their second hottest ever year in 2023. As global temperatures rise because of climate change, scientists have warned that heatwaves and other extreme weather events



like droughts and wildfires will become more frequent and intense.





# Embassy of Japan celebrates Japan Self-Defense Forces Day

**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: TAKANO Shuichi, Chargé d' Affaires of the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan, and Mrs. TAKANO Asako this week hosted a reception on Wednesday, December 4th, 2024, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) Day.

Defense Attaché, Colonel ABE Kazuo represented the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) at the Embassy. H.E. Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador-designate of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and Mrs. AKAMATSU Yumiko were also present at the occasion.

Air Marshal Muhammad Sarfraz, HI(M), Deputy Chief of Air Staff (Projects), Air Headquarters, was the chief guest on the occasion.

The reception was attended by the military officials as well as Ministers, parliamentarians, senior members of the Government of Pakistan, members of the diplomatic community and other dignitaries from the public and private sectors.

In his remarks, Mr. TAKANO stated, "I am pleased to see the progress in defense exchanges and cooperations between Japan and Pakistan" and "I believe that the deepening of the exchanges and cooperation between the JSDF and Pakistan Armed Forces will lead to strengthening the Japan-Pakistan relations." In August this year, the Pakistan Navy PNS YARMOOK together with Japan's Counter Piracy Enforcement Unit, JS SAMIDARE, conducted a goodwill exercise in the Gulf of Oman that contributed to deterring pirate activities and ensuring the safe navigation of merchant vessels navigating in the Gulf of Oman.



With regard to disaster relief cooperation, Mr. TAKANO mentioned that in the earthquake in 2005 and the floods in 2010 in Pakistan, the JSDF dispatched helicopter units to transport relief supplies and affected people as part of the Japan Disaster Relief Team. He paid gratitude to the Pakistani people residing in Japan who had extended immense support to the Japanese people during the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 by giving food and distributing relief supplies to the affected people.

Next year in February, the multilateral joint exercise "AMAN25" will be hosted by the Pakistani Navy. Japan is participating in AMAN25. We regard it as an important exercise, contributing to the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" in cooperation with like-minded navies.

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In his brief remarks, AKAMATSU stated that he feels very fortunate to have been appointed as the Ambassador to this wonderful country and expressed his desire of working together to further strengthen the ties between Japan and Pakistan. "Japan and Pakistan share a long-standing friendship, built on mutual respect and cooperation. Together, we can build a future that fosters mutual growth and understanding", said the Ambassador-designate. The JSDF Day was originally celebrated when the Japan Defense Agency (upgraded to the Ministry of Defense in 2007) and the JSDF were established on July 1st, 1954, but the date has been changed to November 1st as the JSDF are expected to respond to natural disasters such as frequent typhoons in summer season in Japan.

# US launches historic Police Community Partnership in Pakistan



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: In a landmark event in Islamabad this week, US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker unveiled the Pasban Awam Saath Saath Program, a transformative initiative aimed at fostering citizen-focused policing and empowering women in law enforcement across Pakistan.

The program, a collaboration between Pakistan's civilian security agencies, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the U.S. Embassy, underscores the U.S. commitment to gender equality and justice.

"Together, we are making history," said Baker, commending efforts to increase representation and strengthen community ties. Among the achievements highlighted: A 20% rise in women officers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and 25% in Balochistan.

Training for over 1,600 women and 70 transgender officers in Punjab, leading to the resolution of 1,500 cases for the transgender community.

The Public Complaint Redressal System in KPK addresses over 50,000 citizen complaints.

As Pakistan observes the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, Baker emphasized the broader impact of U.S.-funded initiatives, including anti-rape crisis cells and gender desks at police stations. These have led to a 60% increase in crimes reported by women and girls in KPK.

Recognizing trailblazing women officers like Senior Superintendent Riffat Bokhari and Superintendent Beenish Fatima, Baker stated, "Your courage moves us, your commitment inspires us, and your sacrifices humble us."

The United States pledged continued support for a secure and equitable future for all Pakistanis, reaffirming its solidarity with women leaders in law enforcement.



# EASA lifts ban on PIA for flights to Europe



H. E. Dr. Riina Ruth Kionka EU Ambassador to Pakistan

In 2020, after a PIA plane crash in Karachi killed nearly 100, followed by a fake pilot licence scandal, the EASA banned the airline from its most lucrative routes in Europe and Britain. The ban cost the airline an annual revenue of nearly Rs40 billion. Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Ali Pervaiz Malik informed the National Assembly in June that PIA flights to Europe were expected to be restored soon as the European Commission Air Safety Commission had delisted Pakistan from its concern list on May 14, describing it as a "positive development".

In March, Asif claimed that PIA flights to the UK would resume soon after clearance from EASA by mid-May. The minister's remarks were based on conversations with "relevant quarters".

In a post on X, he said: "It is a momentous day to announce that European Commission and EASA has lifted the suspension on PIA flights to Europe." He added that Third Country Operator authorisation was also issued to Airblue.

Asif said the development was



Celina Ali

Islamabad: Aviation Minister Khawaja Asif this week announced that the European Commission and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) have lifted the ban on Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) for flights to Europe.

made possible due to the aviation ministry's "complete focus" on strengthening the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) and ensuring safety oversight in line with the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). "Our government has taken significant measures to strengthen PCAA, including enactment of PCAA Act,



smooth segregation of regulator and service providers, appointment of professional leadership and training to build the capacity.

"I am grateful to European Commission and EASA for conducting a transparent process and our commitment to ensure aviation safety in Pakistan."



# Senior UK official visits Pakistan, strengthens partnerships in development, climate, security



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Melinda Bohannon, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's (FCDO) Director General for Humanitarian and Development, concluded her first official visit to Pakistan this week, marking a decade of impactful UK-funded initiatives and reinforcing ties in critical sectors. During her three-day visit, Bohannon celebrated 10 years of the UK's £155 million investment in Karandaaz, a programme that has supported over 1.1 million jobs—more than half of which were for women—and generated over PKR 230 billion in additional business income across Pakistan. She held discussions with Pakistan's Finance Minister on the country's IMF-supported economic reforms and ongoing UK technical assistance. Bohannon also acknowledged the significant milestone of launching Pakistan's first National Sex Offender Register, meeting the Anti-Rape Act Sub-Committee chaired by the Secretary of Law and Justice. Highlighting the UK's commitment to climate action, she opened the final session of the British High Commission's Chevening 'Climate Connects' debate series, focusing on progress made at COP29. The series



explored themes of green growth and urbanisation in Karachi and Lahore, respectively. In Haripur, Bohannon praised local teachers and health workers delivering education and family planning services, supported by UK-funded schools and mobile medical camps. She also visited a groundwater recharging project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where cost-effective, nature-based solutions are helping communities tackle climate challenges. To mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Bohannon met with young disabled women leaders advocating for inclusion and accessibility. Their efforts, supported by the British High Commission, include distributing disability cards, promoting accessible transportation, and lobbying for job quotas. Reflecting on her visit, Bohannon said, "The inspirational individuals I met, from teachers to entrepreneurs, are the heart of driving change in Pakistan. The UK remains committed to supporting Pakistan's development priorities."

# Ben Warrington celebrates appointment as Head of British High Commission's Lahore Office

**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Ben Warrington this week officially assumed his new role as Head of the British High Commission's Lahore office, bringing fresh energy and enthusiasm to the mission's operations in Punjab. In a heartfelt message shared on social media, Warrington expressed his excitement about joining the @UKinPakistan team and his deep admiration for Lahore's rich heritage and vibrant culture. "Thrilled to be part of the @UKinPakistan team as the Head of the British High Commission's Lahore Office! I've already fallen in love with this amazing city and country. Now I truly understand why people say, 'Jinnay Lahore nai wekhya o jammia nai' [One who hasn't seen Lahore hasn't truly lived]," he remarked. Warrington's appointment underscores the United Kingdom's unwavering commitment to fostering a robust and dynamic relationship with Pakistan, particularly in Punjab, the nation's most populous and economically significant province. The Lahore office serves as a critical hub for advancing diplomatic ties, promoting

bilateral trade, and deepening cultural connections between the two nations. For decades, the British High Commission's Lahore office has been at the forefront of initiatives that strengthen UK-Pakistan relations. From supporting trade partnerships to championing projects in education, healthcare, and climate resilience, the office has played a pivotal role in enhancing mutual cooperation. Warrington's leadership is expected to further these efforts, with a renewed focus on economic development, cultural exchange, and people-to-people connections. His arrival heralds a new chapter in the longstanding partnership between the UK and Pakistan, aiming to build on shared successes and explore new avenues of collaboration. Known as the cultural heart of Pakistan, Lahore has already captivated Warrington with its iconic architecture, bustling bazaars, and legendary culinary offerings. His reference to the popular saying, "Jinnay Lahore nai wekhya o jammia nai," reflects his deep appreciation for the city's unique character and its central role in

Pakistan's cultural identity. "I'm eager to explore more of this dynamic city and to work alongside its incredible people," Warrington added. As Warrington settles into his role, he plans to engage actively with a wide array of local stakeholders, including government officials, business leaders, and civil society organizations. His mission will focus on strengthening the British High Commission's objectives of fostering deeper ties and supporting initiatives that benefit both nations. Under Warrington's leadership, the Lahore office will continue to champion programs that drive sustainable growth, empower communities, and celebrate the deep bonds between the UK and Pakistan. Warrington's tenure promises an exciting period for UK-Pakistan relations. His dedication to enhancing cooperation and fostering goodwill will undoubtedly contribute to the continued success of the British High Commission's mission in Pakistan.



“It’s like if you want something so badly go out and grab, just keep on doing it.”

Edward Sheeran

# COVERT

TRUTH UNFOLD

December 15 - 21, 2024

“If everything was perfect you would never learn and you would never grow.” — Beyonce Giselle

# Giorgia Meloni praises Hungarian EU Presidency during meeting with PM Orbán



### Newswire

Rome: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni received Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Rome this week. The two leaders discussed several challenges facing the European Union. ‘Old friendship, new chapter, big plans,’ Orbán wrote in a post on X following the meeting. During their discussions, Meloni congratulated Orbán on Hungary’s successful EU Presidency,

highlighting the adoption of the Budapest Declaration on Competitiveness and the initiation of accession negotiations with Albania. She also commended the breakthrough achieved under Hungary’s presidency on the Schengen accession of Bulgaria and Romania. The two prime ministers reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening the Hungarian-Italian bilateral partnership. Regarding trade relations, they expressed satisfaction that the value of trade between the two nations reached

also looked ahead to the next Ukraine Recovery Conference, which Italy will host in July 2025. Viktor Orbán and Giorgia Meloni highlighted the excellent cooperation between their countries in the field of security and defence within NATO, particularly Italy’s participation in the Hungarian-led multinational battalion comprising 260 soldiers. They agreed to maintain their support for NATO and EU initiatives aimed at stabilizing the West-

ern Balkans and reaffirmed their commitment to the integration of the region’s countries into European structures. The discussions also addressed the issue of illegal migration. The two leaders emphasized the need for enhanced cooperation with countries of origin and transit, tackling the root causes of migration, and intensifying efforts to combat human trafficking and smuggling to prevent further loss of life.

They underscored the urgent need to update the legal framework to facilitate and expedite returns from the European Union, particularly by clarifying and strengthening the concept of a safe country of origin. The two leaders also agreed on the importance of exploring new approaches to preventing and combating illegal migration, in line with EU and international law, building on the framework established by the Italy-Albania agreement.

Before meeting with Meloni, Prime Minister Orbán was received by Pope Francis in Vatican City. Their discussions focused on promoting peace in Ukraine. During his visit, the Hungarian head of government also met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin and Under-Secretary for Relations with States Miroslaw Wachowski. The Holy See released a statement about the meetings, noting: ‘In a cordial meeting at the State Secretariat, the parties praised the solid and fruitful bilateral relations and expressed their appreciation for the commitment of the Catholic Church in Hungary to promote the development and well-being of society.’

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H.E. Marilina Armellini, Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan

# France’s Macron pledges to stay in office until end of term

### Covert Report

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron said this week he will stay on “until the end” of his five-year term, until May 2027, after a no-confidence vote in parliament toppled the government. Speaking to the nation in a televised address on Thursday, Macron said he would name a new prime minister in the “coming days”. “The mandate you have given me is for five years, and I will exercise it until the very end,” Macron asserted during the 10-minute speech. He pointed blame at his opponents on the far right for bringing down the government of Prime Minister Michel Barnier. He said they chose “not to do but to undo”. “They chose disorder,” he said, adding the far right and the far left had united in what he called “an anti-Republican front”, and stressed that “I won’t shoulder other people’s irresponsibility”. A total of 331 lawmakers in France’s 577-seat National Assembly voted to remove the government in the no-confidence vote on Wednesday, forcing Barnier to step down after three months in office – the shortest tenure of any prime minister in modern French history. A protester holds a placard reading “(French President) Macron, you stink, get out” during a rally in Marseille on December 5, 2024, as part of a day of action and strike in the public sector. - Civil servants in France are mobilizing on December 5, 2024 for a day of action and strikes called by public service unions to open up a social front in the midst of a political crisis, the day after Michel Barnier’s government fell on a motion of no-confidence. Barnier submitted his resignation in a meeting with Macron at the Elysee Palace.

