

Trump to sell 'gold card' US visas for \$5m **NewsWire**

Washington: US President Donald Trump unveiled plans this week to sell new "gold card" residency permits for a price of \$5 million each — and said Russian oligarchs may be eligible. Trump said sales of the new visa, a high-price version of the traditional green card, would bring in job creators **(Page-5)**

Pakistan-Italy BPC express satisfaction at positive trajectory of bilateral ties **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: The 6th round of Pakistan-Italy Bilateral Political Consultations convened in Rome this week expressed satisfaction at the positive trajectory of bilateral relations as well as cooperation in **(Page-10)**

China's public security ministry firmly opposes U.S. threat of additional tariff hike



Henan Daily
Beijing: China's Ministry of Public Security this week voiced firm opposition to the U.S. threat of imposing an additional 10 percent tariff on Chinese exports. A spokesperson made these remarks in response to a media inquiry on the United States' threatened tariff

hike, which would be in effect from March 4 and cited fentanyl issues as the cause. Once again, the United States is using the fentanyl issue as a pretext to impose tariffs on Chinese goods, the spokesperson said. China has some of the strictest and most thoroughly enforced anti-drug policies in the world, and it actively

engages in international cooperation on drug control. China has provided support to the United States in addressing the fentanyl issue out of humanitarian goodwill and has achieved significant results, according to the spokesperson. The spokesperson noted that the root cause of the U.S. fentanyl crisis lies within the country itself, adding that reducing domestic drug demand and strengthening law enforcement coop-

eration are the fundamental solutions. The U.S. side ignores objective facts and fails to address the core issue of drug demand while shifting blame onto other countries. This approach does not contribute to solving the problem and will severely impact China-U.S. cooperation on drug control, the spokesperson said. The Chinese side urges the U.S. side to correct its wrongful actions, preserve the hard-won progress in bilateral anti-drug cooperation, and return to the right path that benefits the people of both nations.

Pakistan and Denmark discuss multilateral cooperation, strengthening economic ties



Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan His Excellency Jakob Linnell

Lokke Rasmussen," the foreign office said in a social media post. "The two leaders expressed their resolve to strengthen the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and Denmark into a strong economic partnership."

"They explored ways to expedite collaboration in trade and investment through the promotion of Public-Private Partnerships," it continued. "Additionally, as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council for 2025 and 2026, they pledged to cooperate on multilateral platforms to advance mutual interests, peace, and sustainable development."

In August 2022, Pakistan and Denmark signed the Green Framework Engagement Agreement, aiming to enhance collaboration on climate change mitigation, renewable energy and sustainable development. While the volume of trade between the two countries remains modest, Pakistan has sought to intensify economic diplomacy with European nations in recent years. The relations between both sides have also faced challenges in the past. In 2005, anti-Islam caricatures published in a Danish newspaper led to public protests in Pakistan.

Recently, Denmark faced criticism from Muslim states for allowing public burnings of Islamic scripture. In December 2023, however, the Danish government enacted a law criminalizing the public desecration of religious texts, deescalating tensions and aiding in the normalization of diplomatic relations with Muslim-majority countries.?



Celina Ali

Islamabad: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar this week discussed cooperation on multilateral platforms with Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, with the foreign office in Islamabad describing their conversation as "productive."

Both Pakistan and Denmark began their two-year terms as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in January 2025, joining the 15-member body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. The Council comprises five permanent members — China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States — and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly. Non-permanent members play a crucial role in shaping the Council's agenda, participating in decision-making processes, and contributing to resolutions on global issues.?

"Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar had a productive phone conversation with Denmark's Foreign Minister, Lars

BISP, ADB discuss skill training, non-formal education for beneficiaries

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, held a meeting with Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Principal Social Protection Specialist, Ms Xin Long, at BISP Headquarters this week to explore avenues for providing employment opportunities through skill training and non-formal education to BISP beneficiaries.

The meeting aimed to strengthen cooperation in empowering deserving households through skill-based initiatives, particularly under the Benazir Hunarmand Programme. Both sides discussed the importance of enhancing maternal and child health, nutrition measures, and educational stipends for children of registered families. Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized that economic uplift of vulnerable communities requires equipping individuals with market-relevant skills and non-formal education aligned with international standards. She highlighted the need for internationally certified training to ensure that beneficiaries not only secure jobs in the local market but also gain access to employment opportunities abroad.



"There is a high global demand for skilled labour, and by providing quality certifications along with skill training, we can empower deserving individuals to stand on their own feet, break free from poverty, and contribute positively to the national economy," said Senator Rubina Khalid. Ms Xin Long praised BISP's efforts in launching skills development initiatives under the Benazir Hunarmand Programme and acknowledged the pivotal role of social protection in transforming lives. She assured that the ADB would continue supporting BISP in expanding skill training programmes, improving maternal and child health outcomes, and strengthening social safety nets for marginalized communities. The meeting reaffirmed both sides' commitment to inclusive economic empowerment and poverty alleviation through sustainable social protection initiatives.

First Pakistani astronaut to go into space with China's help

Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: With help from Iron Brother China, Pakistan is all set to send its first astronaut into space. This comes after a cooperation agreement was signed on Friday afternoon between the Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) and the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA). Under the agreement, two Pakistani astronauts will undergo training at the Astronaut Center of China. One will ultimately be selected as a scientific payload specialist for a future mission to Tiangong, China's space station. The selection process is expected

to conclude by 2026. Once aboard the Chinese Space Station (CSS), the Pakistani astronaut will conduct experiments in medical sciences, aerospace, physics, space radiation, ecology, and astronomy. The research aims to advance space technology and contribute to scientific developments with potential benefits for life on Earth. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed the agreement as a landmark moment in Pakistan's space programme, describing it as a cornerstone of the country's aspirations in human spaceflight. He highlighted Pakistan's steady progress in space science and technology, citing achievements in satellite launches and contributions to global scientific research. Minister for Planning & Development Ahsan Iqbal emphasized that the partner-

ship would drive technological innovation and human spaceflight capabilities. He noted that collaboration with China goes beyond astronaut training, laying the foundation for Pakistan's long-term space exploration ambitions. CMSA Director General Dr Lin Xiqiang welcomed Pakistan's participation, underscoring the deepening space cooperation between the two countries. SUPARCO Chairman Mohammad Yousuf Khan described the initiative as a major milestone and encouraged professionals and researchers to contribute to the programme. Briefing Pakistan's journey in space exploration, Chairman SUPARCO Mohammad Yousuf Khan said Pakistan has its three observation satellites in space, which are fully operational.



Chinese bubble tea maker sets Hong Kong IPO financing record

Henan Daily

Zhangzhou: Chinese beverage company Mixue Bingcheng's public offering subscription phase concluded on Wednesday, with the financing amount setting a new record for IPOs on the Hong Kong stock market. In its current IPO, Mixue Bingcheng, headquar-

tered in Zhengzhou, capital city of Central China's Henan province, plans to issue about 17.0599 million shares, with 1.706 million shares allocated to the Hong Kong public offering and 15.3539 million shares allotted to the international offering, at an offer price of HK\$202.5 (\$26.06) per share. Mixue Bingcheng noted that proceeds from its Hong Kong IPO will be used to focus on supply chain enhancement, such as boosting Chinese

production capacity, upgrading logistics agility, and establishing a global supply chain network to fuel overseas growth. As of Dec 31 last year, Mixue Bingcheng had a combined 46,479 stores at home and abroad -- with approximately 9 billion cups of beverages sold in 2024. As of Sept 30, 2024, the company had opened approximately 4,800 stores outside the Chinese mainland.



Chinese experts to introduce new crop varieties in Pakistan, especially cotton

Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: Chinese experts this week expressed keen interest in introducing and testing new varieties of sesame and dragon fruit in Pakistan, aiming to boost agricultural diversity and productivity. The interest was shown at a meeting between Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and Chinese agricultural experts and Hitech Private Limited to discuss enhanced agricultural cooperation between Pakistan and China, said an official statement. The discussions focused on improving cotton productivity, with a pilot project set to launch in Multan and Bahawalpur divisions, where China will fund seventy percent and Pakistan thirty percent of the initiative. The project includes the installation of AI-based weather stations, the development of advanced cotton seed varieties, and the use of drone technology for pest management. Rana Tanveer Hussain appreciated the Chinese experts' support and em-



phasized the importance of adopting modern technologies, including AI-driven agricultural solutions and bio-

technology, to enhance Pakistan's food security and crop yield. The meeting concluded with a com-

mitment to strengthen research partnerships and accelerate the implementation of joint agricultural pro-

jects, paving the way for a more resilient and productive farming sector in Pakistan.

Pakistan-Italy BPC express satisfaction at positive trajectory of bilateral ties



Celina Ali
Islamabad: The 6th round of Pakistan-Italy Bilateral Political Consultations convened in Rome this week expressed satisfaction at the positive tra-

jectory of bilateral relations as well as cooperation in the European Union context. Pakistan side was led by Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch and the Italian delegation was led by Secretary General Ricardo Guariglia,

Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release on Saturday. Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch while highlighting the growing trade relations between the two countries underscored the immense potential to further expand



cooperation in the areas of economy, development, agriculture, defence, higher education and people to people contacts. The Foreign Secretary and the Italian secretary general also positively assessed the Bilateral Consular Consultations held on 30th January in Islamabad this year. Both sides appreciated the similarity of views on a number of international and regional issues as well as close coordination in the UN. The foreign secretary shared a formal invitation letter from the Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar addressed to his Italian counterpart to hold the second ministerial review of Pakistan-Italy strategic engagement plan in Islamabad this year. It was agreed to convene the 7th session of the dialogue next year in Pakistan.

Why foreign companies are betting on long-term success in China

Ding Gang

The findings of a Wednesday-released report from the American Chamber of Commerce on the state of business in southern China reveals a fascinating trend: Despite ongoing geopolitical tensions and weakened confidence in the future of China-US relations, American companies are reinvesting in China. They are expanding operations in the world's second-largest economy and aiming for more outstanding market share.

But why is this happening? Is it just because of the size of the Chinese market? The answer is simple: While the market size is undoubtedly a factor, the real reason runs deeper.

Without the cooperation of Chinese manufacturing, some of the most iconic American industries and globally leading high-tech products would struggle to survive. Take a closer look at the rapid evolution of Chinese manufacturing in recent years, and you'll see that the US and Chinese industries have developed a unique relationship of "having complementary advantages and moving forward together," offering a promising future for both parties.

Let's start with a story that perfectly illustrates this point. US tech company Apple

is set to launch its highly anticipated iPhone 16e series on February 28, and China's BOE Technology Group will supply over 15 million flexible LTPS OLED displays for the lineup. This milestone marks a significant breakthrough for the Chinese company, solidifying its position as a major player in the high-end OLED display market. BOE has not only caught up with traditional giants like Samsung Display and LG Display, but in some areas, it has even surpassed them.

However, this success didn't come without challenges. Back in 2021, BOE attempted to supply Apple with OLED screens, but only secured a small batch order due to issues with production stability and yield rates.

Nonetheless, over the years, through sheer determination and relentless effort, the Chinese display panel manufacturer finally met Apple's demanding standards and, in the process, significantly improved its own technological capabilities.

This story demonstrates why for-

foreign companies can't simply walk away from China: China is the only place where cutting-edge technological requirements can be broken down into scalable manufacturing processes.

For decades, the prevailing narrative was that foreign companies couldn't leave China because of its massive market. However, the Apple-BOE story offers a new perspective: China is not just a market for foreign companies; it is their "technological survival partner." China's supply chain ecosystem covers every step of the production process, from raw material procurement to semi-finished goods processing to precision mold manufacturing. Most importantly, these processes are constantly being upgraded and integrated.

What sets Chinese manufacturers apart is their ability to "follow orders" and their capacity to drive independent innovation through partnerships with foreign companies. Chinese manufacturers can quickly adjust their processes and respond to shifts in market demand or upgrades. Their adaptability and commitment to innovation make them reliable partners for foreign companies and this partnership can-



not be easily severed by policy or replaced by a single alternative market.

Washington has called for companies to "decouple" from China, but business leaders understand that leaving China entails more than just losing access to its market. It also means sacrificing supply chain efficiency and technological partnerships - losses that can't simply be offset by "adjusting operations."

Companies like Apple and Tesla choose China not merely for short-term convenience, but because it fosters global industrial specializa-

tion. This is not something that can be replaced by policy or replicated elsewhere.

As China continues its push toward manufacturing upgrades, this relationship will become more substantial and inseparable. For American companies, staying in China is not just a choice - it's a necessity.

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

China's rising per capita disposable income has global implications

Global Times

The National Bureau of Statistics of China recently released data showing that in 2024, the nationwide per capita disposable income reached 41,314 yuan (\$5,672), exceeding 40,000 yuan for the first time - nearly double the 21,996 yuan recorded in 2015.

This milestone not only marks a significant improvement in the living standards of Chinese residents but also reflects the strong resilience and vitality of China's economy amid a complex and volatile international environment.

The combination of GDP growth and an optimized distribution system allows residents to share more in the fruits of economic development. Simply put, rising incomes represent not just a numerical leap but a reflection of ordinary people's journey from "having enough to eat" to "eating well." This also signals China's contribution to global economic development.

The figure of 41,314 yuan may seem simple, but it embodies profound changes. A decade ago, China's nationwide per capita disposable income was around half this amount. Now, people are focusing more on higher-level needs such as health, education and cultural entertainment. This transformation is a microcosm of China's economic development and a direct reflection of the improved living standards of ordinary citizens.

"The overall improvement indicates that China's economic growth over the past few years has

been highly effective. Not only has the overall economic scale expanded, but the sense of gain among all residents has also strengthened. The increase in nationwide per capita disposable income gives residents greater discretionary power to improve their living standards, which is significant for the stable development of society," said Zhou Mi, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Nowadays, more people are pursuing higher-quality goods and services. For instance, consumer demand in sectors such as new energy vehicles, smart homes and healthcare is growing rapidly, becoming a new engine of economic growth. Stable domestic demand has become a crucial safeguard for China's economy against external risks, especially amid rising global economic uncertainties.

From an international perspective, the growth of China's household income is not just a Chinese story but a global one. With a population of 1.4 billion, China is one of the world's largest consumer markets. As incomes rise, Chinese consumers' purchasing power continues to grow. This increase in purchasing power not only provides new growth momentum for the Chinese economy but also creates enormous market opportunities for global companies. US tech firms, European luxury brands, and Southeast Asian agricultural exporters, among others, all benefit from the purchasing power of Chinese consumers. The rise in Chinese residents' income is injecting new vitality into the global economy.

Moreover, China's experience can inspire other countries, demonstrating that with effort and sustainable economic development, a better life for people is achievable.

Of course, compared to developed countries, there is still a gap in the income levels of Chinese residents. What can China do in the future to narrow this gap? Zhou told the Global Times that, first, China must continue to maintain high-quality development, further stabilize economic growth and provide a solid foundation for increasing household income. Second, a more equitable distribution system needs to be established. By optimizing distribution mechanisms, more people will be able to enjoy the dividends of development, thereby reducing their concerns about potential risks and impacts. Third, efforts must continue to diversify economic and industrial development while strengthening the momentum for innovation. These measures will create more income sources for residents, broaden their development opportunities and provide more possibilities for achieving common prosperity.

Overall, the increase in China's household income is a key indicator of the country's high-quality development and a vivid representation of the improved living standards of the people. To sustain this growth, China must drive industrial upgrading, refine income distribution and promote regional development. The government, businesses and society must collaborate to ensure that economic gains benefit everyone, advancing common prosperity.



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High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri meets Pakistani students after Sydney tragedy

Covert Report

Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week met Pakistani students at the Pakistan Consulate Sydney.

His visit came after the tragic fire incident of Haider Ali offering prayers for his soul. “High Commissioner H.E. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri met Pakistani students at the Pak Consulate Sydney following the tragic fire incident of Mr Haider Ali offering prayers for his soul. He highlighted the importance of awareness, communication & preparedness assuring support to students,” the Pakistani High Commission in Australia posted on X. Haider Ali died after the e-bike he used to earn a living and build a better life in Australia exploded in the early hours last week. Fire crews rushed to the scene at 5am and contained

the fire to one bedroom, however, Ali was unable to escape.

Ali died while five others managed to escape the house fire in Guildford — in Western Sydney — which is believed to have been sparked by a lithium battery of an e-bike.

Now, his community is warning of the potential dangers of lithium batteries for all Australians.

“A very strong message to all Australians, please do not use any sort of substandard bikes which use lithium charging... please stay away from these charging things”, President of the Pakistan association of Australia Hamid Saroha said.

Bruce Mcpherson, a neighbour opposite the impacted house said neighbours saw him standing outside the home — used as a share house for students.

“I heard this almighty big bang, and I come out the back door in my bed attire, and there is just a great big plume of smoke pouring out the roof”, Mcpherson said.



Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad reaffirms Pakistan's resolute support to Palestinian people

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan this week called on the UN Security Council to take steps to end Israel's aggression in the occupied West Bank, emphasizing that the 15-member body ensure that the ceasefire in Gaza extends beyond the war-shattered enclave to all occupied Palestinian territories.

“Peace cannot take root as long as Israel's actions in the occupied West Bank continue with impunity,” Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, the alternative permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said after a briefing to the Council members by the top UN official for the Middle East Peace Process, Sigrid Kaag, on the situation in the restive region.

Over 50,000 Palestinians have been forcibly displaced, with military raids, settler violence, and illegal land annexations intensifying daily, he said. “These are not isolated incidents but part of a deliberate strategy to erase Palestinian identity from their own land— It is ethnic cleansing in real time,” the Pakistani envoy added.

Reaffirming Pakistan's resolute support to the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said that a sovereign, independent and contiguous State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, was not just a political necessity — it is a moral imperative.

“If we truly believe in the UN Charter principles, if we stand for justice, for the rule of law, for the fundamental right of all peoples to live in dignity — then we must act,” he said.

Earlier, Ms. Kaaq, the UN official in the region, urged Council members to ensure Gaza remains an integral part of a future Palestinian State, and that the enclave and the West Bank including East Jerusalem are unified politically, economically and administratively.

At the same time, she said there should be no long-term Israeli military presence in Gaza — although Israel's security concerns must be addressed.

In his remarks, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad urged the international community to “prioritize” the pursuit of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East in general and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in particular in a bid to move beyond this perpetual cycle of violence and destruction, asserting that despite the ceasefire, the situation remains precarious and the pause in violence should not be mistaken for peace.

In this regard, he demanded full and immediate implementation of the ceasefire that ensures a permanent



cessation of hostilities, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, unrestricted humanitarian access, and a comprehensive reconstruction plan for Gaza to be supported by the international community and led and owned by the Palestinians.

“The legal and historical status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif/al-Aqsa Mosque must be upheld,” the Pakistani envoy said.”

“It is clear that stability cannot be achieved through continued occupation and oppression.”

Ambassador Asim Ahmad stated that humanitarian relief cannot be allowed to be weaponized, demanding that UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian people, must be allowed to operate without obstruction, pointing out that Israel has a legal duty under the UN Charter to facilitate its work.

He also underscored the need for revival of a credible, irreversible political process that leads to establishment of a Palestinian state, saying that full UN membership for Palestine is not a symbolic gesture but is a legal and moral imperative.

The June Conference, to be co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, he said presents an important opportunity for peace that must be seized and fully supported. “But let us be clear — peace cannot and must not be

allowed to be dictated by the occupier; it must be grounded in justice, international law, and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.”

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said that the upcoming Arab League Summit in Cairo to be followed by the OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in Jeddah will provide crucial guidance on addressing the dire situation in Gaza and the broader Palestinian question.

Meanwhile, he urged the Security Council to continue to stand firmly against forced displacement and annexation, saying that just peace demands more than diplomatic declarations — it requires enforcement, accountability, a rejection of impunity, and pressure on the occupying power to comply with UN resolutions and international legitimacy.

The right of return for Palestinian refugees and the realization of a sovereign, independent, and contiguous Palestine are not mere aspirations — they are the foundation of any lasting peace in the region, he stated.

The ambassador drew the attention of the international community to the plight of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners languishing in Israeli custody, saying some have perished due to mistreatment and medical neglect. “These are war crimes,” he pointed out.

“Double standards on human rights only embolden injustice and perpetuate the conflict.”



Poland expresses interest to promote trade ties with Pakistan

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Poland this week expressed interest in promoting trade relations with Pakistan. During a visit to Federation of Paki-

stan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Polish Ambassador to Pakistan Maciej Piasarski said Pakistan and Poland have a history of political, diplomatic and economic relations.

Both the countries have a rich historical heritage. He said the business communities of Pakistan and Poland maintain close relations.



Third death anniversary of Senator Rehman Malik observed



Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: The third death anniversary of former interior minister and senior leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Senator Rehman Malik, was observed this week.

A seasoned statesman and retired senior bureaucrat, Malik played a significant role in Pakistan's political and security landscape.

Throughout his career, Malik held various key positions, most notably serving as Pakistan's Federal Interior Minister from 2008 to 2013. His tenure was marked by efforts to combat terrorism and strengthen national security.

In acknowledgment of his outstanding services, he was honored with prestigious civil awards, including the Sitara-e-Shujaat and Nishan-e-Imtiaz.

He earned his Master's degree in Statistics from the University of



Karachi in 1973 and was later awarded an honorary PhD from the same institution in 2012 in recognition of his contributions. Party leaders, colleagues, and supporters are paying tribute to his legacy, remembering his contributions to the nation's security and governance.



Germany's Dr Arretz boosts Pakistan's exports with training, investment

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan's trade future is receiving a vote of confidence from German trade leader Dr. Michael Arretz, Managing Director of the German Importers Association, who is demonstrating this through significant investments and initiatives.

Dr. Arretz is currently in Pakistan, actively training local textile manufacturers, investing in the "Green Pakistan" project, and working to increase imports from the country. His initiatives suggest a strong belief in Pakistan's role as a key player in the global supply chain, despite concerns over the GSP+ program. During his visit, Dr. Arretz emphasized Germany's commitment to strengthening trade relations with Pakistan, with a focus on sustainability, quality, and long-term economic collabora-

tion. He highlighted that while Germany has historically sourced products from China, India, and Bangladesh, Pakistan is emerging as an increasingly important hub for textiles, home goods, and football manufacturing. "Our approach is one of mutual growth. We are not just looking to import goods, but to build a partnership based on sustainability and innovation," Dr Arretz stated. "We see significant potential in Pakistan, and we want to help make the country an even more attractive partner for trade with Germany and the European Union." A key element of this collaboration is the "Green Pakistan" initiative, which seeks to promote sustainable manufacturing practices by encouraging energy and water efficiency. Dr Arretz praised Pakistani factories, such as the

world's largest football manufacturer, for incorporating renewable energy solutions like solar panels and energy-efficient technologies. "We want to bring more of these sustainable practices to Pakistani factories to help them reduce energy and water consumption and minimize CO2 emissions," he explained. "Germany looks for high-quality products that meet international sustainability standards, and we believe Pakistan can deliver." Germany's government is also playing a role in this collaboration, providing funding for initiatives such as the Responsible Business Help Desk Hub in Pakistan. This support reflects Germany's recognition of Pakistan's trade potential and its commitment to fostering economic growth through sustainable and responsible business practices. Despite these positive developments, Dr Arretz



acknowledged that Pakistan must enhance its investment climate to attract more foreign investors. He noted that while German companies have established factories in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and China, Pakistan has yet to see substantial German-owned industrial investments. He emphasized the need for a stable political and economic environment to facilitate long-term commitments. "To attract more investment, Pakistan needs to create a more stable environment," he said. "At this stage, the focus should be on increasing trade volume and making Pakistan more attractive to buyers from Germany and other European Union countries. Once that foundation is in place, we can look at long-term investments." Dr Arretz also underscored the importance of Pakistan's continued participation in the GSP+ trade program, which allows for tariff-free exports to the EU. While acknowledging the concerns over Pakistan's GSP+ status, he reassured that the German Importers Association remains committed

to maximizing the benefits of preferential trade agreements. "The GSP+ regime has proven successful for Pakistan, and we want to continue building on that success," he stated. "Germany and the European Union have a shared interest in making trade a win-win situation for both sides, and we want to contribute to that." Looking ahead, Dr Arretz expressed optimism about the future of trade between Germany and Pakistan, emphasizing the need for collaboration, quality improvements, and sustainable business practices. He envisions a long-term partnership that will benefit both economies through increased trade and responsible investment, according to the press release. "We are just at the beginning of what I believe will be a long and fruitful partnership," Dr Arretz concluded. "With collaboration, patience, and a shared vision for a greener, more sustainable future, we can achieve great things together."

Bulgaria successfully managing borders after full Schengen accession

NewsWire

Sofia: Bulgaria's Interior Minister, Daniel Mitov, said this week that the country's border with Türkiye is among the best-protected external European Union frontiers, based on the statistical data.

The Minister said that the Interior Ministry is managing quite well the increasing amounts of drugs being seized and human traffickers arrested along Bulgaria's Schengen borders, Schengen.News reports.

Mitov addressed the journalists about his department's performance since Bulgaria became a full member of the Schengen Zone on January 1, 2025.

Border Police Director, Anton Zlatanov, said the aim is to keep the good results registered up to this point and achieve even better results. According to him, the migratory pressure situation has marked an improvement since the beginning of this year, according to a report from the Bulgarian News Agency.

According to Zlatanov, the Bulgarian border police are continuing their checks at the borders with Schengen members Greece and Romania, in spite of the fact that routine border controls have been lifted.

He considered it important to keep migratory pressure from shifting from the Turkish-Bulgarian border to the Greek-Bulgarian border. Representative to Bulgaria Yordanka Chobanova said Bulgarian authorities have shown remarkable dedication to protecting the borders. The European Commission stands right behind Bulgaria as it wants the EU and Bulgaria to be safe and protected.

Bulgaria together with Romania became the newest Schengen Zone country on January 1, 2025, abolishing all land border controls.

The decision came following the approval from the European Union Ministers in order to allow Romania and Bulgaria to join Schengen from January 1, 2025.

EU member states have decided to remove checks on persons at the internal land borders with and between Bulgaria and Romania from 1 January 2025. Council of the European Union Bulgaria and Romania entered the Schengen Zone partially in March 2024, by air and sea, however, land border controls remained effective.

Among the conditions to become part of the EU Schengen Area for Bulgaria and Romania was to keep the number of irregular migrants low.

However, the data from Frontex revealed that in 2024 there was a decline of 38 per cent in irregular border crossings in EU countries.



Portuguese Author Teresa Nicolau captivated by Pakistan's cultural heritage



and its beauty." Her fondness for Pakistan didn't stop at its



cultural richness; she also expressed a great appreciation for the country's food. "The food here is full of life," Nicolau said. "The spices give the dishes such depth of flavor. It's something I will truly miss when I leave." Beyond her observations about Pakistan's landscapes, people, and cuisine, Nicolau sees the country as one brimming with untapped potential—both in its citizens and its cultural legacy. She hopes to contribute to fostering stronger cultural and literary connections between Portugal and Pakistan in the future.

Teresa Nicolau, born in Bombarral, Portugal in 1973, is a well-known figure in the Portuguese cultural scene. She currently serves as the Director of Culture at the Santa Casa da Misericórdia in Lisbon, where she oversees a variety of cultural projects.

Nicolau's career in journalism spans over two decades. She worked at RTP (Radio and Television of Portugal) from 1996 to 2023, where she held the position of Art and Culture Editor. She also created and hosted the popular program *As Horas Extraordinárias*, which aired on RTP3 from 2015 to 2023. Additionally, Nicolau contributed her voice to the daily column *As Horas Extraordinárias* on Antena 1 between 2021 and 2023. For her work in cultural journalism, she received the Pro-Author Award in 2017 and the Cultural Journalism Award in 2020, both from the Portuguese Society of Authors.

Her academic background is as remarkable as

her professional journey. Nicolau holds a degree in Communication Sciences from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She furthered her education by studying Film Directing at the New York Film Academy on a scholarship from the Luso-American Foundation for Development. Nicolau also pursued postgraduate studies in Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art at the University of Lisbon, as well as Comparative Studies and Cinema and Television at Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Currently, she is working toward a PhD in Media and Society at Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, supported by a Merit Scholarship.

Known for her profound understanding of culture and communication, Nicolau uses her platform to engage audiences on social, cultural, and political issues. She firmly believes in the power of literature and media to bridge divides and foster mutual understanding between cultures.

This visit to Pakistan is part of her ongoing efforts to engage in cultural exchanges and literary collaborations. Through her discussions in Islamabad and Lahore, Nicolau hopes to promote greater understanding between Portugal and Pakistan while celebrating the rich cultural heritage of both countries. She is especially eager to connect with the young people of Pakistan and explore the country's vibrant literary and cultural scenes.

Celina Ali Islamabad: Teresa Nicolau, the esteemed Portuguese author and journalist, has expressed her admiration for Pakistan, calling it a country vibrant with life, youthful energy, and a rich cultural heritage. In an interview at the residence of Portuguese Ambassador Frederico Silva, Nicolau shared her deep appreciation for Pakistan, highlighting the warmth of its people and the country's diverse cultural landscape. "Pakistan has won my heart," Nicolau remarked. She was particularly struck by the genuine hospitality shown to her by the Pakistani people. "The kindness and warmth of the people here are extraordinary. My

interactions with the locals have left a lasting impression," she said. Nicolau also emphasized Pakistan's potential as a tourist destination, noting its breathtaking landscapes, historical landmarks, and the wide variety of cultures across the nation. From the stunning mountains to the ancient ruins, she described Pakistan's natural beauty and historical significance as unparalleled.

Among her many observations, Nicolau was especially impressed by the country's youth. "The young people here are full of talent, passion, and creativity. They are the future, not only for Pakistan but for the world," she added, recognizing the immense potential within Pakistan's younger generation.

Nicolau's admiration for Pakistan was so strong that she eagerly anticipates returning. "I am certain I will be back," she said. "There is so much more to explore—its people, its culture,



Japan provides grant to support education development in Islamabad's Tarnol area



been actively working in the fields of education, health, and infrastructure for the past 15 years, will use the funds to construct a school building and install furniture in village Ramzania, Tarnol. The project will expand the school's capacity, providing a better learning environment for children from pre-

school to 5th grade, accommodating both boys and girls. The new school building is expected to be completed by February 2026. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi highlighted Japan's commitment to education as a driver of national prosperity, citing Japan's own experience of economic growth through investment in education.

He expressed hope that the project would contribute to improving the living standards of Pakistani children, who represent the country's future. The Government of Japan reaffirmed its commitment to supporting grassroots initiatives in Pakistan through flexible and timely grant assistance, emphasizing its role in strengthening human security and community development across the country.

Celina Ali Islamabad: The Government of Japan, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Program, this week approved a grant of USD 44,025 (approximately Rs12.2 million) to support a local non-governmental organization (NGO) in improving educational infrastructure in Tarnol, Islamabad. A grant contract was signed on Thursday between Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Akamatsu Shuichi, and a representative of the Community Services Program (CSP) at the Embassy of Japan. CSP, which has



Trump to sell 'gold card' US visas for \$5m



Newsire Washington: US President Donald Trump unveiled plans this week to sell new "gold card" residency permits for a price of \$5 million each — and said Russian oligarchs may be eligible. Trump said sales of the new visa, a high-price version of the traditional green card, would bring in job creators and could be used to reduce the US national deficit. "We're going to be selling a gold card. You have a green card, this is a gold card. We're going to be putting a price on that card of about \$5 million," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. The Republican president, who has made the deportation of millions of undocumented migrants a priority of his second term, said the new card would be a route to highly prized US citizenship. "A lot of people are going to want to be in this country, and they'll be able to work and provide jobs and build companies," Trump said. "It'll be people with money." Sales of the cards would start in about two weeks, Trump added. "We'll be able to sell maybe a million of these cards. We have it all worked out from a legal standpoint," Trump added. The billionaire

former real estate tycoon said that all applicants for the new gold cards would be carefully vetted. But asked if wealthy Russians would also be able to apply, Trump said it was a possibility. "Possibly, I know some Russian oligarchs that are very nice people. It's possible," Trump said. "They're not as wealthy as they used to be. I think they can. I think they can afford \$5 million." A number of Russian oligarchs have been hit by western sanctions since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine three years ago. Trump has caused shock in European capitals by suddenly opening negotiations with Russia to end the war, amid fears that he could be willing to sell Ukraine short. The US president told reporters that lifting sanctions on Russia was possible "at some point" but was not currently on the table. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, standing at Trump's side in the Oval Office, said of the gold cards that "we can use that money to reduce our deficit". Trump, who has branded a series of hotels and casinos in a long business career, even suggested the new cards could also be named after him. "Somebody said, 'Can we call it the Trump gold card?' I said, 'If it helps, use the name Trump,'" he said.

€20 m allocated to support migration governance: EU delegation envoy

Celina Ali

Islamabad: With growing concerns over irregular migration and human smuggling, experts at a high-level dialogue this week underscored the need for structured and legal migration channels so that the root cause of irregular migration might be addressed.

The dialogue on 'Safe Migration Pathways for Aspiring Pakistani Migrants' was organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute here.

Philipp Oliver Gross, the Deputy Head of European Union Delegation, reaffirming the EU's commitment to structured migration partnerships with Pakistan, said that migration, when managed properly, benefits both migrants and host countries.

Acknowledging the challenge of skills mismatch, he said while Europe has labour shortages, most Pakistani migrants do not meet the required skill levels.

He further said the EU's Talent Partnership Programme aims to align Pakistani workforce training with European market demands. He said the EU has allocated €20 million (2021-2027) to support vocational training, migration governance, and reintegration programmes.

Dr Arshad Mahmood, Federal Secretary for Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development, said that while migration is a key economic driver, policies must balance economic benefits with social impact.

He emphasized that Pakistan's remittances have reached \$35 billion, yet there is a significant untapped potential to increase foreign earnings through structured migration policies.

A comprehensive National Migration Policy is under review and will soon be presented to the federal cabinet for approval, he said, adding that Key initiatives include the EU-Pakistan Talent Partnership, which is creating structured pathways for skilled workers in IT, healthcare, and construction, alongside collaborations with Germany, Finland, and Estonia for vocational training programmes in hospitality, caregiving, and technical trades.

He also announced that Pakistan is developing a cloud-based digital platform to match workers with verified international employers and is offering uncollateralized migration loans through debit cards, enabling safer financial planning for legal migration.



Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, the Executive Director of SDPIs, emphasized the need for collaboration among policymakers, civil society, and international agencies to create a migration framework that prioritizes security, economic development, and human dignity. By establishing structured legal migration channels, promoting skill development, and enhancing governance, Pakistan can maximize the benefits of labour mobility while mitigating the risks of irregular migration. Muhammad Tayyab, Director-General, Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, provided a comprehensive overview of Pakistan's migration trends, highlighting the growing demand for skilled labour internationally. He acknowledged that nearly 58-59% of Pakistani migrants are unskilled, leading to a significant mismatch between aspirations and global job market needs. To address this, he stressed the need for a "Skill Emergency," urging closer collaboration between the government and training institutions such as NAVTTC and TEVTA to equip Pakistani workers with globally relevant skills. Under recent policy reforms,

he said, 600 licenses of overseas employment promoters (OEPs) have been canceled, with over 30 more suspended for violations, while over 500 complaints against illegal agents have been forwarded to the Federal Investigation Agency, resulting in PKR 150 million in recoveries.

Additionally, the Bureau is modernizing migration processes by digitizing recruitment channels to reduce reliance on intermediaries and ensure greater transparency in labor migration. The Bureau also highlighted that migration contributes \$32 billion annually to Pakistan's economy, with over 1 million Pakistanis migrating each year, he added.

Dr. Kashif Majeed Salik, Research Fellow at SDPI, highlighted the issue in the backdrop of recent migrant tragedies, including the January 2025 sinking near Mauritania following similar incidents in Greece and the Mediterranean in previous years.

He said despite migration to the Gulf countries remains largely regular, but costly, irregular migration to Europe persists due to lower financial barriers, but higher risks.

Dr. G.M. Arif, a migration and development expert, highlighted that many migrants willingly undertake dangerous journeys despite being aware of the risks. He elaborated upon the importance of enhancing oversight of migration intermediaries to prevent fraud and deception and suggested learning from successful migration models

such as the Philippines, where district-level engagement ensures better regulation.

Ms Raana Rahim, Senior Advisor at International Centre for Migration Policy Development, highlighted the critical role of awareness campaigns in ensuring safe migration decisions.

She highlighted the success of Migration Resource Centers (MRCs) in Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar, which actively educate potential migrants about legal pathways and the risks of irregular migration routes. She said that many irregular migrants are young males with low education levels, often influenced by family and peers in their search for a better lifestyle.

Sajjad Mustafa Bajwa, a former senior officer at the Federal Investigation Agency, explained how smugglers exploit legal loopholes and shift transit routes, particularly via Iran, Turkey, and Libya, as stricter border controls reduce direct access to Europe.

Human smugglers, he said, exploit religious visa loopholes where migrants are sent to Iran, Iraq, or Saudi Arabia as religious pilgrims before illegally transitioning to Europe. Pakistan's crackdown on human smuggling has intensified, leading to the suspension of some FIA officials for negligence. He emphasized the need for specialized immigration courts.



Over 100 Chevening and Commonwealth Scholars return to Pakistan after UK studies

High Commissioner Jane Marriott welcomes back scholars



Islamabad: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott this week welcomed back 43 Chevening and 71 Commonwealth Scholars, celebrating their studies in the UK. The 2023-24 cohort include scholars from every part of Pakistan, studying public policy, health sciences, climate change, and business at institutions

across the UK. . As they return, these scholars become part of a thriving network of over 3,500 alumni, spanning government, media, business, and civil society. Many Chevening and Commonwealth alumni have become leaders in their fields, shaping policy and driving social change. Notable alumni include the Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan, Yahya Afridi; the Honourable Supreme Court Judge, Justice Athar Minallah; Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Chief Commission-

er of Islamabad Capital Territory; Zulfiqar Younis, Additional Secretary for Climate Finance; Abia Akram, Founder of the National Forum of Women with Disabilities; and Maha Kamal, Co-Chair of Women in Energy. British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott, said: "Chevening and Commonwealth scholarships are among the UK's most prestigious opportunities for Pakistanis. These scholars return empowered by a world-class education, global networks, fresh ideas, and the ambition to create real impact in Pakistan. Studying at UK universities is no easy feat, and I offer them my high-



est congratulations." Oneir Raza, a scholar from Pakistan's education sector, said: "Chevening was a remarkable experience. Studying at the University of Cambridge allowed me to gain practical skills, learn from a diverse faculty, and connect with people from different cultures. Beyond academics, Chevening broadened my horizons and helped me build lifelong bonds. I am super grateful for this opportunity." The British High Commission has launched climate-focused Chevening alumni engagement initiatives, including debates on the impacts and solutions to climate change in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, and a climate mentorship scheme pairing 13 mentees with 8 Chevening alumni mentors. These programmes are helping to grow Pakistani climate leadership, sparking critical dialogue, convening experts to come together to find tangible solutions to Pakistan's climate challenges. Applications for Commonwealth Scholarships will next open in September 2025. To find out more information, visit the CSC website. Applications for Chevening scholarships will open in August 2025. Interested candidates can register for alerts by visiting www.chevening.org Commonwealth Scholarships?are highly competitive scholarships provided by the UK government to provide financial assistance to talented international students from across the Commonwealth nations who wish to pursue a post-graduate degree in the UK. In Pakistan, there are over 1,500 Commonwealth alumni to date. The scholarships have been available to Pakistani students since 1960. Chevening Scholarships are the UK government's global scholarships programme. Established in 1983, these scholarships support study at UK universities – mostly one-year Masters' degrees – for students with demonstrable potential to become future leaders, decision-makers and opinion formers. In Pakistan, there are over 2000 alumni to date.

“The road to success and the road to failure are almost exactly the same.” - Colin R. Davis

“It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation.” - Herman Melville

EU needs to do more to boost defense spending: Italy's Meloni

Newsire
Rome: A proposal to exclude defense spending from European Union budget rules is a first step, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said this week, insisting that more was needed to beef up Europe's contribution to NATO.



rulebook, as Europe grapples with US pressure to pay more for its own security. For all the latest headlines follow our Google News channel online or via the app.

Von der Leyen's initiative "is a first step. I think this first step should be followed by other solutions," Meloni said at a press conference in Rome with her Swedish counterpart Ulf Kristersson. The US demands are a problem for highly-indebted Italy. The country is projecting its defense spending will hit 1.61 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2027, the economy minister said in November, far below a current 2 percent NATO goal, which US President Donald Trump wants raised to 5 percent. Italy has called on the EU to use common debt to pay for higher defense spending — traditionally anathema to the



more fiscally conservative northern European EU members such as Germany and the Netherlands. Speaking about the three-year-old Russia-Ukraine war, which Trump has pledged to end quickly, Meloni reiterated that security guarantees had to be offered to Kyiv involving both

the US and Europe. "I believe that these security guarantees should be implemented in the context of the (NATO) Atlantic Alliance, because I think that this is the best framework for guaranteeing a peace that is neither fragile nor temporary," she said.

Pakistan, France agree to expand cooperation in agriculture sector

Celina Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan and France this week agreed to expand the cooperation in agriculture sector. This came at a meeting between Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain and French ambassador Nicolas Galey in Islamabad. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that agriculture



trade volume between Pakistan and France has reached 39 million dollars. Matters pertaining to increasing exports of rice, mangoes and other

agricultural commodities to France came under discussion. Possibilities of cooperation were also discussed in the production of hybrid seeds.

Meanwhile, the proposal of French model market for promotion of value-added milk and meat products in Pakistan also came under discussion.