

## MUSTREAD

**China Coast Guard patrols waters around Huangyan Dao**

**Beijing:** The China Coast Guard (CCG) conducted law enforcement patrols in the territorial waters of China's Huangyan Dao and surrounding areas on Saturday. In a statement, the CCG said it had intensified law enforcement patrols in the territorial waters of Huangyan Dao and surrounding areas since November. The CCG, in accordance with laws and regulations, carried out tracking, warning, intercepting and expelling operations against ships and aircraft that engaged in illegal infringing and harassing activities in this region.

**Yermak's resignation calls for audit of US aid to Ukraine: Luna**

**Washington:** The searches at the place of Andriy Yermak, former head of Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky's office, and his resignation point to the need for an audit of the financial aid provided by the United States to Kiev, US Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna said. "No, do you see why we should have been auditing the cash being sent to Ukraine? Corrupt," Luna wrote on X, commenting on the searches and Yermak's resignation. On Friday, Ukrainian lawmaker Yaroslav Zheleznyak said that the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office had been conducting searches at Yermak's office amid the corruption scandal.

**Tanker catches fire in Black Sea due to 'external impact'**

**Istanbul:** A tanker caught fire in the Black Sea off the coast of Turkey on Friday due to an "external impact," and crew evacuation is being prepared, Turkey's Directorate General of Maritime Affairs said. "In a report received, a fire broke out on the Kairos tanker, sailing empty toward Novorossiysk, 28 nautical miles off the Turkish coast, due to external impact. All 25 crew members are fine," the directorate said in a statement. The vessel, flying the flag of the Gambia, is currently located in the Black Sea.

**Pak: Civil society protests planned as 123 trees uprooted for Nasser Bagh development**

**Lahore:** The transplantation of 123 trees and dismantling of historic fountains and ponds at the British-era Nasser Bagh for an underground parking facility has sparked strong backlash from Lahore's civil society and residents. Several activists and students plan to stage a protest on December 2 against what they call an assault on the city's green heritage, as reported by Dawn. According to Dawn, the project, titled Provision of Underground Parking Facility at Nasser Bagh, Lahore, costing PKR 1.63 billion, is being executed by the Traffic Engineering and Transport Planning Agency (Tepa), a subsidiary of the Lahore Development Authority.

**Fourth suspect charged with direct involvement in Louvre burglary**

**Paris:** The fourth suspect accused of being directly involved in the robbery of the Louvre Museum in Paris has been charged, the BFMTV broadcaster reported on Friday, citing sources familiar with the matter. On Tuesday, the Paris Prosecutor's Office said that four more suspects had been detained in the Louvre burglary case. According to media reports, one of them could be the fourth member of the group of robbers who broke into the museum.

**PoJK drowns in filth as Pakistani authorities look away**

**Muzaffarabad:** The worsening sanitation crisis in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) has sparked widespread outrage among citizens, who accuse the Pakistani-backed administration of negligence and failure to maintain even basic cleanliness. Streets filled with uncollected garbage, blocked roads, and unbearable stench have turned daily life into a struggle for residents.

# India emerges stronger in Asia Power Index 2025

## Reclaims major power status



**Agencies, Sydney**

India has reaffirmed its standing as a major power in Asia, rising steadily in the Asia Power Index 2025 released by the Australian-based think tank Lowy Institute.

Ranked third among 27 countries, India regained the significant 40-point benchmark, achieving an overall score of 40.0 out of 100, a 0.9-point or 2% increase from the previous edition.

The Lowy Institute's latest report credits India's upward momentum to strong economic growth, expanding international partnerships, and rising cultural influence.

The Index, which evaluates national power across eight key measures, places India third in economic capability and future resources, reaffirming its position as one of Asia's most dynamic economies.

Notably, India has surpassed Japan to secure third place in economic capability, buoyed by higher inward investment and diversified

**Bangladesh Ex-PM Begum Khaleda Zia critically ill**

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was admitted to the capital's Evercare Hospital on November 23 with a lung infection. She is undergoing treatment at the hospital's Coronary Care Unit (CCU) under the supervision of local and foreign specialist doctors from the medical board, the local media reported.

The 80-year-old former Prime Minister, who is suffering from various ailments, is now under close observation by doctors.

Quoting doctors, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said that her physical condition is very critical.

Muhammad Yunus, the Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's interim government, expressed concern about the health condition of Khaleda Zia, the Chairperson of BNP.

The storm, which triggered widespread flooding and landslides, has left a trail of destruction across several districts.

The DMC confirmed that 123 deaths have been recorded so far, with 373,430 people affected nationwide.

More than 43,000 people have been displaced and are currently housed in 488 temporary shelters. Cyclone Ditwah exited Sri Lanka early Saturday, but severe weather continues to batter the island.

The DMC has issued a red-level alert, warning of persistent heavy rainfall, the threat of further flooding, and unstable slopes that could

trigger additional landslides over the next 24 hours.

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Friday directed the Tourism Authority to take all necessary steps to assist foreign tourists affected by the emergency.

**Cyclone Ditwah: Sri Lanka's death toll reaches 123**

**Colombo (UNI)**

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regional markets.

India's cultural influence has seen the greatest year-on-year gain, with a +2.8 increase, reflecting the growing global footprint of Indian cinema, technology, and digital diplomacy.

**India sets up emergency help desk in Colombo**

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**US halts Afghan visas, freezes asylum applications**

**Washington (UNI)**

The United States announced an "immediate halt" to the issuance of visas for individuals travelling on Afghan passports and paused all asylum applications, following a deadly shooting in Washington, D.C., that left one National Guard member dead and another critically injured.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said the freeze is intended to ensure that every applicant is vetted and screened to the maximum degree possible.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a post on X that the State Department has "IMMEDIATELY paused visa issuance for individuals traveling on Afghan passports," adding that the administration is

**Hong Kong mourns victims of blaze that killed 128 and counting**

**Agencies, Hong Kong**

Hong Kong on Saturday mourned the 128 people known to have died in a massive fire at a high-rise apartment complex, a toll that is likely to rise with 150 still missing days after the disaster.

Authorities have arrested 11 people in connection with the city's worst blaze in nearly 80 years as they investigate possible corruption and the use of unsafe materials during renovations at the Wang Fuk Court complex.

Rescue operations at the site in the district of Tai Po, near the border with mainland China, concluded on Friday, though police say they may find more bodies as they comb through the hazardous, burnt-out buildings in coming weeks.

Police revised down the number of people unaccounted for to 150 from 200 on Saturday, after confirming with some relatives that they had managed to reconnect with loved ones they initially reported as missing.

Hundreds of officers deployed to search for remains found no further bodies but rescued three cats and a

turtle, police officials told a press conference.

The fire started on Wednesday afternoon and rapidly engulfed seven of the eight 32-storey blocks at the complex, which were wrapped in bamboo scaffolding and green mesh and layered with foam insulation for the renovations.

Mainland China on Saturday ordered a nationwide investigation of fire risks at high-rise buildings, especially residential blocks undergoing renovation. Condolence books have been set up at 18 points around the former British colony for the public to pay their respects.

**India sets up emergency help desk in Colombo**

The High Commission of India in Sri Lanka has set up an Emergency Help Desk at Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in Colombo to support Indian nationals impacted by Cyclone Ditwah. The mission announced the arrangement in an update posted on X.

According to the High Commission, Indian citizens facing distress at any airport or location in Sri Lanka can contact the emergency number +94 773727832, which is also accessible via WhatsApp. The mission said it is already assisting stranded Indian passengers at BIA, providing essentials such as food and drinking water.

**France-Ukraine Rafale deal is only declaration of intent**

taking "all necessary steps to protect US national security and public safety."

The stringent action comes after authorities identified the suspect in Wednesday's ambush-style shooting as an Afghan national. In the aftermath of the attack, the Trump administration moved swiftly to tighten immigration policies.

Additionally, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said it has suspended all asylum decisions, citing the need to ensure enhanced screening and vetting procedures.

USCIS Director Joe Edlow said on X, "USCIS has halted all asylum decisions until we can ensure that every alien is vetted and screened to the maximum degree possible."

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Emphasizing the critical role of cyberspace governance within national governance, Xi underscored the need to strengthen the comprehensive governance framework and foster coordinated efforts under the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee.

He stressed the need to strengthen guidance of online platforms, independent media creators, and multi-channel internet entities, and urge them to shoulder social responsibilities and serve as disseminators of positive energy.

Xi highlighted the importance of making the internet a vital front for ideological guidance, moral cultivation, and cultural inheritance.

**Japanese take to streets showing anger with PM Takaichi's erroneous Taiwan remarks**

and China have cooled down. No matter how you look at it, it's all because of Takaichi's remarks."

Sakamaki, another protester, said that Japan-China relations are deteriorating, and Takaichi should retract her erroneous remarks to prevent the situation from worsening further.

At a Diet meeting on Nov. 7, Takaichi claimed that the Chinese mainland's "use of force on Taiwan" could constitute a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan and implied the possibility of armed intervention in the Taiwan Strait.

**Around 40 countries seek permanent food aid: FAO**

**Moscow:** Around 40 countries need constant external food assistance, Oleg Kobiakov, Director of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Liaison Office with Russia, told Sputnik in an interview.

"There are around 40 countries and regions in the world that constantly seek external food assistance," Kobiakov said.

Famine is expected to worsen in 13 countries, with FAO urging major donors, including Russia, to make voluntary contributions to FAO and its partners' emergency assistance programs, he said, adding that the list of countries with possible deteriorating situation includes Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Syria, Somalia, and Chad.

**Asim Munir takes over as Chief of Defence Forces**

**Islamabad (UNI)**

Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, has officially taken over as the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) alongside his existing role as Chief of Army Staff (COAS).

The post, created through the controversial 27th Amendment to the Pakistani Constitution, places Munir at the helm of the three services - the army, air force and navy - for a fixed five-year term.

This change will be reflected in all official documents, military references, and media reports, signifying the unified office of the CDF and COAS.

A significant structural change introduced by the 27th Amendment is the abolition of the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC)

Haydon has accompanied Albanese to several events over the years and was also with him during his election campaign in 2022 and in May this year, when his Labor party

won with a thumping majority.

Haydon wore a dress by Sydney designer "Romance was Born," while the prime minister wore a suit from MJ Bale.

around 40 countries seek permanent food aid: FAO

**Beijing (UNI)**

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, has emphasized the importance of improving long-term mechanisms for cyberspace governance.

Presiding over a group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on Friday, Xi called for sustained efforts to cultivate a clean, healthy and sound online environment.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the Party has accorded high priority to cyberspace governance, consistently reinforcing mainstream values, mainstream opinions and mainstream culture on the internet, and effectively combat-

ting unhealthy online content, Xi said, noting that the overall online environment has witnessed positive strides.

The 27th amendment, passed by both houses of parliament earlier this month, creates a powerful unified command, placing Munir at the apex of all three branches of the armed forces and granting him an additional five-year term.

The post gives him overarching authority not just in the army, but also over commanders in both the navy and the air force, bestows him control over the country's nuclear command structure, as well as lends him lifelong immunity from prosecution.

The prime minister will appoint the commander from among serving Pakistan Army generals for a three-year term, based on recommenda-

tions from the COAS/CDF.

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