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Detailed News On Page-08

Tarar calls for culture driven climate actions

Detailed News On Page-08

Tim Southee announced Test retirement

Detailed News On Page-06



COAS slams Hindutva ideology

Pakistan will not become part of any global conflict

Unrestricted freedom of speech contributing to degradation of moral values in societies, says Gen Munir at Margalla Dialogue 2024

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir has castigated India, saying due to its extremist "Hindutva ideology" minorities are not safe abroad especially in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada. "India's cruelty and brutality in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is also a continuation of Hindutva ideology and policy," the army chief said on Friday while addressing a special ceremony of Margalla Dialogue 2024, organised by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI). Gen Munir was apparently referring to India's global "extrajudicial" network of state-sponsored targeted killings. Besides Pakistan, Canada and the US have also accused Indian agents of being linked to one assassination and one attempt in their countries. Indian government is allegedly involved in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen and prominent campaigner for a sovereign Sikh state – known as Khalistan in northern India. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), in its 2024 annual report, highlighted how throughout 2024, individuals have been killed, beaten, and lynched by vigilante groups, religious leaders have been arbitrarily arrested, and homes and places of worship have been demolished. "It describes the use of misinformation and disinformation, including hate speech, by government officials to incite violent attacks against religious minorities and their places of worship," the report stated. In Jan 2024, former foreign secretary Syrus Qazi said Pakistan had "credible evidence" for Indian agents' link to the killings of two of its citizens on Pakistani soil, exposing the "sophisticated

Continued on Page 06

Explosion at Taliban's house in Mir Ali kills 7

The blast badly damaged several nearby homes and wounded 14 people

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: A car bomb detonated at the house of a Taliban militant in the Mir Ali area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Thursday, killing two children and five suspected militants. According to the police, the explosion took place before dawn when a man identified a local commander of the militants, Rasool Jan, was fitting a bomb in a car at his house. Police official Irfan Khan said other militants from the Pakistani Taliban group quickly arrived at the scene and removed the bodies of the insurgents who died. Authorities later found the bodies of two children in the rubble of the house, which collapsed after the explosion. The blast badly damaged several nearby homes and wounded 14 people, including women. Some of

Continued on Page 06

TRNC PROCLAMATION DAY



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkiye, Irfan Neziroglu, former Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, former Senator Talha Mehmood and TRNC representative in Islamabad, Dilsad Senol along with others cutting cake to celebrate the 41st anniversary of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. – DNA

PM Shehbaz felicitates Sri President

Says, Pakistan remained committed to further expanding its cordial relations

SAIFULAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday extended his heartfelt felicitations to President of Sri Lanka Anura Kumara Dissanayake on re-sounding victory of his party in the parliamentary elections. "This is a testament to the confidence and trust that the people of Sri Lanka have reposed in his vision and leadership," the prime minister wrote on his X account. He said Pakistan remained committed to further expanding its close and longstanding relations with Sri Lanka, which were based on mutual respect, shared values, and a long history of cooperation.

Hamas ready for ceasefire 'immediately'

NEWS DESK

LONDON: A Hamas official has claimed that Israel has not put forward any "serious proposals" for a ceasefire since the assassination of its leader Ismail Haniyeh, despite the group being ready for one "immediately." Dr. Basem Naim told during a British news channel program that the last "well-defined, brokered deal" was put on the table between the two warring sides on July 2. "It was discussed in all

Continued on Page 06

Citing 'unethical content'

Council of Islamic Ideology declares VPNs 'un-Islamic'

Naeemi went on to add that it was the government's "duty" to impose restrictions

KHAYAM ABABSI

ISLAMABAD: The Council of Islamic Ideology has declared virtual private networks (VPNs) usage "un-Islamic" (against Sharia). "The government has the authority to prevent access to immoral content and harmful material from an Islamic perspective," CII Chairman Allama Dr Raghieb Hussain Naeemi said in a statement on Friday. VPNs, or Virtual Private Networks, are commonly utilised worldwide to bypass restrictions and access blocked content. In Pakistan, users often employ VPNs to visit sites like X and others that are not accessible. In its statement, the PTA reported that it has blocked over 100,183 URLs that contained blasphemous material, as well

Continued on Page 06

Ban on VPN: Interior ministry writes to PTA

The ministry noted VPN misuse by terrorist groups

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Interior has directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to block unauthorised Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), citing national security concerns and alleged misuse

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Nawaz takes a dig at Imran

'Nothing but disrepute to country'

DNA

LONDON: Reacting to jailed PTI founder Imran Khan's "final protest" call, PML-N President Nawaz Sharif asked why people would take to the streets on his call when the former premier did nothing except "bringing disrepute to the country" during his nearly four years in power. "What Imran Khan has done during his tenure that people would take to the streets on his call. Tell me a single [development] project that he could proudly present as evidence of development during his tenure," the former premier said in an informal interaction with reporters in London.

'Will take our stolen mandate back'

Says party leadership would try its best to take maximum people to the streets

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Pakistani Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary Information Sheikh Waqas Akram said on Friday that the PTI would take back its mandate on Nov 24, which, he said was stolen on February 8. Speaking to media outside the Peshawar High Court (PHC), Akram said his party leadership would try its best to take maximum people to the streets, adding that everyone including lawyers, traders, students and members of civil society should join the PTI's protest against the government.

Last day of talks

IMF stresses need to implement tax targets

Pakistan reiterates commitment to strictly follow conditions of \$7bn bailout programme

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The five-day talks between Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which began on Nov 11, concluded today with Pakistan reiterating its commitment to strictly follow the conditions of the ongoing bailout programme. Sources said that the technical talks featured Pakistan's economic team headed by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and the IMF delegation led by mission chief Nathan Porter. The IMF team, the sources said, stressed the need to implement tax targets and the National Fiscal Pact. They added that the IMF delegation is set to visit Pakistan in February or March 2025 for the first economic assessment under the \$7 billion bailout package. During this visit, Pakistan will

Continued on Page 06

Cabinet committee endorses rejection of bid for PIA stake

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCOP) has approved the Privatisation Commission's recommendation to reject the Rs10 billion offer submitted by the sole bidder for a 60 per cent stake in Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL), it emerged on Friday. On Wednesday, the Privatisation Commission's board rejected the sole bid submitted by Blue World City, a real-estate development company, and referred

Continued on Page 06

'Constitutional bench can also take suo motu notice'

SC can still take suo motu notice, only procedure has changed, says top court judge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In a fresh development, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar said that the Supreme Court's constitutional bench now has the power to take suo motu notices – an authority that once rested with the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP). During a hearing of an anti-terrorism case on Friday, Justice Mazhar told a counsel: "Mr advocate, only the procedure has changed after the [26th Constitutional] Amendment. The Supreme Court still retains the authority to take suo motu notice. The only difference now is that suo motu cases will proceed before a constitutional bench." The constitutional bench of the Supreme Court heard 16 cases pending for a long time in the apex court on Friday. Multiple cases were disposed of, hearings of a few

cases were adjourned by issuing notices, and several crucial remarks were made by the bench during the case hearings. The new bench, constituted under the 26th Constitutional Amendment, held its first-ever hearing of cases on Thursday, aiming to clear the large backlog and provide justice to petitioners. The Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan-led bench had to hear around 34 cases as per the cause list for November 14 and 15. Eighteen of these cases were scheduled for Thursday and the remaining 16 set for Friday (today). With Justice Khan in the lead, the constitutional bench includes Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan. Following the conclusion of


Continued on Page 06

CJP chairs key huddle for jail reforms


COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi on Friday chaired an important meeting to bring about jail reforms. The top judge also constituted a sub-committee that would visit the prisons across the Punjab. The meeting was also attended by Lahore High Court Chief Justice Aalia Neelum, Ahad Cheema and Khadija Shah. A sub-committee was also formed by the CJP to introduce jail reforms. Amna


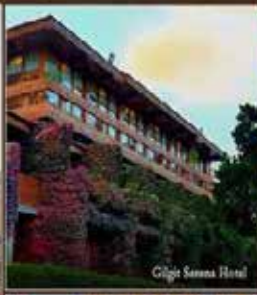




Continued on Page 06



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Next generation Pak learning Festival launched

Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the importance of organizing such festivals across all districts of Pakistan. He highlighted how these events provide students with opportunities to meet successful individuals and learn from their experiences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Friday inaugurated the Next Generation Pakistan Learning Festival. Besides the Education Minister, the inauguration ceremony was also attended by the Federal Minister of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Supreme Court Judge Justice Athar Minallah, and Education Secretary Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Federal Education Secretary Mohyuddin Wani hoped that 2 to 3 lakh children will participate in the three-day learning festival. Wani further said that such learning festivals will also be organized at the national level in collaboration with the provinces. The mega learning festival in the history of country, have multiple learning activities like knowledge sharing, story telling, documentaries, movies, books fair, books reviews, Ed-tech and skills activities, he mentioned. He said that thousands of students of federal public and private educational institutions and specially from the Gilgit-Baltistan and Karachi are also participating in the three-day academic fair organized by the Federal Ministry of Education.

Addressing the learning festival, Justice Athar Minallah said that the youth of today has a lot of potential. He said that the limit of the development is sky, adding such a festival increases the learning of children. During his address, Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the importance of organizing such festivals across all districts of Pakistan. He highlighted how these events provide students with opportunities to meet successful individuals and learn from their experiences. Ahsan Iqbal reflected on Pakistan's history, calling it a "precious nation built through immense sacrifices." He noted that skeptics at the time of Pakistan's creation doubted its survival. Despite such challenges, he said, the country has made significant achievements over the years. "We started with nothing, not even common office supplies but today, Pakistan has become the seventh nuclear power and produces advanced aircraft like the JF-17 Thunder," Iqbal stated. While highlighting the advancements in education, Iqbal mentioned that Pakistan has now over 250 universities. From Gilgit-Baltistan to Karachi, a robust fiber optic backbone connects the nation, symbolizing technological progress. Mr Iqbal urged the youth to adopt a positive mindset,

emphasizing that hatred and despair lead nowhere. "Dreams come true through hard work," he said, sharing his own journey of success through education rather than wealth or privilege. Recounting his career, Iqbal revealed that as a student, he had written in an admission essay that he aspired to serve Pakistan through public office. "I took my first oath in the National Assembly in 1993, proving that dreams backed by effort can indeed turn into reality." Ahsan Iqbal called for fostering peace, stability, and brotherhood to ensure national development. He criticized divisive rhetoric and stressed the importance of teamwork under the banner of "Team Pakistan." Referring to a past incident where a young man attacked him, Ahsan Iqbal said, "That boy's mind was poisoned with hatred by political leaders and social media." He urged the audience to reject the "virus of hatred and prejudice" and embrace tolerance for a brighter future. Dr Khalid Maqbool also visited the book stalls and observed other activities of the event. The ceremony concluded with a strong message of hope and determination, encouraging the youth to pursue their dreams and contribute to Pakistan's journey toward becoming one of the leading nations in Asia.



ISLAMABAD: Students reading books on a book stall during Pakistan Learning Festival at Islamabad Model College for Boys (ICB) G-6, in the Federal Capital.

Efforts afoot to address financial challenges in edu sector

ISLAMABAD: Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Professional Training, Hassan Saqlain, stated that the government was taking urgent steps to improve access to quality of education in the country. He highlighted initiatives such as the provision of free meals in educational institutions, health and sanitation programs, the establishment of Early Childhood Education classrooms, solar-powered schools, a pink bus service for female students, and the creation of IT and STEM labs equipped with robotics and artificial intelligence. Additionally, unused hostels are being converted into IT labs, and through public-private partnerships, education experts are being integrated into the educational system to enhance its capacity and accessibility. He was addressing the policy dialogue on "Investing in Education: Bridging Financial Gaps and Optimizing Resource Allocation," hosted by the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) in collaboration with the Pakistan Coalition for Education. The goal of the dialogue was to shed light on the financial challenges facing education and identify practical actions to ensure the provision of quality education for all, in alignment with Article 25-A of the Constitution and Sustainable Development Goal 4. At the start of the policy dialogue, Director General of Pakistan Institute of Education, Dr. Mohammad Shahid Soroya, emphasized PIE's commitment to finding collective solutions.

Glucometers given to children with Type 1 diabetes

PESHAWAR: To meaningfully observe 'World Diabetes Day', the Mercy Teaching Hospital Peshawar spearheaded an initiative aimed at supporting young patients living with Type 1 diabetes. The hospital distributed free glucometers here the other day, providing children and their families with the tools needed to monitor blood glucose levels independently — a crucial step in diabetes self-management and lifelong health. The event featured an educational session, shedding light on the unique challenges associated with Type 1 diabetes. Specialists in endocrinology and diabetes care provided insights into effective disease manage-

ment, the importance of regular monitoring, and lifestyle strategies to improve quality of life. Dr. Faheem Ullah, Assistant Prof. Endocrinology and Diabetes Department, MTH, opened the session with an overview of Type 1 diabetes, focusing on its prevalence and impact in Pakistan. He emphasized how critical lifestyle management can reduce health complications, helping patients to live healthier, longer lives despite their diagnosis. Ms. Iqra, a nutritionist, highlighted the role of nutrition in blood sugar management, offering practical guidance on meal planning and dietary adjustments to prevent complications and support

long-term health in patients with Type 1 diabetes. Dr. Saud Khalid presented on hypoglycemia, a serious concern in Type 1 diabetes. Concluding the session, Dr. Harris, who manages his own Type 1 diabetes, shared his inspiring story, illustrating the importance of resilience, self-discipline, and a supportive healthcare network. Mercy Teaching Hospital underscored its commitment to diabetes awareness and community health. The provision of free glucometers and the educational session have empowered children and their families with tools and knowledge to navigate their diabetes journey confidently.—APP

Rs. 4b released for Sehat Card program

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has released an additional Rs. 4 billion for the Sehat Card Program, Advisor Finance Muzammil Aslam announced on Friday. To date, Rs. 24 billion has been allocated under the program since Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur assumed office. Muzammil Aslam expressed pride in the public's satisfaction with the program, which offers free healthcare to residents. In a major policy move, Chief Minister Gandapur has approved the expansion of the Sehat Card Scheme by including more public and private hospitals in its panel. He directed the relevant authorities to convene a policy board meeting to finalize the inclusion of hospitals that meet the scheme's quality standards.—APP

78 new dengue cases surfaced in Punjab

LAHORE: The Punjab Health Department confirmed on Friday that 78 new cases of dengue fever were reported across the province in the last 24 hours. According to a report, Rawalpindi recorded the highest number of cases with 64, followed by Lahore with 5 and Attock with 2. Single cases were also reported in Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur, Mianwali, Sargodha, Sheikhupura, and Okara. Over the current week, 502 new cases have been recorded, pushing the total number.—APP

AJK President allocates Rs 569m for uplift projects

MIRPUR (AJK): Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has laid foundation stones of two different Rs 569 million construction projects at the state-run Women University in Bagh district. The projects included Rs 315 million administrative block and Rs 254 million state of the art student hostel building at the main varsity's campus. Addressing ceremony on this occasion, the AJK President said that primary objective in his life was to raise awareness about the Kashmir cause on global scale and to resolve the problems being confronted by the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir at local level. He added that visiting Bagh had always been a pleasant experience for him particularly

the Women's University, which, he said, was founded to provide higher education and training opportunities to the women of the liberated territory. "I am happy to see that the objectives for which this institution was established are being achieved fully", the president said, adding that it was heartening to see that challenges faced by the university in terms of basic infrastructure, acquiring land and attracting highly qualified faculty had now been overcome. He expressed the optimism that a state-of-the-art infrastructure would be available for the university very soon and the students after graduating from the institution would be able to serve the nation in a much better way. "I also appreciate the support of the Higher Education

Commission of Pakistan and the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in strengthening the only university established for women in Azad Kashmir", the president added. Barrister Chaudhry said that it was a pleasure to see that the first software technology park for women had been established in the Women University in collaboration with Pakistan Software Export Board. Appreciating girls' talent, the president said that the women of the liberated territory, who were endowed with so many natural talents, would serve the country better by benefiting from such facilities. "It is a matter of great satisfaction that the university has made its place in the global ranking in spite of numerous challenges in a very short period of time", he said.—APP

KP CM for implementation of public agenda to improve governance

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Friday stressed that the public agenda of the provincial government must be implemented in letter and spirit to improve governance and ensure efficient service delivery in the province. Presiding over a meeting to review implementation of 99-point of the government's Public Agenda, he emphasized that negligence would not be tolerated, and monitoring at the district level would be made more effective. A press release issued here said he directed divisional commissioners to hold at least one public meeting each month in their respective districts, and deputy commissioners to organize a minimum of two such meetings per month. He also instructed assistant commissioners to hold Katchery in their tehsils monthly and complete the mapping of all land records offices within 51 days. Earlier the CM was informed in a briefing on the key accomplishments that a total of 429 public meetings, known as "Khuli Kachery," have been conducted across the province. These include 27 Katchery for women, 17 for minorities, 14 for farmers, 18 for persons with disabilities, and 11 for traders. As part of a special cleanliness drive, 431 campaigns have been conducted in educational institutions. Additionally, 843 public toilets, 590 canals, 1066 roads, 287 recreational spots, and 298 bus stations have been cleaned. Waste has been cleared from 7267 vacant plots, and 1195 clogged drains have been reopened, while 1509 drains have been cleaned. Moreover, 439 sewer lines were cleaned, and 101 were repaired. During the campaign against illegal dumping sites, 368 such spots were cleared, and 226 designated sites for waste disposal were notified. A total of 4359 trash bins have been installed for public use. In efforts to enhance recreational areas, clean drinking water has been made available in 114 public parks, while benches have been installed in 169 parks. Over 4000 advertisement boards and banners have been removed from utility poles, and 4500 ads were cleared from walls. It said that 11697 water tanks have been cleaned, and inspections have been conducted at 108 bus stations, where 497 rest rooms and 100 waiting rooms have been cleaned. Furthermore, government-issued fare charts have been posted at 93 bus stations, and over 300 waste bins have been placed at 95 tourist destinations. The briefing also noted that 4682 manholes have been repaired, and over 6300 street lights have been fixed, with an additional 4500 street lights installed. The removal of 1188 illegal speed breakers and 293 unauthorized parking stands was also reported.—DNA

BD deputy High Commissioner meets SBCCI Mahbulul for boosting trade ties between Pak, BD

KARACHI: Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner SM Mahbulul Alam has stressed the need for enhancing trade and investment cooperation with Pakistan. He expressed these views during his visit to Nawabshah and meets the businesspersons and office bearers of the Shaheed Benazirabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SBCCI) recently. The President, Senior Vice President, Vice Presidents, Secretary and other office bearers of the SBCCI welcome the Bangladesh envoy. The Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh interacts with the business leaders of Shaheed Benazirabad division of Sindh province. He highlighted the poten-

tial trade and business with Bangladesh. He expressed his optimism that Bangladesh Missions in Pakistan have been striving to achieve USD one billion bilateral trade between the two countries in near future. He invited the potential business persons to explore new areas of export and import be-

tween the two brotherly countries. He also invited the potential entrepreneurs and investors from Pakistan to invest in Bangladesh as he elaborated the foreign investment friendly policies of Bangladesh. He mentioned that Bangladesh has been working to establish 100 special economic zones across

the country, where foreign investors from different counties have been investing. The Shaheed Benazirabad Chamber and the eminent business persons expressed their interest for wider trade and business relations with Bangladesh. Issues such as direct flight, direct shipping, visa simplifi-

cation, and exchange of business delegation between the two countries were discussed. Deputy High Commissioner invited business delegations from Pakistan to Bangladesh. He also emphasized wider interaction among the Chambers vis-à-vis business persons of the two countries. They also attached importance for more people-to-people contract between the two countries. The Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner in Karachi and the Shaheed Benazirabad Chambers of Commerce and Industry (SBCCI) expressed their sincerity and readiness to extend all possible supports for the promotion of trade and economic relationships between Bangladesh and Pakistan.—Agencies



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Briefs

Sufficient fertilizer stocks available for Rabi season

ISLAMABAD: The Fertilizer Review Committee (FRC) on Friday expressed complete satisfaction with the country's current fertilizer reserves, ensuring adequate supplies of both DAP and urea for the upcoming Rabi season. The committee met under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Industries, Production, and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain to assess the stock position of DAP and urea fertilizers for the Rabi season 2024-25, said a news release. The minister highlighted the increasing demand for DAP fertilizer in the country, with a 44% surge in DAP off take. This rise in demand is attributed to the Punjab government's Kisan Card initiative. The DAP off take estimate for October 2024 was 215,000 tonnes, which has increased by 44% to 309,000 tonnes. This increase is mainly due to the disbursement of Rs 75 billion by the government of Punjab as an interest-free loan through the Kisan Card (Rs 30,000 per acre for seeds, phosphorus, and nitrogen) for 500,000 farmers, each with up to 5 acres (Rs 150,000 per farmer). So far, farmers have drawn Rs 18 billion to procure fertilizer. This initiative by the Punjab government is expected to encourage the farming community to apply more DAP for balanced fertilizer use. The trend of increased DAP off-take in October is expected to continue through November and December 2024. Rana Tanveer assured that additional fertilizer stocks are available to meet farmers' needs, helping them achieve higher yields during the Rabi season.—APP

Baku to host Parliamentary Meeting as part of COP29

ISLAMABAD: Baku will host a Parliamentary Meeting as part of the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Co-organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the event will welcome 92 delegations from 66 countries and international organizations, totaling around 330 participants, including 167 parliamentarians, with 12 speakers and deputy speakers. According to AZERTAC news agency, the meeting will address topics such as the impacts of climate change, the role of parliaments in implementing ambitious climate commitments, development of climate financing structures, building resilience, equitable approaches to climate action, technological advancements for climate change mitigation, health and food security, and managing climate-related population displacement. A concluding document will be adopted at the end of the sessions. Several bilateral meetings are also planned during the event.—APP

Chairman CDA, lawmakers discuss Islamabad key issues

The Parliamentarians reaffirmed their commitment to support CDA for Islamabad's development, beautification, and overall betterment. They expressed their full cooperation for CDA's initiatives and offered their valuable suggestions to resolve city-wide challenges effectively

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Parliamentarians from Islamabad, comprising Tariq Fazal Chudhary, Raja Khurram Shahzad Nawaz, and Mr. Anjum Aqeel Khan, met with Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, to address pressing issues affecting the city. The meeting was attended by Members of CDA, DC ICT, and senior officers from relevant wings. Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa welcomed the parliamentarians and emphasized the importance of regular meetings to address issues faced by the residents of Islamabad. He stated that ownership of key initiatives and projects by the Parliamentarians is essential for the city's development and progress. The Parliamentarians reaffirmed their commitment to support CDA for Islamabad's development, beautification, and overall betterment. They expressed their full cooperation for CDA's initiatives and offered their valuable suggestions to resolve city-wide challenges effectively. During the meeting, progress on projects under the Rural Development Package was reviewed. Chairman CDA assured that financial hurdles affecting progress would be resolved urgently. The DG Works CDA was designated as the focal point for expediting work on the ongoing projects. The development of green belts along Islamabad Expressway was also discussed, including proposals for establishing play grounds through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The DG Environment was assigned to oversee issues related to upgradation of existing parks and new parks, green belts, and open spaces. The parliamentarians



were briefed on the digital parking system recently launched in Islamabad and plans for its expansion to other commercial centers and markazs. Chairman CDA stated that the revenue generated from digital parking will be spent on the uplift and upgradation of the local area improvements. The Parliamentarians expressed their full support for this initiative. The Chairman updated the delegation on efforts to address sewage issues, including the creation of a dedicated body, Islamabad Water.

It was discussed that the sewage problems in the border areas of Islamabad will be taken up with WASA Rawalpindi. The need of land for new graveyards were also discussed, with plans to identify suitable land. The parliamentarians urged on the need for expanding electric bus to new routes across Islamabad. The chairman stated that the existing routes will be reviewed and the new routes would be added as per the need of residents. The meeting also discussed the revision of the master

plan of Islamabad with emphasis on addressing zoning issues and improving building regulations. The meeting also discussed the issues pertaining to the affectees of Islamabad. The parliamentarians were briefed about the recent legal developments. The delegation was informed that a committee comprising legal and revenue officers has been formed to bring legal reforms without affecting the rights of affectees as per law. The encroachment issue at Lethrur was highlighted. The ICT

and CDA's Enforcement Wing instructed to conduct anti encroachment operations. The governance model for Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) was also discussed, focusing on the need for legal and financial reforms to improve efficiency and better service delivery. The meeting concluded with a decision to hold follow-up meetings fortnightly to monitor progress and ensure timely resolution of the issues highlighted in the meeting which are affecting Islamabad residents.

School students visits AIU

ISLAMABAD: A group of students of an Islamabad-based school, Saint Gabriel school, visited Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) on Friday. The students visited Print Production Unit, Radio and Television Studios, Central Library, Students' facilitation center and call center of the University. Incharge Printing Press, Dr. Sarmad Iqbal briefed the students regarding the processes of designing, pasting, plating, and printing. Dr. Sarmad Iqbal informed the students that this is the largest printing press among Asian universities, producing 2 million books each semester. He further elaborated that these machines were imported from Japan, Germany, the UK, and China. During their visit to the Call Center and facilitation center, the students were briefed on the services provided to students of the University across the country. They were informed that the call center handles 1,500 calls daily, providing the required information to students. Meanwhile, a larger number of students visit the facilitation center daily to resolve their issues under one roof. Later, the students toured the library and radio/TV studios. They showed great interest in the Iqbal Gallery within the library and asked numerous questions, which were satisfactorily answered by the senior cataloger, Muhammad Ishaq. The students' faces lit up with joy upon seeing the University's radio/TV studios. They expressed surprise, saying they had never imagined that an educational institution could have such advanced facilities. Sharing their impressions of the visit, the students remarked that they felt as if they were in a university of a developed country, given the exceptional educational facilities, administrative arrangements, and overall environment.—APP

President ICCI urges govt to remove barriers impeding business growth

Qureshi highlighted the mounting frustrations within the business community due to an increasingly restrictive regulatory environment

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi has called on the government to enact urgent, transformative measures to eliminate persistent obstacles hindering business growth. He warned that without such action, more businesses and industries may be forced to close, leading to rising unemployment and economic strain. In a statement released Friday, Qureshi highlighted the mounting frustrations within the business community due to an increasingly restrictive regulatory environment.

He pointed to a reluctance among certain gov-



ernment departments to adapt to pro-business policies, and to their continued reliance on outdated and counterproductive practices. He specifically

criticized the recent tax hike imposed by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) on commercial operators, which he described as unjustified and damaging to economic stability. Qureshi also lent support to recent comments by Dr. Gohar Ejaz, former Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce, who urged the government to address the growing tax shortfall—exceeding Rs. 180 billion in the fiscal year's first four months—by taxing sectors enjoying "abnormal profits" instead of overburdening an already struggling population. Ejaz argued that the government's current taxation approach unfair-

ly targets consumers and small businesses, further straining a population grappling with record inflation. Qureshi reiterated that with inflation surging nearly 60% in the past two and a half years, Pakistan's citizens are already facing substantial financial hardship. He emphasized the urgent need to broaden the tax base by targeting those not yet in the tax net, rather than imposing additional burdens on compliant taxpayers. He concluded by underscoring the importance of collaboration, trust, and efficiency in moving the country toward sustainable progress and prosperity.

Mobile learning festival in collaboration with Pak Railways

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday suggested launching a Mobile Learning Festival in collaboration with Pakistan Railways, providing students from every district an opportunity to listen to the struggle stories of successful personalities and set their future goals. "The Ministry of Education will be asked to take this initiative. It will help students explore their capabilities and set their future direction with complete determination," he said while addressing students at the inaugural ceremony of the Pakistan Learning Festival-2024, held at Islamabad College for Boys, G-6/3. He remarked that Muslims of the Indian subcontinent managed to secure Pakistan after great sacrifices, and it was the responsibility of the younger generation to make it a proud nation by 2047, when both Pakistan and India would celebrate their 100th year of independence. "Pakistan's youth should celebrate this milestone with pride, without any excuses for lagging behind in development," he emphasized. Citing an example, he said the country needed to give its full effort over the next 23 years, much like an athlete running a 1,200-meter race: maintaining a calculated pace for the first 1,000 meters, and then giving full energy during the final 200 meters to cross the finish line and clinch victory. He also mentioned Pakistan's development journey since its inception in 1947, when the newly-born state had nothing even common pins to bind papers in offices. Today, however, he said Pakistan manufactured the JF-17 Thunder aircraft, became the world's first Islamic nuclear power and seventh overall, and has built a digital backbone with fiber optic cables running from Gilgit-Baltistan to Karachi. Additionally, the country has increased its number of universities from 2-3 to around 250, he added. "Pakistan's situation is like a glass of water that is half-full and half-empty. We just need to fill it with hard work, greater unity, positive and constructive thinking, moving forward with a strong commitment to attain progress and prosperity among the community of nations," he said. Ahsan Iqbal said setting aside negativity, disappointment, hatred and intolerance was essential for achieving set goals and realizing big dreams. "There should be no virus of hatred and bias in the mind to move forward in life and achieve success," he remarked.—DNA

NUML launches book on 'Muhammad (SAW) in urdu version

ISLAMABAD: The Arabic Department of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) hosted a book launch on Friday for the Urdu version of "Muhammad (SAW): 11 Leadership Qualities that Changed the World." Authored by Nabeel Al Azmi (Late) and edited under the supervision of Col (R) Tahir Najeeb Raja, Regional Director of Mirpur at NUML, the book explores

the transformative leadership principles exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The ceremony featured Lieutenant General (Retired) Sher Afgan as the chief guest, addressing an audience of faculty members, students, and distinguished guests. The event also included remarks from Col (R) Tahir Najeeb Raja, Director General of NUML Brig Shahzad Munir, other esteemed guests, and Head

of the Arabic Department, Dr. Muhammad Abu Bakar Bhutta, who hosted the occasion. Col (R) Tahir Najeeb Raja shared insights into the book's compilation, emphasizing its role as a guide for students and leaders to incorporate values such as integrity, compassion, hard work, and honesty into their lives. He expressed gratitude to everyone involved in the book's development. Lt. Gen. (Retd) Sher Afgan

praised the efforts of the Author, Col (R) Tahir Najeeb Raja, and his team in bringing this significant work to fruition. "Leadership is an art that can be cultivated," he stated, encouraging attendees to emulate the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He stressed the importance of knowledge, integrity, and a positive attitude and emphasized unity and commitment to Pakistan's progress.

Pakistan's cities unite with diverse traditional cuisine at Lok Mela

With thousands of visitors attending the festival daily, Lok Mela has become a symbol of Pakistan's shared cultural heritage and traditions, said a youngsters' group. I am loving the variety of traditional dishes here and the flavors are amazing" a Islamabad resident added

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ongoing 10-day Lok Mela festival has brought together people from all walks of life and cities, showcasing Pakistan's vibrant cultural heritage and tantalizing traditional cuisine where visitors are flocking to indulge in mouth-watering delicacies like Balochi Sajji, Sarson ka Saag, Chapli Kabab, Sindhi Biryani and Chapal Kabab. A report aired by PTV News channel stated that Pakistan's cities have come together to celebrate the

country's rich culinary diversity at the 10-day Lok Mela festival. The festival, which kicked off in Islamabad, features a wide range of traditional cuisine from across Pakistan, showcasing the unique flavors and cooking techniques of each city. From the spicy karhai of Peshawar to the flavorful biryani of Karachi and from the savory sarson ka saag of Lahore to the mouthwatering Balochi Sajji, the festival offers a culinary journey through Pakistan's diverse cities, said a visitor while enjoying food. The report

highlighted that the festival aims to promote cultural unity and exchange among Pakistan's cities providing a platform for artisans, chefs, and musicians to showcase their talents. With thousands of visitors attending the festival daily, Lok Mela has become a symbol of Pakistan's shared cultural heritage and traditions, said a youngsters' group. I am loving the variety of traditional dishes here and the flavors are amazing" a Islamabad resident added. "I have never tasted such authentic Peshawari Kabab

outside of Peshawar" said a student visited with his school friends. "Lok Mela has become a yearly tradition for me. The food, music and crafts everything is just fantastic" Maria Ahmed, a woman came from Punjab said. "I am so glad to see our cultural heritage being celebrated through food. It is a true representation of Pakistan" Tahir Hussain a businessman mentioned. "The kebabs from Quetta are to die for I have had them every day since the festival started" Aliya Fatima a food blogger added.

"Lok Mela has become an iconic event, celebrating Pakistan's heritage and traditions. We will continue to support such initiatives" Mayor of Islamabad also added. "We have sold out of our famous Sindhi biryani every day since the festival started. The response has been overwhelming" a food stall owner said. "Lok Mela provides a platform for small businesses like ours to showcase our traditional cuisine. We are grateful for the opportunity," a homemade food seller said.

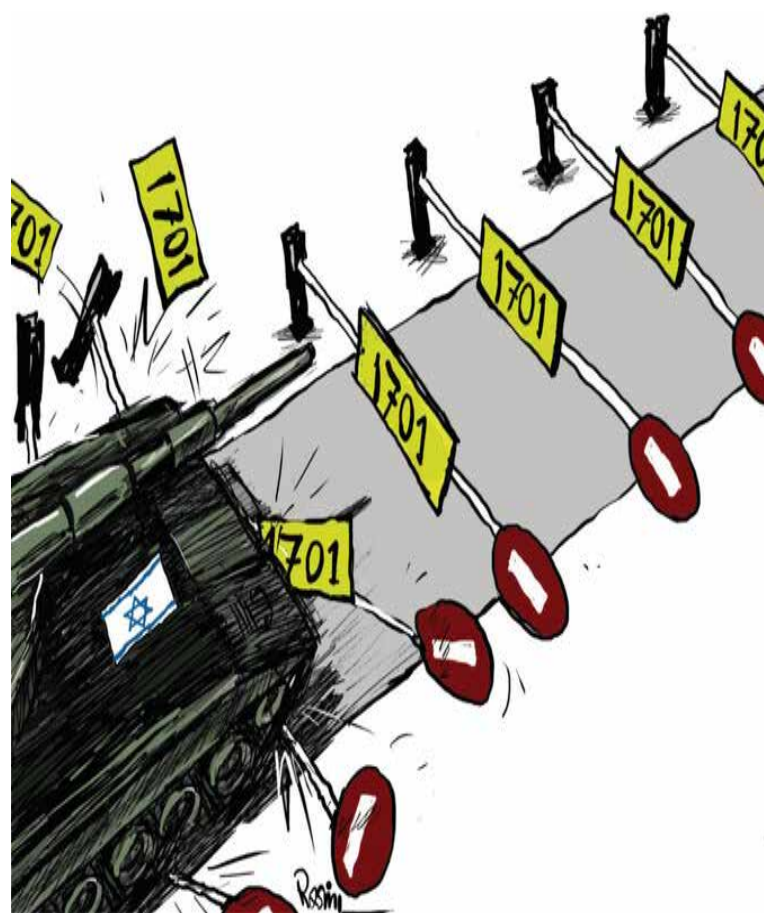
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'Trump-proofing'

Over the past week, four of the world's more important multilateral institutions – and hundreds of world leaders – have been working hard to foster international cooperation. Pity most of their work is likely to be in vain. Instead of focusing on the looming challenges – from slowing climate change and agreeing on finance for poor countries that are immediately threatened, to reforming global institutions and settling wars in Ukraine and the Middle East – leaders have been diverted by how to “Trump-proof” their economies. In Baku in Azerbaijan, thousands of leaders and officials at Cop29, the UN climate change conference, are wrestling with the challenge of slowing global warming and finding the trillions of dollars needed to protect poor, climate-vulnerable countries. But they must surely know they are spitting in the wind. The financing commitments they seek are unlikely to be worth the paper they are written on. Donald Trump, who has dismissed the climate crisis as a Chinese hoax, is far likelier to withdraw America again from the 2015 Paris Agreement and divert investment to boosting the US oil and gas industry than he is to sign multibillion-dollar cheques to help poor economies deal with climate loss and damage. And it is not just Trump who cannot be trusted. As Harvard professor Dani Rodrik notes: “The US and other major economies are woefully ill-disposed to provide the public goods the world economy really needs; and given the mood in their capitals these days, their disposition is unlikely to improve any time soon.” In Lima, Peru, US President Joe Biden meets Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Apec summit as the lamest of lame ducks. (Is there not deep irony that Barack Obama flew into the 2016 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit – also in Lima – as a lame duck days after Trump first won the presidential election?) As the other 20 Apec leaders look to commit to “creating the conditions necessary for trade to become more open, equitable, transparent and inclusive”, everyone in the room knows Biden's signature will mean nothing. The real conversations will surely be focused on Trump's tariff plans and how best to parry them. And most of the excitement was likely reserved for Xi's inauguration of a US\$1.3 billion mega port in Chancay, 60km northeast of Lima, and the fact that the Chinese leader arrived for a state visit with a big business delegation. While Trump beats his chest in Mar-a-Lago, other Apec members are quietly getting on with business – perhaps the most effective Trump-proofing strategy of all. Whether Trump plans to withdraw the United States from Apec – or whether the US remains relevant to Apec's mission of free and open trade and investment – will nevertheless be at the back of many nervous minds. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, is making final preparations to host next week's G20 summit. His agenda priorities include climate change and the global energy transition, reform of governance at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund – and a billionaires' tax. He, too, must surely know he is spitting in the wind. Given that Trump now has Elon Musk constantly at his elbow, billionaire supporters from Stephen Schwarzman to Jeff Yass, and Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg and Tim Cook rushing to congratulate him, da Silva must be in dreamland if he believes his billionaires' bill will see the light of day any time soon.

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Global climate governance

The 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) is taking place in Baku, Azerbaijan, at a time when global climate governance will likely enter an era of “uncertainty.” At the conference, countries are generally concerned about whether the US will assume the responsibility of a major power in global climate governance in the future, and COP29 is considered an important opportunity to promote actions to respond to the climate crisis. As of May this year, 151 countries have committed to carbon neutrality targets, with 120 of them enshrining their dedication through laws or policy documents. In the face of increasingly severe climate challenges, China is leading the way with its carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals, accelerating the comprehensive green transformation of its economy and society. The new European Commission is also committed to accelerating the EU's green transition. In fiscal year 2024, the World Bank Group delivered a record \$42.6 billion in climate finance. The UK has closed its last coal-fired power station, and Australia is pushing for net-zero emissions and energy transition. On the other hand, as the US accounts for about 13.5 percent of global carbon emissions in 2023, if it truly “unravels Biden's climate legacy,” by 2030, the country's greenhouse gas emissions will increase by more than 4 billion tons compared to 2005 levels. Ahead of COP29, the World Meteorological Organization released its latest report. The “State of the Climate 2024 Update for COP29” says concentrations of the three key greenhouse gases in the atmosphere – carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide – reached record high observed levels in 2023. And the year 2024 is on track to be the warmest year on record after an extended streak of exceptionally high monthly global mean temperatures. As climate plans of many countries fall far short of expected goals, COP29 hopes to address three focus priorities through its two main pillars – “enhancing ambition” and “enabling action”: making emergency emissions reductions, doing more to protect people from the ravages of the climate crisis, and tearing down the walls to climate finance. The aim is for parties to reach a fair and ambitious new climate financing target, improve Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, strengthen global financial institutions, and ensure private sector commitments to climate action. Financing discussions are a key focus at COP29. In addressing the climate crisis, the most important issue is not financing or technology, but the fact that the existing climate governance systems are currently unable to tackle the climate crisis effectively. Two months ago, the UN held the Summit of the Future and adopted the “Pact for the Future,” which covers new areas and addresses issues that have been unresolved for decades, including several points of consensus on sustainable development, climate and development financing. However, we still need to accelerate our efforts. At COP29, the “China Pavilion” received special attention from attendees and the media.

What the Gulf wants from the incoming Trump admin

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

At the economic level, the GCC shares Trump's interest in combating predatory economic practices but believes that this should be done by fixing the global trading system, which has pitted industrialized countries against developing countries. Because that system is dysfunctional, major trading nations have abandoned cooperation and engaged in a mutually destructive cycle of actions and retaliations. The first Trump administration imposed a long series of protectionist tariffs, including on GCC exports to the US. To go by Trump's election rhetoric, his new administration may initiate additional punishing tariffs against China, which could spark another cycle of retaliation

The speed with which Donald Trump is assembling his team indicates that he wants to hit the ground running come his inauguration on Jan. 20. Choosing Steve Witkoff, a close adviser and confidante, as special envoy to the Middle East could mean that the president plans to be hands-on when it comes to this region. During Trump's first term (2017-2021), the Gulf Cooperation Council, collectively and bilaterally through its member states, enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial relationship, ever since Trump broke with tradition by choosing Saudi Arabia for his first trip abroad and meeting with GCC, Arab and Muslim leaders in Riyadh in May 2017. Although at times there were differences of opinion between the two sides, especially on the Israel-Palestine conflict, their strategic partnership continued through Trump's last days in office. Most likely, that spirit of cooperation will continue and strengthen over the next four years. What the Gulf wants from Trump's second term can be summarized under three main headings: political, economic and cultural. Trump's motto of “ending all wars” is appealing and so is his prioritizing of economic objectives. We share an interest in combating illegal migration and predatory trading practices, although we may differ on the means. We would also like to join hands in combating hate and intolerance. At the political and strategic levels, the GCC wants to dial back raging conflicts and return to diplomacy and the pacific resolution of disputes, as the UN Charter calls for. There is little doubt that the international system is broken because of the intense disagreements between the permanent members of the UN Security Council, which render the organization unable to play its key role in maintaining peace and security around the world, as is evident in its inability to stop Israel's war on Gaza and Lebanon. On Gaza and the underlying Israel-Palestine conflict, the GCC would like to work more closely with the US on ending the conflict. The international community has spoken clearly about the parameters of the solution, based on the UN Charter and resolutions. There are only a hand-

ful of countries that still tolerate Israel's genocidal war in Gaza and its maximalist approach to the underlying conflict. Last month, the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, of which the US is a member, together with about 90 other countries, articulated the global consensus on these issues. This includes an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, reunifying it with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority and embarking on an irreversible path toward an independent and viable Palestinian state along the 1967 borders. The extraordinary summit held in Riyadh last week expressed the unified voice of the Arab and Islamic worlds on the conflict and called for accountability for the unspeakable atrocities committed by Israel in both Gaza and the West Bank. So, what is needed in the region is de-escalation and for the way to be prepared for sustainable solutions in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and elsewhere. Diplomacy should also be the starting point in dealing with Iran and its regional network of supporters and allies. At the economic level, the GCC shares Trump's interest in combating predatory economic practices but believes that this should be done by fixing the global trading system, which has pitted industrialized countries against developing countries. Because that system is dysfunctional, major trading nations have abandoned cooperation and engaged in a mutually destructive cycle of actions and retaliations. The first Trump administration imposed a long series of protectionist tariffs, including on GCC exports to the US. To go by Trump's election rhetoric, his new administration may initiate additional punishing tariffs against China, which could spark another cycle of retaliation. The best way to deal with trade disputes is through the World Trade Organization, by doubling efforts to reenergize the organization and strengthen its dispute resolution mechanism. Finally, we want the new White House to lead on cultural reconciliation and mutual understanding. Cultural estrangement has led to a rise in hate speech and hate crimes in many parts of the world. Some of the pernicious outgrowths of this intolerance

can be found in rising racist rhetoric, Islamophobia and antisemitism. The Trump administration would find ready partners in the GCC and the wider Arab and Islamic worlds to work together on toning down the rhetoric of cultural war and to reinforce cultural and religious tolerance. Fortunately, there exists an extensive framework for cooperation under the GCC-US Strategic Partnership, which includes engagement at the heads of state level, as well as at the ministerial and technical levels. There are more than 10 working groups covering many aspects of this partnership, including political and defense issues, cyber threats, maritime security, air defense and counterterrorism. There are also working groups dedicated to specific issues, such as Iran and Yemen. The GCC states and the US are active members of the US-led Combined Maritime Forces, a coalition of 46 nations that operates out of Bahrain through five task forces covering the Gulf, the Red Sea and areas in between. The long-standing GCC-US Trade and Investment Dialogue and the 2012 framework agreement on economic cooperation provide appropriate channels for coordinating trade policies. As the US and GCC countries are major producers of energy, they have overlapping interests in both conventional and renewable energies. They have an abiding imperative to coordinate on both types of energy. As most GCC currencies are pegged to the dollar, it is important to continue to coordinate closely on monetary policy, as decisions taken by the Fed affect GCC economies and have a direct impact on monetary policy. On culture, the framework of the GCC-US Strategic Partnership allows for engagement to promote mutual understanding, although this area was in the past dealt with bilaterally with member states. Rising cultural tensions in the US and elsewhere make it necessary to develop and grow cooperation at the regional level to deal with this phenomenon.

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg is the Gulf Cooperation Council assistant secretary-general for political affairs and negotiation.

China-West academic decoupling...

Zhuowen Li

The erosion of academic exchange between China and the West has a significant human impact. Chinese students, particularly those in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) fields, increasingly find themselves caught in a web of suspicion, facing lengthy security reviews and visa restrictions. Some are forced to choose between completing their studies and visiting family, as one-year academic visas make return trips risky. Others see their academic dreams derailed entirely, shying away from pursuing degrees in the US because of security screening and pivoting to Europe only

The recent decision by ETH Zurich, Switzerland's top-ranked university, to restrict admission of students from China and certain other nations marks a troubling milestone in the growing academic divide between China and the West. ETH Zurich recently announced stringent security screening measures which affect applicants from 23 countries, including China, to its master's and doctoral programmes. The policy calls for scrutiny not just of an applicant's nationality but their previous education, funding sources and intended field of study. In September, Georgia Institute of Technology in the US announced it was ending its long-standing collaboration with China's Tianjin University. It cited government security concerns after Tianjin University was added to the US Department of Commerce's Entity List in 2020, making the partnership “no longer tenable”. These moves highlight how deeply geopolitical tensions are reshaping global academic exchange. The deterioration of educational ties between China and Western countries foreshadows broader repercussions for scientific progress and international understanding. During the past decade, US-China educational ties have transformed dramatically to a point where the landscape is now one of reciprocal distrust and growing barriers. US students studying in China plummeted from a peak of nearly 25,000 in 2012 to a mere 700 last year, while Chinese students' enrolment in US universities hit a decade low in 2023. Now, this academic decoupling is spreading to Europe. ETH Zurich's restrictions are among the most extensive imposed by a Western university so far, but similar policies with regard to foreign students have emerged at universities in Germany and the Netherlands. The erosion of academic exchange between China and the West has a

significant human impact. Chinese students, particularly those in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) fields, increasingly find themselves caught in a web of suspicion, facing lengthy security reviews and visa restrictions. Some are forced to choose between completing their studies and visiting family, as one-year academic visas make return trips risky. Others see their academic dreams derailed entirely, shying away from pursuing degrees in the US because of security screening and pivoting to Europe only to find themselves in the crosshairs again. Moreover, these restrictive measures are reshaping the global flow of talent and knowledge. Western universities are likely to face a brain drain if such restrictions continue or are expanded. This would hurt the diversity of leading US and European institutions and ultimately weaken global scientific collaboration and innovation. More critically, the decline in scientific exchanges between China and the West weakens the world's collective ability to address challenges that require global collaboration, such as climate change and public health crises. In fields such as artificial intelligence safety and quantum computing, the isolation of research communities risks creating dangerous blind spots and duplicative efforts. These aren't just theoretical concerns. We have already seen the negative impact of reduced research collaboration on the productivity of ethnically Chinese scientists in the US. This academic decoupling could also affect future generations of policymakers and leaders. Without sustained people-to-people contact, it is hard to imagine future leaders navigating complex international relationships effectively. As exchange and cooperation dwindle, countries on both sides risk gradually losing their ability to understand each other. This could ultimately harm their own interests more than protect them

as such understanding remains crucial even in a competitive or adversarial relationship. Justifications for restrictions on academic exchange often cite national security considerations and the risk of illicit technology transfer. While there are legitimate security concerns that universities need to address, the current trend of imposing broad restrictions based on nationality rather than specific risk factors threatens to throw out the baby with the bathwater. A more nuanced approach is needed – one that can safeguard sensitive research while preserving the international character of academic institutions. It is crucial to strike a balance between legitimate security concerns and the fundamental values of open academic exchange. Universities have long been bastions of international cooperation and cross-cultural understanding. By erecting barriers to collaboration, we risk undermining the very foundation of scientific progress and global problem-solving. Observers in both China and the West have noted that the optimism of scientific exchange strengthening all nations feels like ancient history. We have entered an era of mutual suspicion and increasing isolation. However, the stakes could not be higher right now. How we approach academic cooperation today will determine not only the future of international education but also the prospects for scientific progress and mutual understanding in an increasingly polarised world. Addressing global challenges such as climate change and public health crises requires diverse perspectives and collaborative solutions. As we confront these unprecedented issues, dismantling the bridges of cooperation built over decades is a choice we cannot afford.

Zhuowen Li is a Washington-based researcher focused on Chinese political economy and international development.

Briefs

Gold prices up by Rs.1,300 to Rs.267,700 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,300 and was sold at Rs.267,700 on Friday against its sale at Rs. 266,400, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also went up by Rs.1,115 to Rs.229,510 from Rs. 228,395 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold increased to Rs.210,384 from Rs. 209,362. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3250 and Rs.2,786 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$13 to \$2,565 from \$2,552, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee gains 08 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Friday appreciated by 08 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.66 against the previous day's closing of Rs 277.74. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.40 and Rs 278.90 respectively. The price of Euro increased by 42 paise to close at Rs 293.49 against the last day's closing of Rs 293.07, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.78, whereas a decline of 89 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 351.54 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 352.43. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham decreased by 02 paise and closed at Rs 75.59 and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paise to close at Rs 73.93.

Musk met Iran's UN envoy to defuse tensions

NEW YORK: Elon Musk, tech billionaire and adviser to US President-elect Donald Trump, reportedly met with Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saied Iravani, on Monday, New York Times reported. The New York Times, citing two Iranian officials, reported that Musk and Iravani's hour-long meeting, held at a secret location in New York, centred on defusing tensions between Iran and the United States. Neither Musk nor Trump's transition team has commented on the reported meeting, and Iran's mission to the United Nations also declined to respond. Biden administration officials at the UN were not informed about the meeting and have not received independent confirmation of its occurrence, a US official told CNN. The timing of the reported meeting, just after Trump's electoral victory, has drawn the attention of experts who warn that Trump's return could revive the "maximum pressure" campaign. Analysts note that during Trump's first term, his administration imposed sanctions that significantly impacted Iran's economy. Under Trump, US policy included sanctions targeting Iran's oil exports, financial systems, and extensive support for militant groups across the Middle East. Since Trump left office, Iran has ramped up its uranium enrichment, raised oil exports, increased support to regional militias, and even carried out direct strikes on Israel on two occasions. With Trump's impending return to office, the trajectory of US-Iran relations remains uncertain, though some suggest Musk's involvement may hint at a diplomatic approach within the new administration. Moreover, Musk's meeting with Iravani has raised questions about his future influence on US foreign policy as a top Trump adviser. Last week, Musk participated in a call between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, where he was reportedly thanked by Zelensky for his support in providing Starlink communication services for Ukraine's war efforts.—APP

World hails Azerbaijan's COP29 excellent organization

According to AZERTAC news agency, in the plenary session, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan's Prime Minister, congratulated Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on the successful organization of the COP29 in Baku, calling him "Dear Brother"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Guests representing various countries, officials, media representatives and experts, as well as world leaders commended the successful organization of the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change by Azerbaijan, expressing their optimism that the COP29 negotiations would yield productive results. According to AZERTAC news agency, in the plenary session, Muhammad Shehbaz Sha-

rif, Pakistan's Prime Minister, congratulated Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on the successful organization of the COP29 in Baku, calling him "Dear Brother". Mostafa Madbouly, Prime Minister of the Arab Republic of Egypt, expressed his gratitude to Azerbaijan for the high-level organization of the COP29 and wished the country a successful conference. Giorgia Meloni, Prime Minister of Italy, said she was delighted to see Azerbaijan as the President of COP29, which is considered as part of the climate initiative for peace, expressing her gratitude to

Azerbaijan for the organization of COP29. Irakli Kobakhidze, Prime Minister of Georgia, also expressed his deep appreciation to the President of Azerbaijan for the excellent organization of the COP29. Judith Suminwa Tuluka, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thanked Azerbaijan and personally President Ilham Aliyev, for hosting in Baku such a momentous event for humanity. Maia Sandu, President of Moldova, expressed her deep gratitude to President Ilham Aliyev and the Government of Azerbaijan for hosting COP29 in Baku.

Addressing the COP29 Leaders' Summit, Siaoisi Sovoleni, Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, commended the President and people of Azerbaijan for the sincere hospitality and the opportunity to convey to the world community the challenges and position of small island countries of Oceania. Patricia Scotland, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, expressed her gratitude for the two memorandums signed with the organization represented by the government of Azerbaijan and Azercosmos. Dickon Mitchell,

Prime Minister of Grenada, Chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), expressed his confidence that COP29 would be remembered as a "Good COP". Mafalda Duarte, Executive Director of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), underlined that the GCF had undertaken significant steps to ensure access to funding, Ibrahim Cheikh Diong, Executive Director of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, emphasized the leadership of Azerbaijan in launching the Fund's activities, drawing attention to the new financial commitments undertaken by the countries.



Delegation of Spanish Senators called on Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization & Communication Abdul Aleem Khan.

Commerce minister pledges support for textiles sector

The representatives of APTMA also raised their concerns on withdrawal of sales tax exemption on local procurement for exporters under Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) of Federal Board of Revenue, introduced in the Finance Act 2024

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Friday pledged support for textiles and apparel industry amid mounting challenges. During a meeting with the delegation of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA), he reiterated the government's commitment to facilitate textiles and apparel sector to promote value-addition and product/market diversification and boost exports, said a press release issued here Friday. In a meeting with the APTMA representatives, led by its Chairman, Kamran Arshad, the minister emphasized the importance of the textiles and apparel industry vis-a-vis socio-economic development and growth. The delegation of APTMA included Aamir Fayyaz Sheikh, Chairperson Textile Council (Kohinoor Mills), Anees Khawaja (Mahmood Group), Rahim Nasir (Ayesha Group), Naveed Ahmad (Indus Dyeing), Naveed Gulzar (Crescent Mills), Asad Shafi (Cross Stitch), Ali Ahsan (Ashiana Cotton), Shahid Sattar (Executive Director, APTMA), and Raza Baqir (Secretary General, APTMA North). Kamran Arshad outlined the critical challenges facing the textiles and apparel sector and their implications, including potential disconnection of gas supplies to industrial captive power plants, high electricity prices, high taxes and liquidity crunch which may erode the industry's competitiveness and adversely impact exports. The representatives of APTMA also raised their concerns on withdrawal of sales tax exemption on local procurement for exporters under Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) of Federal Board of Revenue, introduced in the Finance Act 2024. They explained that, while imports of the same inputs remain tax-free, locally procured materials are now subject to 18 percent sales tax. Delays in refunding these taxes through the FASTER system have further strained exporters, pushing them toward imports and jeopardizing the domestic supply chain. Arshad urged the government to renegotiate its commitment to the International Monetary Fund and reconsider the decision of cutting off captive gas supply by end of January 2025 so that sector could be able to regain the lost grounds and enhance exports. Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan reaffirmed the government's support, recognizing the textiles and apparel sector a cornerstone of Pakistan's exports and economy. "The textiles and apparel industry is the established sector, and government will extend maximum support for its sustainability and growth," he stated. The minister expressed optimism about increasing textiles and apparel exports through collaborative efforts and supportive policies. He encouraged to focus on potential in existing markets, explore new markets and diversify more to new value-added finished products. "The Ministry of Commerce is committed to addressing these challenges. I will personally engage with the relevant authorities to find solutions," the minister assured. The meeting concluded with a renewed pledge to facilitate and uplift Pakistan's textiles and apparel industry, a vital driver of exports and employment generation for the masses.

Lebanon losses top \$5b: WB

BEIRUT: More than a year of clashes that recently escalated into war have cost Lebanon more than \$5 billion in economic losses, with actual structural damage amounting to billions more, the World Bank said on Thursday. Since September 23, Israel has ramped up its air invasion in Lebanon, later sending in ground troops following almost a year of limited, cross-border exchanges initiated by Hezbollah over the Gaza war. Lebanon's health ministry said at least three people were killed on Thursday in an Israeli attack on the main eastern city of Baalbek. Intensified strikes blamed on Israel have also hit Hezbollah ally Syria, where the defence ministry said 15 people were killed Thursday. In its Lebanon report, the World Bank provided estimates for damage between October 8, 2023 and October 27, 2024, saying "the conflict has caused \$5.1 billion in economic losses", with damage to physical structures amounting to "at least \$3.4 billion" on top of that.—APP

Paris sees historic low attendance for France vs Israel football match

PARIS: The UEFA Nations League football match between France and Israel at the Stade de France saw a historic low attendance, with only 16,611 spectators in the stands. The match was overshadowed by brief clashes in the crowd as Israel's national anthem was met with loud boos. In response, security was tightened, with around 4,000 police officers and 1,600 security personnel deployed around the stadium, including riot police stationed on-site. Despite the heavy security presence and the pre-match tensions, the game, which was attended by French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Michel Barnier, concluded without major incidents of violence. The low turnout came just days after pro-Palestinian protests in Amsterdam led to clashes, and the event saw only a small number of Israeli fans in attendance. Around 100 Israeli fans defied government advice against travel and were seated in a corner of the 80,000-capacity stadium. During the game, they held yellow balloons and chanted, "Free the Hostages," in a reference to Israelis held by Hamas in Gaza. Approximately two kilometres from the stadium, a pro-Palestinian protest outside the Front Populaire Métro station in St-Denis drew several hundred demonstrators. The group marched towards the stadium but was dispersed by riot police. Eric Coquerel, an MP from the left-wing France Unbowed party, criticised the government's approach to the event. "We are living in a schizophrenic moment," he said. "On the one hand, international institutions recognise the existence of a genocide in Gaza. On the other, we have a French government that reluctantly agrees to call for a ceasefire." Coquerel argued that Macron's attendance at the match sent a signal to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, allowing further military action in Gaza. "France is looking the other way," he said, questioning if Macron would attend a match between France and Russia under similar circumstances.—DNA

CDWP recommends 3 energy sector projects

The project was accorded in-principle approval for strengthening distribution network and for exploring financing by ADB by Economic Affairs Division (EAD)

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (PDSI) and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday chaired a meeting of the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) that okayed and recommended three major development projects in the energy sector worth Rs58.857 billion to ECNEC for final approval. The meeting was attended by Awais Manzur Sumra, Secretary and Additional Secretary Planning, Joint Chief Economist (Operations), members of the Planning Commission and representatives from the Ministry of Energy and the Power Division, a news release said. The committee considered

the first project namely "Power Distribution Strengthening Project (SEPCO)" worth Rs 9,014.360 million and recommended to ECNEC for further consideration. The project is proposed to be financed through Asian Development Bank (ADB). The project envisages conversion of 4 No 66 kV Grid Station into 132 kV Grid Station, installation of 50,000 No. of AMR meter on 3-phase meters having load more than 5 kW, installation of APMS on 1200 No. general duty DTs in SEPCO and bifurcation of 40 No. feeders having load above 300 Amps and high technical & administration loss. The forum forwarded the second project namely "Power Distribution Strengthening Project (LESCO)" worth Rs

27,613.00 million to ECNEC. The project is proposed to be financed through ADB (Rs. 20,317 million) & LESCO Own Resources (Rs. 7,296 million). Under the project, construction of 05 new 132 kv grid stations and 04 Aug/Extension of 132 kv grid stations will be carried-out, besides installation of 1600 APMS, 1328 km AB cable and 131901 Nos AMI/AMR meters in LESCO to improve electricity supply, operational efficiencies and modernize operations and management of the LESCO. The CDWP recommended the third project namely "Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Asset Performance Monitoring Systems (APMS) for 100kVA & 200kVA General Duty Distribution Transformers and

deployment of AMI Meters in MEPCO" worth Rs. 22,229.810 million to ECNEC for further consideration. The project is proposed to be financed through Asian Development Bank (ADB). The project envisages installation of 13,323 Nos APMS (Asset Performance Management System) and 150,000 Nos AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) meters in MEPCO jurisdiction. The APMS system will establish real time access to 100 and 200 KVA Distribution Transformers (DTs) for improved visibility, close monitoring and preventive actions. Apart from APMS, Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters will allow two-way communication between utilities and consumers, enabling remote meter reading, real-time data

monitoring, and proactive management of energy distribution. The Deputy Chairman Planning Commission and Minister PDSI Ahsan Iqbal has directed the Power Division to review the scope of the projects on techno-economic feasibility basis in-consultation with all concerned experts as well as stakeholders. They further directed that an updated version, incorporating these reviews, may be resubmitted for consideration by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC). The project was accorded in-principle approval for strengthening distribution network and for exploring financing by ADB by Economic Affairs Division (EAD).—Agencies

Cracks deepen in Canada's pro-immigration 'consensus'

TORONTO: From the ground floor of a low-income apartment building in Toronto, Sultana Jahangir runs an organization that helps South Asian women get established in Canada – a challenge she said is getting harder. Polling and migration experts tell a consistent story: broad support for immigration that prevailed for decades in Canada has cracked following a three-year immigrant-fueled population surge. Jahangir's South Asian Women's Rights Organization, which operates out of two apartments packed with desk chairs and tables, equips women with vocabulary for job interviews, basic computer training and other skills. A social worker born in Bangladesh who came to Toronto in 2005 via the United States, Jahangir said settling in Canada was never easy – but things have "definitely" gotten worse. "You're seeing more fierce and negative competition between immigrants and more negative feelings towards people who may be new versus people who have been here for a long time," she said. Daniel Bernhard, chief executive of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, said while Canadians are turning against immigration, many still view immigrants who are already here positively. It's an important distinction, he argued, but one he fears is fragile. "The consensus for the last 30 years was rock solid," Bernhard told AFP. "Too much immigration" In a 2019 Gallup poll that assessed support for immigration in 145 countries, Canada ranked first, with 94 percent of respondents describing migrants moving to the country as a good thing. Five years later, a September survey from the Environics Institute found that "for the first time in a quarter century, a clear majority of Canadians say there is too much immigration." "We're not at Brexit and 'Stop the boats' and 'Build the wall' but we're 10 years behind that," Bernhard said, referring to Britain and the United States. Canada may have so far avoided the inflammatory rhetoric and baseless claims about immigrants that partly drove Donald Trump's presidential campaign, but Bernhard argued "that tends to be the next step." Canada is "waking up to the fact that, actually, we are just like everybody else," he added, referring to global anti-migrant sentiment.—Agencies

Primary schools empty as smog persists in New Delhi

NEW DELHI: Residents in India's capital New Delhi again woke under a blanket of choking smog on Friday, a day after authorities closed primary schools and imposed measures aimed at alleviating the annual crisis. Delhi and the surrounding metropolitan area, home to more than 30 million people, consistently tops world rankings for air pollution in winter. The smog is blamed for thousands of premature deaths each year and is an annual source of misery for residents, with various piecemeal government initiatives failing to measurably address the problem. All primary schools were shut by government order on Thursday night with young pupils – particularly vulnerable to smog-related ailments due to their age – instead moving to online lessons. "I have an eight-year-old kid and he has been suffering from a cough the past couple of days," Delhi resident Satraj, who did not give his surname, said on the streets of the capital. "The government did the right thing by shutting down schools." Thursday's edict also banned construction work, ordered drivers of older diesel-powered vehicles to stay off the streets and directed water trucks to spray roads in a bid to clear dust particles from the air. Delhi's air quality nonetheless deteriorated to "hazardous" levels for the fourth consecutive day this week, according to monitoring firm IQAir. Levels of PM2.5 pollutants – dangerous cancer-causing microparticles that enter the bloodstream through the lungs.—APP

