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PM directs Punjab, NA speakers to address PPP concerns

Detailed News On Page-08

Khawaja Asif vows firm action against mob

Detailed News On Page-08



Kohli surpasses Don Bradman's record in Test

Detailed News On Page-06



Vows to arrest instigators

'Foreigners participating in PTI protest'

Are Pakistani citizens involved in PTI protests, or is this movement led by foreigners?: Mohsin Naqvi

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi claimed that foreign nationals, including Afghan citizens, are participating in protests organised by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), while rallies have only emerged from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In a press conference at D-Chowk, Naqvi revealed that "33 out of 100 individuals arrested in PTI's last protest were Afghans, and several other foreign nationals were detained in the past two days." He questioned PTI's intentions, asking, "Are Pakistani citizens involved in your protests, or is this a movement led by foreigners?" Naqvi added that, once the protests conclude, authorities would publicly present an assessment of the damages incurred, so that the public can make decisions. "PTI protests bring harm to the country and create considerable hardship for citizens," he said. He clarified that mobile services remain operational across Pakistan, though mobile data services have been temporarily suspended to manage the situation. "We're working to restore mobile data as soon as possible to relieve the public," Naqvi noted. The minister also highlighted communication with PTI's Barrister Gohar, reminding him of the foreign delegations currently visiting Pakistan. Naqvi said he wouldn't have doubted PTI's intentions had they chosen a date without overlapping with significant international events. "PTI's protest call always coincides with major global events or visits by foreign dignitaries," he remarked. Asserting the government's position, Naqvi stated, "The government is neither intimidated nor yielding. Anyone attempting to reach Islamabad or D-Chowk will be detained."

PTI convoys head to Islamabad amid arrests and clashes

NACTA has issued a security alert, warning of a potential terrorist threat during PTI protest in Islamabad

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is set to march towards Islamabad and hold a protest at D-Chowk today, following a call by party founder Imran Khan. Supporters of the party have begun gathering at the Peshawar Motorway as part of the planned protest. The party, led by former Prime Minister Imran Khan, has called on the public to join the march to "break the shackles of slavery." Imran Khan, in a statement, urged the masses to unite for the protest, calling it a movement for freedom and justice. In related developments, PTI's chief whip Aamir Dogar and party leader Zain Qureshi have been arrested by Punjab Police. According to Express News, both leaders were detained at the Qadirpurra Toll Plaza in Multan.

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Rawalpindi terror plot averted by CTD

Eliminates three Khawarij terrorists

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Three hardened terrorists associated with Fitna al Khawarij were killed during an intelligence-based operation conducted by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in the Chakri area of Rawalpindi. According to a CTD spokesperson, the team launched the operation based on credible intelligence about the presence of terrorists in the area. Upon arrival, the militants opened indiscriminate fire on the CTD personnel, triggering a heavy exchange of gunfire. The spokesperson revealed that three terrorists were killed during the encounter, reportedly by the firing of their own associates. However, two militants managed to escape, prompting the CTD to launch a search operation in the surrounding areas. The operation uncovered a large cache of weapons and explosives, including a suicide jacket, safety-fuse wire, rifles, an IED bomb, bullets, and other explosive material. Authorities believe the terrorists were planning to target sensitive locations in Rawalpindi. The CTD has cordoned off the entire Chakri area, and efforts are underway to identify the deceased militants while pursuing the two who fled.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi receiving High level Belarusian Delegation on their arrival in Islamabad. -DNA

As dozens killed in clashes

Warring tribes in Kurram agree on seven-day ceasefire

"Two parties agreed to return each other's hostages and bodies," says Barrister Saif after meeting tribal leaders

STAFF REPORT

PESHAWAR: The warring tribal groups in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram district have finally agreed to a seven-day ceasefire after days of clashes that left at least 30 dead and injured dozens, a KP government spokesperson said on Sunday. "The two parties have agreed to return each other's hostages and bodies," Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said in a statement after the delegation, under his chairmanship, met the tribal leaders in a bid to stop the clashes. He noted that the government delegation flew to Parachinar - Kurram's main city - on Saturday to meet leaders of both sides. The delegation met both warring parties today to try to broker a ceasefire deal and then move to resolve the matter. Armed groups have attacked settlements that are populated by members of rival groups. "Approximately 300 families have relocated to Hangu and Peshawar since this morning in search of safety," a senior official told AFP, adding that more families were preparing to leave the violence-hit district.

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Country hit hard by inflation and unemployment: JI

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Jamaat-e-Islami Chief Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman has said that Pakistan is surrounded by problems like inflation, unemployment and lack of education. Addressing a meeting in Karachi, Hafiz Naeem said 2 crore 62 lakh children are out of schools. It has become difficult for poor people to send their children to universities for higher education. He said 98 percent of people have no opportunity for education. JI chief tragedy is that the poor have no representative voice. 90 to 95 percent of the parliament are billionaires. JI chief claimed that a few people have occupied Pakistan. He said a nation can never develop in a country

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Briefs

Belarus delegation arrives in Islamabad

The delegation, comprising 68 members, included eight ministers and 43 business representatives

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Belarusian delegation, led by Foreign Minister Maksim Ryazanov, has arrived Islamabad, with President Alexander Lukashenko scheduled to visit tomorrow, according to the Foreign Office. The delegation, comprising 68 members, included eight ministers and 43 business representatives. They were welcomed by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Additional Secretary for Foreign Affairs Shafiq Ali Khan, and Pakistan's Ambassador to Belarus, Sajjad Haider Khan.

PTI leaders surrendering, says Tarar

PTI should hold rally in KP, not capital

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Sunday said some of the PTI leaders did not agree with the Imran Khan's protest strategy. Therefore, they were voluntarily surrendering to the police so that they did not become the part of the chaotic politics in the country. He made this remark during his short journey to different places of the capital during which he also claimed that many PTI leaders did not want the release of Imran Khan. He said PTI wanted to secure a deal to get NRO for their leader but the government could do not do a thing in this regard as this was the prerogative of the courts.

Amid different viewpoints

Opp alliance decides to stay away from march

TTAP leadership wants all opposition parties, including JUI-F, to be taken on board for any movement

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: As the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) looks set to march onto Islamabad to hold its "do-or-die" protest today, the Mahmood Khan Achakzai-led opposition alliance Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) has decided against becoming part of the former ruling party's protest. According to well-placed sources in the PTI and the TTAP, the alliance's leaders hold a different viewpoint - as opposed to the PTI - and want a mutually agreed upon date reached via a consensus to hold the protest with a different mode altogether. The development comes as authorities have sealed off several roads leading to Islamabad and have deployed additional security personnel to deter the PTI workers and supporters. Meanwhile, internet services have also witnessed disruptions in the federal capital along with Karachi, Peshawar and other cities. The stern measures come as the incumbent government has categorically maintained that it

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Imran is only making missed calls: Tessori

Tessori said that PTI members would eventually "go in circles and return to where they started"

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori has stated that former prime minister Imran Khan was making "missed calls" and would not be able to reach anyone for the next five years. In a conversation with a private TV channel in London, Tessori said that PTI members would eventually "go in circles and return to where they

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Major cities face cellular, internet disruptions

Curbs on mobile phone and internet services cause significant inconvenience for citizens

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: As Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) prepares for its highly anticipated "do-or-die" protest in Islamabad, communications services have been disrupted across the country. Major cities - including Karachi, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi - have reported interruptions in mobile internet and other services, leaving citizens and businesses inconvenienced. The disruptions are part of the government's broader security measures aimed at managing the protest. Mobile data services have been suspended in Islamabad and Rawalpindi,

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Imran's release is only possible through courts

Says people have rejected the elements making calls for protests and sit-ins repeatedly

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal has asserted that Imran Khan had to prove his innocence to the courts and his release could only be possible if the courts provide him relief. Addressing a news conference in Lahore on Sunday, the planning minister said that people had rejected the elements making calls for protests and sit-ins repeatedly and today's show by PTI would also fail. He stressed that the government couldn't release Imran Khan with administrative powers without him being freed from charges against him. Iqbal recalled that PML-N leadership including him was targeted with political revenge during the PTI government. "We didn't approach the US Congress or beg from anyone at the British House of Lords to get free from false and bogus cases. We didn't present our political narrative on UN or international forums going against Pakistan," Ahsan Iqbal stated. Federal minister insisted they fought their political struggles through law and never requested

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Imran faces 2nd round of grilling in protest case

SP Rawal Haseeb, DSP Raja Inayat, Inspector Kayani interrogate former PM in Rawalpindi's Adiala jail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi police have started grilling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan in, what they described as, the second phase of interrogation, after arresting him in the case lodged at the New Town police

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BMP for proactive steps as political uncertainty rattles economy

Mian Anjum said that the government should be committed to transforming the economy of the country, as the process of transforming the economy is already underway in the country, acknowledging that structural reforms in every sector takes time

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry' Businessmen Panel (BMP) has stated that political uncertainty has rattled the Pakistan economy, asking the government to take proactive measures to encounter external and domestic challenges, besides stabilizing the economy. In a statement issued here on Sunday, the FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that the private sector leadership under the banner of Pakistan Businessmen Panel has always stood firm and united against harmful actions to national economy and the people of the country has not accepted any move by mafias, who were responsible for creating chaos through unnecessary and unwarranted proposals, detrimental to national cause. He outlined a comprehensive economic agenda aimed at steering the country towards progress. He emphasized the critical need for a strategic approach to economic development, calling for concerted efforts from both the government and political parties. Mian Anjum Nisar observed that industry was expecting to presage easing of all political uncertainty paving the way for economic stability that all stakeholders and associated media pundits insisted would be a key factor in turning the economy around. This in the face of ever-rising electricity rates as pledged to the International Monetary Fund in an attempt to attain full cost recovery (instead of improving the management of the sector as is required). Mian Anjum said that the government should be committed to transforming the economy of the country, as the process of transforming the economy is already underway in the country, acknowledging that structural

reforms in every sector takes time. He mentioned that the government will have to take joint action to combat currency smuggling and narrow the difference in dollar rates between official and open markets. It is the fact that the government has undertaken various initiatives for the betterment of the country. The trade deficit narrowed by 3.6 per cent to \$1.3 billion, demonstrating positive progress and expressed optimism that the government's efforts would lead to an expansion in export potential and the export market. The BMP leader said that the government would encounter the external and domestic challenges, which are enormous but the government will have to take proactive measures to overcome them. He said that the Pakistan Credit Guarantee Company had been formed for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), emphasizing that the companies had to stand on their own feet and should not rely on subsidies. He stated that a substantial change should introduce to the FBR to enhance its performance with a view to raise the economic growth of this country. He said that the economic managers should diligently work on reforms in the FBR and ensure their implementation. He praised the efforts of the caretaker government and urged consultations with the BMP in the fiscal budget-making process to facilitate the business community. Furthermore, he called upon political parties to announce clear and robust economic strategies. He argued that these strategies should not only focus on short-term gains but also encompass a long-term vision for sustained progress. The Chairman emphasized that such transparency from political leaders is crucial for instilling confidence

in the business community and investors. The BMP Chairman outlined a comprehensive economic agenda aimed at steering the country towards progress. He emphasized the critical need for a strategic approach to economic development, calling for concerted efforts from both the government and political parties. Turning his attention to the international stage, he highlighted the need for the country to actively engage with the global market. He argued that tapping into international opportunities is key to unlocking the full potential of the economy. Encouraging businesses to explore and expand their presence in the global arena, he urged policymakers in the upcoming government to create an enabling environment for international trade and investment. He mentioned that the government will have to take joint action to combat currency smuggling and narrow the difference in dollar rates between official and open markets. It is the fact that the government has undertaken various initiatives for the betterment of the country. He observed that industry was expecting to presage easing of all political uncertainty paving the way for economic stability that all stakeholders and associated media pundits insisted would be a key factor in turning the economy around. BMP leader said, "we shall continue our efforts for the protection of our community and the countrymen at large, who have been directly and indirectly involved in national economic growth." He said that BMP has never safeguarded the vested interests of mafia, which not only halt the progress of the country but curb the large part of society.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspecting the ongoing construction work on F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange

Sindh CM stresses constitutional protection of 1991 water accord

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has called for constitutional protection of the 1991 Water Accord, emphasizing that the provincial government will never compromise on Sindh's water share. "The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) demands constitutional protection for the Water Apportionment Accord of 1991, despite its shortcomings, to ensure its implementation in true letter and spirit," Pakistan's cuisine This he said while replying to a question during a media talk at the World Children's Day celebrations at Nissan-e-Pakistan. CM Shah said, The chief minister clearly said that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) would never compromise on Sindh's water rights. He reiterated the party's longstanding opposition to the Kalabagh Dam, a position that dates back to the time of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who staged a historic sit-in at Kamo Shaheed in district Ghotki. Talking about the party's role as the representative of Sindh, Mr Shah said, "The PPP is the true voice of Sindh, and we will not allow a single drop of Sindh's water to be taken away." His remarks underscore the province's consistent resistance to projects perceived as harmful to its water rights.—APP

Naqvi makes surprise visit to F-8 interchange project

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi made a surprise visit to the F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange Project and F-10 Chowk late at night on the other day. He inspected the ongoing construction work. During his visit, the Interior Minister directed the completion of the project's piling work as soon as possible. He also reviewed the progress of the underpass and flyover construction work. He highlighted that the F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange Project will be completed in just 4 months instead of the scheduled 12 months. The project includes the construction of a flyover, an underpass, and link roads. The Interior Minister emphasized that the project must be completed within the stipulated time frame, and 24/7 construction work should be carried out to achieve this target. He also directed the authorities to

ensure smooth traffic flow at F-10 Chowk and to prepare a comprehensive plan to widen the chowk. Furthermore, Mohsin Naqvi instructed the authorities to conduct an authentic traffic count at F-10 Chowk and to review the construction of an underpass after the completion of the traffic count. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa briefed the Interior Minister on the progress of the F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange Project. The Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad, senior officers of the CDA, and the contractor were also present on the occasion. Meanwhile, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded the security forces for their successful operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the other hand, resulting in the elimination of three terrorists. In a statement issued on Thursday, the minister

commended the swift and decisive actions of the security forces, which thwarted the nefarious plans of the militants. "We salute the security forces for bringing three extremist terrorists to a shameful end. Their prompt response has safeguarded the nation from potential harm," said Naqvi. He further emphasized the nation's unwavering pride in its brave security personnel and reiterated the government's firm stance against terrorism. "We will not allow extremist terrorists to find refuge anywhere in Pakistan," he declared, adding, "With the support of the nation, we will continue to eradicate terrorism from its roots." The operations, conducted in a challenging environment, reflect the commitment of the security forces to ensuring peace and stability in the region.

Political stability vital to attract investment: PIAF

LAHORE: Raising grave concern over the falling trend of foreign direct investment the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) on Sunday said that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Pakistan has plunged by 4 percent to \$243 million during the first quarter of the current fiscal year, indicating that the government has failed to win the confidence of foreign investors due to continued uncertainty in the country. PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol, in a joint statement along with senior vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Ch, observed that the inflows under the FDI recorded 32.7 percent decline to \$393 million during the quarter under review as compared with \$575 million in the same quarter of the last year. Quoting the data, Faheem ur Rehman Saigol said that the total foreign private investment into the country fell by 34.2 percent to \$242.2 million during the quarter under review.—APP

61,024 respiratory diseases cases reported in single day

LAHORE: The ongoing smog crisis in Punjab has reached alarming levels, significantly impacting public health across the province. According to the Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, 61,024 cases of respiratory diseases were reported in a single day on the other hand. Hospitals recorded 4,211 asthma cases, 2,105 ischemic heart disease cases, 181 strokes, and 385 conjunctivitis cases within the last 24 hours alone, highlighting the severity of

the situation. Over the past 30 days, approximately 1.92 million individuals sought medical attention for respiratory and smog-related illnesses across Punjab. Hospitals treated 125,520 asthma patients, 60,966 ischemic heart disease cases, 5,701 stroke patients, and 14,007 conjunctivitis cases during this period. In just the past week, 455,283 respiratory disease cases were reported, alongside 31,034 asthma cases, 13,479 ischemic heart disease cases, 1,360 strokes, and 4,121 conjunctivitis cases, showcasing the escalating burden on the healthcare system.

Laure remains the worst-affected city, bearing the brunt of the crisis with staggering health statistics. Over the last month, the city reported 132,569 respiratory disease cases, 6,613 asthma cases, 13,585 ischemic heart disease cases, 706 strokes, and 3,269 conjunctivitis cases. The last week alone saw 34,830 respiratory disease cases, 2,262 asthma cases, 2,804 ischemic heart disease cases, 302 strokes.—APP

CM KP reviews security situation in Kurram

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur chaired an important video link meeting at the Chief Minister's House here on the other hand to review the latest security situation in Kurram district. The provincial government's delegation on its visit to Kurram on the special directive of the Chief Minister, submitted its initial report to the chief minister. The provincial government's delegation comprising provincial Law Minister Aftab Alam, Adviser to the Chief Minister on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan, former MNA Sajid Turi and Commissioner Kohat Division, Mutasim Billah Shah, met with the elders of Shia community in Parachinar. The delegation sought input and recommendations from the community for a sustainable resolution to the ongoing dispute. During the meeting, the delegation briefed the chief minister on the demands and suggestions put forth by the Shia community. It was informed that the delegation will meet Sunni community leaders in Satta tomorrow today to have consultations for resolving the conflict. Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister reiterated the provincial government's commitment to achieving a peaceful and lasting resolution to the Kurram dispute. He expressed sorrow over the recent tragic incident, condemning it as highly tragic and heinous and said that the provincial government equally shared the sorrow with the bereaved families. "The government will formulate its strategy based on the consultations and recommendations of local elders", the chief minister said and added that all legitimate demands from both sides would be addressed. He directed the government delegation to finalize its recommendations after thorough discussions with all stakeholders.—DNA

The controversial IPPs: Will there ever be accountability?

NAIRA ESHAAL

HERE is an increase in the rise of electricity prices every new day. There are many families who are looting and plundering the people day in and day out. The per unit price of electric units has exceeded Rupees 70. The issue of electricity prices creates a panic in the hearts and minds of the people. There is more than 43,000 Megawatts installed power generation capacity in Pakistan. 28,811-Megawatt electricity is generated from thermal sources while 10635 Megawatt is produced from water sources, 1838MW is produced from wind. 360-Megawatt electricity is produced from nuclear sources. 822 Mega Watt is produced from solar energy. Half of the electricity is produced by IPPs and according to some analysts these IPPs are the actual apple of discord. Even some experts draw an analogy of these plants with the East Indian Company. Just like East India Company had established its foot in like manner these proved to be the blood suckers for

Pakistan's economy. There are 42 IPPs in Pakistan. All these are thermal facilities. The first company was Hub Power Company. According to the agreement it was said that Pakistan whether buys electricity or not, as per power capacity of the plant the Government of Pakistan will pay to the owner as per dollar rate. In the coming days whatever agreements were carried out with the IPPs, Per Unit and capacity payment burden went on increasing. The circular debt in the energy sector exceeded 5.422 trillion rupees and the capacity payment to IPPs have crossed Rs 2.25 trillion. Many families own these power plants. On one side is the fact that most of them have an involvement in politics and on the other side is the miserable condition of the masses of Pakistan. Machinery and fuels are getting expensive. 34 crore units are provided free to the government employees annually in Pakistan. Much of the electric theft is there. Many rich people and industrialists are involved in this. KESC which is often regarded as a success story, one must not forget

that the actual subsidy to KESC by the government has crossed Rs 193 billion. Often the people are protesting against this because eventually this all leads to exorbitant electric prices. Industries are getting closed because of expensive electricity. Domestic use and industrial use of electricity has also seen a decline. The government is facing a great crisis in paying to these IPPs. The rapid rise of solar energy by domestic, agricultural consumers and the people involved in industry is a direct response to the expensive electricity. It also tells upon the broader global shift towards renewable energy resources. Among renewables solar amounted to 3.2 percent of the generation mix. The Tar Coal project has been lingering on for so many years. In such situations it is no wonder that Hub power company has said that in Pakistan the use of electricity is getting lesser and lesser. According to HUBCO in 2023 electricity use witnessed a reduction to the tune of one sixth. Now HUBCO will make one fifth of its total capacity but it will get the payment to its maximum capacity as per

agreements. There were wrong policies in Pakistan coupled with poor government and mismanagement. No one thinks in the collective interest of Pakistan. Individual interests have been pervasive. The result is that such fallacious agreements are drafted which only benefit their owners and the loss is borne by the people. However, since these agreements are backed by the sovereign guarantees and now if the government terminates them then no international company will come in Pakistan in future and there will be a loss of credibility. In comparison to Vietnam and Bangladesh in every plant in Pakistan there was over invoicing to the tune of 4 times as compared to the wind plants there as regards their capacity. These plants mostly operated on thermal plants despite the fact that Pakistan had vast coal reserves. It led to a strange vicious circle. Today all know that these IPPs did not produce the electricity as per their optimum capacity. The maintenance and insurance has been borne by the government of Pakistan. These IPPs received huge subsidies and 1.217 trillion rupees tax relief was given

to these plants from the mid-1990s till 2024. Keeping in view all these facts it is evident that such a colossal loss these IPPs caused to the economy of Pakistan. The licenses in their agreement reveal that capacity payment is dependable. The government of Pakistan can audit this capacity. The plants which have been operative since 1994, their audit must be done. These power plants can be retired early also paying them their arrears. In some way the demand for electricity can be increased by installing more and more industry. Businesses are getting closed in our country because of high dollar rates and tedious and prolonged procedures. The government should give people facilities to start their business and install production houses and factories. The question arises that the Five IPPs which are going to be closed, with the combined capacity of 2400 Megawatts, will there be some recovery of the money they received in the name of maintenance, purchase of fuel and tax relief. Or in the name of national interest all will be forgiven and forgotten?

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Peshawar
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Kabul
House #4, Street #4,
Chahri Anvari Road, Shahr-e-Naw,
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National Days and Armed Forces Days

NOVEMBER

- Nov 01/Algeria National Day
- Nov 04/Italy Armed Forces Day
- Nov 07/Russian Federation Socialist Revolution
- Nov 09/Cambodia National Day
- Nov 11/Poland Independence Day
- Nov 14/Jordan Birthday of King Hussein
- Nov 15/Belgium Kings Day
- Nov 15/Brazil Republic Day
- Nov 15/Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus National Day
- Nov 18/Oman National Day
- Nov 18/Morocco Independence Day
- Nov 21/Bangladesh Armed Forces Day
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Olympic champion Arshad immortalized in Mueen's artwork

The piece, titled The Throw, features an abstract portrayal of Nadeem and his mother, veiled behind Saheed's distinctive brushstrokes and use of small squares. Known for his signature style of Abstract Narrative Expressionism, Mueen captures not just the physical likeness but also the emotional depth of his subjects

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Sri Lankan artist Mueen Saheed made a memorable addition to his tour of Pakistan by presenting a special painting dedicated to Arshad Nadeem, Pakistan's celebrated Olympic gold medalist, to the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). The artwork, now part of the PNCA's prestigious permanent collection, pays homage to Nadeem's remarkable achievements and his role in uniting fans across borders. The piece, titled The Throw, features an abstract portrayal of Nadeem and his mother, veiled behind Saheed's distinctive brushstrokes and use of small squares. Known for his signature style of Abstract Narrative Expressionism, Mueen captures not just the physical likeness but also the emotional depth of his subjects. Through energetic colors and dynamic forms, the painting reflects the strength, perseverance, and spirit of the athlete who brought pride to Pakistan on the global stage. The presentation ceremony at PNCA, part of the artist's Passages of Light exhibition, was attended by key figures in the arts and culture sector, including PNCA Director General Muhammad Ayub Jamali and Federal Minister for Information and Culture, Attaullah Tarar. The minister praised Saheed's gesture, noting the significance of honoring a national hero whose journey resonates beyond sports, inspiring audiences from Pakistan, India, and around the world. Saheed shared his motivation for the piece, explaining, "Ar-



shad Nadeem's story is one of resilience and humility. His victory at the Olympics and the moments of sportsmanship with his Indian counterpart, Neeraj Chopra, were powerful examples of unity in competition. I wanted to create a piece that celebrates his legacy and the human spirit that transcends borders." This new addition to PNCA's collection highlights Saheed's commitment to cultural diplo-

macy through art. Throughout his career, the artist has paid tribute to icons and leaders from various fields, having previously painted portraits for sports legends like Virat Kohli and Kumar Sangakkara, Bollywood personalities such as Jacqueline Fernandez, and esteemed world leaders including Prince Charles and the King of Brunei. The Arshad Nadeem painting joins Saheed's broader body of work showcased

during his Pakistan tour, which included successful exhibitions at the Lahore Museum and PNCA Islamabad. His artworks, exploring themes of heritage and identity, have sparked meaningful dialogue and strengthened cultural ties between Sri Lanka and Pakistan. With this gift, Saheed continues his tradition of using art as a bridge between nations, celebrating shared values and stories that inspire beyond borders.

Decode the secret language of shopkeepers in twin cities

ISLAMABAD: If you frequently visit the markets of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, you may have overheard salesmen in shoe or garment shops speaking a language that seems unfamiliar, using numbers and expressions understood only by insiders. Don't worry, it's not a new dialect it's a coded system of communication passed down through generations, with shopkeepers using it to keep an edge over customers, protect profit margins and all without anyone catching wind of it. Let's break it down. One of the most commonly overheard words in this private terminology is "Bulla." But don't jump to a conclusion, it's not name-calling or an insult. In fact, it is the term salesmen use to refer to a customer, regardless of gender. When a customer walks into the shop, the

sales team quickly assesses their appearance, clothing, and posture. If they're deemed a "Bulla," the game is on. Bulla beware: Decode the secret language of shopkeepers in twin cities. So, who created this code? Where did it come from? According to many elderly shopkeepers, the origins are unclear. "It comes from our forefathers," says one elderly Pindi salesman, "We call it 'Batori,' a collection of phrases that no one outside the market understands," most shopkeepers responded similarly to APP. Though there's no official record of "Batori" in trade talk history, it continues to thrive in the streets of the twin cities and beyond. Muhammad Afzal, a salesman with over 30 years of experience in Pindi, Islamabad's markets, shares his insights with a grin. "This secretive set of slangs is passed down

like a sacred trade secret. Every new salesman to the market is taught as an initiation ritual." According to Afzal, it helps conceal information from the customers about a product's real price and allows salesmen to control the process to ensure maximum gains. He continues, revealing a few more covert terms. "Bulla chokas ee khial rakhi," for example, roughly translates to, "This customer is well-off, treat him with respect." The message is clear from the senior or the shop owner to make sure this person walks out with something expensive in their bag. Conversely, if a customer is just browsing, there's a code too: "Diwo ha aitch karo." It instructs a junior salesman to wrap it up and focus on more promising customers. The phrase "Bulla kasso kahrr ha" signals that a customer looks too poor to make a pur-

chase. "It's a red flag. It tells the team to get rid of him quickly," Afzal explained. Salesmen have an entire arsenal of these coded phrases, like: • "Bulla palsi aa" (The customer is serious and will definitely buy). "Chabbi-an lamtar dass isko" (This regular client is accustomed to offer a low price; quote the highest to cover the profit margin). ("Chabbian" means amount and "lamtar" means high). "This insider jargon is in decline, and young salesmen aren't picking it up anymore. It's dying out, and at places like Saddar and Raja Bazaar, it's mostly the older folks who still use it," said Shafique Ahmed, a salesman at Family Wear. Faisal, a customer at Aabpara's Club Shoes, responding to an APP inquiry about his understanding of this coded communication, said, "I've heard some strange words before in the shops.—APP

Peace to be ensured in Capital at all costs: Asif

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif warned the PTI on Sunday that any violent protests would be met with a firm response. He emphasised that the state will not permit any illegal mob to attack Islamabad, noting the party's history of organizing demonstrations that have often escalated into violence. "The government will take a tough stance on individuals who disrupt law and order in Islamabad", the minister warned in a recent private news channel interview. Islamabad had been placed on high alert, with the government warning of zero tolerance for violent mobs, he added. Khawaja Asif has emphasised that peace will be ensured in the capital city at all costs. He accused the PTI of habitually using innocent people to attack state institutions, adding that the state will not be blackmailed by the PTI's protests, which have a history of turning violent. He said that the government will take firm action against any illegal activities and will not allow the party to use innocent people to attack state institutions. The Defence Minister expressed disappointment that the PTI tends to protest whenever a country announces to visit Pakistan, adding that Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, should focus on improving the law and order situation in the province. Pakistan's cuisine. "Both government and military leadership are jointly move the country forward. We will not permit any violent mob to attack Islamabad under any circumstances," Defence Minister Khawaja Asif stated. He emphasised the government's firm stance on maintaining law and order.—DNA

Danyal warns strict action against unlawful protest

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Danyal Chaudhry said that the government would not allow any mob to attack and damage the economic growth of the country and to create hurdles for the citizens. Addressing at a press conference here on Saturday, he said that due to the conducive policies of the incumbent regime after a long time again country's economy is on track and the growth ratio increasing day by day but unfortunately some elements wanted to disrupt it. The nation knew that these people were not sincere with the development and prosperity of the state. Danyal also condemned the statement of Bushra Bibi regarding Saudi Arabia and blamed the PTI wanted to damaging the current strong Pakistan and Saudi bilateral relationships. Pakistan's cuisine He said that Pakistan had signed a number of MoUs with Saudi regimes recently and trade volume would be enhanced very soon, but some elements wanted to sabotage the journey of progress. He criticized that the founder of PTI had sold the gifts of brother country adding that Saudi Arabia is the best and most trustworthy friend of Pakistan. He said that the graph of inflation decreased from double digits to single and the growth of economics on smooth way and ratio of interest also reduced. Overseas Pakistanis fully support the incumbent government as 3.1 billion dollars were sent by expatriate in the first week of October 2024. Danyal underlined that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced a good relief to the citizens in electricity billing. Stock market going up due to the local and foreign investment in the country, he added.

HEC unwilling to break NIHCR begging bowl

No doubt, the public sector universities, centres and institutes have been facing a financial emergency because of budget cuts for the past six years

KEHKASHAN TABBASUM

ISLAMABAD: Although the Finance Division has revised upward the Indicative Budget Ceilings (IBC) for the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to Rs. 65 billion from an initial allocation of Rs25 billion for fiscal year 2024-25 yet most of the universities, centres and institutes under its control have not been allocated and released sufficient funds and funds for the fiscal 2024-25. With the passage of time, annual budget allocations and grants are getting decreased for the universities in general and its recognised centres and institutes in particular. Over the years, particularly since 2018, Centres of Excellence have become beggars demanding bail out packages, grant in aid and supplementary grants to overcome their financial pendency but in vain. No doubt, the public sector universities, centres and institutes have been facing a financial emergency because of budget cuts for the past six years. Since then, the HEC decreased funding has failed to keep up with exacerbated house rent ceiling,

pay and pension increases and other allowances. Nowadays universities, centres and institutes are facing financial crisis; some of them do not have funds to pay house rent ceilings, salaries and pensions to their staff and pensioners. One such academic research institution is the National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, which has been facing financial crunch since fiscal 2019-20 due to which the staff and pensioners have not been paid House Rent Ceiling since July 2021 at the pretext that the Higher Education Commission had not released funds to the NIHCR. Hard hit are the NIHCR pensioners who have not so far been paid their house rent ceilings since July 2021, gratuity and leave encashment in toto. The NIHCR authorities hold HEC responsible for not releasing required funds to clear the pensioners once for all. According to my well-placed sources in the NIHCR, at least five pensioners are waiting for payment of their pending pensionary dues and house rent ceilings. Ironically, the NIHCR has not granted 15 percent Adhoc Relief an-

nounced in the Budget 2024-25 to its pensioners for non-release of funds by the HEC. The NIHCR failed to implement the Special Dispensation for the Civil Servants in the Federal Government for the Employees in BPS-01 to BPS-16 effective 01-01-2023 for want of funds from the HEC. The Institute has not paid 35 percent and 25 percent Adhoc Relief announced in the Budget 2023-24 to its staff and officers, respectively. Likewise, the Institute failed to pay 25 percent and 15 percent Adhoc Relief announced in the Budget 2024-25 to its staff and officers, respectively, besides payment of medical allowance and medical reimbursement to its staff for lack of funds. In spite of huge financial pendency, rumours are rife in the NIHCR that some high ups have been granted house building, motor car and motor cycle advances instead of clearing the pending house rent ceilings of lower staff or making payments to the retired staff. It is need of the hour for HEC to look into the NIHCR financial matters properly and fill its begging bowl to the brim by allocating required funds to clear the backlog once for all.

IRSA releases 95,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 95,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 48,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1502.17 feet and was 104.17 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 23,400 cusecs and 49,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1162.85 feet, which was 112.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,900 cusecs and 27,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 64,700, 48,000, 34,200 and 5,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Digitalization initiative for KPK's C&W Deptt launched

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant for Communications and Works (C&W), Sohail Afridi launched the digitalization initiative of the C&W Department on Saturday, which includes the implementation of the Asset Management System and the Human Resource Information Management System (HRIMS). The event was attended by the Secretary of C&W, Chief Engineers, and other senior officials. Sohail Afridi emphasized that the Asset Management System aims to digitize records related to the department's machinery, financial accounts, and provincial assets, ensuring transparency and accurate data management, according to a Press release. The initiative is expected to reduce fraud and discrepancies. Afridi also highlighted the importance of the HRIMS, which will streamline administrative processes such as postings, transfers, leave applications, and seniority lists. "The objective is to secure departmental records, eliminate the possibility of manipulation, and enhance efficiency for both the department and the public," Sohail Afridi said.—APP

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Briefs

Ethiopian
envoy
praises Sindh
Governor's
initiatives

ISLAMABAD: Ethiopian Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula commended the Sindh Governor's Initiative, highlighting their potential to significantly improve the quality of life for the public. He made these remarks during his meeting with Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House, which was also attended by Ethiopia's Honorary Consul General Ibrahim Khalid Tawab. Their discussions focused on strengthening bilateral ties between Pakistan and Ethiopia, enhancing trade, investment, and fostering exchanges of delegations. The governor emphasized the attractive investment opportunities in Sindh and encouraged Ethiopian investors to benefit from profitable sectors in the province. He highlighted the increased exchanges facilitated by Ethiopian Airlines, which has furthered the bilateral relationship, contributing to job creation and poverty alleviation in the region. The Ethiopian Ambassador lauded the "Bell of Hope," ration drive, and IT courses under the governor's initiative, calling them exemplary projects that can serve as a model for other regions. He expressed confidence that these initiatives would bring about positive change in the lives of the people.—DNA

RTO
conducts
raids to
check
issuance of
PoS receipts

RAWALPINDI: Regional Tax Office (RTO) Rawalpindi, on the directives of Chief Commissioner, Regional Tax Rawalpindi, Tehmina Amir is conducting raids to check issuance of Point of Sale (PoS) receipts at business outlets and taking action in accordance with the law against the rules violators. According to a RTO spokesman, the authorities concerned have imposed fines amounting to Rs 500,000 during an operation against those not issuing PoS receipts at various business centers. Assistant Commissioners, Regional Tax Revenue, Muhammad Hamza Nazir and Wasimullah Khattak along with their team members raided at various shops and business outlets. They sealed two bakeries for not issuing PoS receipts and also imposed fines amounting to Rs 500,000. Talking to APP, AC, Muhammad Hamza Nazir said that action is being taken against the rules violators. The teams conducted raids in different areas including Abid Majeed Road and Scheme-III in Cantonment areas and inspected issuance of the PoS receipts, he added. Raids are being conducted to make the tax system transparent in business centers, he said adding, if the receipts are not being issued to the customers at any business outlet, a complaint can be registered through the "Tax Asan.—App

ICCI and FTO host awareness session on taxpayers' rights

ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi emphasized the need to foster a conducive environment for the business community. Praising the FTO's exemplary performance, he suggested its inclusion in the formulation of tax policies to prevent anti-taxpayer measures

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), in collaboration with the Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), organized an awareness session highlighting taxpayers' rights and the pivotal role of the FTO in providing relief to aggrieved taxpayers. Muhammad Nazim Saleem, Advisor Sales Tax at the FTO, delivered an insightful presentation, shedding light on the tax system and the FTO's commitment to safeguarding taxpayers against harassment and unwarranted litigation. He underscored the FTO's Outreach Campaign, designed to enhance public awareness about its role in delivering prompt and cost-free justice. The FTO has made remarkable progress in resolving complaints, adjudicating 8,128 cases filed by taxpayers against the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in 2023. Furthermore, the President of Pakistan upheld 96.01% of the FTO's decisions in appeals filed by the FBR, demonstrating the institution's efficacy and credibility. Notably, the FTO has taken measures to curb unnecessary litigation. The federal cabinet has directed the FBR to avoid filing appeals against FTO rulings in high courts, and the FBR has instructed its field formations to refrain from initiating frivolous legal actions.



ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi emphasized the need to foster a conducive environment for the business community. Praising the FTO's exemplary performance, he suggested its inclusion in the formulation of tax policies to prevent anti-taxpayer measures. He also called for leveraging electronic media, which is mandated to allocate 10% of its

airtime to public welfare initiatives, to amplify awareness about the FTO's objectives and complaint resolution mechanisms. President Qureshi described the FTO as a beacon of hope for taxpayers facing grievances and advocated for the promotion of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to ensure swift and effective settlement of tax disputes, reducing burdens

on both taxpayers and the judicial system. The session also featured valuable input from Asad Hussain Ghalib, President of the Islamabad Tax Bar Association, who shared insights into streamlining processes for taxpayers. The event was moderated by ICCI member Naeem Siddiqui and attended by ICCI Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, along with Execu-

tive Members Naveed Akhtar Satti, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Zulqarnain Abbasi, Chaudhry M. Waseem, Chaudhry Irfan, and other prominent stakeholders. The session highlighted the importance of collaboration between institutions to uphold taxpayers' rights and strengthen confidence in the tax system, ultimately fostering a more business-friendly environment.

China's CSG warns to dismantle plant, withdraw investment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Chinese steel giant, Century Steel Group (CSG) has threatened to withdraw its investment and shut down operation in Pakistan, if its demands were not met. The steel group relayed this in a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In the letter, Century Steel Group CEO Li Chunjian stated the company had reached the decision to wrap up its business and withdraw investment from the country as the government departments, responsible for handling foreign direct investment (FDI) in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Rashakai Special Economic Zone (RSEZ) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, failed to resolve multitude of their problems. "This will be our last notice to the Government of Pakistan; if the problems are not resolved immediately, we will start dismantling the plant from the RSEZ," the company said. A senior government official stated that the prime minister has constituted a committee under Federal Minister for Communications, Privatisation and Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan to address all of the company's complaints. The committee consists of members from the KP and federal governments. According to the

steel group, they arrived in Pakistan with big goals and intended to build up the country's biggest steel mill in three stages in the first RSEZ of CPEC in KP. Over \$30 million out of the \$82 million invested in the project's first phase was already underway, with an anticipated yearly production of 500,000 tonnes of steel products. Through the transfer of cutting-edge steel technology from China to Pakistan, the following two stages would also result in an investment of more than \$200 million in Pakistan for the manufacturing of downstream steel products. Within five years, the final capacity for steel products would be 1.5 million tonnes, the China's

steel giant said. "We aimed to contribute to the GDP of Pakistan and also to create thousands of jobs as well as build exports of steel products to the regional markets. However, due to the following unresolved issues for over five years, we have finally decided to exit from Pakistan and report this matter to the Chinese government/embassy and the international press as a last resort. "We have been waiting for the last five years at RSEZ and maintenance of our staff and expenses has caused us big losses to the tune of \$7.5 million," it said in the letter. Plot purchase agreement couldn't be signed with KPEZMC despite our various exchanges and meetings and long time has passed.

ISSI, PIPS ink MoU for mutual collaboration

The collaboration envisaged under this MoU is expected to facilitate knowledge-sharing

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) and Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for mutual collaboration. This partnership aims to enhance collaborative efforts in providing credible research-based analysis to key decision-makers and policymakers in Pakistan, said press release issued here on Saturday. The MoU was signed by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI and Muhammad Rashid Mazool Zaka, Executive Director, PIPS. The ceremony was attended by senior representatives from the two Institutes. Within the framework of this partnership, ISSI and PIPS will work together on a range of areas such as parliamentary affairs, legislation, governance, policy-making processes, foreign affairs, climate change, public health, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), National Action Plan, violent extremism, strategic communication, and other subjects relevant to development, prosperity, and foreign policy. By combining the strengths of both institutions, the partnership aims to contribute significantly to the discourse on governance and policy formulation in Pakistan. The collaboration envisaged under this MoU is expected to facilitate knowledge-sharing and joint research initiatives that will help empower policymakers with informed insights on critical national issues.

Ring Road to be completed within revised time frame

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) and relevant authorities have reiterated their commitment to completing the Rawalpindi Ring Road within the revised time frame and budget while 37 percent work on the project has been completed. The road, once completed, is expected to significantly reduce traffic congestion and promote economic development in the region. According to a RDA official, the much-anticipated Ring Road project has seen 37 percent of its construction completed and the project would speed up after the approval of the revised PC-I. The project was

originally approved by Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) in December 2021 for Rs 23,606 billion, with a completion period of 36 months. Later on, the project's cost was updated to Rs 26,969 billion on February 4, 2022. The project has seen its cost revised multiple times, now reaching Rs39 billion, as per the latest estimates. The official informed that the RDA submitted the first revised PC-I of Rs44 billion and later re-submitted the document after the PDWP asked it to rationalize the cost. Subsequently, Rs32.9 billion PC-I was submitted in May, 2024. The revised

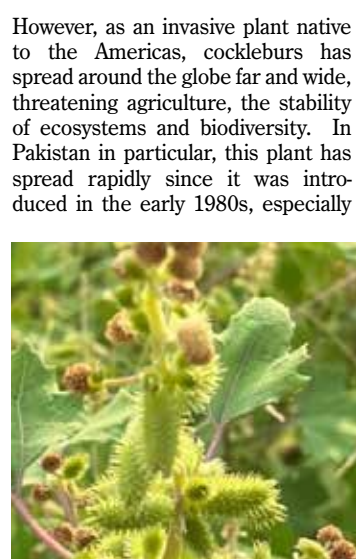
PC-I of the instant project was cleared to be placed before CDWP/ECNEC for approval. In this regard, the instant scheme was discussed in a pre-CDWP meeting in July 2024. The Pre-CDWP decided to extend the completion date to September 2025 due to the project's complexity and to ensure quality. It was also agreed that project escalation costs would be adjusted within the total revised cost by reducing the other overhead charges, ensuring the overall project cost remains unchanged. Subsequently, in light of the meeting, Rs39bn PC-I was submitted with a gestation period of 46 months till

September 2025. These revisions come as a result of inflation, rising material costs, and adjustments mandated by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP), which directed the inclusion of escalation charges in the revised project plan. The provision of price escalation had been made for the smooth execution and timely completion of the project. RDA, which is overseeing the project, recently submitted a new Project Concept-1 (PC-1) with the revised cost to the Secretary of Housing. The proposal will now pass through the Punjab Planning and Development Wing (PDWP).—DNA

Invasive species cocklebur could be turned into treasure

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Invasive species cocklebur in Pakistan could be turned into a treasure, said Professor Yuan Guobao, chairman of the Hubei Technical Market Association. Prof. Yuan had visited Pakistan more than 30 times and has a deep understanding of the local climate, soil and hydrological conditions. "Cocklebur has not caused much harm in China, and is generally eradicated with ordinary herbicides. However, considering the fact that its thorny fruits are easily spread, perhaps we can change our thinking and use the method of 'turning waste into treasure' to deal with it," according to Gwadar Pro. What do you think of when mentioning cockleburs? For most people, it may just be a small "gift" that gets caught on clothes or the body from time-to-time when they are out in the wild, sometimes causing a sting, but more often it is harmless.



in agricultural areas such as Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where it has become an important factor affecting the growth of local crops and

ecological balance. The research results of this harmful species, jointly completed by Pakistani researchers including Muhammad Waheed, Department of Botany, University of Okara, have just been published in the journal BMC Ecology and Evolution. "From 2020 to 2022, our team conducted extensive field surveys in Punjab and other places to record the distribution of cockleburs, and combined with public data from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), a total of 82 distribution records were collected. After screening of these data, a species distribution model (SDM) was constructed. The results showed that cockleburs have now invaded about 21% of Pakistan's land, especially in the central and northeastern regions, where are most likely to become the hardest hit areas for its future spread due to suitable climatic conditions," said Muhammad Waheed. Currently, it is considered one of the most problematic and widespread weeds in Pakistan.

The researchers also pointed out that the distribution of cockleburs is affected by factors including seasonal temperature changes, the average temperature of the wettest season, and the total nitrogen content of the soil. The study shows that in the context of climate change, most parts of Pakistan, except Sindh Province, may be further invaded by it. This spreading trend poses a major threat to cash crops including but not limited to corn, soybeans, and cotton. "Our predictive model predicts that the suitable habitat for cockleburs will expand under future climate scenarios, which could lead to a loss of biodiversity and a decline in native vegetation." In this regard, Muhammad Waheed stressed that researchers, policymakers, resource managers and stakeholders need to work together to develop effective strategies to stop the spread of this invasive species.

Pakistan issues visas to Indian Hindu pilgrims

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi has issued 87 visas to Indian Hindu pilgrims for their visit to Pakistan to participate in the 316th birth anniversary celebrations of Shiv Avtari Stguru Sant Shadaram Sahib, at Shadani Darbar Hayat Pitafi, Sindh from 24 November to 04 December. On the occasion, Charge d' Affairs, Saad Ahmad Waraich wished the pilgrims a rewarding and fulfilling journey, a press release on Saturday said. He further said that Pakistan remained committed to preserving sacred religious places as well as providing necessary facilitation to the visiting pilgrims. "The issuance of visas is covered under the framework of Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974," it was added.

ANF recovers over 192 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations across the country managed to recover over 192 kg drugs and arrested three smugglers, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman. He informed that 80 kg morphine and 30 kg hashish hidden for the purpose of smuggling were recovered in the Qila Abdullah district, in Balochistan. About 250 grams ice concealed in 'Peshawari chappals' were recovered from a parcel booked for New Zealand at a courier office in Karachi. 4.1 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested on GT Road, Rawalpindi. The spokesman further informed that in an operation conducted near Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza, Lahore two accused, members of an inter-provincial drug smuggling gang were arrested. Acting on a tip-off, an operation was conducted at Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza. ANF tried to stop a suspicious Toyota Hiace single cabin but, instead of stopping the vehicle, the suspects tried to escape. In their attempt to escape from the scene, the suspects also damaged an ANF vehicle but, ANF personnel successfully stopped and arrested the accused. Upon search of the vehicle, 65 packets of hashish weighing 1200 grams each were recovered from the vehicle. Total 78 kg hashish worth approximately Rs 5.5 million was recovered from the vehicle. The suspects confessed their involvement in smuggling drugs from Peshawar to different districts of Punjab.—APP

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

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Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

EV tariffs and Ukraine war

CHINESE President Xi Jinping and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met on the sidelines of the Group of 20 (G20) summit in Rio de Janeiro. While their meeting lasted a mere 30 minutes, they still found time to talk about crucial economic and geopolitical issues. Both leaders face difficult situations at home, with Scholz occupying a more precarious position. While Scholz was talking to Xi and other world leaders in Brazil, meetings were taking place in Berlin to discuss whether Scholz should remain his Social Democratic Party's top candidate for the general election which is expected to take place on February 23. Scholz's coalition government collapsed earlier this month as the German economy slowed and coalition partners were riven by deep economic and political rivalries. For the time being, Scholz serves as the head of an interim minority government. In Beijing, meanwhile, Xi also must grapple with a difficult economic situation, including a slowly recovering economy and a looming trade war over electric vehicles (EVs) with the European Union (EU). The prospect of the imminent return of Donald Trump to the White House is adding further uncertainty to the fragile and tense state of US-China relations. As part of the summit in Brazil, G20 leaders released a declaration. The document outlines multiple fields of cooperation and attention for a more inclusive and effective G20: the international economic and political situation; social inclusion and the fight against hunger and poverty; sustainable development, energy transitions and climate action; and the reform of global governance institutions. In his remarks on global governance in Rio de Janeiro, Xi emphasised the need for cooperation, openness, stability, innovation and eco-friendliness. While these high-minded aspirations are shared by many world leaders, their implementation is likely to be difficult in an increasingly polarised international environment. During the Scholz-Xi meeting on November 19, Xi spoke of the Europe-China and Germany-China partnerships as among the most important economic relationships in the world. But Xi also asked for German help in overcoming the European Commission's decision to adopt tariffs on electric vehicles from China. Berlin had opposed the imposition of tariffs on Chinese-made EV vehicles entering the single market and even voted against it, but the tariffs were backed by 10 EU members and adopted by the European Commission. In his conversation with Xi, Scholz focused on another priority: Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Shortly before the G20 leaders summit, the EU received evidence that drones for use in the war by Russia were being produced in China's Xinjiang region. China has denied this. While there have been strong suspicions on the part of many Western countries that China has delivered products classified as dual-use goods to Russia, which can be used for military purposes, the possible production of drones for Russia on Chinese soil seems to paint a different picture. The war in Ukraine is bringing Europe and the rest of the world to a tipping point. Thousands of North Korean troops have arrived in Russia to support Moscow's war efforts, and two undersea fibre-optic communications cables in the Baltic Sea were cut on November 17 and 18, raising European fears of sabotage.



US abusing its veto power

ONCE again, the US has positioned itself in opposition to the international community. On Wednesday, the US vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for a cease-fire in Gaza. This marks the fourth time the US has used its veto power on this issue, even as the death toll in Gaza now stands at around 44,000. The draft, put forward by the Security Council's 10 non-permanent members, demanded an immediate, unconditional and permanent cease-fire, as well as the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Among the 15 members of the Security Council, the US was the sole opposing vote. This US action once again raises the question: How many more innocent lives in Gaza must be lost to awaken Washington's conscience? Now, nearly 44,000 people have been killed in Gaza, and the US still does not hesitate to use its veto. Nearly all of Gaza's 2.4 million residents have been displaced by the war, creating an unmeasurable humanitarian crisis. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the US is expected to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining global peace and stability. However, its actions - marked by the abuse of veto power - blatantly contradict global efforts to promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The US' approach to the Palestine-Israel conflict has left it isolated on the international stage. Even the US media outlet The New York Times has acknowledged that this underlines Washington's diplomatic isolation on the issue. France and the UK's UN ambassadors have also openly expressed dissatisfaction with the US veto. Nicolas de Riviere, France's UN representative, stated unequivocally: "There is an obvious urgency to implement an immediate and unconditional cease-fire. This is the only way to guarantee the protection of all civilians and the massive and unhindered delivery of emergency aid." Ni-Xinchun, executive director of the China-Arab Research Institute of Ningxia University, told the Global Times that there is no doubt that the US' unwavering support for Israel has not only caused domestic divisions but also created rifts with its allies on the international stage, leaving the US increasingly isolated in the UN. Washington repeatedly claims to defend human rights; yet, it appears indifferent to the situation in Gaza. While the international community agrees on the need for the unconditional release of all hostages and an immediate cease-fire, the US continues to insist on preconditions for a cease-fire - even as Israel's military operations in Gaza have long exceeded the scope of rescuing hostages. This stance effectively gives the green light to prolong the war and condone the continued killing. The US' repeated vetoes are not only the greatest obstacle to achieving a cease-fire but also the root cause of the dysfunction within the UN Security Council. As the world's most authoritative international body, the Security Council is expected to speak on behalf of the global community and push for resolutions that pressure both parties to end the conflict. However, the US' abuse of veto power has left the Council unable to act effectively. This has become a recurring issue that not only severely undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the UN, but also further erodes global confidence in the US.

“Parachinar: The dream of peace, the journey of blood”

Dr. Jazbia Shirin

The current situation in Parachinar is as fragile as it has ever been. In the recent clashes, extremists targeted the Shia community, resulting in dozens of deaths and many injuries. These attacks are not only based on sectarianism but are also carried out for control over Parachinar's strategic location and resources. The presence of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and other extremist groups has made the region even more dangerous, as these groups use sectarianism to further their own interests. The people of Parachinar have always sacrificed for the peace and stability of Pakistan, but the government's delayed response in addressing their problems has persisted. Local residents continue to suffer from insecurity due to ongoing attacks...

THE recent incident in Parachinar has once again sparked sectarian violence in the Kurram district of Pakistan. This tragic event is part of the ongoing tension between the Shia and Sunni communities, with land disputes and other regional issues adding fuel to the fire. According to reports, at least 36 people have been killed and 162 injured, with the majority of the victims being from the Shia community. The attacks have been carried out by extremist groups, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has been attempting to establish its presence in the region for decades, using sectarian violence for their nefarious purposes. This violence has worsened the already fragile situation in the area, where both government actions and the traditional Jirga system have failed to bring peace. The historical significance of Parachinar and its geographical location are also important aspects of this conflict, as it is situated near the Afghanistan border and has long been a hotspot for various group conflicts. The government needs to take this issue seriously to not only ensure the protection of the affected community but also to take action against the groups exacerbating these conflicts. Relatives of the victims and local leaders are calling for immediate action, but the government's response has been slow and ineffective. Human rights organizations have also described the incident as a form of genocide and stressed the need for global attention. The solution to this issue cannot be achieved solely through the use of force; it is essential to promote sectarian harmony and provide platforms where people can resolve their disputes peacefully. For a country like Pakistan, it is crucial to ensure the protection of its citizens and work on eliminating these issues on a sustained basis. Parachinar, the capital of the Kurram tribal district in Pakistan, holds a unique position due to its geographical importance and historical background. It is located near the Afghanistan border and, because of its Shia-majority population, has always been a target for conflicts and attacks. Parachinar has long suffered from sectarian violence, attacks by extremist groups, and local tribal disputes, forcing it to endure continuous instability. Looking at the history of Parachinar, the city has been plagued by armed clashes, land disputes, and sectarian tensions for several decades. During the 1980s and 1990s, sectarian attacks were also witnessed here, and from 2007 to 2012, Parachinar was besieged by armed extremists, causing a shortage of food, medicine, and other essential services for the Shia community. During this period, hundreds of people were killed, and thousands were displaced. The current situation in Parachinar is as fragile as

it has ever been. In the recent clashes, extremists targeted the Shia community, resulting in dozens of deaths and many injuries. These attacks are not only based on sectarianism but are also carried out for control over Parachinar's strategic location and resources. The presence of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and other extremist groups has made the region even more dangerous, as these groups use sectarianism to further their own interests. The people of Parachinar have always sacrificed for the peace and stability of Pakistan, but the government's delayed response in addressing their problems has persisted. Local residents continue to suffer from insecurity due to ongoing attacks and inadequate government action. The recent events once again highlight the need for effective measures by the government and the international community to resolve these issues so that the people of Parachinar can live a safe and peaceful life. The continuous attacks on Parachinar by terrorists are not mere coincidences but reflect a deep conspiracy rooted in sectarian division, geographical significance, and the selfishness of extremist groups. This city has long been a target for extremist groups because of its Shia-majority population, which they exploit to increase their power through religious division. Parachinar's strategic location, being near the Afghanistan border, makes it even more sensitive and prone to conflicts. This terrorism is, in fact, a conspiracy that not only fuels religious differences but also destroys peace and order in the region. Extremist groups like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other military organizations target Parachinar because its people have always remained united for the protection of their religious beliefs and community. Through such attacks, terrorists not only cause loss of life but also try to undermine the collective courage and unity of the region.

It is also possible that the attacks are a proxy war between regional powers, where different groups are being used against each other to impose their will. The people of Parachinar have always tried to stand against terrorism, but they do not receive the support from the government that they need. This entire situation is heartbreaking. One wonders when this will end. What must the families of those who have lost their lives in these attacks be going through? Words fall short to express this grief and pain: How long will the blood keep flowing? How long will this land keep screaming? How long will these children remain orphans? How long will mothers wear the dress of widows? We all must stand together against this cruelty. Both the government and the public must unite and raise

their voices against these oppressors. Our prayers are with the martyrs of Parachinar and their families. May Allah keep us safe from such incidents. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially areas like Parachinar, has always been a target of terrorism and extremism. There are several reasons for this, including the region's geographical position, its border with Afghanistan, and internal and external factors. This situation is not only devastating the lives of local people but also affecting the peace of the entire country. But is there a solution to this problem? Yes, solutions exist, but for their implementation, the government must take steps with seriousness and consistency. First and foremost, the government must strengthen the presence of security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is crucial to monitor the activities of terrorists through advanced technology and intelligence networks. Permanent military or paramilitary check posts should be established in areas like Parachinar to immediately address the threat of terrorism.

The second important step is to engage with local communities and address their issues. To promote sectarian harmony, the government must facilitate negotiations between different communities. Platforms should be created where people can resolve their issues peacefully, and extremists should not be given the opportunity to exploit these conflicts. The government should also pay special attention to educational reforms. The youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who are often victims of poverty and unemployment, become easy targets for terrorist groups. By providing quality education and employment opportunities, they can be directed towards a better future. Similarly, social and economic development projects should be introduced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Investments should be made in infrastructure, health, and education sectors so that the local people can trust the government and also stand against extremism.

In the context of international relations, Pakistan must strengthen its ties with Afghanistan. Both countries need to adopt a joint strategy against terrorism, as a large part of this problem originates from across the border. Finally, it must be ensured that government policies are consistent and not changed under political pressure or for personal gain. Serious actions should be taken to eliminate sectarianism, and extremists should be severely punished instead of being allowed to operate freely. To end the hardships of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a comprehensive and sustained policy is required. Only in this way can we make this region a place of peace and tranquility. We pray that the bloodshed on our land ends, and we move towards a peaceful and prosperous Pakistan.

A gamble for peace

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The Iranian government harbors deep-seated grievances from Trump's first term, which saw measures such as the “Muslim ban,” the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization, and the targeted killing of Soleimani. Despite these hostilities, Trump consistently expressed willingness...

THE prospect of Donald Trump's return to the White House has generated significant discourse in Tehran, where the primary concern is not what policy trajectory the incoming administration might adopt toward Iran but whether the Islamic Republic should engage in negotiations with the former president. Prominent Iranian officials, including experienced diplomats, argue that Tehran must exercise its agency and signal a willingness to negotiate. This perspective posits that Trump's strong mandate, as evidenced by the electoral outcome, provides him with the political latitude to broker a mutually beneficial agreement with Iran. However, whether such calls will influence Tehran's posture in the wake of Trump's inauguration remains uncertain. In 2018, during Trump's first term, his administration's withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the subsequent imposition of a “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign devastated Iran's economy. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei categorically dismissed the possibility of negotiations with Trump, labeling the American president as unworthy of engagement. Khamenei's assessment relied on the belief that Trump's presidency represented an anomaly in U.S. politics. This gamble, however, backfired as U.S.-led sanctions decimated Iran's oil revenue and international trade, while escalating tensions culminated in the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani in January 2020. Today, the geopolitical landscape has shifted markedly. Trump's political position appears stronger, and Iran faces increasingly severe domestic and international challenges. The prevailing sentiment in Iranian media underscores an urgent need for recalibration. As one commentator observed, “The era of no war, no peace is over. It's now the era of either war or peace.” With the Republican Party controlling all three branches of the U.S. government, proponents of negotiation assert that a potential agreement with Trump would carry more durability than the JCPOA, which faced resistance from congressional Republicans. Iranian commentators also highlight Trump's unpredictability. While his rhetoric often aligns with anti-war sentiments, his unconventional governance style leaves

the possibility of military confrontation open. A Republican-controlled Congress affords Trump significant latitude in foreign policy, potentially allowing him to initiate military action without the constraints faced by previous administrations. This dynamic poses a significant risk to Iranian strategic assets, including its nuclear facilities, should Tehran resist engagement. At the same time, the possibility of a negotiated settlement remains on the table. Figures close to Khamenei suggest a cautious approach, advocating for a wait-and-see strategy to evaluate Trump's intentions. For instance, Ali Larjani, a moderate advisor to Khamenei, has suggested that Trump may adopt a more constructive approach in his second term. Similarly, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has encouraged Trump to abandon his “maximum pressure” campaign in favor of “maximum wisdom,” signaling that Tehran could reciprocate constructively to avoid conflict. The Iranian government harbors deep-seated grievances from Trump's first term, which saw measures such as the “Muslim ban,” the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization, and the targeted killing of Soleimani. Despite these hostilities, Trump consistently expressed willingness to negotiate with Iran albeit on terms perceived as highly unfavorable by Tehran. Iranian officials as tantamount to a call for capitulation dismissed his administration's infamous 12-point demand list. Nonetheless, there are signs that Trump's second administration might adopt a different approach. His decision to exclude former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a staunch Iran hawk, from his new team has been interpreted in Tehran as a potential olive branch. However, the composition of Trump's national security team remains fluid, leaving uncertainty about the influence of hawkish versus isolationist elements within his administration. A straightforward compromise between Trump and Khamenei could center on Iran's nuclear program. Trump's primary demand is the prevention of Iranian nuclear weaponization, a position ostensibly aligned with Khamenei's 2012 fatwa declaring nuclear weapons un-Islamic. However, tensions extend beyond nuclear issues, encompassing Iran's regional activities and its role in supporting allied

groups across the Middle East. Addressing these broader concerns will likely require concessions from both sides. In this context, regional developments could play a pivotal role. Tehran is reportedly optimistic that Trump might pressure Israel into accepting a ceasefire in conflicts involving Gaza and Lebanon, potentially creating space for dialogue on select regional issues. Larjani's recent visits to Damascus and Beirut, where he conveyed reassurances to Iran's allies while advocating for a ceasefire, suggest that Tehran is exploring options to de-escalate regional tensions. Despite these overtures, Tehran faces a profound strategic dilemma. Should it prioritize preserving the Axis of Resistance a network of regional proxies—or pursue a re-orientation of its regional agenda to align more closely with international expectations? While immediate priorities appear to favor the former, growing domestic and international pressures may necessitate a broader rethinking of Iran's strategic framework. Khamenei's reluctance to engage with Trump during his first term reflected confidence in Iran's ability to withstand external pressures. However, the cumulative impact of sanctions, regional setbacks, and domestic unrest has significantly eroded Tehran's position. Consequently, there is increasing recognition within Iranian policymaking circles that negotiations with Trump, while fraught with uncertainty, may offer a pragmatic pathway to alleviating external pressures. The return of the maximum pressure campaign, albeit under a different guise, remains a central concern for Tehran. While the Biden administration maintained existing sanctions, it did not enforce them with the same vigor as Trump's first administration. Tehran anticipates that Trump's renewed emphasis on sanctions could lead to the reactivation of snapback provisions under the JCPOA, particularly if European powers frustrated by Iran's support for Russia in the Ukraine conflict align with Washington. At the same time, Tehran sees potential opportunities in the shifting geopolitical landscape. China, a critical buyer of Iranian oil, is unlikely to abandon its partnership with Tehran given its own tensions with Washington. Similarly, Arab states appear inclined to avoid entanglement in U.S.-Iran conflicts, prioritizing regional stability over alignment with American strategies.

Briefs

PTI convoys head to Islamabad...

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The arrests come amid heightened security and political tensions as PTI proceeds with its protest plans. Meanwhile, the government has taken several steps to block the protest, including deploying heavy security forces, sealing key roads, and setting up barriers around the capital. The Interior Ministry has emphasized that, in accordance with court orders, no protests or sit-ins will be allowed in Islamabad, and any attempts to disrupt public order will be met with legal action. PTI leadership has announced plans to gather at specific locations before marching to Islamabad, where they intend to hold a sit-in at D-Chowk. Despite government efforts to block access to the city, the party has vowed to continue their protest and push for the release of Imran Khan and other demands. Gandapur, in a statement, affirmed that PTI will remain at D-Chowk until their demands are met, regardless of roadblocks or containers obstructing their path.

Imran's release is only...

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Imran Khan to get them free in political cases. He stressed that protection of lives and properties was the government's responsibility and appropriate precautionary measures had been taken in this regard. Ahsan Iqbal pointed out that Pakistan was on the path of progress and development due to successful economic policies. He said PM Shehbaz Sharif would soon announce a five-year plan for economic progress. He said, however, the protestors had a nefarious design to disrupt this progress for their own personal agendas by vandalism and arson. He said that the PTI wants to disrupt normal life and create a law and order situation in the country once again. He said, however, no one will be allowed to take the law into their own hands and the miscreants will be dealt with strictly.

Imran faces 2nd round...

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station pertaining to alleged violence during a protest on September 28. A Pakistani newspaper reported that Superintendent Police (SP) Rawal Raja Haseeb, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Legal Raja Inayat and Inspector Rashid Kayani interrogated the former prime minister in Rawalpindi's Adiala jail on Saturday, on the third day of his physical remand. The investigative team had prepared more than 15 questions to ask Imran, which were formulated based on the interrogation of 23 suspects who were already in police custody after their appearance in court. Sources claimed that the investigating team has acquired the social media posts and speeches by PTI leaders, as well as the records of people who met with Imran in prison. The probe body has also obtained the surveillance camera footage that is relevant to the case.

Opp alliance decides to...

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cannot allow the Imran Khan-founded party to hold a demonstration in Islamabad in the light of Islamabad High Court's (IHC) order which came in light of the three-day official visit of the Belarusian president from November 25 to 27. The court, on Thursday, had directed the authorities not to allow the PTI to protest in the federal capital in adherence to the Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act, 2024 - which empowers the district magistrate to regulate and ban public assemblies. Despite the restrictions, the former ruling party - during a huddle at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister House - has decided to go ahead with its protest and has chalked out a comprehensive strategy while refusing to defer the demonstration until its demands were met.

Virat Kohli goes past Don Bradman's record in Test
Jaiswal top-scores for India with a sensational 161

WEB DESK

PERTH: Jasprit Bumrah dismantled Australia's top-order with twin strikes after Virat Kohli and Yashasvi Jaiswal's centuries powered them to set a daunting target on the third day of the first Test here at Optus Stadium on Sunday. At the stumps on day three, Australia were reeling at 12/3 while chasing a mammoth target of 534. In the dying minutes of the eventful day, Bumrah started from where he left off as he dismissed debutant opener Nathan McSweeney (zero) and Marnus Labuschagne (three), while nightwatchman Pat Cummins fell victim to Mohammed Siraj after managing just two. Left-handed opener Usman Khawaja, unbeaten on three, will resume Australia's pursuit with veteran Steve Smith. Earlier, India declared their second innings at 487/6d, immediately after Kohli's record-breaking century. The touring side resumed their second innings from the overnight score of 172/0 through openers KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal at the start of the third day. The duo added a further 29 runs to their stand until Mitchell Starc provided a much-needed breakthrough to the home side by getting Rahul caught behind on 77. Jaiswal then put together a one-sided 74-run partnership for the second-wicket with Devdutt Padikkal, who made a cautious 25 off 71 deliveries before falling



victim to Josh Hazlewood in the 86th over. The opening batter eventually walked back after top-scoring for India with a sensational 161 off 297 deliveries, peppered with 15 fours and three sixes. His dismissal sparked a brief middle-order collapse which had reduced India to 321/5. But an anchoring 89-run partnership between Kohli and Washington Sundar pushed their lead beyond the 450-run barrier. Sundar contributed with a resilient 29 off 94 deliveries. Kohli was then joined by first innings' top-scorer Nitish Kumar Reddy and the duo added 77 runs for the seventh wicket from just 52 deliveries until

stand-in captain Bumrah called for declaration as soon as the former brought up his drought-ending century. India's batting stalwart Virat Kohli surpassed legend Sachin Tendulkar with a drought-ending century in the first Test of the five-match series against Australia here at Optus Stadium on Sunday. Kohli, who entered the ongoing series with a dismal form in the format as he had scored at a modest average of just 32 since 2020, turned the tables with a drought-ending century. The right-handed batter made the most of the Perth's conditions, that changed drastically after a wicket-fest open-

ing day, which saw him perishing for just five. Coming out to bat at No.4, the ace batter looked in fine control, the highlight of which was a picture-perfect cover drive against Australian captain Pat Cummins. He then shrugged off his recent struggles against spin by displaying measured footwork against Nathan Lyon. Kohli continued to dominate the hosts' bowlers and eventually brought up his 81st international century in the 135th over of India's second innings. His 30th Test century, which came after 17 innings, featured 10 boundaries including two sixes. This was Kohli's seventh Test century in Australia and his ninth overall against the opposition. The drought-ending ton put Kohli as the joint-second in the list of most centuries by a visiting batter, only trailing Jack Hobbs (9). Furthermore, Virat Kohli also went past batting great Sachin Tendulkar, who had six Test centuries against Australia in their home ground. All in all, he has 10 centuries in Australia across formats, the most by any touring batter. Speaking to former Australian wicketkeeper batter Adam Gilchrist after achieving the milestone, Kohli said he is someone who takes pride in performing for the country. "I'm not a guy who hangs around for the sake of it. I take pride in performing for the country," said Kohli. As soon as he got to his century, India's stand-in captain Jasprit Bumrah called for declaration, setting Australia a stiff 534-run target in the first Test.

Verstappen wins title as Russell triumphs in Vegas



LAS VEGAS: Red Bull's Max Verstappen won his fourth consecutive World Drivers' Championship with fifth place in the Las Vegas Grand Prix. The race was won by Mercedes' George Russell, who held off a charge by team-mate Lewis Hamilton, the seven-time champion taking second place from 10th on the grid. Verstappen's position behind the Ferraris of Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc was more than enough for the Dutchman. His title rival Lando Norris could man-

age only sixth for McLaren, his deficit to the Dutchman now 63 points with a maximum of 60 available. Verstappen joins Alain Prost and Sebastian Vettel as a four-time champion, with only Hamilton, Michael Schumacher and Juan Manuel Fangio ahead of him in that list. "What a season," Verstappen said to his team over the radio. "It was a little more difficult than last season, but we pulled through." He added: "It has been a long season and we started amazing, almost like

cruising, and then we had a tough run but we kept it together as a team, kept working on improvements and pulled it over the line." To stand here as a four-time world champion is something I never thought possible so standing here relieved in a way but also proud." Third and fourth places for the Ferraris of Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc reduced their deficit to McLaren in the constructors' championship to 24 points with two races to go. Norris stopped for fresh tyres to take fastest lap in the closing stages to give McLaren an extra point. Verstappen, starting one place ahead of Norris in fifth place on the grid, headed his rival throughout a relatively quiet race for the Red Bull driver as Russell took control from the start. Verstappen's measured performance was aimed at securing the title at the first chance he had, and he did so with the calmness and aplomb with which he has driven for the vast majority of the year. Russell controlled the race from the front, fending off an early challenge from Leclerc, who jumped from fourth on the grid to second past Alpine's Pierre Gasly and then Sainz under the first two corners. As Leclerc then squabbled with the recovering Sainz, and the Ferraris then ran into tyre trouble before Mercedes and Verstappen, Russell stretched out his lead to take control of the race. Hamilton ran 10th in the early laps, but drove a superb first stint, fast while also keeping his tyres in shape. - Agencies

Sinner leads Italy into Davis Cup final

MALAGA: Jannik Sinner and Matteo Berrettini led defending champions Italy into the Davis Cup final with a 2-0 victory over Australia. Sinner, the world number one and two-time Grand Slam champion, continued his dominant year with a 6-3 6-4 win over Alex de Minaur. That came after compatriot Berrettini fought back to overcome Thanasi Kokkinakis 6-7 (6-8) 6-3 7-5 in an entertaining first singles match. Italy will face the Netherlands on Sunday in a tie that will be streamed live on the BBC Sport website and app. Italy's women triumphed in the Billie Jean King Cup tournament earlier in the week. Both Sinner and Berrettini were supported by a noisy partisan crowd in Malaga. "It feels like Italy, it is unbelievable," Berrettini said afterwards. "I love this atmosphere, I love playing Davis Cup and I cannot wait to play many more matches." Sinner's victory over De Minaur was perhaps not surprising - he had won all eight of their previous meetings, including a 6-3 6-0 thrashing in last year's Davis Cup showpiece. The Italian was dominant in the first set, using all of his easy power to hustle past De Minaur and put his side within touching distance of the final. The second set was more competitive but De Minaur, serving to stay in touch at 4-4, blinked first, and Sinner promptly served out the match to the delight of the crowd. Sinner has now won the past 24 sets he has played on the ATP Tour, having not lost one since the second round of the Shanghai Masters in early October. "I had one of the best feelings ever last year winning the Davis Cup," said Sinner, who won the Australian and US Opens this year. "We're happy to be back in the final." Berrettini could have made his own match easier had he taken his chances in the first set against Kokkinakis. The big-hitting Italian served for the set with a 6-5 lead and had a set point but a wonky forehand forced him into a tie-break. Berrettini again had two set points in the breaker but could not convert, with Kokkinakis rewarded for his hard work as he clinched the first set. Kokkinakis had break points early in the second set but Berrettini stood firm, firing down three huge serves to hold and capitalising on some nerves from his opponent to force a decider. The third set was again a tight affair before a superb dinked forehand from Berrettini at 5-5 on the Kokkinakis serve shifted the momentum. - Agencies

Barcelona let two-goal lead slip in Celta Vigo draw

WEB DESK

BARCELONA: La Liga leaders Barcelona conceded twice in two minutes in a dramatic finish to draw with Celta Vigo after having Marc Casado sent off. Captain Raphinha opened the scoring for Barca - the former Leeds United player's 13th goal in all competitions this season - after driving into the box before finishing. Celta were lively throughout and had strong appeals for a penalty waved away just before half-time when Iago Aspas went down inside the box after a challenge by Gerard Martin, who had already been booked. Former Liverpool forward Aspas was furious with the decision not to award a spot-kick and was yellow-carded for protesting. Barcelona thought they had wrapped up the points when Raphinha, who also hit the post, turned provider for Robert Lewandowski to score his 15th La Liga goal of the season. But in a dramatic finish Casado was sent off for a second booking in the 82nd minute before Alfon Gonzalez pulled one back for Celta two minutes later. Then Hugo Alvarez struck in the 86th minute to earn the hosts a deserved point.

NEW DELHI: Rishabh Pant became the most expensive player in the history of the Indian Premier League as he was signed by Lucknow Super Giants for 27 crore (£2.54m) at the mega auction in Saudi Arabia. The India wicketkeeper, 27, was the subject of a bidding war between the Super Giants and his former side, Delhi Capitals. Pant, who returned to the game in this year's IPL after an 14-month lay-off following a car accident, beat the record set earlier in the day when Shreyas Iyer was signed for 26.75 crore (£2.51m) by Punjab Kings. Australia seamer Mitchell Starc, who held the record prior to the auction, was signed for 11.75 crore (£1m) by the Capitals, some way short of his 24.75 crore (£2.3m) cost when he was signed by Kolkata Knight Riders last year. Jos Buttler was the only Englishman in the initial batch of players auctioned in Jeddah, and the England white-ball captain and wicketkeeper was picked up by Gujarat Titans for 15.75 crore (£1.4m). Liam Livingstone was signed from the second set

Pant becomes most expensive player in IPL

Australia seamer Mitchell Starc, who held the record prior to the auction, was signed for 11.75 crore (£1m) by the Capitals, some way short of his 24.75 crore (£2.3m) cost when he was signed by Kolkata Knight Riders last year of players, joining Royal Challengers Bangalore for 8.75 crore (£827,000). Harry Brook was re-signed by Delhi Capitals for 6.25 crore (£590,000). Brook had been picked by the Capitals in last December's mini auction but withdrew from the 2024 IPL following the death of his grandmother. The Capitals also snapped up Australia batter Jake Fraser-McGurk, who hit four half-centuries for them last season, for 9 crore (£850,000). Punjab Kings, who are coached by Ricky Ponting, signed Aussie all-rounders Glenn Maxwell for 4.2 crore (£390,000) and Marcus Stoinis for 11 crore (£10.3m). Elsewhere, spinner Ravichandran Ashwin returned to Chennai Super Kings for 9.75 crore (£927,000) where he previously played from 2008 to 2015. CSK, who are coached by former New Zealand skipper Stephen Fleming, signed Black Caps duo Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra for 6.25 (£590,000) and 4 (£378,000) crore respectively. Hundreds of players will go under the hammer at the IPL's mega auction across Sunday and Monday, with sides looking to build their squads after retentions in October. - Agencies

Zimbabwe trump Pakistan by 80 runs

Green Shirts had restricted hosts on 206 runs but lost wickets in rapid succession

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: Zimbabwe defeated Pakistan through the Duckworth-Lewis (DLS) method by 80 runs in the first one-day international (ODI) of the three-match series on Sunday at Queens Sports Club. The hosts had posted a total of 206 runs after they were bundled out by the Green Shirts in 40.2 overs. Beginning their chase, Pakistan lost wickets in rapid succession taking them to 60/6 in the 21st over of the second innings. The match was then stopped due to rain and later called off, resulting in Zimbabwe to lead ODI series by 1-0. Earlier, Pakistan had won the toss and invited Zimbabwe to bat first. National side spinners - vice captain Salman Ali Agha and debutant Faisal Akram - destroyed Zimbabwe batting lineup for a modest total. Both took three wickets apiece. Amir Jamal (42/1) and Mohammad Hasnain (43/1) turned out to be the most expensive bowlers for the Green Shirts. Zimbabwe's Joylord Gumbie (15) got run out in sixth over, then

his successor Dion Myers (8) was caught off Agha in 10th. Tadiwanashe Marumani made (29 off 44) before departing on Agha's ball. Captain Craig Ervine (6 off 12) failed to impress with the bat as Saim Ayub caught him off Haris Rauf. Then Brandon Mavuta (1) was routed by Jamal and Brian Bennett

(20) by Faisal. Lower middle order batsman Sikandar Raza (39 off 56) and tail-ender Richard Ngarava (48 off 52) put up modest resistance before Pakistan concluded the innings with opponents' all out. This is Green Shirts' second ODI series this month after they beat Australia 2-1

in a historic achievement down under earlier this month. In the 15-member squad, Arafat Minhas, Babar Azam, Naseem Shah and Shaheen Shah Afridi have been replaced with uncapped duo of Abrar Ahmed and Ahmed Daniyal along with pacer Shahnawaz Dahani and Tayyab Tahir. Pakistan and Zimbabwe last faced each other in the 50-over format in November 2020 in Rawalpindi where the national side beat the visitors 2-1. Pakistan, on their last visit to Zimbabwe whitewashed the Chevrons in a five-match ODI series in July 2018. The ODI series will be followed by a three-match T20Is at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo. Pakistan XI: Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Amir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Haaseebullah Khan, Kamran Gulam, Mohammad Hasnain, Salman Ali Agha (vice-captain) and Saim Ayub. Zimbabwe XI: Craig Ervine (captain), Brian Bennett, Blessing Muzarabani, Brandon Mavuta, Dion Myers, Joylord Gumbie, Richard Ngarava, Sean Williams, Sikandar Raza, Tadiwanashe Marumani and Trevor Gwandu.



Imran is only making...

FROM PAGE 01
tated," describing the current political situation as a "game of emotions and the last over." He added that the situation will soon come to an end, and that frustration was evident in their statements. Tessori also commented on the controversial statement by Bushra Bibi, noting that even her own party did not endorse it. He said if Imran Khan made such a statement to Bushra Bibi, he would have violated his oath. He further explained that if any such matters did occur, Imran Khan had taken an oath as prime minister not to disclose state secrets. Tessori emphasised that any attempts to link these issues would go against the country's sovereignty and integrity. Regarding Pakistan's economic stability, the Governor stated that the country was making efforts towards recovery, with support from friendly nations. He warned that whatever actions PTI took, would not be welcomed by either the friendly countries or the Pakistani public.

Warring tribes in Kurram...

FROM PAGE 01
The clashes started after gunmen attacked convoys of civilian vehicles on Thursday, killing at least 44. That sparked retaliatory attacks and there have been pitched battles between armed groups from both sides. At least 75 people have been killed over the past three days in the ongoing gun battles between different tribes, according to police. It is pertinent to mention here that tribal and family feuds are common in the area. Last month, at least 16 people, including three women and two children, were killed in a clash in Kurram. Previous clashes in July and September killed dozens of people and ended only after a jirga, or tribal council, called a ceasefire. HRCP said 79 people died between July and October in clashes. Several hundred people demonstrated against the violence on Friday in Lahore and Karachi.

Country hit hard by inflation...

FROM PAGE 01
where education becomes out of reach. If people can't pay fees to their children wherever they go. He said Sindh government's education budget is 481 billion rupees. The Sindh government takes money through the 18th amendment, it does not give it to local body representatives. The clerk of the Sindh Secretariat also does not want to admit his children in the government schools of this province. JI chief said PIA trended the major airlines but today PIA and the steel mill have been destroyed. These tyrants have sunk the fleet of Pakistan. A nation that is not connected to the past has a dark future.

Major cities face cellular, internet...

FROM PAGE 01
while Peshawar has experienced partial disruptions to internet services, though mobile phone networks remain operational. Karachi has seen disruptions in mobile internet since last night, causing significant inconvenience for its residents. In southern Punjab, cities such as Bahawalpur, Kamalia, and Toba Tek Singh are facing suspensions of both internet and cellular services. Dera Ismail Khan, Gujranwala, Rajanpur, and Hafizabad have also been affected, with internet services halted in many areas. In a statement, the Ministry of Interior clarified that internet and cellular service suspensions are limited to areas deemed high-risk for security concerns. Officials assured the public that connectivity in other parts of the country remains unaffected. These measures, according to the government, are necessary to ensure public safety as tensions escalate ahead of PTT's planned demonstration.

Briefs

Main points of the \$300 billion climate deal

BAKU: The deal reached at UN climate talks in Azerbaijan ramps up the money that wealthy historic emitters will provide to help poorer nations transition to cleaner energy and adapt to global warming. Under a framework established by the UN in 1992, 23 developed countries – and the European Union – historically responsible for most planet-heating emissions are obliged to contribute to climate finance. The Baku accord raises the amount of money that developed countries must provide to at least \$300 billion per year by 2035. It is higher than the \$100 billion that is currently required under a previous agreement that runs until next year. But it falls well short of the \$500 billion that some developing countries had demanded at the fraught negotiations in Baku. The deal states that the money will come directly from a "wide variety of sources" including government budgets, private sector investment, and other financing. It also cites "alternative sources" – a reference to potential global taxes under discussion on the aviation and maritime industries, and the rich. The hope is that the money from developed countries will help boost private investment to reach an ambitious goal – written into the deal – of delivering at least \$1.3 trillion per year by the next decade. That is the amount that experts commissioned by the United Nations said was needed by 2035. "With these funds and with this structure, we are confident we will reach the 1.3 trillion objective," EU climate commissioner Wopke Hoekstra told fellow COP29 delegates. The United States and EU had pushed to broaden the donor base to include countries that are still listed as developing but have now become wealthy, such as China and Saudi Arabia. But China, the world's second-biggest economy and top emitter of greenhouse gases, has steadfastly refused to change its status while recalling that it already provides bilateral aid. The deal states that developed nations would be "taking the lead" in providing the \$300 billion – implying that others could join. The text "encourages" developing countries to "make contributions" that would remain "voluntary".—APP

Mounting economic costs of India's killer smog

NEW DELHI: Noxious smog smothering the plains of north India is not only choking the lungs of residents and killing millions, but also slowing the country's economic growth. India's capital New Delhi frequently ranks among the world's most polluted cities. Each winter, vehicle and factory emissions couple with farm fires from surrounding states to blanket the city in a dystopian haze. Acrid smog this month contains more than 50 times the World Health Organization recommended limit of fine particulate matter – dangerous cancer-causing microparticles known as PM2.5 pollutants, that enter the bloodstream through the lungs. Experts say India's worsening air pollution is having a ruinous impact on its economy – with one study estimating losses to the tune of \$95 billion annually, or roughly three percent of the country's GDP. The true extent of the economic price India is paying could be even greater. The externality costs are huge and you can't assign a value to it," said Vibhuti Garg, of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. Bhargav Krishna of the Delhi-based research collective Sustainable Futures Collaborative said "costs add up in every phase". "From missing a day at work to developing chronic illness, the health costs associated with that, to premature death and the impact that has on the family of the person," Krishna told media.—APP

Rwanda, Pak have huge trade potential: Harerimana

The ambassador said that despite ongoing challenges, Rwanda's labor market experienced a strong recovery, with over half a million new jobs created in the fourth quarter of 2023, marking the most significant reduction in unemployment since the COVID pandemic

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Rwanda to Pakistan, Ms Fatou Harerimana on Sunday said that bilateral co-operation between Rwanda and Pakistan in the health sector and public health is inevitable and there is potential on both sides in this sector. Pakistan's cuisine There is a need to further increase the bilateral economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Rwanda, for which the role of the private sector from both sides is very

important, the Ambassador said and added that Pakistan and Rwanda enjoy friendly relations underpinned by mutual respect, growing economic ties and cooperation at multilateral fora. Rwanda and Pakistan, with a long-standing relationship spanning sixty-two years, actively collaborate in various fields, including trade, health, and investment, she remarked. She said that Rwanda's real GDP of Rwanda grew by 9.7% in the first quarter of 2024, exceeding the previous year's

growth rate of 8.2% and the country has shown remarkable resilience, driven by strong consumer spending in key sectors such as services and industry. Pakistan's cuisine The ambassador said that despite ongoing challenges, Rwanda's labor market experienced a strong recovery, with over half a million new jobs created in the fourth quarter of 2023, marking the most significant reduction in unemployment since the COVID pandemic. "The labor market expansion in Rwanda was

broad-based, with women benefiting slightly more than men and to leverage its youth demographic, Rwanda needs to expand labor force participation, as only 2.8 million out of 8.1 million working age individuals are employed full time. She said that Rwanda aspires to become a Middle-Income Country by 2035 and a High-Income Country by 2050. It plans to achieve this through the implementation of the second National Strategies for Transformation (NST-2), a five

year-development agenda underpinned by sectoral strategies focused on meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Updating on the economy, she said that Rwanda's economy continued to stage a strong growth in the first half of 2024 and after growing by an average of 8.2% in 2022-2023, real GDP increased by 9.7% in the first half of 2024. The GDP growth is expected to maintain momentum in 2025-26, with a projected average of 7.7%, to a recovery in global tour-

ism, new construction projects, and manufacturing activities, she added. CEO of GAK HealthCare International, Dr. Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital, and Islamabad Medical and Dental College, Yasir Khan Niazi said that Pakistan and Rwanda have huge potential in public health sector and they are ready to work and increase bilateral cooperation in this area. Yasir Khan said that Rwanda is a growing economy in the African region where there is immense potential in the health sector.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers are busy in work at the site of under-construction PTCL Chowk underpass project during development work in Federal Capital.

Iran to hold nuclear talks with three European powers

DUBAI: Iran plans to hold talks about its disputed nuclear program with three European powers on Nov. 29 in Geneva, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported on Sunday, days after the UN atomic watchdog passed a resolution against Tehran. Iran reacted to the resolution, which was proposed by Britain, France, Germany and the United States, with what government officials called various measures such as activating numerous new and advanced centrifuges, machines that enrich uranium. Kyodo said Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's government was seeking a solution to the nuclear impasse ahead of the inauguration in January of US President-elect Donald Trump. A senior Iranian official confirmed that the meeting would go ahead next Friday, adding that "Tehran has always believed that the nuclear issue should be resolved through diplomacy. Iran has never left the talks." In 2018, the then-Trump administration exited Iran's 2015 nuclear pact with six major powers and reimposed harsh sanctions on Iran, prompting Tehran to violate the pact's nuclear limits, with moves such as rebuilding stockpiles of enriched uranium, refining it to higher fissile purity and installing advanced centrifuges to speed up output. Indirect talks between President Joe Biden's administration and Tehran to try to revive the pact have failed.—APP

Aid only 'delaying deaths' as Sudan counts down to famine

CAIRO: War-torn Sudan is on a "countdown to famine" ignored by world leaders while humanitarian aid is only "delaying deaths," Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) chief Jan Egeland told mediaperson on Saturday. "We have the biggest humanitarian crisis on the planet in Sudan, the biggest hunger crisis, the biggest displacement crisis... and the world is giving it a shrug," he said in an interview from neighboring Chad after a visit to Sudan this week. Since April 2023, war has pitted Sudan's regular army against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), killing tens of thousands of people and uprooting more than 11 million. The United Nations says that nearly 26 million people inside Sudan are suffering acute hunger. "I met women barely surviving, eating one meal of boiled leaves a day," Egeland said. One of few organizations to have maintained operations in Sudan, the NRC says some 1.5 million people are "on the edge of famine." "The violence is tearing apart communities much faster than we can come in with aid," Egeland said. "As we struggle to keep up, our current resources are merely delaying deaths instead of preventing them." Two decades ago, allegations of genocide brought world attention to Sudan's vast western region of Darfur where the then government in Khartoum unleashed Arab tribal militias against non-Arab minorities suspected of supporting a rebellion. "It is beyond belief that we have a fraction of the interest now for Sudan's crisis than we had 20 years ago for Darfur, when the crisis was actually much smaller," Egeland said. He said Israel's wars in Gaza and Lebanon and Russia's war with Ukraine had been allowed to overshadow the conflict in Sudan.—APP

Political instability to further fuel financial uncertainty

The APBF President observed that amidst continuous of hike in cost of production in the country, what the Pakistan's economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) on Sunday stressed the need for undertaking economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment so that financial stability can be achieved in the long-run. The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, in a statement issued here, stressed the need for reducing cost of doing business, besides evolving a new price control mechanism, as huge taxation, rising oil prices and constant jump in electricity and gas tariffs have lifted the cost of production to a new high. He warned that bailout packages from the IMF were unlikely to speed up economic growth, as the political instability and lack of reforms would further deteriorate the financial situation in the country. The APBF President observed that amidst continuous of hike in cost of production in the country, what the Pakistan's economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management. APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi warned the authorities that high inflation can hurt economic growth and a careful policy is required to keep it in control. He said that the pace of inflation is skyrocketing at a time when the economic activity is slowing down. Ibrahim Qureshi said that the anti-business policies would prove detrimental to the industries due to high cost of doing business and will also open the floodgates of inflation. In addition to making the electricity bills costlier and unaffordable for the consumers, the hike in base tariff would escalate prices of all household goods being widely used in every household, he added. Syed Maaz Mahmood termed the constant increase in tariffs unlawful and a violation of NEPRA's own rules and regulations, as any increase in tariff has to be determined and implemented only after holding public hearings but unfortunately they have solely decided to raise the tariff without holding public hearings, he argued. He condemned the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's decision to increase electricity tariffs on daily basis, stating that the burden of power theft, mismanagement, and inefficiencies cannot be shifted to consumers on the pretext of fuel adjustment. The APBF President said that Pakistan's industry had been harmed by the high cost of doing business, which discouraged investment in capacity and capability and called for easing the burden of heavy taxes on the power sector. Syed Maaz stated that the constant increase in power tariffs on the pretext of fuel adjustment had increased electricity prices and added to the already high cost of trade and industry. Seeking comparable energy tariffs for domestic industries in order to capture the global market, he stated that due to high electricity rates, power theft became rampant as the tariff was unaffordable to consumers.—DNA

Far right eye breakthrough in Romania presidential vote

BUCHAREST: Romanians were voting Sunday in the first round of a presidential election amid a surge in inflation and fears over the war in neighbouring Ukraine that could favour far-right leader George Simion. The vote kicks off two weeks of elections in the poor NATO member country, including a parliamentary vote and a December 8 presidential runoff. Social democrat Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu is leading a field of 13 hopefuls in the polls, with about 25 percent, followed by AUR leader Simion on 15 to 19 percent. Simion is targeting people like Rodica, a 69-year-old who was among the first to vote in Bucharest's chilly sunshine. The pensioner, who would not give a family name, was afraid of the Ukraine war and wanted "better living conditions and

peace". The stakes are high in the race to replace President Klaus Iohannis, a liberal and staunch Ukraine ally, who has held the largely ceremonial post since 2014. Romania, which has a 650-kilometre (400-mile) border with Ukraine, has become more important since Russia invaded its neighbour in 2022. The Black Sea nation now plays a "vital strategic role" for NATO – as it is home to more than 5,000 soldiers – and the transit of Ukrainian grain, the New Strategy Center think tank said. Simion, 38, is hoping to make a breakthrough as far-right parties across Europe notch up electoral successes. Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election has further "complicated"

Romania's choice, political analyst Cristian Pirvulescu told mediaperson. Known for his fiery speeches, Simion – a Trump fan who sometimes dons a red cap in appreciation of his idol – hopes to get a boost from his victory. Simion opposes sending military aid to Ukraine, wants a "more patriotic Romania" and frequently lashes out against what he calls the "greedy corrupt bubble" in Brussels. Romania has so far only had "minions and cowards as leaders", he recently said, adding that people "no longer accept to be treated as second-class citizens" in other countries. Simion has seen his popularity surge by tapping into voter anger over record inflation – 10 percent last year and 5.5% predicted for 2024 – while promising to

deliver affordable housing for all. Should he reach the second round, analyst Pirvulescu predicts a "contagion effect" that would likely boost his AUR party in the December parliamentary election. "Romanian democracy is in danger for the first time since the fall of communism in 1989," he added. "I'm really afraid we'll end up with Simion in the second round," 36-year-old IT worker Oana Diaconu told mediaperson, expressing concern about the far-right leader's unpredictable nature and attacks on the European Union. The campaign has been marked by controversy and personal attacks, with Simion facing accusations of meeting with Russian spies – a claim he has denied. Ciolacu has been criticised for his use of private jets. Despite low popularity

ratings, he hopes to win over voters with his promise of "stability" for Romania. Ciolacu's Social Democratic Party (PSD), which has shaped the country's politics for more than three decades, currently governs in a coalition with the National Liberal Party. Polling in third place is former journalist Elena Lasconi, who became mayor of the small town of Campulung and head of a centre-right opposition party, who could prove to be a surprise package. "Our best hope might be to wake up with Lasconi in the second round – she seems to be the most honest candidate," said Diaconu before hopping on a Bucharest tram. Polling stations opened at 7:00 am (0500 GMT) and close at 9:00 pm, with exit polls expected shortly after.—Agencies

Morocco-US Talks Washington backs Sahara initiative

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States reaffirms its support for the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a serious, credible, and realistic solution to the issue of the Moroccan Sahara, said U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Barbara Leaf, on Friday in Rabat. Washington continues to support the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the Sahara, Staffan de Mistura, in his efforts to advance negotiations toward a mutually acceptable political solution, she added during a press briefing following her talks with Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccan Expatriates, Nasser Bourita.

Morocco Spain joint operation dismantles Daesh cell

MADRID: In a new joint and coordinated security operation between Moroccan and Spanish authorities, Morocco's Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations (BCIJ), affiliated with the General Directorate of Territorial Surveillance (DGST), and the General Intelligence Directorate of the Spanish National Police successfully dismantled a terrorist Daesh-affiliated cell in the Sahel region. This operation, carried out on Friday, led to the arrest of nine (09) individuals, including three (03) active in Tetouan and Fnideq (Morocco) and six (06) others in Madrid, Ibiza, and Sebtia. A statement by the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations indicated that searches conducted at the suspects' residences resulted in the seizure of bladed weapons and electronic equipment, which will undergo necessary digital forensic analysis. The statement further revealed that preliminary investigations showed the suspects, some of whom were previously imprisoned in Spain on terrorism-related charges, were promoting Daesh ideology and holding meetings in Sebtia and Tetouan as part of planning and coordinating terrorist activities in the name of Daesh, with the intent to eventually join the organization's branch in the Sahel region south of the Sahara. The individuals arrested in Tetouan and Fnideq have been placed in custody under the supervision of the specialized public prosecutor's office for terrorism and extremism cases, to investigate their internal and external connections and to determine their level of involvement in the terrorist projects planned by the members of this cell.—APP

Israeli strike on Lebanese army center kills soldier, wounds 18 others

BEIRUT: An Israeli strike on a Lebanese army center on Sunday killed one soldier and wounded 18 others, the Lebanese military said. It was the latest in a series of Israeli strikes that have killed over 40 Lebanese troops, even as the military has largely kept to the sidelines in the war between Israel and Hezbollah militants. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has said previous strikes on Lebanese troops were accidental and that they are not a target of its campaign against Hezbollah. Lebanon's caretaker prime minister, Najib Mikati, condemned it as an assault on US-led ceasefire efforts, calling it a "direct, bloody message rejecting all efforts and ongoing contacts" to end the war. "(Israel is) again writing in Lebanese blood a brazen rejection of the solution that is being discussed," a statement from his office read. The strike occurred in southwestern Lebanon on the coastal road between Tyre and Naqoura, where there has been heavy fighting between Israel and Hezbollah. Hezbollah began firing rockets, missiles and drones into Israel after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack out of the Gaza Strip ignited the war there.—APP

Wounded Bangladesh protesters receive robotic helping hand

DHAKA: Squeezing rubber-covered robotic prosthetic hands, Bangladesh protesters wounded during the deadly revolution to topple autocratic leader Sheikh Hasina test out replacement arms for their lost limbs. "I'll be able to do some everyday tasks with this artificial hand," said student Hafeez Mohammad Hossain, 19, whose right hand was ripped off in gunfire on August 5. It was the same day protesters stormed Hasina's palace as she fled to India by helicopter. In the middle of the chaos, Hossain said a police officer levelled a shotgun at him and fired. He described searing pain as gun pellets lacerated his back and leg. Surgeons picked out the gunshot but were unable to save his hand. "I can't write anymore," Hossain said. "I'm struggling to learn how to write with my left hand." On Thursday he was fitted with a prosthetic limb, alongside four other students who also lost their hands during the months-long protests in which at least 700 people were killed during a police crackdown. Robolife Technologies, a Bangladeshi organisation manufacturing artificial hands, said the prosthetic limbs use sensors connected to the nerves to move. The company says it allows users to grasp objects, to type and use a phone. "If you ask me whether they work like organic hands, I'd say no," said Antu Karim, who is working on the government-backed project to fit the limbs. "But these hands allow the boys to hold a glass if thirsty, or a spoon to eat," he added. "At least, they won't be looked down upon for not having hands." Hasina's 15-year tenure saw widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killings of her political opponents. Limbless protesters held a rally earlier this month demanding the interim government who took over after Hasina's fall support those injured in the protests. Many say they have not received the aid they need. The four other former protesters who had arms fitted on Thursday included Mohammad Mamun Mia, 32, a father of two, whose hand was hacked off by a gang he said was loyal to Hasina's Awami League party. The new arm is far from perfect, but it has made a huge difference. "I'll be able to do some regular tasks with this hand," he said, saying that while he cannot work driving a tractor in the fields again, he hopes now to open a small business. Arif Hossain Sagar, 19, had his hand amputated after it failed to heal from an injury he sustained during the protests, and doctors worried about gangrene.—APP

Briefs

Masses reject PTI call: Muqam

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam has said masses have rejected the protest call of the PTI. Addressing a presser in the capital on Sunday, he said the instigators wanted to spread anarchy in the country while mentioning that the business of the people had taken a toll due to protests. He said, "There is a bloodbath going on in Kurram right now but the KP CM does not have this issue on his priority list as he is involved in protests instead of resolving the law and order situation." He said the PTI founder would not make it out of prison due to protest in Islamabad as only the courts would decide on the matter. The PML-N leader said the resources of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were being utilized for political gains.

Govt targeting innocent people: Saif

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Advisor Barrister Saif has taken a jibe at the PM and Punjab CM saying uncle and niece were planning to attack innocents to prolong their fake empire. In his statement, he stated that the PTI rally was getting on the government's nerves therefore the government had made Pakistan a 'Containeristan' placing containers and digging trenches. Saif stressed that the fake government wanted to malign PTI by covering containers with green cloth for fake videos. He warned the public to be aware of the fake government's nefarious aims. He alleged that the government had closed the whole country blocking highways, roads for a week to halt the PTI peaceful protest.

Mohsin Naqvi conducts aerial visit to review security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi conducted an aerial visit of Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Attock to review security arrangements in the three cities. During his visit, Interior Minister took an aerial view of the security arrangements in various areas of three cities. He also observed the overall situation on the Motorway, Swabi, and Pathar Gharh, expressing satisfaction with the security arrangements. Mohsin Naqvi stated that necessary measures have been taken to ensure public peace and order in compliance with the Islamabad High Court's order. He added that police, FC, and Rangers personnel are diligently performing their duties.



ISLAMABAD: A view of closed Sunday weekly bazaar at sector H-9 due to road closed with shipping containers ahead of PTI protest, in the Federal Capital. – Online

PM directs Punjab, NA speakers to address PPP concerns

The directive came during a consultative session held in Model Town, Lahore, to review the current political climate

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has instructed the speakers of the national assembly and Punjab's provincial assembly to take active steps to address concerns raised by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The directive came during a consultative session held in Model Town, Lahore, to review the current political climate, party sources reported on Sunday. The meeting included National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan. According to officials, discussions focused on the PPP's grievances as well as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protests, which have raised concerns of potential political instability. To ease tensions with the PPP, the

prime minister had previously set up a committee dedicated to resolving their issues. Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has urged the PML-N led Punjab government to honor its commitment with the PPP, stating that the committees formed by the two parties to resolve issues have yielded no results yet making it necessary for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to intervene. Khan said this on Saturday during his meeting with Punjab Assembly Deputy Speaker Zaheer Iqbal Channar. The Punjab governor belongs to the PPP which is not a part of the federal or Punjab governments but has been propping up the PML-N since ouster of the PTI government in April 2022. Khan said a functional coalition between the PML-N and the PPP would be beneficial for the country, warning

that if the coalition government fails, it would primarily harm the PML-N, which currently leads the government. The governor also criticized the PTI for failing to conduct peaceful protests, accusing the party of using protests to create chaos. He said repeated protests have disrupted daily life. The governor was referring to the PTI's proposed march to Islamabad that is scheduled to take place today (Sunday). "No one trusts the PTI due to its history of vandalism during protests. To prevent unrest, containers have been placed in strategic locations." He claimed that no protests would emerge from Punjab. He also dismissed any guarantee of the PTI conducting peaceful demonstrations. Regarding foreign relations, he commended improvements in diplomatic ties under

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's tenure as the foreign minister during the last coalition government. The governor condemned accusations levelled against Saudi Arabia, a longstanding ally of Pakistan, by Bushra Bibi, the wife of incarcerated former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan. "Such statements have strained relations between the two nations," he said. Speaking on the occasion, Zaheer Iqbal Channar said all grievances of coalition partners would be addressed and called for government measures that do not burden the common man. "There is a need to consider human and social challenges during emergency measures [taken by authorities in view of the PTI's protest]. Ambulances stuck in traffic on highways should be immediately given passage on humanitarian grounds," he added.

Educational institutions to remain closed in twin cities

Decision taken in view of prevailing situation, says district administration in notification

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The district administrations have announced the closure of educational institutions in Islamabad and Rawalpindi today (Monday) amid PTI "do-or-die" protest call. The decision has been taken in view of the prevailing situation, stated a notification issued by the capital administration. It added that the notification will be applicable to all educational institutions in the federal capital. The development came as the former ruling party plans to stage a "do-or-die" protest at Islamabad's D-Chowk against the "illegal" incarceration of PTI founder Imran Khan, other party leaders and workers, "stolen mandate" in February 8 general elections and 26th Constitutional Amendment. IHC had directed the authorities concerned not to allow the party to stage demonstration in the federal capital in violation of the newly enacted peaceful assembly law. The protests coincide with the upcoming visit of the Belarusian president, scheduled from November 25 to 27, adding to the government's concerns about maintaining law and order. Meanwhile, internet services have witnessed disruptions in the federal capital along with Karachi, Peshawar and other cities, with Mohsin Naqvi saying: "Mobile services are working while the Internet has been shut down."

Pakistan polio tally hits 55 after 3 more cases

Balochistan reports highest polio cases in the country with 26 children affected, followed by KP with 14 cases

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In a worrying development, Pakistan's poliovirus tally has reached 55 after three more children were diagnosed with the crippling disease. As per details, two new polio cases have been reported in Balochistan whereas one child has been affected by the virus in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bringing the provinces' total to 26 and 14, respectively. Confirming the new cases in Balochistan, the health department has said that one polio case was reported from Districts Zhob and Jaffarabad each. District Zhob has now reported three, whereas District Jaffarabad's tally stands at two polio cases in the ongoing year, added the health department. Balochistan has reported the highest number of poliovirus cases in 2024 followed by KP. Sindh has reported 13 cases, whereas Punjab and Islamabad have each reported one case of polio this year. The fresh cases come as Pakistan remains one of the last two countries in the world where the wild poliovirus continues to spread. This persistence is largely attributed to obstacles such as insecurity, misinformation, and community reluctance, which hinder vaccination efforts. The highly contagious viral disease predominantly affects children under five, particularly those with weak

immunity or inadequate vaccination. Health authorities have time and again underscored the importance of vaccination campaigns to curb the spread of this preventable disease, which remains a significant public health challenge in the country. Meanwhile, the increasing cases of the crippling disease have prompted the Polio Oversight Board (POB) to emphasise the need to intensify routine immunisation (RI) efforts in Balochistan and south KP, The News reported on Sunday. During a recent visit to the country from November 20 to 22, the board underscored the significance of ensuring consistent access to vulnerable children and achieving complete eradication of polio from the country. The POB, the highest decision-making body under the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), comprises leaders from the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), the CDC, Rotary International and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The delegation, led by Dr Chris Elias, included WHO Regional Director Dr Hanan Balkhy, Unicef Regional Director Sanjay Wijesekera, US CDC Deputy Director Andi Fristedt, and representatives from KS Relief. Ayesha Raza Farooq, the Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, hosted the delegation at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC).

Punjab Govt ready to deal with any situation

Says people have no interest in the politics of PTI

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister, Azma Bokhari has emphasised that government would not allow anyone to create law and order situation as public was fed up with PTI's politics of disruption. Addressing a news conference in Lahore on Sunday, she said situation in Lahore was normal and the PTI protest call had received no response. She said Punjab Government was alert and ready to deal with any untoward situation and lives and properties of people would be protected at all cost. Azma Bokhari said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur had announced to lead the protest from Swabi but there was no sign of any protest anywhere as yet confirming people's disinterest in the politics of PTI. She pointed out that neither the PTI founder's wife nor his children, nor any children of the party members are participating in the protest. She said that government officials of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were being forced to take part in the protest despite the fact that law and order situation in their own province had been deteriorating and PTI government had expressed no seriousness in dealing with it. Meanwhile, Islamabad authorities have already enforced Section 144 across the federal capital to ensure law and order in the city, following the directives of the Islamabad High Court. Citizens have been asked to refrain from participating in any illegal activities. Authorities have also warned that strict action will be taken against those found violating the law to uphold peace and security in Islamabad.

Kh Asif vows firm action against mob

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has warned PTI workers that any violent protests would be dealt with iron hands. Talking to a private news channel, he emphasized government's firm stance on maintaining law and order. He said that the state will not permit any illegal mob to attack Islamabad and will take a tough stance on individuals who disrupt law and order. The Minister warned that Islamabad has been placed on high alert, with warning of zero tolerance for violent mobs. Khawaja Asif emphasized that peace will be ensured in the capital city at all costs. He said that the government will take firm action against illegal activities and will not allow the party to use innocent people to attack state institutions. The Defence Minister said that Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, should focus on improving the law and order situation in the province.

Sirens sound across Tel Aviv as Hezbollah fires barrage of missiles

Israel has been targeting Lebanon since October 2023, when it launched a genocidal war on the Gaza Strip

FOREIGN DESK

BEIRUT: Air raid sirens sounded in the Israeli-occupied city of Tel Aviv and its surroundings after the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah launched a barrage of missiles against the occupying entity, amid the regime's intensified deadly aggression against Lebanon. Lebanon's al-Mayadeen news channel reported on Sunday that more than five heavy and long-range missiles were fired toward a military target in Tel Aviv. According to Hebrew-language media, at least 10 Israelis were injured in Petah Tikva, east of Tel Aviv, as well as Haifa and Nahariya after rockets hit these areas. Israeli media also reported that explosions were heard in central Tel Aviv due to the landing of rockets fired from Lebanon. Hezbollah said in a statement that it carried out an operation against a "military target" in Tel Aviv using "a barrage of advanced missiles and a swarm of strike drones." The Israeli military said it intercepted around 55 projectiles fired at the northern occu-

piated territories. In a separate statement, Hezbollah said its fighters had carried out a drone attack on the Ashdod naval base in the southern part of the occupied territories. The resistance group said that it had launched an aerial attack using a swarm of strike drones on the Ashdod naval base for the first time. Israel has been targeting Lebanon since October 2023, when it launched a genocidal war on the Gaza Strip. Hezbollah has been responding to the aggression with numerous retaliatory operations, targeting the occupied Palestinian territories. Since late September, Israel has escalated its strikes against Hezbollah, assassinating its leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and a number of its senior figures. At least 3,600 people have been killed by Israeli fire, and 15,200 others wounded since the clashes began last year, according to the health ministry. The Lebanese resistance movement has vowed to keep up its operations against Israel as long as the Israeli regime continues its Gaza war, which has so far killed at least 44,176 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

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11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165