



Islamabad POST

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Iran releases Nobel Peace laureate Narges Mohammadi

Detailed News On Page-08

President Yoon faces impeachment

Detailed News On Page-08



Rizwan drops in latest ICC T20I rankings

Detailed News On Page-06



JAPAN SELF DEFENSE FORCES DAY



ISLAMABAD: Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Defence Minister, Governor Sindh, Kamran Tessori and AKAMATSU Shuichi Ambassador-designate of Japan to Pakistan are cutting to celebrate Japan Self Defense Forces Day. - DNA

India edge Pak to win Junior Hockey Asia Cup

India also defeated Pakistan in previous edition's final

SPORTS DESK

MUSCAT: Arajjeet Singh Hundal scored four goals and led India to beat Pakistan 5-3 and win the 2024 men's Junior Hockey Asia Cup. Pakistan got off to a flying start to the blockbuster contest as they acquired an early lead through skipper Hannan Shahid just three minutes into the game. The green shirts' lead, however, did not last long as Hundal hit back in the next minute with an equalizer, forcing the first quarter to end at 1-1. India completely dominated the proceedings in the second quarter as the defending champions struck back-to-back goals through Dilraj Singh and Hundal in the 18th and 19th minute, respectively, to take a 3-1 lead.

Security forces eliminate 5 terrorists

The terrorists hideout was targeted after receiving intelligence

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Security forces on Wednesday eliminated five terrorists in an intelligence-based operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, security forces conducted the operation to clear the area from the evil of terrorism. The terrorists' hideout was targeted in a precise manner which killed five while two others injured. The ISPR reiterated resolve that the sanitisation operation would continue in the area adding that the security forces are determined to wipe terrorism out of the country.

Bilawal meets Maulana Fazl

Maulana raises concerns over madrasa registration

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari meet Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman. Significant decisions were held between both of them. Sources indicate that Maulana Fazlur Rehman raised the issue of the registration of religious seminaries with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Bilawal reportedly assured Maulana Fazlur Rehman that the bill regarding madrasa registration has not yet been signed by the President of Pakistan.

Dismayed over 'lockdown' PTI, govt both at 'fault', IHC CJ on Nov 24 protest

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq censures PTI, govt for violating public rights during protest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq on Wednesday strongly criticised both Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the government for their disregard of citizens' rights during and after the November 24 protest. Hearing a contempt petition filed by traders, the IHC CJ remarked, "PTI was wrong, and so was the government," as he questioned the actions of both sides. Censuring the government for shutting down Islamabad,

Continued on Page 06

Barrister Saif denies talks with govt

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa spokesperson Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif has stated that while they believe in dialogue - having negotiated even with the Tehreek-e-Taliban - currently, there are no talks underway with the government and protests will continue.

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After PM visit

Tarar: Pak-Saudi ties reaching new heights

He said that agreements signed during the visit are now materializing, paving the way for increased economic collaboration

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has said Pak-Saudi economic ties are reaching new heights. Addressing a press conference after PM Shehbaz Sharif concluded his visit to the Kingdom, the minister emphasised the growing strength of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations, calling the visit a turning point in bilateral ties. "The Prime Minister had his fifth meeting with the Saudi Crown Prince in six months, reflecting the deepening cooperation between the two brotherly nations," Tarar stated.

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Ali Zafar appointed JCP member

Senate chairman appoints Senator Zafar as JCP member after consulting with opposition leader

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Barrister Ali Zafar was on Wednesday appointed as a member of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) - the judicial body responsible for judges appointment to the superior courts - where he will represent

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Minister rubbishes reports about oil deal with Russia

"We are creating such framework that consumer gets cheap oil," says Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik categorically denied media reports on Wednesday claiming that Pakistan had reached a deal with Russia to import crude oil at a discounted rate. "The news of a deal with Russia on crude oil is absolutely false. No agreement has been reached with Russia regarding such a deal," said Malik while speaking to the reporters. The federal minister's clarification comes after it was reported that Islamabad had decided to import Russian crude oil at a discounted rate on the offer of Moscow. Media reports suggested that during the Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) meeting being held in Moscow, both countries had agreed to

Continued on Page 06

Pak committed to implementing IMF program

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Mohammad Aurangzeb has stated that Pakistan is dedicated to implementing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program, with ongoing economic reforms and efforts to simplify the business process. Speaking at an event in the federal capital Islamabad, the finance minister shared that

Continued on Page 06

Dar assures diplomats

Govt committed to ensuring Red Zone's security

FM says no federating unit has right to march on Islamabad, slamming KP government for using "state resources"

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Rejecting the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) allegations of "straight firing" at civilians during its "do-or-die" protest in Islamabad, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has clarified that the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) were not provided with live ammunition, but water cannon, tear gas and batons. "Police and Rangers were deployed in the first two tiers, with the army as the third line of defence to protect the Diplomatic Enclave, Parliament House and other important buildings," he said while briefing members of the diplomatic corps on the recent situation after the PTI protest. The former ruling party's much-hyped protest in Islamabad, aimed at securing PTI founder Imran Khan's release who has been behind bars for more than a year, culminated in PTI's hasty retreat after the government's midnight crackdown on the protesters. The Imran Khan-founded party has since claimed that at least 12 of its workers were killed and 1,000 were arrested. However, the government has categorically denied using live ammunition against the protesters and said that four law enforcers including three Rangers personnel and policeman were martyred during the protest. Briefing the foreign diplomats, Dar - who is also the deputy prime minister - said that the government had enacted a new law "Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act, 2024" that barred the protest demonstrations in the Red Zone and required permission from a magistrate for any public gatherings. Explaining why the government resorted to

Continued on Page 06

PML-Q opposes banning PTI, calls for talks

"PTI is a political party and a ban should not be imposed on it," says Punjab minister

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: As the ruling coalition and the opposition PTI locked horns over the November 24 Islamabad protest, Punjab Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain has opposed any move to ban the Imran Khan-founded party. "PTI is a political party and a ban should not be imposed on it," Hussain said while talking to the media on Wednesday. Hussain, whose party Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) is an ally of PML-N-led government both at the Centre and in Punjab, also called for holding talks with the PTI.

Continued on Page 06



OGRA has started action against all offenders involved in illegal handling of petroleum products

OIL, CNG/ RLNG, LPG



Whoever is found involved in the following illegal activities, shall be punished with imprisonment or fine or with both

- Decanting of LPG from cylinder to cylinder for domestic and commercial use
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Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority Government of Pakistan



Punjab CM hails banks' role in economic growth

CM Maryam Nawaz reaffirmed the Punjab government's vision of establishing a robust, transparent, and equitable financial system. She stressed that a fair and inclusive financial framework is essential for sustainable economic progress and ensuring equal opportunities for all

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that banks serve as the backbone of the economy, driving financial stability, facilitating trade, and creating new opportunities for investment. In her message on the International Day of Banks, being celebrated on Wednesday, the CM acknowledged the critical role financial institutions play in the development of economies. The CM extended heartfelt appreciation to banking profession-

als, financial experts, and all stakeholders contributing to economic growth and stability. She specifically lauded the contributions of the Bank of Punjab to the province's development. She noted that the institution has been instrumental in supporting economic initiatives, funding public welfare projects, and fostering entrepreneurship. Highlighting the government's ongoing reforms in the banking sector, she emphasized that modern practices and technological advancements are being introduced at the Bank of Punjab to align with global stand-

ards and meet the evolving needs of the economy. CM Maryam Nawaz reaffirmed the Punjab government's vision of establishing a robust, transparent, and equitable financial system. She stressed that a fair and inclusive financial framework is essential for sustainable economic progress and ensuring equal opportunities for all. She expressed hope that the banking sector will continue to support the province's journey toward prosperity by creating avenues for innovation, investment, and financial inclusion.



LAHORE: Pakistan Navy officials attend the funeral of Former Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Yastur-Ul-Haq Malik.

PFC to join 5th Pak-Africa trade conference in Ethiopia

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will participate in the 3-day 5th Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference and Single Country Exhibition (PATC & SCE) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, commencing from Jan 15. Chairing board of directors meeting here on Wednesday, CEO PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq said Addis Ababa, a hub of African diplomacy, provides an ideal venue for fostering economic collaboration between Pakistan and Africa, promoting sustainable growth and long-term partnerships across the continent. The conference aimed to facilitate meaningful business engagements between Pakistani exporters and African importers, showcasing Pakistan's diverse products, including textiles, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, agriculture, and engineering goods. The single-country exhibition will provide a platform for Pakistani companies to display their offerings, fostering mutual trade and investment opportunities, he added. Organized by the Federal Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), this event underscores Pakistan's commitment to deepening trade and economic ties with African nations under its "Look Africa" policy, he concluded.

Crackdown launched on those employing children as labourers

DNA

LAYYAH: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Amira Baidar has announced strict action against those employing domestic workers below the age of 15, declaring it a punishable offence. The step is part of her broader campaign to curb gender-based violence and protect vulnerable segments of society. The DC also imposed a ban on making domestic

workers work for more than 48 hours per week, especially women and minors. Employers found violating these rules would face fines ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000. "Gender-based violence and exploitation have no place in a civilised society," DC Amira warned. She stressed that treating domestic workers with respect and providing them with fair working conditions was not just a legal responsibility but a moral imperative also.

The administration has also launched awareness campaigns to educate employers and domestic workers about their rights and responsibilities. Civil society organisations and residents of Layyah have appreciated the DC's proactive measures, calling it a significant step toward creating a just and equitable society. The initiative highlights the administration's commitment to safeguarding the dignity and rights of women and children.

Over Rs 120m fine imposed on 64,000 misfit vehicles

LAHORE: Traffic Police imposed fine of more than Rs 120 million on 64,000 smoke-emitting vehicles during its on-going anti smog crackdown in the provincial capital this year. According to a spokesman for the traffic police department, a total of 12,000 vehicles that caused pollution by transporting sand, dirt, and other materials without proper coverings were also fined. Additionally, 661 vehicles in poor condition had their route permits cancelled, while more than 27,000 vehicles were temporarily shutdown as part of the operation. Special measures including a complete ban on heavy traffic entering the city on Fridays and Sundays to reduce congestion and air pollution. Further crackdowns were conducted at entry points of the city, where vehicles carrying materials like dust and sand were strictly monitored. Chief Traffic Officer Ammara Athar emphasized that no tractor trailers were allowed to operate without proper safety measures, such as tarpaulins and water for dust control. DSPs across the city were actively conducting special operations at entry and exit points to enforce these regulations. In response to videos of smoke-emitting vehicles circulating on social media, the authorities had initiated further crackdowns. As part of a comprehensive awareness campaign, more than 2,700 awareness lectures had been delivered in schools, colleges, bus terminals, and public institutions. Additionally, artificial intelligence systems were being used to issue fines, with over 7,000 tickets being generated so far. The Lahore Chief Traffic Officer has also sent official notices to government and semi-government agencies to address smoke-emitting vehicles.—APP

Passing out parade of 117 cadets held

KARACHI: The Passing out parade of the 61st Batch was held here at Pakistan Marine Academy on Wednesday where 117 Cadets graduated in Nautical and Marine Engineering. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh graced the occasion as Chief Guest. The parade ceremony was attended by a large number of Armed forces and civil dignitaries apart from families of the passing out term. The Commandant PMA Commodore Rizwan Ali Munnawar SI (M) congratulated the passing out term and appreciated their efforts during 2 years of professional training. He urged the Cadets to continue their hard work with the same zeal and zest and also keep abreast with modern trends in the shipping industry for their future duties. Later, Chief Guest distributed the awards to the high achievers in the passing out term which included, Cadet Wasam ul Haque who won the Commandant's Medal, Cadet Ali Zaman won the PNSC Dagger, Cadet Lt/Muhammad Talha Khan, who won Chief of Naval Staff Silver Medal, Minister of Ports & Shipping Medal was won by Bilal Ahmed, whereas President's Gold Medal was won

by Cadet. Ehtisham Ali. GRG Shield and Cash Award Rupees 100,000 was awarded to the best overall Cadet, Bilal Ahmed and GRG Medal and Cash Award Rupees 50,000 were awarded to second second-best overall Cadet, Muhammad Jabran. SSMA Arabia's third position Cash Awards of rupees 25,009 were awarded to Cadet Talha Noor and Cadet Inam Numan Sahi, and SSMA Arabian's Second Position Cash award of Rupees 50,000 was awarded to Cadet Bilal Ahmed and Cadet Muhammad Jabran. Whereas SSMA Arabia First Position Cash Award Rupees 75,000 was received by Cadet Muhammad Talha Khan and Cadet Ehtisham Ali. The Chief Guest in his speech highlighted that he is indeed proud of the Pakistan Marine Academy as it offers training to Cadets in the fields of Nautical & Marine Engineering, conducts the Mandatory Seafarers Training, Certification Courses and Post-sea specialized courses. Pakistan Marine Academy is contributing positively to the development of the Maritime sector of our beloved Country. During his address, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh highly appreciated the efforts of PMA to upgrade the institution into

the "Maritime University of Pakistan" in the Nautical and Engineering fields. He wished to see PMA to be a "Prestigious Maritime, Research and Development Institute" of Pakistan duly recognized and acknowledged at the international level. Chief Guest appreciated the Commandant PMA and his entire staff for hosting a successful visit of Secretary General IMO to PMA. Furthermore, the chief guest announced one additional salary to the entire staff of PMA. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh also announced a full-fee scholarship to the needy Cadet of PMA under his patronage. During his address, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh also congratulated the graduating term for starting their Maritime profession which is indeed a vital sector for Pakistan's economy. He reminded the cadets that they would be the sailing ambassadors of the country and advised them to maintain the excellent standards, which they had attained at the Academy. He expressed that Government of the Pakistan attached great importance to Marine Training and the Pakistan Marine Academy is living proof.—APP

PAJCCI concerned at decline in exports to Afghanistan, CARs

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Senior Vice President Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has expressed his deep concern over drastic reduction in bilateral trade with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs). In a press statement issued here on Wednesday, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi who is also Executive Member Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) blames enforcement of two percent Infrastructure Development Cess (IDS) by Khyber Government on export cargo

as reason for recent dip in trade between Pakistan, Afghanistan and CARs. Zia said in the recent past the volume of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan was around 2.5 billion dollars which has shrunk to mere 700 million dollars. Citing other reasons behind this plunge in trade volume, Zia said it includes frequent closure of Pak-Afghan border at Torkhem border, Temporary Admission Document (TAD), implementation of ban on Pak-Afghan trade including 100 percent bank guarantee, inclusion of 14 items into negative list, enforcement of 10 percent processing fees, restrictions at

Karachi port causing holding of more than 300 containers of transit trade. Zia said due to stopping of these more than 300 containers at Karachi port, huge financial penalties under the head of demurrage and detention charges were imposed and a large portion of Pak-Afghan trade was diverted to Bandar Abbas and Chabahar ports in Iran, rendering thousands of custom clearing agents, border agents, shipping agents, transporters, labourers and other associated persons as jobless. SVP PAJCCI said due to enforcement of 2 percent IDS on export goods in KP, most of the export consignments that were transported to Afghanistan from

Torkhem border have been shifted to Chaman border in Baluchistan, depriving KP of substantial revenue. He demanded KP government to review its decision regarding imposition of two percent IDS on export because the decision has rendered thousands of people associated with Pak-Afghan trade as jobless. He said on the one hand federal government is announcing numerous incentives for promotion of trade in the country, while on the other hand KP government has imposed two percent cess on export as a result of which commercial activities at Bacha Khan airport in Peshawar, Azhakhel dry port.

Pakistan holds potential in shaping peace & prosperity amid Global Power shifts

Ambassador Tehmina Janjua highlighted in her keynote address that the preeminent power today ensures through its policies that the perception of competition that it holds with its adversaries becomes a reality for the rest of the world

ISLAMABAD: The speakers at a session "Major Power Competition: Emerging Realities", highlighted that Pakistan holds the potential to contribute significantly to peace, connectivity, and economic growth in an era defined by competition and collaboration among major powers. The working session was organised by the China Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) here at the ISSI's annual flagship dialogue forum, "Islamabad Conclave", said a press release issued on Wednesday. Distinguished panelists included Ambassador Tehmina Janjua, former Foreign Secretary of Paki-

stan; Prof. Dr. Hu Shisheng, Director China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR); Dr. Farhan Hanif Siddiqui, Professor at SPIR, Quaid-i-Azam University and Dr. Andreea Stoin-Karadeli, Assistant Professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC, moderated the session. The Working Session was attended by notable diplomats, academics, students and members of civil society, said a press release. Ambassador Tehmina Janjua highlighted in her keynote address that the preeminent power today ensures through its policies that the perception

of competition that it holds with its adversaries becomes a reality for the rest of the world. She added that amidst the pressure for choosing sides in the ongoing competition, smaller states are more likely to accede to demands of external powers. However, this situation can be averted by creating neutral alliances of the small and medium sized states that do not involve in bloc politics. She also emphasised that for Pakistan the regions of concern shall continue to be South and West Asia. In South Asia, Pakistan must only get in conversation with India if the other side has respectful in-


terlocutors. Whereas in West Asia, once the war in Gaza is over, there shall be increasing pressure on countries including Pakistan for a settlement similar to Abraham Accords in the region. Dr. Hu Shisheng spoke about how the BRI has become a vital platform for countries that are facing sanctions or economic challenges, offering opportunities for growth and collaboration. BRI remains a key driver of both hard and soft connectivity—linking countries not only through infrastructure but also through cultural and economic partnerships, he added. Over the past decade, the BRI has


created significant economic opportunities, such as the creation of 40-50 per cent more jobs in Laos and considerable regional trade growth in Africa. The BRI has also facilitated China's presence in over 267 cities across Europe, furthering global economic integration. China's trade also grew by 20 per cent during past 10 years since BRI. Dr. Farhan Hanif Siddiqui noted that today's competition is multifaceted, involving not only economic and strategic rivalry but also the strategic use of trade and sanctions, unlike the bipolar competition during the Cold War.—APP

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- Pet Relocation
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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

- Dec 01/Romania National Day
- Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day
- Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day
- Dec 05/Thailand National Day
- Dec 06/Finland Independence Day
- Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day
- Dec 09/Tanzania National Day
- Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day
- Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day
- Dec 12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day
- Dec 16/Bahrain National Day
- Dec 16/Kazakhstan Independence Day
- Dec 18/Qatar National Day
- Dec 18/Niger National Day
- Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day
- Dec 23/Japan National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.....9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Moot on economic agenda in Pak's foreign policy concludes

Presenting the findings and recommendations of the conference, Prof. Dr. M. Riaz Shad emphasized the following, The rise of multiple economic powers in the world presents both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. To stay competitive, Pakistan must closely observe and engage with emerging economies, particularly in East Asia

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages successfully concluded its two-day international conference titled "Prioritizing Economic Agenda in Pakistan's Foreign Policy towards China, the US, and the EU." The conference brought together leading scholars, policymakers, and researchers to deliberate on enhancing Pakistan's economic diplomacy in an evolving global landscape. The final session of the conference focused on prioritizing the economic agenda in Pakistan-EU relations. Prof. Dr. M. Riaz Shad, Jean Monnet Chair and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, NUML, opened the session by highlighting the critical importance of upgrading economic ties with the EU. Dr. Abiha Zahra, Assistant Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Governance and Global Studies, Information Technology University, Lahore, discussed the challenges in strengthening Pakistan-EU economic relations. Dr. Najimdeen Bakare, Professor

at the Centre for International Peace and Stability, NUST, identified opportunities for advancing the economic agenda, while M. Taimur Fahad Khan, Research Associate at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), presented key policy lessons for enhancing economic cooperation. The session concluded with a Q&A segment, engaging participants in meaningful dialogue. Presenting the findings and recommendations of the conference, Prof. Dr. M. Riaz Shad emphasized the following, The rise of multiple economic powers in the world presents both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. To stay competitive, Pakistan must closely observe and engage with emerging economies, particularly in East Asia. Pakistan's industrial base remains relatively small, limiting economic growth and diversification. Initiatives like CPEC and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) offer an opportunity to gradually enhance industrial capacity. Pakistan needs to address

productivity challenges in goods, services, and human resources. The growing reliance on unskilled labor is a concern, and youth must be leveraged as an economic advantage. Pakistan's exports lack diversification and value addition. It is crucial to diversify exports, add value, and determine comparative advantages to boost exports. While Pakistan has emphasized its geographic location for strategic connectivity, this approach has limitations. The focus should shift toward leveraging geography for geoeconomics by fostering a strong, diversified economy based on innovation, industrial growth, and human capital. Connectivity initiatives like CPEC must go beyond infrastructure development to attract private capital, create jobs, generate exports, and facilitate technology transfer for sustainable economic development. The government should actively promote private sector involvement in foreign business deals and international partnerships. Economic diplomacy should be re-

defined, moving beyond traditional aid and loan-based approaches to emphasize investment attraction and trade agreements. Pakistan needs to leverage its diaspora for remittances, investments, and business relations. The diaspora, particularly in the U.S., can act as economic ambassadors. Sector-specific collaborations in IT, pharmaceuticals, energy, and tourism should also be prioritized. Institutional reforms are necessary to address governance challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, lack of transparency, and policy inconsistencies. Strengthening regulatory bodies and ensuring policy stability and predictability are critical. Security and economic issues should be decoupled in Pakistan-U.S. relations. Institutional frameworks focusing on non-political sectors like technology, education, climate resilience, and renewable energy can help establish an economic relationship resilient to geopolitical tensions.

Pakistan's economy, primarily agriculture-based, must transition to include more cottage industries to add value to agricultural products and process raw materials locally. Political stability and policy continuity are essential for fostering a stable environment conducive to long-term economic growth. Director General NUML, Brigadier Shahzad Munir, delivered the vote of thanks, commending the organizers for addressing critical issues. He emphasized the importance of shifting focus to geo-economics and redefining economic diplomacy while recognizing global economic dynamics. Brig. Munir urged participants to embrace knowledge sharing, foster national pride, and work collectively for Pakistan's growth and prosperity. The conference provided actionable insights and fostered discussions on redefining Pakistan's foreign policy with a strong economic focus, positioning Pakistan as a competitive player in the global economy.—DNA

New legislation to safeguard minority rights

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Advisor on Political Affairs and Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination, Rana Sana Ullah on Wednesday chaired a ministerial committee meeting focusing on finalizing the National Commission for Minorities Bill 2024 and reviewing policies on inter-faith harmony and religious tolerance. Convened at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, the meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarrar and Federal Minister for Planning, Ahsan Iqbal. Addressing the participants, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarrar underscored the importance of making the National Commission for Minorities independent and autonomous, free from ministerial influence. A subcommittee proposed granting financial and administrative autonomy to the commission, which will comprise 13 members, including nine representatives from minority communities. The committee directed the Ministry of Law and Justice to finalize the draft of the National Commission for Minorities Bill 2024 within three days, incorporating recommendations put forth by the subcommittee.—APP

Rana slams PTI for focusing on lie-based propaganda

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Prime Minister Rana Inshan Afzal Wednesday criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and said that they lack of a public-related agenda by focusing on spreading lie-based propaganda. In an interview with a Private news channel, Coordinator Rana Inshan said PTI's false propaganda about protester deaths is a desperate attempt to achieve their nefarious political objectives and hide the failure of their protest. About PTI's propaganda efforts, he said that they are merely an attempt to tarnish Pakistan's image internationally, he mentioned. The spread of misinformation on social media has become a significant concern.—APP

Ethiopia, Pakistan agree on enhancing aviation coop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Wednesday agreed to bolster the bilateral relations by expanding their cooperation in the aviation sector. Both sides agreed to this end during a meeting between H.E. Dr. Jemal Bekir Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDR Ethiopia to Pakistan, and H.E. Ahsan Ali Mangi, Federal Secretary for the Ministry of Aviation. During the meeting, they had a detailed discussion on the matters of mutual interests including the bilateral cooperation for increasing air connectivity between the two countries, and also transferring knowledge and technology. During the meeting, H.E. Ambassador Dr. Jemal expressed his gratitude for the crucial support extended by the Government of Pakistan in the commencement of the Ethiopian Airlines' operations in Karachi. He underscored the significance of launching the Ethiopian Airlines in other cities of Pakistan to increase mobility not only between Ethiopia and Pakistan, but also Africa and Pakistan. The Ambassador briefed the Federal Secretary on the pivotal role being played by Ethiopian Airlines in the



effective implementation of the "Look Africa and Engage Africa" policies of Pakistan that were aimed at strengthening government-to-government, people-to-people, and business-to-business relations between both Pakistan and African countries. He said the Ethiopian Airlines have been brought to this country under the "Enter and Operate

in Africa through Ethiopia" policy launched by the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad. The Ambassador also highlighted the growing popularity of Ethiopian Airlines among the people of Pakistan who have been fully appreciating the services offered by one of the largest airlines in the world.

Khunjerab Pass operationalized for trade round year

ISLAMABAD: The Khunjerab Pass has been made operational for round the year trade among Pakistan, China, and the Central Asian states. This significant milestone has been achieved for the first time after 77 years of independence. Khunjerab Pass serves as an important trade route, linking Gilgit-Baltistan with China. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project aims at enhancing trade links among Pakistan, China, and Central Asian states. Goods such as machinery, textiles, electronics, and food items are transported through the Khunjerab Pass, which is crucial for the economic development of neighboring countries. In recent years, Pakistan has also used this route to deliver industrial and agricultural products to the Central Asian states, especially Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. The opening of the Khunjerab Pass round the year will further strengthen economic ties between China, Pakistan, and other regional countries which will also help promote regional trade. Historically, the Pass was open only from April to November, with trade across the border halting for five months each year due to heavy snowfall and harsh winter conditions. To resolve this issue durably, the leadership of Pakistan and China agreed at the third Belt and Road Forum in 2023 to take steps to keep the Khunjerab Pass open round the year. The joint communiqué expressed the commitment of both countries to take all necessary measures for infrastructure development and ensuring uninterrupted trade. In this context, the National Logistics Corporation (NLC) has taken comprehensive measures at the Sost Dry Port for cross-border trade, including the installation of a central heating system and other facilities for officials and the trading community. These facilities aim to ensure smooth and continuous trade activities throughout the year. Furthermore, extensive planning has been made to promote imports and exports and facilitate large-scale transit from Pakistan.—DNA

Banks urged to lead in providing housing finance

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb said here on Wednesday that the government will not revert to directed lending to the housing sector and urged for creating incentivization to facilitate banked financing to make it accessible to public. "We will not go back to directed lending, which was wrong thing to do. It creates distortions and has implications for the medium term," the minister said while speaking at International Affordable, Green & Resilient Housing Conference. In order to promote housing finance, the government will instead focus on creating incentivization mechanisms, he added. This approach will encourage banks and microfinance institutions to take the lead in providing housing finance, making it easier for people to access. The minister said, the country's housing sector was linked with two existential problems including population growth and climate change. With a population growing at an alarming rate of 2.5 percent, the minister said, it had far-reaching consequences, including child stunting, poverty, poor learning outcomes, and a significant number of girls being out of school. Housing plays a critical role in addressing these issues, and the government recognizes its importance in providing affordable and resilient housing solutions, he added. On the other hand, he said, the devastating 2022 floods served as a wake-up call, highlighting the need for resilient housing that can withstand the impacts of climate change. He said, the Sindh government has taken the first step towards promoting resilient housing by discouraging the construction of houses on water banks. He said, to address the housing finance gap, the government plans to establish a regulatory authority that will enable financing for housing. Furthermore, the government aims to introduce foreclosure laws to encourage banks to lend to the housing sector. Talking about the state of economy, the minister said, Pakistan has achieved notable milestones in its journey towards a sustainable and inclusive growth paradigm, with housing emerging as a critical pillar of this inclusiveness.—DNA

Saidpur Village, Melody beautification work to be completed by Spring

Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that the experts from Baku are working day and night to beautify Srinagar Highway, Melody Market, and Saidpur Village, which is commendable

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The work of beautification, restoration, and uplift of Saidpur Model Village and Melody Market will be completed by the spring, while beautification work on Srinagar Highway will also be completed soon. This was informed during a meeting chaired by Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa and Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Khazar Farhadov. The meeting was attended by horticultural experts from Baku and senior officers of CDA. Saidpur Village, Melody Market, and Srinagar Highway are being beautified with the assistance of horticultural experts from Baku. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that the experts from Baku are work-

ing day and night to beautify Srinagar Highway, Melody Market, and Saidpur Village, which is commendable. He added that a focal person be appointed from both CDA and Baku experts to ensure the successful and timely completion of the beautification work. The meeting was informed that the beautification work of Saidpur Village will be completed within four months. The Chairman CDA instructed architects and officers of CDA to visit Saidpur Village and provide their feedback to ensure the beautification efforts are long-lasting. It was also mentioned that steps have been taken to improve the sewerage system in Saidpur Village. The meeting decided that water experts from Baku and relevant CDA officers will propose a workable solution for the sewerage and water man-

agement at the beautified sites. The meeting further noted that the beautification process of Melody Market will also be completed by April. Chairman CDA said that after the beautification, these locations, especially Saidpur Village, will be turned into a hub for recreational and cultural activities. Various colorful programs and festivals will be organized at these places during the spring season. The meeting was informed that local plants will be planted along Srinagar Highway, and its natural landscape is being further beautified. It was also mentioned that under the Islamabad Beautification Plan, statues of prominent figures of Pakistan Movement, including the founder of Pakistan, will be installed at the Pakistan Monument to honor their significant contributions in the history of Pakistan.

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ULTIMATE WOMENS HEALTH SCREEN ADD ON Breast Ultrasound/ Mammogram Ultrasound Abdomen & Pelvis Cervical Smear Ovary Tumor Marker	ULTIMATE MEN HEALTH SCREEN ADD ON Prostate tumour marker (PSA) Testosterone Ultrasound Abdomen & Pelvis (Including Prostate)	

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Briefs

Academic research key to sustainable real estate policies

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Wednesday said that reliance on academic research for producing sustainable policies in the housing and real estate sectors was inevitable. While addressing the international conference on Re-Imagining the Real Estate: Sustainable Market Growth and Urban Planning, he lauded the team at NUML that worked tirelessly to take the lead and to introduce real estate as a sector that has a huge potential for workable research and planning. This conference was arranged by the faculty of Management Sciences at National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad. The conference was aimed to underscore the persistent challenges and inefficiencies within Pakistan's real estate sector. As one of Asia's largest real estate markets, the sector significantly influences the national GDP but suffers due to the lack of transparency, standardized valuation methods, and regulatory oversight that results in mispricing, under-invoicing, and unauthorized housing developments, particularly in urban areas like Islamabad. Through the conference experts in real estate industry were brought together to forge solutions that would enhance market efficiency and integrity, which are vital for fostering sustainable economic growth and urban development in Pakistan. The Minister said that in many countries like Japan, Türkiye and Iran urban expansion has been managed efficiently through proper planning and management.—APP

Early screening stressed for detecting ovarian cancer

ISLAMABAD: A leading expert Wednesday stressed the need for increased awareness and early screening of symptoms of ovarian cancer among women as the country witnesses a steady rise in cases, primarily attributed to the prevalence of unhealthy lifestyles. Talking to a private news channel, a senior Gynecologist Dr Khurshid Noorani said ovarian cancer is often diagnosed at a late stage, significantly reducing the chances of survival, adding, therefore, creating awareness about the disease can play a pivotal role in promoting early diagnosis and treatment. Raising awareness about ovarian cancer involves educating women and healthcare providers about the subtle symptoms of the disease, which can include persistent bloating, abdominal pain and difficulty eating. Experts suggest that women, especially those over the age of 40 or with a family history of ovarian cancer, should be more vigilant about these symptoms and seek medical attention promptly if they persist. Responding to a query, the expert said that the alarming rise in ovarian cancer cases in the country has been linked to the prevalence of unhealthy lifestyles.—APP

Ahsan describes religious harmony as 'collective responsibility'

The seminar was held in collaboration with Allama Iqbal Open University, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, University of Management & Technology, Lahore, Gift University, Gujranwala, The Islamic Foundation, UK, and Markfield Institute of Higher Education, UK

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday said that promoting peace, justice and harmony was a collective responsibility of citizens, which ultimately led to achieving national development and prosperity.

"We must stand against hatred and raise the voice of moderation, as Pakistan's Constitution is against extremism and terrorism," he said while addressing the inaugural session of an international seminar titled "The Role of Religions in Fostering Peace, Harmony and Justice."

The event was organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Islamabad, in collaboration with Allama Iqbal Open University, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, University of Management & Technology, Lahore, Gift University, Gujranwala, The Islamic Foundation, UK and Markfield Institute of Higher Education, UK.

The minister said the doors to development could be opened by promoting social harmony, terming the religious, ethnic and ideological divide as an 'obstacle' in the path to progress and prosperity. He said that Paigham-e-Pakistan (Message of Pakistan) was the road-map to forge greater harmony among religions and various sects and ensure moderation, add-



ing: "The message of all religions is based on humanity, love and justice."

Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the enduring wisdom of faith traditions, emphasizing their universal principles of human dignity, non-violence, and compassion. Drawing on teachings from Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, he said these faiths stressed the need for promoting harmonious and progressive societies. The day-long event gathered international and local speakers, scholars, religious lead-

ers, policymakers, and civil society members to discuss religion's transformative role in tackling humanity's key challenges. Dr Tamara Sonn, Professor Emerita at Georgetown University, Washington D.C., Prof. Khurshid Ahmad, founder and patron-in-chief of IPS, Khalid Rahman, chairman of IPS, and Khurshid Ahmad Nadeem, chairman of the National Rahmatul-Lil-Aalameen WaKhatamun-Nabiyyin Authority, also spoke on the occasion. Prof. Khurshid Ahmad emphasized religion's role in addressing spiritual require-

ments, calling it a fundamental necessity throughout history, and warned that modern civilization's departure from religion had led to injustice, oppression and discord. As humanity grapples with materialism, nationalism, and neocolonialism, Prof. Ahmad urged faith communities to foster harmony through moral appeal rather than coercion, offering ethical guidance to counter today's challenges. He described Islam's principles as fostering progress, justice, and harmony. Dr Tamara Sonn highlighted religion's para-

doxical role in conflicts, noting its unparalleled potential to resolve disputes despite often being seen at their core. She warned against religious nationalism, calling it manipulative and destabilizing, and urged societies to embrace universal values of justice, humanity, and equality. Stressing the importance of values over identities, she remarked: "It is not the faith we are born into but the values we embody that define a person's merit." Dr. Sonn advocated interfaith collaboration through a "dialogue of action" to address shared challenges. Khurshid Nadeem underscored religion's enduring relevance, highlighting secularism's failure to provide a comprehensive moral framework. He stressed that religion remained essential to addressing fundamental human needs for meaning and guidance, especially in today's moral crisis. Khalid Rahman accentuated the decisive role of human behavior in shaping religion's influence, emphasizing that "religions are not inherently divisive; their impact depends on how they are practiced and interpreted." He highlighted how religion was some time misused to incite violence and exclusion, overshadowing its core values of compassion and justice.

Minister hosts Chinese delegation to foster collaborative initiatives

The Minister acknowledged the project as a significant investment from China's Ministry of Education and reiterated the government's focus on skill development as a vital catalyst for economic growth

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain, convened a meeting with a Chinese delegation to explore collaborative opportunities in the realms of healthcare and skill development. Chinese delegation led by Ms Scarlet, head, OPH, Healthcare project presented a comprehensive proposal by GAREA Group, a renowned provider of integrated solutions for digital products and services in primary healthcare, said a press release. The proposed project endeavors to provide affordable healthcare services to remote areas through the strategic deployment of AI-based cloud

computing, thereby reducing costs and enhancing access to accurate diagnoses. A notable feature of the project is the introduction of a portable diagnostic machine, capable of diagnosing 7-8 types of diseases, which will significantly reduce transportation costs and increase accessibility. Furthermore, the project's digital platform will enable seamless communication between patients, doctors, and medical stores. Reports will be directly shared with doctors on the panel, and prescriptions will be shared with medical stores, facilitating the direct delivery of medication to patients. This initiative has already yielded promising results in Indonesia, where it has

augmented doctors' earnings by increasing the daily patient check-up ratio from 8 to 37. The Minister expressed unequivocal support for the initiatives, underscoring the government's unwavering commitment to equipping individuals with advanced skills to meet the evolving demands of the global labor market. The delegation also introduced the three levels of certification: Huawei Certified ICT Associate (HCIA) 2 week course, Huawei Certified ICT Professional (HCIP) 1 month course, and Huawei Certified ICT Expert (HCIE) 6 months course. The Minister acknowledged the project as a significant investment from China's Ministry of

Education and reiterated the government's focus on skill development as a vital catalyst for economic growth. The meeting culminated in a consensus to formalize the partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between OPH and the Ministry of Health. This MoU will serve as a foundational framework for coordinated efforts, aligning both ministries toward shared objectives of skill development and healthcare advancement. The Minister reaffirmed that such partnerships are instrumental in upgrading the skillsets of Pakistanis, thereby enhancing their competitiveness in the global job market.—APP

Railways reunite around 684 kids with heirs

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways Police have rescued and reunited as many as 684 vulnerable children with their legal heirs and different welfare institutions during the last ten months with the help of train staffers. "During the operation, the Railways Police have retrieved and returned around 2,263 lost luggage valued Rs 23.7 million to the passengers," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. Additionally, the official said that around 14,793 handicapped, injured and old passengers were provided with first aid, wheelchairs, and stretcher facilities during their journey in trains. Giving details of division wise, he said that Rawalpindi division reunited 151, Lahore 164, Karachi 137, Sukkur 69, Peshawar 79, Multan 65 and Quetta division 19 runaway children to their parents and different welfare institutions. The official said that most of the children were found unaccompanied and loitering at stations after they left their house following a fight or getting scolded or in search of better life. Similarly, he said that Rawalpindi division assisted 3,837 passengers, Lahore 2,761, Karachi 6,135, Peshawar 1195, Sukkur 449, Multan 533 and Quetta 442 in retrieving lost luggage. "The valuables that were returned to the passengers included laptops, smart-phones, gold and artificial jewelry, ladies and gents' handbags and local or international currencies," he added. He said the Railways Police Help Desks had been established at all the major railway stations across the country, and the performance of the Railways Police has been quite satisfactory during the last year. "Police are performing duties efficiently despite the limited resources while steps would be taken to further improve their performance to the optimum level during the next year," he added.—DNA

Services trade deficit shrunk 9.94%

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Services trade deficit during the first 04 months of the current financial year shrunk by 9.64 percent as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported on Wednesday. During the period from July-October, 2024, the services trade balance was recorded at \$993.24 million was against the \$1,009.24 billion of the same period of the last year, it added. In the first four months of the current financial year, services exports grew by 7.91 percent and imports increased by 2.41 percent respectively as services worth \$2,600 billion were

exported from the country as compared to the exports of \$2,409 billion of the same period of the last year, it added. Meanwhile, the imports of services into the country in the first four months of the current financial year were recorded at \$3,593 billion as against the imports of \$3,509 billion of the same period of the last year, it added. On month on month basis, the services traded deficit contracted by 26.79 percent as services exports grew by 13.43 percent and imports by 16.82 percent, it added.

In October 2024, services valued at \$688.95 million were exported as compared to exports of \$607.37 million, whereas

imports of services were registered at \$950.08 million as compared to the imports of \$813.32 million. On year on year basis, the services trade deficit widened by 1.02 percent in October 2024 as compared to the same month of the last year as services valued at \$688.95 million were exported as compared to the exports of \$661.91 million of the same period of the last year. As compared to the month of October 2023, the services trade imports into the country grew by 3.22 percent as it was recorded at \$950.08 million in October 2024 as compared to the imports of \$920.40 million of the same month of the last year.

PO to organize webinar

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a webinar titled "Quality Control Circles" on December 10 (Tuesday). A quality circle is a team of employees who work together to solve problems and improve quality in their workplace. They meet regularly to discuss issues and find solutions, according to an NPO document issued here. It helped employees to take ownership of their work and make positive changes. The workshop provides information about improvement initiatives, the definition of quality circle, iceberg of ignorance, X and Y technologies, and quality circle history. It also highlighted the objectives of quality circle, the operation cycle, and essential and unique features of the quality circle. The workshop has been designed for industrialists, senior managers, departmental heads, production managers, and executives of all departments.—APP

Int'l Volunteer Day for eco, social uplift today

ISLAMABAD: International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development is going to be observed on today (December 5) globally including Pakistan, to recognize the tireless efforts of volunteers. International Volunteer Day's theme, "Solidarity through Volunteering," highlights the importance of unity and caring for one another. On this day, volunteers reaffirm their objectives for selfless service, showcasing humanity's best and working towards peace, sustainable development, and human rights.—APP

PNCA hosts engaging artist talk by Pakistani-Irish artist Amna

This session offered a unique opportunity to delve into the creative mind of an extraordinary artist whose work deeply resonates with themes of displacement, migration, and identity. Amna Walayat shared exclusive insights into her artistic process, the symbolism in her works, and the inspirations drawn from her personal experiences as an Eastern Muslim woman and migrant artist

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) hosted an engaging Artist Talk by Pakistani-Irish artist Amna Walayat as part of her thought-provoking travelling solo exhibition, A Flight of Two Half Birds. The event took place, Wednesday, at PNCA Lecture Hall, Islamabad.

Amna Walayat is a Cork-based Pakistani-born Visual Artist. She works for Backwater Artists and is a member of Sample-studios and Art Nomads. She has exhibited her work in many solo and group exhibitions in Ireland. This session offered a unique opportunity to delve into the creative mind of an extraordinary artist whose work deeply resonates with themes of displacement, migration, and iden-

tity. Amna Walayat shared exclusive insights into her artistic process, the symbolism in her works, and the inspirations drawn from her personal experiences as an Eastern Muslim woman and migrant artist. Her art, rooted in traditional Indo-Persian miniature painting techniques, is rich with powerful symbols such as butterflies, boats, and tulips, evoking emotions of longing, resilience, and adaptation. She

skillfully weaves personal and collective narratives into her work, connecting them to the reflections of literary and historical icons like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Bahadur Shah Zafar, whose explorations of exile and displacement deeply align with her themes. The exhibition A Flight of Two Half Birds continues to welcome visitors until 6th December 2024, with daily viewing hours from 10:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

Global action urged against India's repression in IIOJK

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has said that Indian forces, along with its investigative agencies, are intensifying their crackdown on Hurriyat leaders and activists in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir to suppress the ongoing struggle for right to self-determination. According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC leaders and parties, including Bashir Andrabi, Imtiyaz Rishi, Maulana Musab Nadvi, Jammu and Kashmir Muslim League, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Democratic Freedom Party and Peoples League, in separate statements in Srinagar, condemned India's continued violation of political, social and religious rights in the territory. They highlighted that over one million heavily armed Indian troops, empowered by draconian laws, have turned the territory into a living nightmare for its people. The leaders expressed concern over the demographic changes being orchestrated by the Indian government since August 5, 2019, under its Hindutva ideology, threatening Kashmir's unique identity and culture. They also condemned the recent killing of a youth in a fake encounter in Dachigam, Srinagar, terming it another heinous act of Indian state terrorism.—APP

IRSA releases 99,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 99,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 44,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1488.59 feet and was 90.59 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 21,700 cusecs and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1152.95 feet, which was 102.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,900 cusecs and 27,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 68,000, 46,600, 36,900 and 7,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

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South Korea's Yoon retreats

THESE days, it seems some elected politicians around the world are rather trigger-happy. Still, there is a difference between firing a gun and launching a bazooka. With no prior warning, President Yoon Suk-yeol had tried to fire the latter. And in doing so, he has most likely ended his political career. Come to think of it, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau did something similar, back in 2022. And for what?! In both cases, it was complete overkill. The only difference is that unlike Yoon, Trudeau got away with it. By comparison, Hong Kong endured more than six months of riots, arson and violent protests back in 2019, but it still didn't declare an emergency or martial law. And yet, it earned constant condemnation from Western governments. Talk about double standards! Yoon had barely finished his broadcast in declaring martial law before reversing himself. Apparently, South Korea's constitution allows for a majority vote in the National Assembly to overturn the president's martial law declaration, and the opposition did exactly that. It soon became clear the military leadership had no stomach for what looked like a return to the country's dark recent past. Be that as it may, Yoon's martial law address to his nation makes for fascinating reading and says a lot about his state of mind. It may still be worth examining for educational purposes. His first line was: "Honourable citizens, as president, I appeal to you with a feeling of spitting blood." Cantonese has a similar expression, which is literally "vomiting blood". Both denote a state of internal turmoil and suffering when confronted by something intolerable. What is this something? It's "the legislative dictatorship of the Democratic Party", which, according to Yoon, "is paralysing the judiciary by intimidating judges and impeaching a number of prosecutors, and it is paralysing the executive branch". In their April election landslide, the Democratic Party and smaller opposition parties jointly won 192 of 300 seats in the National Assembly. As a result, the opposition has been frustrating Yoon and his administration at every turn, something he no doubt blamed for his low approval rating, which stood at under 20 per cent according to a poll released last week. "This trampling of the constitutional order of the free Republic of Korea and the disruption of legitimate state institutions established by the constitution and laws is an obvious anti-state act that plots insurrection," he said. He also claims the opposition is pro-North Korea: "Dear citizens, I declare emergency martial law to defend the free Republic of Korea from the threats of North Korean communist forces and to eradicate the shameless pro-North Korean anti-state forces that are plundering the freedom and happiness of our people and to protect the free constitutional order." That may be a tad exaggerated. But then, if you are like Yoon who loves to sing "American Pie" in public and has essentially relinquished South Korea's defence and foreign policies to Washington, any independent streak shown by opposition figures may seem that way to the president. These days, some elected politicians like to play cowboys. Back in early 2022, Trudeau enforced the Emergencies Act, for the first time in Canada's history. A bunch of truck drivers were causing traffic gridlocks in downtown Ottawa and some roads in other parts of the country because they opposed the Covid vaccine mandate and the restrictions that came with it. No one, not even the Trudeau cabinet that authorised the Emergencies Act, had claimed the truckers were in any way violent.



Biden's use of presidential pardon

JOE Biden's presidency has been quite consequential. His investments in infrastructure, climate initiatives and pandemic recovery have reshaped the United States' trajectory. He fortified the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation at a critical time to support Ukraine against Russian aggression. However, these achievements could be eclipsed by decisions that prioritise personal interests over the greater good. Those decisions may define a presidency that promised renewal but instead stumbled into self-inflicted crises. The first decision was Biden's insistence on seeking a second term, despite glaring concerns about his age and ability to endure the rigours of another four years. His determination seemed more rooted in personal pride than practical reality, leaving his party in a bind as it hesitated to challenge an incumbent president. When his candidacy faltered after a disastrous debate performance, the result was political chaos. Vice-President Kamala Harris was thrust into the unenviable position of salvaging a campaign marred by Biden's missteps, with precious little time to mount an effective counter to Donald Trump. Biden's stubbornness ceded significant electoral ground to Trump, paving the way for his return to the White House. Another decision came on Monday when Biden used his presidential pardon to shield his son, Hunter Biden. Convicted in June on three federal firearm charges and pleading guilty in September to tax evasion, Hunter Biden faced years of imprisonment. His sentencing loomed this month, promising a rare instance of accountability for a figure at the heart of so many political controversies. However, instead of letting the justice system run its course, Joe Biden intervened. Chinese leader Xi tells US President Biden he is 'ready to work' with Donald Trump. Of course, Biden's fears that Trump could weaponise the Justice Department and subject Hunter to relentless legal harassment are not entirely meritless. Individuals whom Trump has nominated for cabinet positions are defined by their loyalty to president-elect, not the US Constitution – including Pam Bondi, who could serve as the next attorney general. Moreover, Trump has suggested he will prioritise political vengeance over the rule of law. However, even in such a scenario, juries would still decide cases and courts would still function. Due process, while strained, is still the law of the land. A father's concerns, while valid, do not justify the means. The presidential pardon is one of the most controversial and misunderstood powers granted by the US Constitution. It bestows upon the president near-absolute authority to forgive federal crimes, ostensibly as an instrument of mercy or justice beyond the reach of the judicial branch. With such immense power comes immense peril. The pardon has always been a minefield where moral clarity collides with political expediency. Biden's decision to pardon his son epitomises this reality. At its core, the controversy rests on Biden's own rhetoric. For years, he cast himself as the antithesis to Trump, a leader restoring integrity after a presidency marked by chaos. Trump's reckless pardons for convicted felons, including his allies Paul Manafort and Roger Stone, were rightly condemned as self-serving abuses of power. Most of us expected no better from Trump, whose tenure thrived on eroding constitutional norms. But Biden? He was supposed to repair the rot, to restore the rule of law as a cornerstone of governance.

Why China need not worry about Trump's tech and financial warfare

Dr Andy Xie

Trump talked about a 60 per cent tariff on Chinese goods during his campaign. More recently, he floated the idea of an extra 10 per cent on top of the existing tariffs. He also wants 25 per cent duties on Canadian and Mexican goods. Many auto workers voted for Trump despite benefiting from trade and being able to buy cheap Chinese television sets, for example; their real competition is arguably coming from Mexico and Canada. No amount of tariffs on China would bring the production of TV sets back to the US. But tariffs on cars from Canada and Mexico could revive US carmakers. Trump's tariff policy should tap into this possibility. The US wants to weaken China without hurting itself. Getting allies to join the tech war against China has been one way to achieve this. The tech war can be expected to escalate during the second

CHINA has overcome Donald Trump's trade war and tech sanctions before. This time, it is in a much stronger position to withstand new threats. As a result, the United States could pivot away from trade confrontations towards information and financial warfare. However, China's nearly US\$1 trillion trade surplus would be a strong buffer against financial instability. Trump began the trade war with China in 2018. By 2023, exports from mainland China and Hong Kong to the US had fallen by about a quarter. Less exposure to the US market has made China more resilient to new tariffs, which reduces the incentive for Washington to escalate the trade war. Trump talked about a 60 per cent tariff on Chinese goods during his campaign. More recently, he floated the idea of an extra 10 per cent on top of the existing tariffs. He also wants 25 per cent duties on Canadian and Mexican goods. Many auto workers voted for Trump despite benefiting from trade and being able to buy cheap Chinese television sets, for example; their real competition is arguably coming from Mexico and Canada. No amount of tariffs on China would bring the production of TV sets back to the US. But tariffs on cars from Canada and Mexico could revive US carmakers. Trump's tariff policy should tap into this possibility. The US wants to weaken China without hurting itself. Getting allies to join the tech war against China has been one way to achieve this. The tech war can be expected to escalate during the second Trump administration, perhaps with the incoming president forcing European, Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese companies not to sell to the mainland Chinese market; this way, their economies would be hurt but not the US'. The US tech war also dovetails nicely with Washington's industrial policy. It wants the key tech sectors in the US, not Asia. American policymakers are

likely to coerce globally competitive companies in Japan, South Korea or Taiwan in the relevant sectors into moving to the US. This is the only realistic option for the US to achieve its industrial goal as its domestic industrial base is too weak to be rejuvenated. If companies outside the US can't sell to China, then access to the US market will be critical to their survival. They must do what the US government tells them to. The big test for China, with Trump 2.0, remains tech sanctions. The US is demanding that semiconductor equipment companies not provide maintenance services for machines in China. It is hard to imagine what else the US could do at this point. Despite US sanctions, China has mass-produced 7-nanometre chips; 5-nm chips could soon be in reach. Meanwhile, China has succeeded in making lithography machines for 28-nm chips. While the technology is more than a decade old, it shows that China is climbing the lithography ladder. Closing the gap would be a matter of time. China's efforts to shore up the semiconductor supply chain could lead to innovations and a much more competitive model, or something on a completely different level altogether. We've seen this happen with renewable energy, nuclear energy and electric vehicles. Why wouldn't it be the same with semiconductors? China sets new world record in development of 'artificial sun' The US tech war could expand to other sectors. The pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries could be blocked from acquiring certain instruments made in America, for example. However, no disruption is likely to last long. It is true that Chinese businesses tend to prefer high-volume markets. But if the US places sanctions on scientific instruments or industrial tools going to China, a Chinese supplier will surely enter the market, high-volume or not. The US might increasingly leverage its allies in its China strategy. It could pressure Europe and Japan to buy less from

China. The US has all but banned Chinese electric cars with a 100 per cent tariff. However, China's EV industry – and renewable energy sector – will surely prosper if it is only the US market that becomes off-limits. The US would need all its allies to follow suit to make a real dent in China's development. China's EV drive in Cuba reshapes Havana's roads US containment efforts prevent China from appreciating its currency, despite its trillion-dollar trade surplus. In other words, China must keep the renminbi weak enough to sell tech products to emerging economies. This is very beneficial to countries in the Global South. At the same time, a depreciated currency gives China immunity from US financial aggression. The trade and tech wars are partly to blame for wealthy Chinese taking money out of the mainland to Hong Kong and foreign countries like Singapore, and that money is likely to end up in the US. Given that the US national debt rose by US\$2.3 trillion in the last financial year and is likely to keep increasing, sucking money out of China seems to weaken the country and help the US. But a side effect could be that it helps keep the renminbi weak and Chinese exports supercompetitive. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. In the face of US pressure, China has kept a lid on speculation and corruption while boosting its technological development. That might not have happened without intense external pressure. When historians look back on China's rise decades from now, Trump's trade war could be viewed as a pivotal point in preventing a Chinese collapse similar to the 1997 Asian financial crisis. In this light, Washington's China containment policy is really a blessing in disguise. Dr —Andy Xie is a Shanghai-based independent economist specialising in China and Asia.

Revolutionizing Banking: The Role of AI and cloud computing in Pakistan's Financial Future

Asim Azeem

Similarly, UBL has implemented AI-powered chatbots to provide instant customer support, streamline interactions, and reduce response times. Meezan Bank boasts significant digital penetration, with a substantial portion of its customers utilizing mobile or Internet banking services, reflecting its commitment to digitalization. Regarding cloud computing, Pakistani banks are leveraging these platforms to reduce operational costs and enhance service availability

IN recent years, Pakistan's banking sector has embraced artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing, ushering in a new era of empowerment. These technologies have been instrumental in enhancing operational efficiency, improving customer experiences, and strengthening security measures. Leading institutions such as Habib Bank Limited (HBL), United Bank Limited (UBL), and Meezan Bank have been at the forefront of this digital transformation, inspiring hope for a more efficient and customer-centric banking future. HBL has integrated AI-driven solutions to refine risk assessment and management, enabling more informed loan and credit decisions based on real-time data. Similarly, UBL has implemented AI-powered chatbots to provide instant customer support, streamline interactions, and reduce response times. Meezan Bank boasts significant digital penetration, with a substantial portion of its customers utilizing mobile or Internet banking services, reflecting its commitment to digitalization. Regarding cloud computing, Pakistani banks are leveraging these platforms to reduce operational costs and enhance service availability. For instance, the collaboration between Khazana Enterprise and Huawei has led to the launch of a hyper-scale financial cloud service in Pakistan, providing a robust infrastructure for digital banking operations. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has played a pivotal role in this digital shift by introducing initiatives like Raast, the country's first instant payment system, which facilitates real-time transactions and promotes financial inclusion. Additionally, SBP's regulations mandate the use of AI-driven biometric verification systems, such as facial recognition and selfie authentication, to enhance the security of digital transactions. This regulatory support from the SBP has been crucial in driving the adoption of AI and cloud computing in Pakistan's banking sector. Huawei, a global leader in cloud and AI technologies, has been instrumental in promoting the adoption of these technologies across various industries in Pakistan. Collaborating with local partners, Huawei has established local cloud nodes to accelerate cloud adoption and enable organizations to leverage AI solutions effectively. A notable partnership is with Khazana Enterprise, led by Chairman Bob Din, a pioneer in cloud technology in Pakistan. Hassan Nawaz, the Cloud computing expert of Huawei Middle East region, has been instrumental in advancing cloud computing and artificial intelligence (AI) within Pakistan's financial sector. As a cloud computing deployment expert, he has led significant projects in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, including the Financial Services Industry (FSI) cloud for Khazana Enterprises, which supports the digital banking industry in Pakistan. Hassan emphasized the need for more cloud computing projects to be deployed in Pakistan as it will generate significant jobs for young talent. The collaboration aims to drive digital transformation by providing scalable and secure cloud services tailored to the needs of Pakistani businesses and government entities. Regarding the design of this cloud project, which is still undisclosed but according to experts, its one of its kind and required a lot of skill to complete its delivery. Several conferences and events

are scheduled to explore the impact of AI and cloud computing in banking, shaping the future of these technologies in the financial industry. The AI Summit Pakistan 2024, set for April 18-19 in Islamabad, and the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Communication Technologies in Karachi on February 19, 2025, will bring together industry leaders to discuss AI innovations in finance and advancements in AI applications within various sectors, including banking. These events provide platforms for professionals to share knowledge and explore the exciting future of AI and cloud computing in the financial industry. These advancements significantly simplify and improve ordinary people's lives. For example, AI-powered chatbots allow customers to resolve issues without visiting a bank branch, saving time and effort. Instant payment systems enable seamless and immediate transfers, ensuring people can send and receive money without delays. Cloud-based banking services ensure digital platforms remain operational even during peak usage, offering reliability and convenience. Enhanced fraud detection systems protect customers from financial loss, creating a safer banking environment. These benefits underscore the transformative impact of AI and cloud computing on the everyday banking experience. By adopting AI and cloud computing, Pakistani banks are not just modernizing their operations, but also making banking more accessible, efficient, and secure for individuals. These technologies are aligning the banking sector with global trends, reassuring customers about the convenience and reliability of managing their finances in an increasingly digital world.

Briefs

Govt committed to ensuring Red Zone's...

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certain actions against the protesters, he said the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had barred the PTI from holding any protest gathering in the Red Zone area of the federal capital. In pursuance of the court ruling, the government had tasked Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to engage with the party but to no avail. He said the federal government always prioritised the Red Zone's security which housed Parliament House, the Supreme Court of Pakistan, federal institutions and the diplomatic corps. Dar informed the diplomats that PTI had chosen to hold a protest on November 24, which coincided with the planned visit of the Belarusian president. He added that this was consistent with the party's past "malafide practice" of scheduling protests on significant dates, such as the SCO summit earlier this year and in 2014, when their protest led to the postponement of the Chinese president's visit. He recalled that the Supreme Court had dismissed PTI's claims of rigging in 35 National Assembly seats — the primary reason behind the 2014 sit-in — yet the party never apologised, despite having committed to do so in a written agreement with the government. Dar explained that PTI stubbornly attempted to march into the Red Zone, despite the government's offer of an alternative protest site in Sangjani. He emphasised that human rights should not be exercised in ways that cause lawlessness and endanger the lives and property of both Pakistanis and the diplomatic corps. The foreign minister highlighted that the government had shown restraint, as LEAs were only equipped with water cannons and tear gas, not live ammunition. Dar also questioned the legality of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government using public resources to stage a march on the federal capital, asserting that no federating unit had the right to do so.

PML-Q opposes banning...

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In the same breath, he also called for accountability of rioters who desecrated martyrs monuments during the May 9 protests last year — a reference to the violent protests broke out in the country following the arrest of PTI founder Imran Khan in a corruption case. The PML-Q leader also slammed the PTI's nine-year rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, saying "not a single hospital was built" in the province and urged Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur to "focus on the progress and development of the province instead of protests". The provincial also touched on the speculation of governor's rule in KP, saying: "Only talks of governor's rule is going on in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa." The violence during the PTI's "do-or-die" protest in Islamabad fueled speculations that the government was mulling tough measures including imposing a ban on the opposition party.

PTI, govt both at 'fault', IHC...

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Justice Farooq said: "You were supposed to maintain peace, but you locked down the entire city." The incumbent government, since the protest called by the PTI founder, spun into action to deter the protesters from reaching and entering the federal capital. Apart from deploying a large number of riot policemen, the administration blocked several roads within the federal capital and various routes leading to the city with shipping containers. However, despite these measures, the convoys of PTI cohorts managed to enter Islamabad and reach even D-Chowk in the Red Zone, where sensitive government buildings, including the parliament, are located.

End of an era

Hamilton to race for Mercedes for final time

Hamilton, seven-time champion, leaves Mercedes for Ferrari after 26 years

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Lewis Hamilton says his final race with Mercedes in Abu Dhabi this weekend is unlikely to be the positive send-off he and the team would have wanted. "I don't think it will end on a high," said Hamilton, who is moving to Ferrari for 2025. "It'll end. What's important is we turn up and give it our best shot." Hamilton has had a difficult final season with Mercedes, and it's only become more so as it has wound to its close. He arrives in Abu Dhabi after last weekend's race in Qatar, during which he said at one point he was "definitely not fast any more", and finished 12th after receiving two separate penalties. It was the culmination of a season of frustration, with Hamilton comprehensively outperformed in qualifying by teammate George Russell. Two wins at Silverstone and Spa - his first for two and a half years - were highs, but have done little to lift his general mood. He and Mercedes, though, are insistent a low-key end to their partnership will not detract from everything they have achieved together. Team boss Toto Wolff said: "When he took the decision to go, we knew it could be a bumpy year ahead. It's normal. He knows he will go somewhere else. We know our future lies somewhere else. And to go through the ups and downs and still keep it together is something we have achieved. He wears his heart on his sleeve and you express your emotions and that is absolutely allowed. Nothing is going to take away 12 incredible years. That will be in the memory, rather than a season or races that were particularly bad." Together, Hamilton and Mercedes have been the most successful team-driver combination in Formula 1 history. After he joined in 2013, Mercedes won eight consecutive constructors' championships, seven drivers' titles - six of them for Hamilton - and 120 grands prix. Hamilton has be-



come the most successful driver ever - taking six of his seven championships with Mercedes, 84 of his 105 race wins, and 78 of his 104 poles. His other successes came with McLaren when they were Mercedes' works team. Next year - his 19th in Formula 1 - will be his first not as a Mercedes driver. The team are determined to turn this weekend's grand prix - held on a track where Hamilton has won five times, more than any other driver - into a celebration of everything they have achieved together. They will be doing it at the place where Hamilton's success with Mercedes came to a screeching halt amid the controversy of the title-deciding race in 2021. Three years ago, Hamilton was on course to win a record eighth championship, having dominated the race from the start, only for race director Michael Masi to fail to apply the rules cor-

rectly during a late safety-car period. Masi's decisions to override protocol over the handling of lapped cars and the timing of a restart were followed by Max Verstappen passing Hamilton when the race was restarted for one final lap and the title changing hands. After a winter in which Hamilton considered walking away from F1, he and Mercedes started the following season still reeling from the perceived injustice of that day, but determined to right what they saw as a wrong. Instead they have floundered - failing to get on top of the new technical rules introduced for 2022. This lack of competitiveness was part of Hamilton's decision to leave for Ferrari - a team he had always dreamed of joining at one point. The trigger was that, when he negotiated a new contract in the summer of 2023, Wolff initially wanted to give him only a one-year deal to retain flexibility about the future of his driver line-up with Hamilton approaching the age of 40. They compromised on a one-year contract with an option for an extra season. But Hamilton knew he wanted to stay in F1 for longer. So when Ferrari came calling last winter, offering him a substantial pay rise - it is said he will earn \$65m (£41m) a year at Maranello - and a longer commitment, Hamilton went for it. "It was a brave and bold decision," says Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin - one of Hamilton's closest colleagues over the years, "but you can totally understand why he's done it. He wanted to drive for more years than we were prepared to commit to. He wanted to have another chapter in his career that was about Ferrari, and it's a great challenge for him. As well as driving, he is still making an impact on the sport and diversity within the sport. He has more he wants to do there, and it's far easier for him to do that from the driving seat. He has such a prominent voice globally. That is a big part of his objectives, as well as winning races and hopefully winning the eighth championship."

Mohammad Rizwan drops in latest ICC T20I rankings

Other key Pakistan players face a dip in the latest rankings update

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan's white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan has slipped in the latest ICC T20I rankings after underwhelming performances in the recent T20I series against Australia. Rizwan dropped two places, moving from sixth to eighth with 704 rating points. Former skipper Babar Azam, however, retained his fifth position with 727 points. Apart from these two, no other Pakistan batter features in the top 50 of the T20I batters' rankings. Australia's Travis Head leads the chart with 855 points, followed by England's Phil Salt with 828 and India's Tilak Varma at third with 806 points. In the T20I bowling rankings, Haris Rauf is the highest-ranked Pakistani at 20th place with 603 points.

Shaheen Afridi slipped two places to 26th with 573 points, while Imad Wasim fell three spots to 38th with 535 points. England's Adil Rashid continues to dominate the bowling rankings with 701 points, followed by Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga (696) and Australia's Adam Zampa (693). In the ICC ODI rankings, Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman dropped two spots to 16th with 642 points, while Imam-ul-Haq slipped to 18th with 633 points. Mohammad Rizwan maintained his 24th position with 604 points. Despite these declines, Babar Azam continues to reign as the top ODI batter with 800 points, leading India's Rohit Sharma (765) and Shubman Gill (763). Among bowlers, Haris Rauf maintained his 15th position with 605 points. Imad Wasim ranked 52nd, while

Naseem Shah dropped to 61st with 460 points. Afghanistan's Rashid Khan leads the ODI bowling rankings with 687 points, followed by Pakistan's Shaheen Afridi (675) and South Africa's KeshavMaharaj (674). Pakistan's batters faced a dip in the latest ICC Test rankings. Vice-captain Saud Shakeel slipped to ninth with 724 points, while skipper Babar Azam dropped to 19th with 670 points. Salman Ali Agha and Mohammad Rizwan held steady at 20th (662) and 21st (661), respectively, but Abdullah Shafique fell to 47th with 541 points. At the top, England's Joe Root continues to reign supreme with 895 points, followed by teammate Harry Brook, climbing to second with 854 points, and New Zealand's Kane Williamson, sitting third with 830 points. In the latest ICC

Test bowling rankings update, Pakistan's Noman Ali has dropped out of the top 10, slipping to 11th with 759 rating points. Shaheen Afridi has also seen a decline, falling to 16th with 667 points. Pacer Hasan Ali, despite being left out of the team, has dropped further to 36th, while spinner Sajid Khan climbed one spot to 37th with 520 points. Other Pakistan bowlers, Abrar Ahmed and Khuram Shahzad, also experienced declines, landing at 57th and 59th positions, respectively. Meanwhile, Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah, after his impactful performance in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy opener against Australia, retains the top spot with 883 rating points. South Africa's Kagiso Rabada is second with 865 points, followed by Australia's Josh Hazlewood in third with 860 points.

Djokovic to begin bid for 25th Grand Slam

BRISBANE: Novak Djokovic will play at the Brisbane International before he starts his bid to win a 25th Grand Slam at Melbourne's Australian Open in January. The 37-year-old, a 10-time winner in Melbourne, is tied with Australian Margaret Court on a record 24 Grand Slam singles titles. The Serb, ranked seventh in the world, failed to add to his Grand Slam tally during a frustrating 2024. The tournament in Brisbane, which runs from 29 December until 5 January, is one of the final warm-up events before the Australian Open begins on 12 January. "I'm excited to be kicking off my Australian swing at the Brisbane International and to compete again at Pat Rafter Arena," said Djokovic. "I am looking forward to experiencing the incredible support from the Australian fans and making this tournament one to remember." With 99 ATP titles to his name, Djokovic is aiming to join American Jimmy Connors (109) and Swiss Roger Federer (103) as just the third man in the Open era to win 100 career titles. The field in Brisbane features Nick Kyrgios, defending champion Grigor Dimitrov and Holger Rune. Djokovic appointed Andy Murray as his coach for the Australian Open last month. The former British number one was beaten by Djokovic in the final of the Australian Open on four occasions. An exact date for when Murray will start his coaching role has not been finalised but BBC Sport has been told the Scot is not currently planning on being in Brisbane with Djokovic. - Agencies



Barrister Saif denies talks with govt

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Express News reported. Speaking to the media in Peshawar alongside Shibli Faraz, he said, "the govt has filed false cases against us. Six cases have been registered against me. We have protested before, and we will continue to do so until this illegitimate government is ousted." He asserted that traveling to Islamabad is every citizen's right, and PTI founder Imran Khan has made it clear that the protests will continue. "Sit-ins, rallies, and demonstrations are all part of a movement, and we have the right to protest anywhere." Barrister Saif emphasized, "I have always been a proponent of dialogue. It was I who initiated talks with the Taliban. We have even held negotiations with the Tehreek-e-Taliban. We believe in dialogue, but no talks are currently happening. If Imran Khan permits, we will engage in negotiations." Criticizing the government, Barrister Saif said, "These fake individuals call us instigators. They should not talk about democracy. The real instigators are those who opened fire on unarmed citizens while negotiations were ongoing." Commenting on law and order, the K-P spokesperson said, "Security is a regional issue. Since 1979, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has faced law and order challenges stemming from Russia's invasion of Afghanistan.

Lahore Qalandars edge out Victoria in nail-biting contest

The final will take place on December 7 in Providence

LONDON: Lahore Qalandars defeated Victoria by 10 runs in a thrilling encounter at the ExxonMobil Guyana Global Super League (GSL) 2024 at Providence. The match was a tense battle from start to finish, with a standout performance from Qalandars' Tabraiz Shamsi, whose brilliant spell made the difference between the two sides. Victoria won the toss, and captain Corey Anderson opted to bowl first. Mirza Baig anchored the Qalandars' innings, scoring a steady 39 from 36 balls to set a solid foundation for his team. Despite Anderson's best efforts,

rotating seven bowlers, the Qalandars' batting never truly gained momentum. Mohammad Faizan was run out for 25 off 21 balls, while Tom Abell and Mohammad Akhlaq contributed 17 and 26 runs, respectively. Captain Carlos Brathwaite's brief stay at the crease ended in a golden duck when Jackson Smith bowled him out. Smith was in superb form, taking three wickets, while his partner, Dominic Drakes, also claimed three scalps. Drakes was particularly economical, keeping the pressure on the opposition with 14 dot balls in his four overs.

Victoria needed 140 runs to win after dismissing the Qalandars for 139. The Australian side made a strong start, with a confident opening partnership of 67 between Blake Macdonald and Joe Clarke. However, regular wickets began to fall, and the pressure mounted. Tabraiz Shamsi's exceptional spell was the defining moment of the match, as he claimed three wickets for just 11 runs from his four overs. His remarkable performance included an astonishing 16 dot balls, with not a single boundary conceded. This brilliant display of con-

trol and precision earned him the well-deserved Player of the Match award. Karima Gore fought valiantly for Victoria, but when he was dismissed for 25 off 22 balls in the 19th over, it left his team with just two wickets remaining. With 12 runs needed from the final over, Faheem Ashraf sealed the victory for the Qalandars by dismissing Jackson Smith in his third delivery. The win tightens the standings in the GSL, with Lahore Qalandars, Victoria, and Guyana Amazon Warriors all on four points, having won two and lost one match each. - Agencies

U19 Asia Cup: Pak thrashes Japan to reach semis

Pakistan will play Bangladesh in the first semifinal of the U19 Asia Cup

WEB DESK

DUBAI: Left-arm spinner Mohammad Huzaifa delivered a sensational performance, claiming five wickets as Pakistan secured a dominant 180-run victory over Japan in the 11th match of the U19 Asia Cup 2024. Chasing a decent target of 244 runs, Japan's batting line-up collapsed under the pressure of Huzaifa's brilliance. The young spinner tore through the Japanese order, leaving them bundled out for a mere 63 runs in just 21.3 overs. His extraordinary performance included three maidens while giving away just eight runs in his 6.3-over spell, showcasing his precision and control. Japanese opener Nihar Parmar fought valiantly, top-scoring with 25 runs off 60 deliveries. Apart from him no other batter managed to reach double figures. Pakistan's bowlers were in excellent form, with Huzaifa receiving strong backing from Mohammad Ahmed and Ahmed Hussain. Both Ahmed and Hussain claimed two wickets each, while FahamulHaq chipped in with one wicket. Pakistan will face off against Bangladesh in the first semifinal match of the tournament on Friday, De-

ember 6, 2024, at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. Opting to bat first after winning the toss, Pakistan posted 243 runs for the loss of six wickets in their first innings. The Boys in Green faced early setbacks, with skipper Saad Baig dismissed for

just 3 runs, leaving the team struggling at 7/1 in the 2.5 overs. The pressure mounted as Haroon Rasheed (9) and Farhan Yousuf (10) followed soon after, bringing Pakistan to a precarious 57/3 in the 14th over. However, opener FahamulHaq steadied the ship



with a valiant 34 runs off 49 balls, including two sixes and a boundary. His promising innings came to an end when Nihar Parmar dismissed him in the 20th over. Tayyab Arif and Shahzaib Khan built a vital partnership, but just as they were getting settled, Arif was dismissed for 20 runs by Parmar in the 24.4 over, leaving Pakistan at 97/4. The crucial moment of the innings came with the pairing of Khan and Riazullah, who put on an 82-run stand for the sixth wicket. Khan was dismissed for a solid 45 runs off 69 deliveries, falling to Timothy Moore. Riazullah, who had been in fine form, found excellent support in Ahmed Hussain. The duo added 61 runs for the seventh wicket, with the right-hand batter remaining unbeaten on 66 runs from 78 balls, which included four boundaries and a six. Ahmed Hussain contributed 30 runs off 23 balls, helping Pakistan to a total of 243/6 by the close of the first innings. Nihar Parmar led the bowling attack for Japan U19, topping the wickets chart with two scalps in his spell. Supporting him well, Kiefer Yamamoto-Lake, Kai Wall, Charles Hinze, and Timothy Moore each claimed one wicket, contributing to a well-rounded bowling performance.

Tarar: Pak-Saudi ties reaching new heights

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He said that agreements signed during the visit are now materializing, paving the way for increased economic collaboration. "Promoting investment and enhancing economic cooperation is our government's top priority." Tarar pointed out that Pakistan's economy is recovering, with inflation at a six-year low and the stock market reaching record highs. He attributed these developments to the government's effective policies. The Minister revealed that a high-ranking Saudi delegation is set to visit Pakistan soon, further solidifying the investment and trade relationship. He added: "The leadership of both countries is committed to strengthening these exemplary relations. The government's economic and diplomatic efforts are bearing fruit and will lead to sustained progress for Pakistan. Pakistan's foreign relations were affected by the PTI regime. Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations improved in a short period. Twenty-eight MoUs have been signed and work on eight projects is on."

Ali Zafar appointed JCP member

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the opposition. Senate Chairman Yusuf Raza Gilani appointed Barrister Zafar as JCP's member after holding consultations with the leader of the opposition. The development comes after PTI Senator Shibli Faraz tendered his resignation and nominated Zafar to take his place on the 13-member body, in line with the directives of PTI founder Imran Khan. In his resignation, Senator Faraz stated that it had always been his "earnest desire to contribute meaningfully towards the betterment of the judicial system in the country and striving to uphold the principles of justice". He said that this role was not only deeply challenging but also immensely close to his heart, given its critical importance to the national interest, particularly in light of recent amendments and the growing erosion of justice that the nation continues to face.

Minister rubbishes reports...

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restart the crude oil trade from January 2025 and that Pakistan would import one cargo each month under the government-to-government arrangement. However, elaborating on the issue, the petroleum minister said that the government wasn't buying any crude oil cargo from Russia. "We are creating such a framework that the consumer gets cheap oil." Touching upon the liquefied natural gas (LNG) issue, he said that the country would not receive any additional LNG cargo due to an existing surplus. "Pakistan has already postponed five of its LNG cargoes and the postponement of five additional cargoes is being considered further," he added. Revealing the factors contributing towards the LNG surplus, he cited the lack of purchase by the power plants and said that the private sector was not buying LNG due to high cost.

Pakistan committed..

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Pakistan's economy is heading in the right direction. He pointed to significant progress over the past 14 months, particularly in reducing the current account deficit and bringing inflation to its lowest in 78 months. Aurangzeb emphasised the critical role the private sector plays in Pakistan's economic recovery and assured that the government will provide policy guidelines and full support to businesses, Express News reported. He further highlighted the significance of the housing sector in the economy but noted that the country faces challenges due to unsustainable population growth and vulnerability to climate change-induced disasters. Despite these challenges, he emphasized that the government remains firmly committed to implementing the IMF program as part of the nation's strategy to stabilise the economy.

Briefs

Gold prices remain unchanged

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold remained unchanged at Rs 275,200 on Wednesday, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat and 10 gram 22 karat also remained constant at Rs 235,940 and Rs 216,278 respectively. Per tola and ten gram silver were also traded at same rate at Rs 3,400 and Rs 2,914.95, respectively. The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$2,640, the Association reported.—APP

PSX stays bullish, gains 545 more points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 545.26 more points, a positive change of 0.52 percent, closing at 105,104.34 points as compared to 104,559.07 points on the last trading day. A total of 1,749,316,877 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,766,474,377 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 50.416 billion against Rs.56.624 billion on the last trading day. As many as 467 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 258 of them recorded gains and 180 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 29 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 257,531,069 shares at Rs 1.61 per share, Energyco PK with 213,200,271 shares at Rs 6.85 per share and Pak International Bulk with 89,650,764 shares at Rs.8.57 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.334.89 per share price, closing at Rs.20,200.00, whereas the runner-up was Hoechst Pakistan Limited with Rs 53.32 rise in its per share price to Rs 2,748.57.—APP

Rupee sheds 06 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 06 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.92 against the previous day's closing of Rs 277.86. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.45 and Rs 278.95 respectively. Pakistan's cuisine The price of Euro increased by 16 paise to close at Rs 292.13 against the last day's closing of Rs 291.97, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.84, whereas an increase of 52 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 352.71 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 352.19. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 and 01 paise to close at Rs75.66 and Rs73.96 respectively.—APP

US-Russia tensions boil over in heated debate on Syria

Deputy US Ambassador to the UN, Robert Wood, called for an easing of hostilities in Syria and prioritised the protection of civilians. He raised concerns over the involvement of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham in the rebel offensive

UNITED NATIONS: Russia and the United States exchanged sharp accusations at the United Nations on Tuesday, each blaming the other for supporting terrorism during a Security Council session focused on the recent intensification of conflict in Syria. The escalation follows Syrian rebels' capture of Aleppo last week, an assault spearheaded by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS). Formerly known as the Nusra Front, HTS was the official Syrian branch of Al-Qaeda until severing ties in 2016 and is designated as a terrorist group by the Security Council. Deputy US Ambassador to the UN, Robert Wood, called for an easing of hostilities in Syria and prioritised the protection of civilians. He raised concerns over the involvement of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham in the rebel offensive.

The fact that HTS is listed as a terrorist organisation by the US and UN does not excuse the further atrocities committed by the Assad regime and its Russian allies," Wood remarked, accusing Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's forces and Russia of civilian

deaths in attacks on schools and hospitals. In a pointed response, Russia's UN Ambassador, Vasily Nebenzia, addressed Wood directly, stating: "You lacked the courage to condemn an obvious terrorist assault targeting peaceful civilians in tranquil Syrian cities." Nebenzia further criticised Washington, saying, "There is no expectation that the United States will ever genuinely fight against international terrorism. To be honest, we are glad to be on the opposite side of the barricades from you." Wood countered, asserting that Nebenzia was in "no position to lecture" the United States, accusing Moscow of supporting regimes that back terrorism globally. "The United States has fought the menace of terrorism for decades and will continue to do so," Wood affirmed.

Earlier, Syria's status quo has been "radically altered" in a matter of days, with a surge in fighting resulting in an "extremely fluid and dangerous" situation, the UN Special Envoy for the Arab country has warned. The Special Envoy, Geir Pedersen, told the Security

Council evening that Syria faced grave risk of further division that was not in the country's interest. Clashes broke out on Nov. 27 between pro-Syrian government forces and anti-government armed groups in the western countryside of Aleppo in northern Syria, marking a re-escalation of the fighting after a period of relative calm in the civil war that has gripped Syria since it erupted in 2011. The renewed violence, which was led by the terrorist group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), has resulted in civilian casualties, the displacement of tens of thousands, and severe damage to essential infrastructure. "As I brief you today, a vast swathe of territory has come under the control of non-State actors, including the terrorist group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and armed opposition groups, including the Syrian National Army," he said. "These groups now de facto control territory containing what we estimate to be some seven million people, including Aleppo - Syria's second biggest city and a vast and

diverse metropolis of more than two million people." He added that Syrian Government forces have regrouped in Hama, but their defences are under pressure as the opposition forces advance closer to the city. Both sides have escalated attacks, with pro-Government airstrikes targeting civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham firing barrages of drones and rockets. Civilians have suffered casualties on both sides, he told the 15-member Council.

Pedersen also reported heightened tensions in northeast Syria, where United States-supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) seized villages citing an imminent threat by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh). Israeli airstrikes were also reported on Damascus and the Syrian-Lebanese border this week, further destabilizing the region. The Special Envoy outlined two core messages, the first: an urgent need for de-escalation and calm. "The last fourteen years of conflict have

decisively shown that no Syrian party or existing grouping of actors can resolve the Syrian conflict via military means," he stressed, urging immediate de-escalation and adherence to international humanitarian law. The second message was that the de-escalation must be accompanied by a credible political horizon for the Syrian people. For almost five years, the "often elevated but somewhat contained" violence on the back of a "patchwork of ceasefire arrangements" was positive, he said. "But without being pegged to a political process to resolve the crisis, this amounted only to a conflict-management approach. And this is not enough." He reiterated his warning that such an arrangement was unsustainable and has now unravelled entirely. He stressed the need for a serious political process involving the Syrian parties and key international players. "Syria will be in grave danger of further division, deterioration, and destruction...this should be in no-one's interest," he added.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority conducted National Simulation Exercise (SimEx), titled "Winter Freeze at NDMA HQs."

Shandong Museum dedicated to education & research

BEIJING: The theme of International Museum Day in 2024 focused on "Museums as Contributors to Education and Research", which is not only a profound interpretation of the role of museums worldwide, but also a perfect annotation of the 70-year glorious history of Shandong Museum. Shandong Museum, located in Jinan, China's Shandong Province, is a national first-class museum and a national-level museum jointly built by the central government and local authorities. Completed and opened to the public in 2010, the new Shandong Museum boasts a total floor area of 128,000 square meters. It features 23 exhibition halls covering 25,000 square meters and houses a collection of over 400,000 artifacts, with a special focus on oracle bone inscriptions, Han dynasty stone carvings, and costumes. Since its establishment in 1954, Shandong Museum has been dedicated to the inheritance of Qilu culture, the promotion of public education and academic research, becoming one of the important bases for the inheritance and development of Confucian culture in China. Shandong Museum takes education as one of its core missions, and has launched a variety of educational activities, including thematic lectures, immersive experiences, and digital interactive study tours, to meet the needs of in-depth visits for visitors of different age groups. In the context of the integration of culture and tourism, Shandong Museum has constructed a new education model through cross-border cooperation, achieving a breakthrough in bringing museum education into people's daily lives. Shandong Museum, based on its educational functions, has embarked on a journey of innovation and branding. By focusing on audience needs, it has innovated the educational approach and created flagship educational programs, fostering a virtuous cycle where educational excellence drives brand building and, in turn, brand recognition fuels museum educational development. And by driving visits and research through events, the maximal utilization of museum resources is finally achieved. Shandong Museum makes full use of its cultural relics resources to develop a series of educational products. From the development of courses to teaching aids and learning tools, the 'Zhishu Dali' series of research and education products have been formed.—APP

China-Pak trade coop with 9 deals worth RMB 1.918 b signed

KUNMING: China-Pak trade coop flourishes with nine deals between Chinese and Pakistani enterprises worth RMB 1.918 billion (approximately \$263.8 million) have been signed. Signing ceremonies were held during a Strategic Cooperation Summit on E-Commerce themed "Unleashing the Digital Potential of CPEC" in Chengong, Kunming, Yunnan on November 25. The agreements span a variety of sectors, including overseas investment, import and export, mineral and ore trading, agricultural products, and the digital economy. Prominent companies involved in the partnerships include Yunnan Yunshangyun Big Data Industry Development Co., Ltd, Jinhui International Trade (Kunming) Co., Ltd, Northern Frontier Mines Pakistan. According to Raja Nasir Ali Khan, Minister for Planning and Development of Gilgit-Baltistan, the signed agreements are expected to boost trade and investment flows between the two countries, particularly in emerging sectors like digital technologies and e-commerce, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday.—APP

FBR failure to meet target despite heavy taxes worrisome: Atif

ISLAMABAD: President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Shaikh has said that despite the implementation of heavy taxes, FBR could not achieve the target which is worrying. It is better to strengthen the system of checks and balances than transferring FBR officers. FPCCI offers its services to increase tax collection and is ready to give suggestions to the government. He said that the implementation of reforms in FBR is necessary to prevent tax evasion, human intervention can be reduced by digitalization of FBR. Increasing tax rates or imposing new taxes will further increase tax evasion. The IMF has also not called for imposing new taxes. Federation President Atif Ikram said that according to reports, FBR has a total shortfall of Rs 343 billion in tax revenues. While in the month of November, FBR could collect revenues of 852 billion rupees And the tax target for the month of November was 1003 billion rupees.—APP

Henan varsity, UCP sign MoU for academic partnership

ISLAMABAD: China's Henan University Kaifeng and the University of Central Punjab, officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a comprehensive academic and research collaboration between the two institutions. This agreement focuses on fostering cooperation in language studies, cultural exchange, and collaborative research initiatives. Both universities have committed to facilitating the exchange of students and faculty to enhance cross-cultural learning and academic development. This partnership aims to promote mutual understanding and strengthen academic ties, paving the way for future joint projects and scholarly engagement. Prof. Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at UCP Lahore, shared with Gwadar Pro that the universities plan to collaborate on joint research programs. "We discussed common areas of interest between the faculties. I also had the opportunity to meet with a delegation of Pakistani students studying at Henan University," he said. Dr. Butt emphasized that the trip was highly productive, strengthening UCP's global academic outreach and positioning it on an international platform for collaboration and excellence. Additionally, they participated in the signing ceremony of the 'Three Gorges Initiative 2024,' alongside representatives from various institutions from Australia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Thailand, the United States, Serbia, Nepal, and China. The 'Initiative 2024' focuses on promoting global education, boosting academic cooperation, encouraging interdisciplinary research, and building sustainable networks, with a consensus from all participants. Dr. Butt highlighted that such forums enable collaboration with educational institutions worldwide, enhancing UCP's international outreach, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday.—DNA

Gunman shoots at Sikh leader outside Temple

Amritsar: A gunman shot at a prominent Sikh politician outside the Golden Temple in northern India on Wednesday before police caught and arrested him, in a scare at the popular site that witnessed a bloody clash between Sikh militants and troops four decades ago. The politician, Sukhbir Singh Badal, former deputy chief minister of Punjab state, was unharmed. The shooter, identified by police as Narain Singh, 68, was seen in TV footage from news agency ANI walking to the entrance of the temple in Amritsar city, the holiest shrine for Sikhs, and stealthily removing a gun from his pocket to fire at Badal. He was stopped and pushed away by a policeman in plainclothes who was standing next to Badal, but not before he fired a stray shot, which did not hit anyone, police said. "Due to the alertness and deployment of our police, this attack attempt was foiled," Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar told reporters, adding that the gunman had been arrested. The reason for the attack was not immediately clear. Badal, a former ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, was sitting outside the Golden Temple doing a penance ritual imposed on him by the Akal Takht, Sikhism's highest body. Sikhism is one of the country's main religions, and Sikhs form nearly 2 per cent of India's 1.4 billion population. In 1984, then-prime minister Indira Gandhi sent the military into the Golden Temple to evict armed Sikh separatist leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his supporters, infuriating Sikhs around the world. A few months later, Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards at her home in New Delhi.—APP

Israel kills 23 as Hamas, Fatah agree to run post-war Gaza

CAIRO: Israeli military strikes killed at least 23 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip, most of them in the town of Beit Lahiya on the northern edge, medics said, as the army issued new evacuation orders in the south of the small enclave. Medics said eight people had been killed in a series of airstrikes in Beit Lahiya while four others were killed elsewhere in Gaza City. An Israeli airstrike later killed two people and wounded others in Jabalia, the largest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps, in the coastal enclave's north, medics said. Another air attack, on Al-Falah School sheltering displaced families in Gaza City's Zeitoun suburb, killed six people and wounded others, medics said, while in Rafah in the far south, three women were killed by Israeli drone fire, they added. The Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said its operations in Jabalia, Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun had now been halted for nearly four weeks due to Israeli attacks on their teams as well as fuel shortages.—APP

PMLN's real defender, loyal companion Azma Zahid Bokhari

Her role as the Information Minister of Punjab, under CM Maryam Nawaz, underscores her strategic importance to the party. Tasked with projecting the initiatives of the Punjab government, she has excelled in coordinating with the media and articulating the party's achievements

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



AZMA Zahid Bokhari, a distinguished political figure and a seasoned lawyer, is a name synonymous with dedication, loyalty, and an unwavering commitment to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Her journey, marked by persistence, leadership, and a staunch defense of her party, is an inspiring tale of a woman

who has carved a niche for herself in Pakistan's political landscape. From her roots in Faisalabad to her prominent role as the Information Minister of Punjab, Azma Zahid Bokhari exemplifies resilience, intellectual strength, and political acumen. Azma Zahid Bokhari's political career began with her election as a Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) of Punjab in 2002. This marked the beginning of an illustrious journey, with her re-election in successive terms during 2008-13, 2013-18, 2018-23, and 2024. Her five consecutive terms in the Assembly underscore her popularity and the trust reposed in her by her party and constituents. During her tenure, she assumed several critical roles, showcasing her versatility and commitment to public service. As Parliamentary Secretary for Culture & Youth Affairs (2009-2011), she worked to promote cultural heritage and youth empowerment. Her role

as Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Law & Parliamentary Affairs (2014-2017) reflected her deep understanding of legislative processes and governance. Additionally, her tenure as Parliamentary Secretary for Information & Culture (2017-2018) highlighted her skills in strategic communication and media management. Azma Zahid Bokhari's political acumen is complemented by her international exposure. She has traveled extensively, visiting countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Dubai, India, Holland, Spain, Qatar, and China. In 2011, she was part of a delegation of Indo-Pakistani Young Parliamentarians to the United States, an experience that broadened her perspective on global politics and diplomatic relations. Her international engagements not only enriched her worldview but also strengthened her ability to represent Pakistan on global platforms, fostering cultural and political

dialogue. Azma Zahid Bokhari's unwavering loyalty to PML-N has earned her the trust of the party's top leadership, including Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Mian Shahbaz Sharif,



and Maryam Nawaz. Her steadfast support during both prosperous and challenging times has solidified her position as one of the party's most dependable figures. Her role as

the Information Minister of Punjab, under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, underscores her strategic importance to the party. Tasked with projecting the initiatives of the Punjab government, she has excelled in coordinating with the media and articulating the party's achievements. Her ability to present the PML-N's viewpoint with clarity and logic has made her a formidable spokesperson. Azma Zahid Bokhari's prowess in media engagements is unparalleled. Known for her logical arguments and articulate responses, she has emerged as a force to be reckoned with in television talk shows. Her ability to counter opposing politicians with composure and intellect has earned her respect across the political spectrum. The reluctance of her political opponents to face her in debates is a testament to her rhetorical strength and command over facts. Yet, despite her

assertiveness, Azma maintains a dignified demeanor, refraining from resorting to personal attacks or unethical rhetoric. Azma Zahid Bokhari's political journey is particularly inspiring for women in Pakistan. Her achievements highlight the potential of women leaders to make significant contributions to governance and policy-making. By breaking stereotypes and excelling in a traditionally male-dominated field, she has become a role model for aspiring female politicians. As the Information Minister of Punjab, her focus on transparency, accountability, and effective communication has enhanced public trust in the provincial government. Her ability to navigate political challenges with grace and resilience ensures her continued relevance and influence in Pakistan's political landscape. Azma Zahid Bokhari stands as a symbol of loyalty, perseverance, and excellence

in public service. Her journey from a practicing lawyer in Faisalabad to a prominent political leader in Punjab exemplifies the transformative power of dedication and hard work. Her contributions to the PML-N, her steadfast defense of her party's principles, and her role in fostering a culture of ethical discourse in politics make her a true asset to Pakistan's democratic system. Azma Zahid Bokhari's story is not just one of personal success; it is a narrative of hope and inspiration for all those who aspire to make a difference through public service. In a world often marred by political cynicism, Azma Zahid Bokhari's journey reminds us of the potential for integrity and intellect to triumph in the realm of governance. As she continues to serve her party and her country, she remains a beacon of resilience and a testament to the enduring power of principled leadership.

Briefs

Iran releases Nobel Peace laureate Mohammadi

TEHRAN: Iran has released Nobel Peace laureate Narges Mohammadi, jailed since November 2021, for three weeks on medical grounds, her lawyer posted on social media. "Based on the advice of the examining doctor, the public prosecutor suspended the jail sentence against Narges Mohammadi for three weeks and she was released from prison," Mostafa Nili said on X. Mohammadi's family and supporters swiftly put out a statement protesting that the three weeks' medical leave was not enough. "A 21-day suspension of Narges Mohammadi's sentence is inadequate. We demand Narges Mohammadi's immediate and unconditional release or at least an extension of her leave to three months," they said in a statement. - Agencies

Pa, Russia ink eight accords in Moscow

DNA
MOSCOW: Pakistan and Russia on Wednesday signed eight agreements aimed at strengthening trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. The agreements were finalised during a ceremony held in Moscow, where the 9th Intergovernmental Commission meeting took place. Federal Minister for Energy Owas Ahmed Leghari led the Pakistani delegation at the talks, which underscored the growing cooperation between the two nations. Speaking at the event, Leghari remarked, "Pakistan-Russia cooperation is progressing steadily, and these agreements will further deepen our collaboration in various sectors."

Syrian army liberates Hama city's surroundings

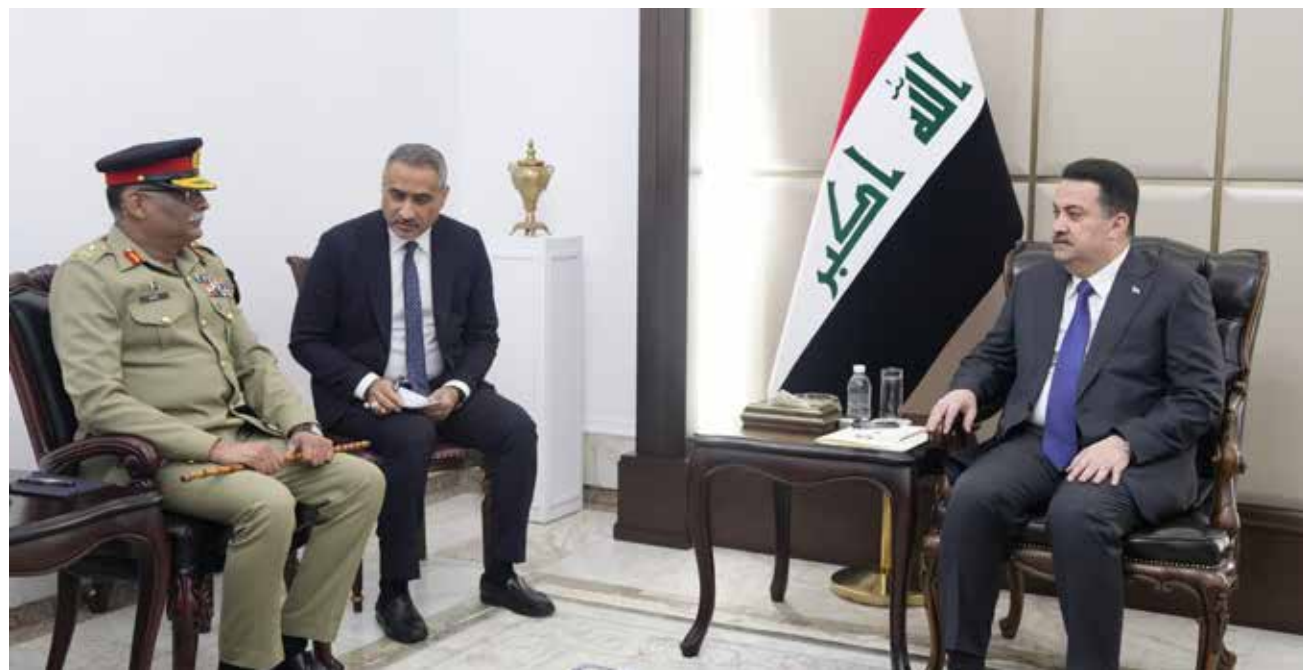
DAMASCUS: The Syrian army has reportedly purged the entirety of the northern city of Hama's surroundings of terrorist presence. Syria media sources said on Wednesday that, "There are no [more] terrorists in the area." According to the sources, the army also extended its control over the town of Tuba, northeast of Hama, after violent clashes with Takfiri terrorists belonging to the so-called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Earlier, a Syrian source reported that "Syrian Arab Army units secured all the points they had advanced to in the northeastern countryside of Hama, at a distance of more than 15 kilometers (nine miles) from the city." According to Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television network, the city has fallen back under the control of the Syrian army and is witnessing "relative calm." - Agencies

Pakistan, Iraq vow to strengthen defence ties

Iraqi civil and military leadership lauded professionalism of Pak Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism

NEWS DESK

BAGHDAD: Pakistan and Iraq have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their defence ties. The commitment was reiterated during Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamsad Mirza's meetings with Iraqi leadership, including Prime Minister Mohammad Shia' Al Sudani, Defence Minister Thabet Muhammad Saeed Al-Abbasi, Interior Minister Abdul Amir Al Shammari and Chief of Defence Forces General Abdul Ameer Rasheed Yar Allah in Baghdad. Both sides discussed key areas of interest, including security, defence cooperation and the current regional environment. They explored ways to expand the scope of military cooperation between the two countries. The Iraqi civil and military leadership lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism. In a separate development, earlier, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Iraqi Ambassador Hamid Abbas Lafta announced a slew of measures aimed at easing travel restrictions and enhancing convenience to facilitate Pakistani pilgrims travel-



ling to Iraq for Arbaeen, ARY News reported. The landmark decisions were reached during a high-level meeting on Wednesday between the two sides who promised to make the journey smooth-

er and more accessible for thousands of devotees. Both sides agreed that Pakistani pilgrims traveling to Iraq for Arbaeen would no longer need to surrender their passports upon arrival.

The meeting decided that the Pakistani pilgrims would be issued visas by the Iraqi Embassy, bypassing travel agents and the quota for Pakistan pilgrims would be increased.

South Korean president Yoon faces impeachment

FOREIGN DESK

SEOUL: South Korean lawmakers submitted a Bill on Dec 4 to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol after he declared martial law and reversed the move hours later, triggering a political crisis in Asia's fourth-largest economy. The surprise declaration of martial law in the major US ally late on Dec 3 caused a stand-off with Parliament, which rejected Mr Yoon's attempt to ban political activity and censor the media, as armed troops forced their way into the National Assembly building in Seoul. The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) called for Mr Yoon, who has been in office since 2022, to resign or face impeachment. Six South Korean opposition parties later submitted a Bill in Parliament to impeach Mr Yoon, with voting set for Dec 5 or Dec 6. "We couldn't ignore the illegal martial law," DP lawmaker Kim Yong-min told reporters. "We can no longer let democracy collapse." There were deep divisions in Mr Yoon's ruling People Power Party as well, as its leader called for Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun to be fired and the entire Cabinet to resign. Mr Kim has offered to resign, the defence ministry said. Mr Yoon told the nation in a TV address that martial law was needed to defend the country from nuclear-armed North Korea and pro-North anti-state forces, and protect its free constitutional order, although he cited no specific threats. Chaotic scenes ensued as troops tried to seize control of the Parliament building, parliamentary aides sprayed fire extinguishers to push them back, and protesters scuffled with police outside. The military said activities by Parliament and political parties would be

banned, and that media and publishers would be under the control of the martial law command. But lawmakers defied the security cordon and within hours of the declaration, South Korea's Parliament, with 190 of its 300 members present, unanimously passed a motion requiring martial law be lifted, including all 18 members present from Mr Yoon's party. The president then rescinded the declaration, just about six hours after its proclamation. Protesters outside the National Assembly shouted and clapped. "We won!" they chanted, and one demonstrator banged on a drum. A South Korean presidential official said: "There are opinions that it was too much to go to emergency martial law, and that we did not follow the procedures for emergency martial law, but it was done strictly within the constitutional framework." There has been no reaction yet from North Korea to the drama in the South. Despite the overnight drama, Seoul appeared normal on Dec 4, with the usual morning rush hour traffic in trains and on the streets. However, more protests were expected with South Korea's largest union coalition, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, planning to hold a rally in Seoul and vowing to strike until Mr Yoon resigns. The US embassy urged US citizens in South Korea to avoid areas where protests were taking place, while some major employers, including Naver Corp and LG Electronics Inc, advised employees to work from home. Financial markets were volatile with South Korean stocks falling around 1.3 per cent and the won stable after plunging to a two-year low. Dealers reported suspected intervention by the South Korean authorities to stem the won's slide.

PTI ready for talks with all political parties

"Imran Khan will chalk out future course of action," says PTI chairman

ISLAMABAD: Days after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) "do-or-die" protest ended abruptly following a late-night crackdown in Islamabad, party chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has extended an olive branch, saying the party is ready to hold talks with all political parties. "[PTI founder] Imran Khan will chalk out the future course of action," Gohar said while speaking to journalists in Abbottabad on Wednesday. His remarks came as the PTI and coalition government trade blames for the violence during the much-protest that left four law en-

forcers dead in Islamabad last month. The former ruling party has since claimed that at least 12 of its workers were killed and 1,000 were arrested. However, the government has categorically denied using live ammunition against the protesters and said that four law enforcers including three Rangers personnel and a policeman were martyred during the protest. The PML-N-led federal government has time and again asked the PTI to "sit across the table and talk", but its founder turned the offer, stating that the party will only hold talks with those wielding real power. Talking to the media today, Barrister Gohar also ruled out the notion of Bushra Bibi, wife of PTI founder, joining politics, saying that she had "no intention" of doing so. "She [Bushra] attended the protest as an ordinary worker," he added. Furthermore, the PTI chairman said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur did not utilise KP government resources during the demonstration. In response to a question, he claimed that at least 5,000 PTI workers were "still missing", adding that they were gathering data of them at district levels. He also lambasted the authorities for "firing" on protesters, saying that no government shoots at its own civilians. Gohar added that the KP government would announce compensation, including jobs, for the families of "martyrs". "Our struggle is for restoration of democracy and Imran's release," he added.

SHC grants protective bail to Arif Alvi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday granted former president and PTI leader Arif Alvi protective bail for 20 days after he petitioned the court, citing multiple cases filed against him for participating in a "peaceful" protest on November 24. PTI Founder Imran Khan had issued a "final call" for nationwide protests on Nov 24, demanding the restoration of the PTI's electoral mandate, the release of detained party members, and the reversal of the 26th Amendment which he said had strengthened a "dictatorial regime". The protests, however, turned violent after PTI protesters entered the prohibited Red Zone in Islamabad and clashed with the law enforcement agencies. As a result, PTI claimed that 12 of its supporters lost their lives during the protest, while the government said one policeman and three Rangers personnel died. Following the party's call to end the protest, more than 900 protesters were arrested for defying state orders and resorting to "violence."

Israeli war on Gaza continues

GAZA: In the midst of catastrophic humanitarian suffering for more than two million Palestinians - half of them children, the Israeli occupation army continued, for the 425th consecutive day, to pound and target different areas and massacre more civilians in the Gaza Strip, especially in the northern areas. Reporters for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said on Wednesday that the Israeli occupation army carried out attacks on several homes, civilian targets and shelter centers in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. The Israeli army's large-scale genocidal campaign in northern Gaza, especially in Jabalia and Beit Lahia, has entered day 61, where its forces continue to intensively bomb homes and shelters and attack civilians while imposing a tight siege on the entire area. Deliberate Israeli attacks on ambulance and civil defense workers already deprived northern Gaza of any rescue services. - Agencies

Aleema Khan rejects 'minus Imran' idea

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Aleema Khan, sister of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, dismissed the "minus Imran Khan" notion as baseless, stating it will not materialise. Aleema while giving an interview to US media asserted that "there is only one leader, and that is Imran Khan." Imran Khan's sister dismissed rumours suggesting she or Bushra Bibi are leading the party, labelling them as propaganda. She clarified that no PTI leaders are in contact with her, and when party leaders were detained, legal counsel Salman Akram Raja only suggested sending a message to the founder. Addressing questions about Bushra Bibi, Aleema stated that Imran Khan did not give her any protest-related directives, as she had been unwell and absent from court appearances for two weeks. Aleema also denied claims made by Mashal Yousafzai regarding the D-Chowk protest, calling them false. On November 29, 2024, Mashal Yousafzai revealed Bushra Bibi's decision to head to D-Chowk. Mashal in her interview stated that, "We were informed that the PTI founder had instructed them (PTI convoy) to stop at Sangjani, but Bushra Bibi wanted to hear directly from her husband regarding the protest at D-Chowk." She also mentioned that Bushra Bibi had repeatedly stated during the protest that Imran Khan's order was to reach D-Chowk. Later, Yousafzai, who also served as the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was removed from her position due to this particular interview. On November 3, 2024 PTI founder Imran Khan, through his sister Aleema Khan, has sent a significant message, revealing that he has "one final card" left. Speaking to journalists outside Adiala Jail, Aleema Khan disclosed that Imran Khan hinted at having "one final card up his sleeve" but chose not to reveal further details. Addressing rumours about the former prime minister's health, Aleema dismissed them as baseless.

Rwanda HC, Jam discuss new business horizons

He suggested fostering collaboration between the chambers of commerce of Rwanda and Pakistan to facilitate matchmaking among business communities

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Rwanda to Pakistan, Fatima Harerimana on Wednesday called on Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, discussed the opening of new trade markets and strengthening bilateral ties between the two nations. This meeting marks a significant milestone as Rwanda's first High Commissioner to Pakistan aims to foster economic cooperation following the establishment of Rwanda's embassy in Islamabad, said a press release issued here. Highlighting the economic potential of Rwanda, the commerce minister observed that while direct trade with Pakistan has yet to be established, Rwanda's growing GDP is comparable to that of Ethiopia. This makes it an attractive market for bilateral engagement. Minister Jam emphasized the need for a broader East African Community (EAC) trade forum in Islamabad, suggesting that the event could be co-chaired by the President of the EAC and Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif, attended by trade ministers from member states. "There is tremendous scope for mutual trade benefits. For instance, Rwanda could export tea to Pakistan, while Pakistan can supply rice to Rwanda," noted Minister Jam Kamal Khan. He proposed identifying key business areas and bringing together stakeholders under Pakistan's "Look Africa Policy." The minister highlighted opportunities in sectors like power, agricultural machinery, food, and pharmaceuticals. He suggested fostering collaboration between the chambers of commerce of Rwanda and Pakistan to facilitate matchmaking among business communities. He also stressed that a high-level interaction involving heads of states would be pivotal for strengthening ties. Minister Khan proposed that during the planned EAC Business Forum, multiple Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements could be signed, paving the way for long-term partnerships. Rwanda's High Commissioner, Fatima Harerimana expressed interest



in Pakistan's electric bikes and the automobile sector, signaling a new avenue for bilateral trade. The minister informed her of Pakistan's significant strides in mobile phone manufacturing, with 13 companies currently operating in the sector. Additionally, he pointed out Pakistan's expertise

in electric bikes, footwear, and textiles, all of which could be promising industries for trade with Rwanda. "Pakistani tractors, known for being both cost-effective and energy-efficient, are already making an impact in Africa. These could be a valuable export to Rwanda," the minister added.

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