



Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-06

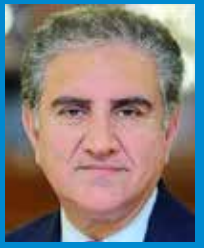
Keeping up diplomacy to 'contain crisis'

Detailed News On Page-07



Punish if I'm guilty, says: Qureshi

Detailed News On Page-08



Maritime Security Workshop

PM pledges to eradicate terrorism

Says Pak Navy has commitment and capacity to cope with entire spectrum of threats

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday reiterated his resolve to eradicate the menace of terrorism in the country. He expressed it while addressing the closing ceremony of the seventh Maritime Security Workshop at Pakistan Naval War Colleges in Lahore. He said Pakistan has paid a heavy price of terrorism, adding that 80,000 people lost their lives while economy suffered losses worth billions of dollars during war against terrorism. PM Sharif said the PML-N had weeded out the terrorism during his previous tenure but lamented that it has once again sprung out. He vowed not to sit idle till the complete elimination of terrorism from the country. He said several meetings of Apex Committee have been held to ensure maintenance of law and order.

PICTURE ON BACK PAGE

He said officers and soldiers of the armed forces are rendering great sacrifices to ensure security of the country and their sacrifices will not go in vain. The premier said Pakistan Navy's officers and sailors have commitment and capacity to cope with entire spectrum of threats making it a formidable force capable of ensuring the maritime security of the country. While appreciating the Pakistan Navy, he said the development and progress could be achieved only through harnessing the blue economy. PM Shehbaz Sharif said China is also providing support to Pakistan in maritime sector. He said the prosperity of the country also linked to the Gwadar port.

Mobile services restored Kurram grand jirga declares indefinite ceasefire

Members held meetings with concerned parties, making significant decisions to ensure sustainable peace in the region

SHAMIM SHAHID

KURRAM: After days of armed conflict and over 131 fatalities in the tribal district of Kurram, a grand jirga has decided on an indefinite ceasefire and has agreed that the trenches will remain vacant until the final decision of the jirga is made. The gathering took place under the guidance of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, with over 100 tribal elders from Kurram attending. The Jirga was led by the Commissioner of Kohat Division, and Kohat Division DIG, Shir Akbar Khan, also participated. The jirga members held individual and collective

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INDEPENDENCE DAY OF FINLAND



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Riina Kionka, ambassador of EU, Finish ambassador Hannu Ripatti cutting cake to celebrate Independence Day of Finland. - DNA

Bangladeshi diplomat receives 'threatening letter'

'Direct flight operation b/w Pakistan & Bangladesh to resume soon'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police have registered a case on the complaint of a Bangladeshi diplomat who said he has received a threatening letter and was being followed by unidentified people. According to the police, the diplomat, Mohammad Ali Khalid, had lodged a complaint with the DIG of

Continued on Page 06

FO issues travel advisory for Syria

MOFA also added contact numbers for Pakistanis in Syria to remain in contact with the Embassy

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Pakistan has issued a fresh advisory urging nationals to exercise extreme caution in Syria due to the rapidly evolving security situation. The warning comes as rebels, including the group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), have made significant territorial gains, capturing key areas such as Aleppo and Hama from government forces.

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Govt trying to appease Fazl JUI-F warns govt of 'march' if madrassa bill not approved

Party does not wish for confrontation, but would be compelled to act if demands ignored, says Haideri

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Secretary-General Abdul Ghafoor Haideri has warned the incumbent government of staging a march on Islamabad if the Societies Registration (Amendment) Act, 2024, related to the registration of madrassas, did not get approval. Speaking to journalists in Lahore on Friday, Haideri expressed concern over the government's "ill intentions" to delay the approval of the madrassa registration bill. He emphasised that while the JUI-F does not wish for

Continued on Page 06

Bilawal emphasises need for dialogue among political forces

PPP Chairman also criticised KP govt for focusing on extremist politics

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Friday praised a multi-party conference (MPC) held a day earlier in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Sh Rashid reveals his 'meeting' with Imran

Says he faced no mistreatment during the 40-day detention

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Awami Muslim League chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed revealed a brief yet emotional meeting with PTI founder Imran Khan. Speaking to media outside the Supreme Court, Rashid shared that Imran Khan embraced him warmly, saying, "You and I are one." Rashid also mentioned his 40-day detention, stating he faced no torture during that period. Commenting on national issues, he claimed that "while Shehbaz Sharif serves as a mere figurehead, someone else is behind the ongoing cases."

NEPRA reduces electricity prices

The decision provides relief to millions of consumers across the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has approved a reduction of Rs. 1.14 per unit in electricity prices under the October monthly fuel adjustment charges. According to reports, this decrease in electricity prices will apply to all consumers of distribution companies (DISCOs), except K-Electric customers.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

Body formed for talks

Imran threatens govt with civil disobedience

PTI founder also announces "grand gathering" in Peshawar on Dec 13 to honour martyrs killed during Islamabad protest

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has warned the government to launch a civil disobedience movement if his key demands are not met. This comes after the apparent failure of the PTI's "do-or-die" protest, which had aimed to secure his release and rally support for the party. Posting on X, Imran Khan announced the formation of a five-member negotiation committee tasked with negotiating with the federal government on two key issues: the release of "political prisoners" currently facing trial and the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate the violent crackdown on PTI supporters during the May 9, 2023 protests and the November 26 crackdown on PTI protesters. Imran Khan made it clear that if these demands are not met, he will launch a civil disobedience movement starting December 14.

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Everyone left me alone at D-Chowk, claims Bushra

Imran Khan's wife visits residence of PTI worker who was killed during 'much-hyped' protest

DNA

CHARSADDA: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's wife, Bushra Bibi, has said that everyone left her alone at D-Chowk in Islamabad after authorities launched a crackdown on the protesters last month. As per reports, the PTI workers were frustrated with the ones leading the November 24 protest, especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin

Continued on Page 06

Syrian rebels close in on key city of Homs after Hama

On Friday, SOHR's Rahman reported that Syrian troops "suddenly" pulled out of eastern Deir ez-Zor city and its surroundings

NEWS DESK

DAMASCUS: Thousands of people have fled the Syrian city of Homs as antigovernment forces push their lightning offensive further south towards Damascus, according to a war monitor. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said on Friday that thousands of Homs residents started fleeing overnight towards the western coast, where embattled Syrian President Bashar al-Assad still maintains control, as the rebels advanced. Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the UK-based monitoring group, said fighters led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) armed group were 5km (3 miles) "from the outskirts of Homs city" after capturing two towns - Rastan and Talbiseh - in the governorate of Homs. Homs, a key crossroads city linking Damascus to al-Assad's coastal heartlands, is 46km (29 miles) south of Hama, which HTS and allied fighters captured on Thursday, days after seizing the country's prized second city Aleppo from government forces. Samer AbdelJaber, head of emergency coordination at the UN's World Food Programme, said renewed fighting in Syria has displaced 280,000 people in about a week, warning numbers could swell to 1.5 million.

Continued on Page 06

Rebel leader says goal is to overthrow Assad

AGENCIES

ALEPPO: Rebel forces pressing a lightning offensive in Syria aim to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad's rule, their Islamist leader said in an interview published on Friday. After wresting other key cities from government control, the Islamist-led rebels were at the gates of Syria's Homs, a war monitor said, though the defence ministry denied claims it had withdrawn its troops. In little over a week, the offensive has seen Syria's second city Aleppo and strategically located Hama fall from Assad's control, for the first time since the civil war began in 2011. Should the rebels capture Homs, that would cut the seat of power in the capital Damascus from the Mediterranean coast, a key bastion of the Assad clan, which has ruled Syria for the past five decades. Abu Mohammed al-Jolani,

Continued on Page 06

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Punjab CM launches free solar panel scheme

The CM said earlier 7.3 million consumers of Punjab benefited from the subsidy of Rs.14 per unit, adding that public resources will be spent only for the public convenience and relief

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the purpose of the free solar panel scheme is to offer lasting relief to the public from the burden of expensive electricity. While formally inaugurating the CM Punjab Free Solar Panel Scheme for 100,000 consumers in Punjab here on Friday, she said that Punjab consumers can apply under the scheme via SMS or online portal from today. The CM said earlier 7.3 million consumers of Punjab benefited from the subsidy of Rs.14 per unit, adding that public resources will be spent only for the public convenience and relief. Earlier, the Provincial Secretary Energy briefed Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif about the free solar panel scheme, under which, 100,000 solar systems will be installed over a period of one year. He added solar systems will be given free to elec-

tricity consumers of the province who consume up to 200 units per month. The CM was briefed that 52,019 consumers who consume 100 units per month will be given free 550-watt solar systems, while consumers consuming up to 200 units of electricity per month will be given free 1100-watt solar system. She was apprised that to register under the CM Free Solar Panel Scheme, one can visit the online portal cmsolar-scheme.punjab.gov.pk. Consumers of Punjab can also register for the scheme by sending an SMS to 8800. Verification will be done using the reference number and CNIC number mentioned on the monthly bill of the consumers. A computerized balloting will be conducted to ensure transparency in the Scheme. She was also briefed that a helpline will also be established to support and guide the consumers who will get free solar systems. Pakistan's cuisine To protect the solar panel and inverter from theft, the solar

panel and inverter will be linked to the computerized CNIC of the consumer. Installing 100,000 solar systems in Punjab will reduce carbon emissions by 57,000 tons. Free solar panel scheme will also reduce the burden of subsidy on the federal government. Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has paid glowing tribute to Major Shabbir Sharif Shaheed on his 53rd martyrdom anniversary. In her message, the CM said Major Shabbir Sharif Shaheed set a great example of courage and bravery, adding that in the 1971 war, Major Shabbir Sharif Shaheed sacrificed his life while showing courage in Sulemanki. The CM said that Major Shabbir Sharif Shaheed is alive as an example of determination and courage, adding that his passion to defend the country is exemplary. The nation is proud of Major Shabbir Sharif Shaheed and all other soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the defence of the homeland, she remarked.



ISLAMABAD: Women admiring the vibrant displays at the 43rd Chrysanthemum Festival and Annual Flower Show, organized by the National Horticultural Society of Pakistan and CDA at Rose and Jasmine Garden.

KP govt to restore student unions through legislation: PA told

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has expressed its commitment to restoring student unions in educational institutions and has decided to introduce consensus-based legislation in this regard. The announcement was made during the provincial assembly session on Friday. Pakistan Peoples Party's Parliamentary Leader, Ahmed Kundi, raised the matter, reminding the assembly of the Chief Minister's earlier pledge to reinstate student unions. Pakistan's cuisine He pointed out that democratic forces in Sindh have already revived student unions, expressing hope that similar measures would be implemented in KP's academic institutions. Higher Education Minister Meena Khan stated that a task force was established in 2013, which recommended the restoration of student unions. He assured the assembly that student unions would be revived through unanimous legislation in the house, and representatives would be given a voice in relevant forums. He said that the revival of unions would empower students and foster democratic engagement within educational institutions in KP. —APP

Plan to shift public, commercial vehicles into electric: CDA chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, chaired a meeting at CDA headquarters on Friday to discuss comprehensive plans to shift public and commercial vehicles into electric. The meeting also reviewed the proposal for digital advertisement on metro and EV buses and their bus stations. The meeting was attended by Member (Admin), Member T&D, and other relevant officers

from the Islamabad Bus Service. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized that this initiative marks a pivotal step toward achieving a greener, more efficient public transportation system in Islamabad. The transition of public commercial buses to electric buses is expected to modernize the city's transport infrastructure while drastically reducing the carbon footprint. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa directed to take on board all relevant stakeholders for transforming commercial buses into electric

ones. He also instructed to explore the provision of special incentives to encourage a faster shift towards electric mobility. The focus of the initiative should be on reducing carbon footprint and improving environmental impact. During the meeting, the need for upgrading charging infrastructure was highlighted as key to the success of this initiative. In this connection, Chairman CDA has instructed to introduce new regulations to facilitate the establishment of electric vehicle charging stations at petrol pumps across the city.

Quality education essential for sustainable economic growth: Muqam

MANSEHRA: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, and SAFFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam on Friday emphasized the importance of quality education for achieving sustainable economic development and prosperity in Pakistan. Speaking at the annual Parents' Day ceremony at Pakistan Scouts Cadet College Batrasi, he highlighted the role of collective efforts in overcoming challenges, including terrorism. He remarked, "Pakistan is endowed with abundant natural resources, and we need to work collectively for its progress to reach greater heights." Citing examples of national resilience, such as the 2005 earthquake, the 2010 floods, and the fight against terrorism, the minister praised the nation's unity in overcoming adversities. Muqam acknowledged the significant contributions of graduates from Cadet College Batrasi in various fields and underscored the importance of students as the nation's future leaders. He urged parents to closely monitor their children's academic performance, extra-curricular activities, and daily routines to secure a bright and safe future. Addressing concerns about misinformation on social media, the minister warned against misleading propaganda aimed at youth, encouraging students to follow truth and reject negative elements attempting to distort young minds. He lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's efforts in tackling economic challenges, noting that the government's effective monetary and economic policies have reduced inflation to single digits and boosted the stock exchange to record levels. Reflecting on the devastating earthquake of October 8, 2005, which severely impacted the Hazara Division, particularly Manshara District, the minister commended the college administration for continuing educational activities despite significant infrastructure damage. —APP

Shanakht to highlight importance of PWDs

ISLAMABAD: The Network of Organizations Working for People with Disabilities (NOWPDP) has launched the National "Shanakht" Campaign to address the under-representation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the national database and the subsequent impact on inclusive policy development. The initiative was unveiled on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) accompanied by a powerful video aimed at challenging societal attitudes and stigmas surrounding disability. The video emphasizes the importance of recognizing the potential of every individual, enabling them to live independent and fulfilling lives. NOWPDP's Shanakht Campaign brings together voices from diverse social, economic,

and political sectors across Pakistan, united in their support for PWDs. A proud recipient of the Zero Project Award 2025, NOWPDP has been working for the empowerment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) since 2008 and has transformed the lives of over 100,000 individuals in the past 16 years. Recognising the systemic nature of marginalization experienced by PWDs, through its 7 pillars, NOWPDP provides guidance, identity, welfare, education, skills development, and employment opportunities to PWDs. For PWDs to be recognized as citizens of the state and gain access to basic rights is the first step towards ensuring their inclusion and equitable participation in all spheres of life. However, a majority of PWDs and

the general public remain unaware of the existence and importance of Special CNICs - the official identity document specifically issued for PWDs that not only grants them their due rights and recognition but also entitles them to certain government-mandated benefits. According to NOWPDP CEO Omair Ahmad, the organization has already facilitated over 15,000 PWDs in obtaining Disability Certificates and Special CNICs through its One-Window Camps. However, the majority of PWDs are still unaccounted for, highlighting the need for the Shanakht Campaign to ensure that PWDs are recognized as equal citizens, entitled to their basic rights and the opportunity for inclusive participation in all aspects of life. —APP

Provinces take initiative to set up constitutional courts: Sharjeel

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that yesterday PTI founder left the court, demonstrating an authoritarian mentality. The courts cannot be bent in this way.' Since 2015, we have been facing cases and appearing in court for 9 years

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that the efforts of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto made the 26th Constitutional Amendment possible, and constitutional courts were established under it. He said that the Sindh province took the initiative in establishing these courts. Talking to the media persons outside the NAB court in Karachi, he said that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari aims to provide immediate justice to the people and quick solutions to their problems. "We have seen in the past that there were cases where those accused of murder were sentenced to death. However, after an appeal, these individuals were acquitted, even though they had already been sentenced to death. We believe that the constitutional courts have provided significant relief to the people." Sindh Senior Minister said that President Asif Ali Zardari spent 12 years in jail without being convicted. He added that various political parties have also faced the courts, and those who create such cases are now facing cases themselves. In response to a question, he said that there should be trust in the courts. The courts should not be intimidated or made controversial, and efforts should always be made to achieve justice based on truth and fairness. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that yesterday PTI founder left the court, demonstrating an authoritarian mentality. The courts cannot be bent in this way.' Since 2015, we have been facing cases and appearing in court for 9 years. We have also appeared in court under pressure when our party and we were under pressure, and we have faced cases even while sitting in jail.' He said that the PTI founder's mentality is that the establishment, judiciary, and Election Commission should follow his orders. When the Election Commission did not comply with his demands, he made the most controversial appointment of Sikandar Sultan Raja. The Senior Minister said that Governor KPK Faisal Karim Kundi organized an APC regarding public order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in which 16 parties, besides PTI, participated. He added that it was PTI's responsibility to bring all political parties together. He said that the situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is worsening, with the police not seen on the streets after dark. The police in KPK have been demoralized, and the situation there is no longer under the control of the government. The PTI government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is failing, and PTI's priority is to spread anarchy, chaos, and confrontation with the institutions in the country. The Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said this is the third term of the PTI government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is shameful that members there cannot go to their constituencies. The police, which were supposed to maintain public order, were instead asked to provide security for the long march and weapons, so they could attack the federation. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PTI has bowed its knees before terrorists. In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the PTI founder also talked about civil disobedience during the sit-in. He was the first to burn his bill, but when his electricity was cut off for non-payment, he was the first to submit the bill. Imran Khan had said that money should not be sent abroad through official channels but through Hawala Hundi. He aims to set fire to everything in the country. —DNA

Afghan Consul opposes IDC levy by KP govt on transit trade

He demanded of the KP government to fully abolish Infrastructure Development Cess which was earlier two percent, but has now been slashed to one percent

DNA

PESHAWAR: Afghan Consul General in Peshawar, Hafiz Mohibullah Shakir has opposed levy of Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC) by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on goods being transported to Afghanistan under the Transit Trade Agreement. According to a press release issued here Friday, the Afghan envoy expressed these views while talking with a delegation of Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(PAJCCI) which called on him under the leadership of SVP PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi. Other members of the delegation included Farooq Ahmad, Director PAJCCI, Intiaz Ahmad Ali, Coordinator PAJCCI, Former President SCCI, Faiz Ahmad Faizi and former VP SCCI, Shuja Muhammad. Afghan Consul General was assisted by Transport Attache, Maulvi Said Muhammad Faiz and Public Relationing Officer, Shahid Khan. Talking to businessmen, Afghan envoy said enforcement of any levy on transit trade is against the

Geneva Convention under which land lock country, Afghanistan is being facilitated for the import of goods. Hafiz Mohibullah Shakir said such decisions have a negative impact on bilateral trade and the regional economy. He demanded of the KP government to fully abolish Infrastructure Development Cess which was earlier two percent, but has now been slashed to one percent. Earlier, the delegation members raised the issues being faced by transporters and traders while transporting goods through Afghanistan. Speaking on

the occasion, SVP PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said trucks traveling from Pakistan are only allowed up to Jalalabad city. For onward transport, Afghan trucks must be hired, which is increasing costs and logistical complexities. Furthermore, Zia continued, Afghan government requires a security deposit equal to 110% of the custom value of goods being transported. This deposit is held in the National Bank of Afghanistan and inflicts a significant financial burden on traders, he added. While objecting to the de-

cision of the IDC levy, Zia said the charges imposed by the KP government on all the inward and outward transit goods is contrary to the Geneva Convention which allows excess to all the goods in transit to land lock countries. He demanded of the KP government to forthwith waive this levy from all kinds of exports, imports and transit trade goods. In response to the submissions of delegation members, Afghan Consul General held out assurance of taking up the issue with concerned officials for resolution of problems.

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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
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- Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day
- Dec 23/Japan National Day

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Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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MH.....561116
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DHQ.....5556311-4
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Holy Family.....9290322-7
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Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

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ISLAMABAD: The outgoing High Commissioner of Bangladesh Rahul Alam Siddique addressing a farewell reception he hosted to bid farewell to his friends. Ambassador Rahul is leaving Pakistan after completing his term. —DNA

WWF-Pakistan honours environmental heroes

Speaking on occasion, Hammad Naqi Khan, Director General WWF-Pakistan, praised the award recipients as true champions of environmental conservation. He highlighted that their tireless efforts embody the core values of WWF-Pakistan, showing the power of passion and persistence in protecting our planet's most valuable resources

DNA

ISLAMABAD: WWF-Pakistan on Friday hosted a prestigious awards ceremony here to recognise exceptional contributions to environmental conservation and environmental stewardship. Awards were conferred to five distinguished individuals in recognition of their significant contributions to safeguarding Pakistan's natural heritage. Pakistan's cuisine The Syed Asad Ali Conservation Award was presented to Muhammad Idrees Nauman of the Wildlife and Fisheries Department, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, for his courageous rescue of a female common leopard stranded 300 feet in a tree. Meanwhile,

the T.J. Roberts Conservation Award was conferred to Rizwana Aziz of the Punjab Wildlife and Parks Department for her extraordinary efforts in combatting illegal poaching and wildlife trade, strengthening enforcement measures, and raising awareness for wildlife conservation in Punjab. The George Schaller Conservation Award recognised Sana Raja of the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board for her outstanding contributions in rescuing and rehabilitating endangered species, including common leopards. The Herbion Nature Conservation Award, sponsored by Herbion Naturals, recognizes outstanding contributions to the research and conservation of medicinal plants and floral studies. In its inaugural year, the award was presented

to Dr Farooq Ahmad of the Punjab Agriculture Department for his groundbreaking work in wetland restoration and biodiversity conservation in Pakistan's Salt Range region. Pakistan's cuisine Dr. Ahmad's efforts have led to the protection of over 60,000 acres of land, the promotion of eco-tourism, and significant advancements in environmental education. Established in partnership with Ahmer Bilal Sufi, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and President of the Research Society of International Law, the Al-Mizan Award for Environmental Justice was presented to Raja Waseem Ahmed, an environmental activist. His legal advocacy in Kahoon Valley, district Chakwal, has safeguarded local groundwater and biodiver-

sity, highlighting the crucial role of legal frameworks in environmental protection. Present at the occasion, Ahmer Bilal Sufi lauded the contributions of all recipients and underscored the importance of legal advocacy in achieving sustainable conservation outcomes. "Through these awards, we honour the individuals who have shown compassion towards conservation. Their selfless acts inspire not only us, but the country as well", he added. During this keynote address, Syed Rizwan Mehboob, Chairman of the Scientific Committee and Board Member WWF-Pakistan, said "I admire the dedication of these unsung heroes and firmly believe in the vital role that these conservationists play in advancing WWF-Pakistan's mission to protect the

natural world". Pakistan's cuisine Speaking on occasion, Hammad Naqi Khan, Director General WWF-Pakistan, praised the award recipients as true champions of environmental conservation. He highlighted that their tireless efforts embody the core values of WWF-Pakistan, showing the power of passion and persistence in protecting our planet's most valuable resources. Khan emphasized that their commitment inspires change and ensures a better future for generations to come. The ceremony concluded with a call to action for increased cooperation and innovative solutions to protect Pakistan's rich biodiversity. These awards not only celebrate past successes but also inspire future generations to champion the cause of conservation.

ISSI signs MoU with KIIR to upscale advocacy on Kashmir dispute

ISLAMABAD: Further deepening its outreach to national think-tanks, the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) has concluded an MoU with the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR), designed to promote policy-oriented research and dialogue, and upscale efforts for enhanced global awareness of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute and its just and lasting solution. In his welcome remarks, Mr Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman, KIIR apprised the ISSI delegation headed by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI, regarding the Institute's structure and its multi-faceted functions. Over the past 30 years, KIIR has produced reports, and research articles, and also remained engaged with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHRC). Further, the Institute has deep engagement with international NGOs, UN mechanisms, national and international think-tanks, and global media outlets. KIIR is recognised as a key source of research-based publications for the relevant Government departments and think-tanks. Mr. Wani highlighted that the primary focus of KIIR is to advocate for conflict resolution through strategic dialogues. The Institute actively engages in outreach and networking efforts while promoting international human rights advocacy in Geneva. Additionally, KIIR has established an extensive outreach and internship program designed to engage and empower the next generation of Kashmiri leaders in different domains. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood emphasized the importance of institutional collaboration, and welcomed the signing of the MoU between ISSI and KIIR. He noted that while the two Institutions have worked closely in the past, there is a need to further build on and upscale mutual collaboration. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the critical importance of continuous evaluation of the developments in the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), documenting human rights violations in the occupied territory, and further strengthening advocacy efforts with logic and evidence.—APP

CDA chief guarantees revenue reinvestment in local sector

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi emphasized that Islamabad's business community faces numerous challenges, necessitating urgent resolution from concerned departments, particularly the Capital Development Authority (CDA). He was speaking at the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office bearers of the Traders Welfare Association (TWA) Jinnah Super Market, where he administered the oath to the new officials. CDA Chairman/Chief Commissioner Chaudhry Mohammad Ali Randhawa attended the ceremony as Chief Guest. Prominent figures, including Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, Chairman of the Founder Group ICCI Tariq Sadiq, Secretary General of the United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari, ICCI former Presidents Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Khalid Javaid, Mian Shaoukat Masood, and senior business leaders attended the ceremony. Nasir Qureshi emphasized the crucial role of the business community in the country's economy but noted their neglect by authorities. He urged that the revenue generated from the business sector be reinvested in the sector to improve amenities for both residents and businesses. He also pledged ICCI's full support for the CDA in addressing these issues. Chaudhry Mohammad Ali Randhawa, Chairman CDA/Chief Commissioner Islamabad, assured that he and his team understands the community's issues and is committed to addressing them promptly and effectively with plans to allocate sector-generated revenue for local development. In his address, TWA Jinnah Super Market President Assad Aziz highlighted issues like sewage, street lighting, toilet shortages, sanitation, and security as major concerns for the business community. The newly elected office bearers of TWA Jinnah Super Market include Abdul Rehman Siddiqui as General Secretary, Fassihullah Khan as Senior Vice President, and Chaudhry Mohammad Ashraf as Vice President.—DNA

Pakistan unveils pioneering Silk Road Culture Centre



DNA

ISLAMABAD: A landmark initiative Silk Road Culture Centre Pakistan (SRCC) was launched to poised to transform cultural exchange and diplo-

macy in the region. This groundbreaking platform celebrates the rich tapestry of cultures that converge along the historic Silk Road, while reinforcing Pakistan's commitment to global harmony and mutual understanding. The SRCC is an embodiment of Pakistan's dedication to strengthening bonds with countries

it has signed cultural agreements with. By showcasing shared heritage, fostering creativity, and hosting collaborative events, the center will play a pivotal role in deepening ties and facilitating meaningful cultural interactions. The launch of SRCC provides an unparalleled opportunity for the diplomatic community in Pakistan to promote cultural diplomacy. It offers an avenue for embassies and cultural missions to showcase their nation's art, traditions, and heritage in a collaborative environment, fostering mutual respect and understanding. The SRCC stands as the first-of-its-kind private-sector initiative in Pakistan dedicated to promoting international art and culture. Through exhibitions, performances, workshops, and dialogues, the center aims to project a positive image of Pakistan as a culturally rich, progressive, and welcoming nation. In a time when global connections are more critical than ever, the SRCC seeks to act as a bridge, bringing together artists.

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Briefs

Rose & Jasmine Garden's floral spectacle pulls huge crowds

ISLAMABAD: The three-day Chrysanthemum and Autumn Flowers Show commenced on Friday at the picturesque Rose and Jasmine Garden Islamabad which is transforming the venue into a vibrant tapestry of colours and providing a major draw for nature lovers and families alike.

The event set to conclude on Dec 8 (Sunday), is poised to attract throngs of visitors from far and wide, with the twin cities expected to make a strong showing, according to a private news channel report.

The National Horticulture Society of Pakistan (NHSP) and the Capital Development Authority (CDA) have joined forces to organize a spectacular exhibition as part of the annual autumn-fall festival, showcasing the beauty and diversity of Pakistan's flora.

The organizers have curated an impressive display of chrysanthemums, featuring a diverse range of species, including intermediates, incurved, reflex, sprays, anemones, pompons, Korean hybrid, single floor, and spidery flowers.

A CDA worker revealed that the 3-day exhibition offers a comprehensive experience, showcasing not only a stunning array of seasonal flowers, herbs, and ornamental plants but also featuring numerous commercial stalls. These stalls offer a wide range of products, including nursery items, seeds, gardening tools, lawn furniture, and accessories.

Additionally, the event provides kids with fun activities, ensuring an enjoyable experience for visitors of all ages, as noted by another enthusiastic visitor.—APP

Call for joint efforts to ensure Online Safety

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja has said that online safety is a significant challenge requiring collective efforts to address online threats. "Children are particularly vulnerable to online dangers. Online safety is a big challenge, and joint efforts are crucial to counter these threats. We must unite to combat online threats," she said during a meeting with Miranda Sissons, Global Human Rights Policy Lead for Meta. According to a press release, the meeting focused on matters of mutual interest, particularly digital safety. Meta's Public Policy Head in Pakistan, Dania Mukhtar, also attended the meeting. Shaza Fatima highlighted the growing risks associated with online threats in today's digital age, particularly for children and young people. "The increasing prevalence of online threats places internet users, especially children, at greater risk," she added. The minister reiterated the government's commitment to strengthening cybersecurity and improving the digital ecosystem nationwide. She also stressed the importance of ensuring the availability of quality content on social media platforms. The meeting was attended by Member IT, Syed Junaid Imam, and Member International Coordination, Imad Memon.—APP

Paving way for sustainable growth conference at NUML

The closing session featured Rector NUML, Major General (R) Shahid Mehmood Kayani, and Deputy Country Director of Islamic Relief Pakistan, Ghulam Raza Narejo, as the keynote speaker

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The International Conference on "Re-Imagining the Real Estate: Sustainable Market Growth and Urban Planning" concluded successfully today at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML). Over two days, the event brought together developers, industrialists, researchers, and academia to tackle pressing challenges in the real estate sector, propose policy solutions, and combat fraudulent practices. Organized by NUML's Faculty of Management Sciences in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Islamic Relief Pakistan, and the Institute of Management Sciences (IMSciences), the conference provided a dynamic platform for dialogue on sustainable development and urban planning. The closing session featured Rector NUML, Major General (R) Shahid Mehmood Kayani, and Deputy Country Director of Islamic Relief Pakistan, Ghulam Raza Narejo, as the keynote speaker. In his address, Rector NUML, Major Gen (r) Shahid Mehmood Kayani HI(M) lauded the efforts of the organizers for hosting the conference, the first of its kind at the university. Highlighting the significance of the real estate sector, which contributes 40% to Pakistan's GDP, he emphasized the urgent need to address its challenges. "The real estate industry impacts everyone in one way or another and holds equal importance globally. It is essential to tackle issues such as illegal



housing societies, which account for 60% of the market, through robust policies and public awareness," he stated. The Rector also stressed the critical role of academia in shaping solutions for the industry and expressed hope that the conference's recommendations would inform government policies. In his keynote address, Deputy Country Director Islamic Relief Pakistan, Ghulam Raza Narejo apprised the audience of Islamic Relief's initiatives, particularly its focus on environmental sustainability. He emphasized the importance of devel-

oping climate-resilient communities to protect urban living and natural habitats. He urged policymakers and developers to prioritize climate and environmental factors when designing societies and infrastructure, underscoring the need for a balanced approach to urban growth that safeguards the planet for future generations.

The two-day event featured eight thematic sessions addressing key issues in the real estate sector. A total of 32 experts from diverse fields shared their insights, providing actionable solutions to challenges such

as urban sprawl, mismanagement, and unauthorized developments. Notably, the conference was organized by 52 dedicated students from NUML, with faculty providing supervision and guidance. Their exceptional efforts ensured the event's success, reflecting NUML's commitment to fostering student leadership and innovation. The conference concluded with a commitment to foster ongoing dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure sustainable market growth and urban planning in Pakistan.

Pakistan undergoing PV power boom: Report

And while the initial cost of solar technology has been a deterrent, the decreasing global cost is making it more economically viable for countries with pressing electricity needs, including Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is now the sixth-largest solar market in the world and its "rapid adoption" of solar energy provides valuable lessons for emerging markets, according to a World Economic Forum (WEF) report. Solar energy is imperative as Islamabad tries to dodge rising fuel prices through renewable energy resources. The WEF indicated the inability of state-owned energy providers to provide a stable supply and the government's inconsistent energy policy characterized by "inefficiencies in production, pricing and regulations" has aggravated local energy crisis, aiding in the usage of solar energy. The International Energy Agency (IEA) reports that while Pakistan's per capita electricity consumption grew

by 87% between 2000 and 2022, over 40 million people remain without access to electricity, and half the population still lacks clean cooking facilities. Many more live in off-grid or underserved areas, with under four hours of electricity daily. Meanwhile, record-breaking heatwaves are boosting demand for basic cooling like fans. Due to the exorbitant costs and unreliable performance of the power grid, 40-50% of industries rely on captive power plants despite being connected to the grid. The momentum towards solar adoption is further fueled by growing consumer independence, driven by declining battery prices and the desire for reliable energy availability. The Sindh government lately announced to provide solar systems to 200,000 households across the province, including 50,000 homes in Karachi. "It is undoubtedly

good news for Pakistan's photovoltaic industry, specifically, for Chinese PV companies that have been involved in the local market," Ali Majid, Pakistan General Manager of leading solar solutions provider LONGi told in an interview with Gwadar Pro. According to NEPRA, Pakistan's installed photovoltaic capacity is expected to reach 12.8GW by 2030 and 26.9GW by 2047. At present, Chinese companies such as Zonergy, LONGi, SOFAR and Ningbo Deye have already laid out the photovoltaic storage market in Pakistan for many years and occupy an important position. In view of natural conditions, experts say Pakistan has ideal climatic conditions for solar power generation, with over nine hours of sunlight in most parts of the country. According to the World Bank, utilizing just 0.071% of the country's area for so-

lar photovoltaic (solar PV) power generation would meet Pakistan's electricity demand. In view of market, mass-produced solar panels from China has lowered costs, making Pakistan the third-largest destination for Chinese exports. Industrial, agricultural and residential sectors have embraced solar, with imported Chinese modules totaling 13 gigawatts in the first half of the year, and forecasts reaching 22GW by year-end. Solar energy has moved from a niche market for providing power in remote places (at the very beginning in 1958 to space satellites) to a mainstream technology which feeds into the national grid. According to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), currently, only 5.4% of Pakistan's installed power generation capacity of 39,772 megawatts comes from renewables like wind.

Serena chowk interchange project to be completed in 3 months

The Interior Minister stressed that during the construction work, the alternative traffic plan should be strictly implemented

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Friday visited the Serena Chowk Interchange project. He highlighted that the Serena Chowk Interchange project will now be completed in 3 months instead of 10 months. He tasked the CDA to complete the project ahead of schedule. He reviewed the construction work and inspected the ongoing construction activities on the project. He gave directions for the timely completion of the project. The Interior Minister said that the completion of this mega project will resolve the problem of traffic in the capital for years. He assured that people from other cities coming to Islamabad would also get convenience in transportation. He added that Serena Chowk Interchange will now be built in just 3 months instead of 10 months and the task has been assigned in this regard. Mohsin Naqvi said that under the Serena Chowk Interchange project, 2 underpasses and connecting roads are being built. He stated that he was personally monitoring the project to ensure its completion within the stipulated period. He instructed that the project should be completed within the stipulated period by continuing 24/7 construction work. The Interior Minister stressed that during the construction work, the alternative traffic plan should be strictly implemented. He emphasized that the best management must be made to ensure the flow of the traffic. The Interior Minister was given a detailed briefing regarding the construction of Serena Chowk Interchange. Chairman CDA, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad and other senior officers were also present on the occasion.—DNA

Under-training officers visit Safe City

ISLAMABAD: The under-training foreign officers from the School of Military Intelligence visited Safe City on Friday.

A public relation officer told media that the delegation visits the command and control center the data hub unit, modern technology-equipped cameras, and the Police operations center hall. They were fully briefed about the procedures and advantages of this project. Furthermore, the delegation was informed that Safe City Islamabad is playing a significant role in various departments through modern techniques, including the Police Operations Center, Emergency Control Center, Data Hub Unit, Dispatch Control Center, E-Challan System, and the "Pucar-15" emergency helpline. The delegation was also apprised of the functionality and benefits of the Safe City cameras in the city. The modern cameras of Safe City are playing a crucial role in ensuring the safety of the city, preventing crimes and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens.—APP

MoU to strengthen Cybersecurity resilience

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) and the National Computer Emergency Response Team (NCERT) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in cybersecurity and safeguard Pakistan's digital infrastructure. The signing ceremony, held at PTA headquarters, highlights a joint commitment to addressing cyber threats and building national resilience against emerging challenges, said a news release issued here on Friday. The agreement outlines collaborative efforts to improve cybersecurity, ensuring the safety and reliability of Pakistan's digital ecosystem. Chairman PTA underscored the critical role of cybersecurity in protecting communication networks and national IT infrastructure, emphasizing the need for collaboration in a rapidly evolving threat landscape. Dr. Haider Abbas, Director-General NCERT, echoed these sentiments, highlighting the importance of a unified response to tackle growing cyber risks affecting critical sectors. This partnership marks a significant step in strengthening Pakistan's cybersecurity capabilities, fostering a secure and interconnected digital environment for all stakeholders.—APP

FBISE launches Pakistan Mathematics Olympiad

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE), in collaboration with Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and Islamic World Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), has initiated a groundbreaking project aimed at fostering mathematical talent in students across Pakistan and abroad.

According to a press release

on Friday, the initiative, known as the Pakistan Mathematics Olympiad (PMO), represents an exclusive competition designed specifically for secondary and higher secondary or equivalent level students. Mathematics, often referred to as the "mother of all sciences," serves as a cornerstone in numerous fields of study. Recognizing this fundamental role, the PMO seeks to enhance students' mathematical abil-

ities while fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills - essential for success in various disciplines. This initiative aims to provide a platform for nurturing future mathematicians and inspiring critical thinkers. To maintain the highest academic standards, the Mathematics Department of LUMS has developed a customized syllabus specifically designed for the PMO. The syllabus is aligned with

international standards, ensuring that participants gain a robust foundation in mathematics. Furthermore, a model question paper has been developed to assist students in preparing effectively for the competition. This effort reflects the commitment to equipping participants with the tools necessary to succeed. The PMO has already attracted significant interest, with over 7,500 students from diverse regions of Pakistan and abroad enrolling in the competition. The overwhelming response underscores the enthusiasm and passion of students eager to showcase their mathematical prowess.—APP



ISLAMABAD: President ICCI Nasir Mansoor Qureshi administering oath to the newly elected union officials of Jinnah Supermarket, President Asad Aziz, General Secretary Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Senior Vice President Faseehullah Khan and others. Chairman CDA Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, Founder Group Chairman Sheikh Tariq Sadiq and former president ICCI Ahsan Bakhtavari can also be seen.

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Life in Gaza

THE ongoing Israeli genocide against Gaza," experts at the United Nations said, "has caused the hardest human tragedy since the Second World War." Meanwhile, UNRWA pointed out that citizens in Gaza are living the gravest bombardment since the Second World War. As people all over the Gaza Strip have suffered from such a tragedy, stories of solidarity among them prevailed. Mohammed, fed up with living in a torn-up tent in Mawasi area in Khan Yunis city in northern Gaza, recounts his story of toil to win some flour. As hunger has driven his kids to tears, he had to borrow 120 shekels approximately 40 USD and finally got three kilos of flour. Although he knew well that his four children who hadn't had a loaf of bread for days were still waiting, he gave the three kilos of flour to an old woman who couldn't afford it. Mohammed was left with mixed feelings of the happiness of helping an elderly and the guilt of not providing for his kids. Before arriving to his tent, he met an acquaintance who knew the story and gave him a share, half of a 25-kilo flour bag. In the northern Gaza Strip, Manal Al-Assi, 55, has witnessed the hardest days of famine throughout the region. Al-Assi told the PIC correspondent that she used to share whatever food she got with her neighbors during these days, adding that she was thankful for the blessing of getting food no matter how little it was. "The Israeli occupation is trying to subjugate the Palestinian people by starving them out, making them cold, and massacring them," she added, affirming that the people are standing together to defeat the occupation and drive it away of their land. Moreover, Um Tarik Abul Ata told our correspondent that she ran out of flour completely. As an alternative, she depended on macaroni and rice for basic meals, although very expensive in the meantime. While she cooks such meals once a day, she was surprised that a bag of flour was brought to her as an aid from a friend. Um Tarik, who is in her sixties, after finally getting the flour bag, decided to give a fourth for her neighbor, a fourth for her brother, and another for her brother-in-law, keeping only a fourth for her own family. "These days are the hardest for years; kids sleep hungry," she underlined, adding that people need to be merciful towards each other especially during this hardship. Furthermore, Mahmood Al Haddad, wept while talking to our correspondent, "as I pondered the question of how to feed my kids crying for a loaf of bread day and night, my neighbor called me and handed me some loaves." "My wife baked 40 loaves; you can take 20," he quoted his neighbor as saying, praising his act of solidarity in such compelling circumstances. But for Mohammed, a displaced old man in Khan Yunis city, he doesn't only support people, but also animals. He provides food for birds. Although staying in a tent in hard conditions to the west of the city, he cares for birds fluttering near his tent. "I don't feed birds for pleasure, but for grief over what has become of every living being in this besieged enclave: a human, a bird, or an animal," Hajj Mohammed said, affirming that he's the provider of his family comprising of eight members amid the high cost of living. The UN and government reports outlined that the whole enclave suffer from severe hunger, as the flour prices are rising and basic food supplies are scarce. The reports also revealed that the occupation deprives citizens in Gaza of their basic needs to survive, adding that it uses hunger as a weapon against the innocent people in Gaza.



China, Europe ties

WITH the impending return of the "America first" president Donald Trump to the White House, some advocate that Beijing and Brussels rebuild trade ties and shield themselves against the precipitous protectionist measures from Washington. However, with Chinese and European Union negotiators knee-deep in protracted discussions over tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), and a flare-up in Sino-Lithuanian relations signalling more tension, there are headwinds preventing drastic improvements in diplomatic ties in the foreseeable future. There are three particular obstacles: Europe's perception of the Sino-Russian relationship, the bilateral trade deficit and the degree to which China's market is open to European firms and investors. On her recent visit to China, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock reiterated the detrimental impact of China's support for Russia on Sino-European ties. To be clear, as a key economic and trade partner to Russia, China is no more supportive of Moscow's military aggression in Ukraine than India, which has reportedly imported 13 times more oil from Russia since the outbreak of the war. India is still rapidly consolidating ties with the United States and Europe alike. Yet Chinese indignation over Western commentators' apparent double standards is met with limited sympathy from policymakers and politicians in major European capitals, who castigate China for its purported supplying of dual-use exports to Russia. Such resentment has also spilled over into the public, albeit to a lesser extent. A European Council on Foreign Relations study across 11 member states last year found that while most viewed European trade and investment relations with China as "balanced" or more beneficial than risky, on average 41 per cent of Europeans would be in favour of sanctions against China if it supplied weapons to Russia, even if those sanctions seriously damaged Western economies. Furthermore, the Sino-European trade deficit has grown considerably during the pandemic, ballooning to US\$418 billion in 2022. While the gap has since decreased, concerns remain among pro-business lobby groups and politicians that Chinese manufacturers are rapidly dislodging home-grown champions within the EU. Vociferous allegations of China using competition-distorting subsidies fail to conceal the real problem facing Europe highlighted in the report by former European Central Bank head Mario Draghi: suboptimal productivity growth that constricts manufacturing capacity and spurs an over-reliance on both the US and China. Such grievances are in turn leveraged by select voices to drive forward the geopolitical agenda of "de-risking" from China. There is growing scepticism among European firms about the viability and vitality of Chinese markets. Persisting difficulties with market access and ambiguous regulatory standards were cited by the European Chamber of Commerce's recent position paper which called for a strategic rethink of doing business in the country. These issues are by no means intractable. There exists a modicum of goodwill from both sides. Moreover, consumers and some manufacturers in Europe stand to gain from more comprehensive and robust ties with China – the former, from cheaper and higher-quality goods, and the latter from China's dominant position in most critical supply chains, especially in what Beijing calls its "three new" exports of EVs, lithium batteries and solar photovoltaic modules.

Weaponized cyber realm could spell unimaginable doom to all

Mohamed Chebaro

Consequently, events like those must concentrate minds, efforts and will to design and enforce a form of accountability, or to update existing guardrails nationally and internationally, or simply agree to new conventions that could spare those vital – mainly civilian – infrastructures, and push all to abide by international laws. This is especially needed if there remains a consensus among countries and political leadership that our interconnected societies and open economies are still relevant. We live in a world that still benefits from the advantages of open skies and interlinked connectivity that delivers dividends for nearly everyone despite geostrategic shifts that rise and fall, resulting in changing...

EVERY day I look with fear at news reports of cyber security incidents of hacking, on-line threats and infrastructure damage – intentional or unintentional – across key regions of the world. Some are said to emanate from hostile states, others from criminal actors on behalf of states or simply committed by gangs intent on theft, blackmail or onward sale of sensitive data to be used by third parties in an increasingly dark side of the tech world and internet. Not a single day passes without a report of another hack or attempt to steal data and penetrate key infrastructure to test vulnerability and/or to exert pressure, or to simply disrupt or sow chaos. In recent weeks, the US deputy national security advisor for cyber and emerging technology, Anne Neuberger, has confirmed that state hackers have compromised telecommunications infrastructure across the US as part of a massive espionage campaign affecting dozens of countries and a multitude of companies. This is to exploit vulnerability in their system, harvest data or simply enhance penetrability of often civilian infrastructure like telecommunication connectivity or health infrastructure, surely with the aim of using it as a weapon of coercion or maybe even war. On this side of the Atlantic, the new UK head of the National Cyber Security Centre, Richard Horne, revealed in a report this week that enemy digital operations emanating from Russian "aggression and recklessness" and China's "highly sophisticated" digital operations have trebled. The NCSC's annual report shows that the wide ranging danger is underestimated by the public as well as private sector. Horne calls for his country "to increase the pace to keep ahead of adversaries." He said: "There is no room for complacency about the severity of state-led threats or the volume of the threat posed by cyber criminals," and added the "defense and resilience of critical infrastructure, supply chains, the public sector and wider economy must improve." He cites examples of hacks that affected the British library in 2023,

and another incident in 2024 when state-sponsored gangs carried out ransomware attacks to disrupt the UK's health service. But could state and regulatory bodies keep up with and control or limit those threats? And at what cost, in an age of dwindling resources and the continued blurring of lines between what could be considered private sector and sensitive state infrastructure, often built and managed by huge international corporations with government clients? More dangerous is that such warnings often coincide with reports of serious intentional or unintentional damage affecting critical infrastructure where authorities were often unable to find sufficient proof of malicious intent. Recently some Baltic undersea telecom fiber-optic communications cables were severed, raising suspicions of sabotage. One was an internet link between Lithuania and Sweden's Gotland Island, and the second was a cable connecting Helsinki to the German port of Rostock. Investigators could not be certain if a Chinese bulk carrier that left a Russian port was responsible, despite the Chinese authorities expressing readiness to cooperate with investigations. Similar suspicious incidents affected that same region in 2022 and 2023 after the war in Ukraine began. Gas pipelines and undersea cables linking Finland to Estonia were damaged, in addition to the famous incident that damaged the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 undersea pipelines, used to pump gas to Germany, in September 2022. All the above incidents, exposing the vulnerabilities of the western world, have been hard to pin on one party, along with other specific acts of sabotage. But there are inferences and circumstantial information that could have come from the pages of a spy thriller. Questions should be posed about whether we are seeing yet another form of warfare developing, and whether or not nations are simply sleepwalking towards the next theaters of confrontation, or even doom for all. Could those committing hostile acts simply not exploit tech-

nological loopholes to attack countries and exert maximum pressure for geopolitical gains? Consequently, events like those must concentrate minds, efforts and will to design and enforce a form of accountability, or to update existing guardrails nationally and internationally, or simply agree to new conventions that could spare those vital – mainly civilian – infrastructures, and push all to abide by international laws. This is especially needed if there remains a consensus among countries and political leadership that our interconnected societies and open economies are still relevant. We live in a world that still benefits from the advantages of open skies and interlinked connectivity that delivers dividends for nearly everyone despite geostrategic shifts that rise and fall, resulting in changing priorities and competition over ever-shrinking resources. The world should be able to conclude that the tech realm has had tremendous benefits for all and that digital technology, despite its many advantages, has innumerable downsides. Cell phones enable location tracking that erodes privacy. Data can be manipulated and destroyed. Mechanical systems can be hijacked by those with malicious intent who find loopholes in the many layers of digital defenses. But as these technologies have become essential in our day-to-day lives and continue to boost economic growth, they remain vital for societal productivity, allowing all to access information at an unprecedented scale. Should reason therefore not prevail to limit the intrusion and weaponization of those systems for the safety of all? There is a need to neutralize the threats to digital services, tools, and infrastructure through global governance. After all, these are crucial for mankind and its continued existence and prosperity, despite them being attractive soft targets.

– Mohamed Chebaro is a British Lebanese journalist with more than 25 years of experience covering war, terrorism, defense, current affairs and diplomacy. He is also a media consultant and trainer.

Trump's destructive impact on world trade could take decades to unravel

David Dodwell

This prevents serious attention from being focused on whether announcements are credible, have substance, would do more harm than good or are any more than markers staked out as part of a future negotiating strategy. The latest example of this was last week's threat to members of the Brics grouping that they would face 100 per cent tariffs if they moved to undermine the role of the US dollar as the predominant global settlement currency. The trigger for Trump's threat was probably an announcement by Brics members in October...

AFTER I moved to Hong Kong in the early 1980s, my father visited me only a couple of times. I am not being unkind when I say he was a prejudiced xenophobe to the bone. He spoke not a word of any language except English, and when he had to talk to Hongkongers, he spoke English. If they could not understand, he had a single universal solution: speak louder. This was one of my singular recollections as I mused over the implications of Donald Trump's return to the Oval Office next month while rereading articles I wrote back in 2016 on the global trade and economic implications of a Trump presidency. Trump's messages are wholly unchanged: bring manufacturing back to the United States, reduce the trade deficit, cut China down to size and earn revenue from tariffs. In so far as these ambitions failed to bear fruit during his first administration, he has simply repeated them this time, just louder. Rather than recognise that this menu of priorities was unachievable or would inflict more harm than good on the US economy if they were to be achieved, he has doubled down. Instead of imposing 10-25 per cent tariffs on a small proportion of imports, he proposed during his campaign to impose tariffs of 10-20 per cent on all imported goods and 60 per cent on imports from China. In late November, he threatened tariffs of 25 per cent on Mexico and Canada – among the US' closest allies and biggest trade partners – if they fail to clamp down on undocumented migrants and fentanyl. Blaming the failures of his first administration on everyone but himself, he has doubled down on the imperative of a loyal and compliant team and used a megaphone to warn trading partners across the world that they fail to comply at their peril. A flurry of announcements within days of the US election result has been astoundingly successful in sucking oxygen from any other issue. Trump threatens new anti-drug

tariffs on 'day 1' for China, Canada, Mexico The "entertaining distraction" tactic used widely in 2016 to shape media activity has been repeated on steroids. This prevents serious attention from being focused on whether announcements are credible, have substance, would do more harm than good or are any more than markers staked out as part of a future negotiating strategy. The latest example of this was last week's threat to members of the Brics grouping that they would face 100 per cent tariffs if they moved to undermine the role of the US dollar as the predominant global settlement currency. The trigger for Trump's threat was probably an announcement by Brics members in October that they would seek to promote a "diversified, multipolar" financial system and increase the use of local currencies for trade settlement. Trump insisted that members of the bloc "must commit that they will neither create a new Brics currency nor back any other currency to replace the mighty US dollar". If they ignored this threat they would "say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US economy". To say Trump's threat was unhelpful would be an understatement. It is true that China has tried to advance the use of local currencies for trade settlement. It has also tried to develop an alternative payment system to Swift, the Brussels-based cooperative that currently manages most of the world's cross-border financial settlements. However, its progress has been negligible. The yuan accounted for less than 3 per cent of global payments in October, according to Swift data, compared to almost 23 per cent for the euro and 47 per cent for the US dollar. Perceiving the ambitions of Brics nations as a threat is just paranoia. Trump's tweet was therefore more likely aimed at a domestic audience, generating another external enemy against

which he will claim victory in due course. Simon Evenett, a professor at the International Institute for Management Development in Switzerland and inspiration for the Global Trade Alert, calculated just how much leverage the US would have over the Brics economies. Iran, Russia and the United Arab Emirates ship less than 3 per cent of their goods exports to the US, while that figure is between 5 and 10 per cent for Egypt, Brazil, China, India and Ethiopia rely on the US market for 10-21 per cent of their exports. Brazil is well placed to sell its commodity exports to other markets, China is already subject to tariffs and is unlikely to be perturbed by new ones and India is not likely to be targeted while being wooed by the US as a key Asia-Pacific ally. That leaves Ethiopia, for whom US tariffs would simply join the queue of terrible challenges already faced. Trump vows high tariffs on China-made cars in his first speech after assassination attempt. In a broader analysis of Trump's tariff threats, Evenett calculates that 69 economies could entirely replace their lost exports to the US within one year if they maintained their trend growth in exports to other markets. China could do so within three years and Germany in 18 months. The economies facing most severe challenges would be Canada and Mexico. It would be a perverse and counterproductive tariff policy that hurts your closest allies above all others. Counterproductive as Trump's trade plan might be, and whether it is more a menu of negotiating targets than real policy intentions, there is a high probability that at least some threats will become a reality over time. Most importantly, trade is set to be dominated by bilateral arm-wrestling rather than by the multilateral rule-making that has prevailed for decades. Trump's destructive impact on world trade could take decades to unravel.

Briefs

Kurram
grand jirga
declares...

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meetings with the concerned parties, making significant decisions aimed at ensuring sustainable peace in the region. After hours of deliberation, the jirga decided to implement a ceasefire for an indefinite period. The participants agreed that peace could not be achieved through conflict and acknowledged that a long-term solution to the decades-old issues would require time, sincerity, and trust from both sides. The jirga emphasised its commitment to the peaceful future of Kurram, stating, "We will remain seated until full and lasting peace is established in Kurram, carrying the message of peace to our respective areas." Kohat Division Commissioner Mutasim Billah Shah assured that the government would fulfil its responsibilities for establishing durable peace in Kurram, ensuring the authority of the state would be maintained under all circumstances.

Syrian
rebels close..

FROM PAGE 01
A Syrian army officer told the Reuters news agency that Russian bombing overnight had destroyed the Rastan bridge along the key M5 highway linking Hama to Homs. Rastan and Talbiseh, which the rebels have reportedly captured, are located on the Homs side of the bridge. Meanwhile, Israel launched air attacks on two border crossings between Syria and Lebanon, hitting the Syrian side of the Arida and Jousiyeh crossings. Lebanon's Transport Minister Ali Hamieh told Reuters they were important access routes to the Homs governorate. The border attacks were confirmed by Syrian state news agency SANA and the Israeli military. The army claimed to have hit weapons transfer hubs and infrastructure used by Hezbollah, which has pledged backing for al-Assad and claims to have sent "super-velocity forces" to Homs.

Rebel leader
says goal...

FROM PAGE 01
The leader of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) rebel alliance, said the goal of the offensive was to end Assad's rule. "When we talk about objectives, the goal of the revolution remains the overthrow of this regime. It is our right to use all available means to achieve that goal," Jolani told CNN in an interview. The rebel alliance conducting the offensive that began on November 27 is led by HTS, which is rooted in the Syrian branch of Al-Qaeda but has sought to soften its image in recent years. According to the Observatory, Syrian troops and Iran-backed forces "suddenly" withdrew from Deir Ezzor in the east and headed towards central Syria where Homs is located. The Observatory later said the army had withdrawn from Homs city towards its outskirts, and rebel military commander Hassan Abdel Ghani said armed forces were "collapsing as they fled before our forces on the frontlines".

Imran
threatens...

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"If these two demands are not accepted, a civil disobedience movement will be launched from December 14," Khan stated, warning that the government would be responsible for any consequences that arise from such a movement. In addition to the political prisoners' demand, Imran Khan has announced a "grand gathering" in Peshawar on December 13 to "pay homage to the martyrs" who, according to the PTI leader, were killed during the Islamabad protests. He further claimed that many PTI workers are still missing and urged the Supreme Court to take action against the human rights violations he believes have occurred. "We approached the Supreme Court, Lahore and Islamabad high courts over serious violations of human rights, but no action was taken," Khan added.

Sweeney keeps Australia on
top as Starc dismantles India
Australia trail by 94 runs with nine wickets in hand

SPORTS DESK

ADELAIDE: Irrepressible Australian pace spearhead Mitchell Starc claimed his career-best bowling figures to bundle India for 180 on day one of the pink-ball Test of the Boder-Gavaskar Trophy here on Friday. After India captain Rohit Sharma won the toss on an overcast day at Adelaide Oval, the visitors were dismissed on the cusp of tea. The menacing Starc, who gave Australia a dream start by removing India opening batter Yashraj Jaiswal with the first ball of the match, took 6-48. Scott Boland and Pat Cummins both grabbed two each. Six wickets went down in the second session, including Rohit for three and the flamboyant Rishabh Pant for 21. Pant should have gone for five, but Nathan McSweeney spilled a sharp chance in the gully after the dangerous Boland, in the side for the injured Josh Hazlewood, drew an edge. But the 35-year-old seamer got his reward four balls later, beating Rohit's bat to trap him lbw. A big innings was needed from Pant, but he was unable to deliver with a vicious climbing ball from Cummins bouncing off the shoulder of his bat and into the hands of Marnus Labuschagne.



Starc was brought back for another spell and was hostile once again, taking care of Ravichandran Ashwin (22) and Harshit Rana (0) in the space of four balls. With India in trouble, Nitish Kumar Reddy decided to take charge, clobbering two big sixes in one Boland

over to reach his highest Test score of 42 before he and Jasprit Bumrah fell to Starc and Cummins respectively. India came into the clash riding high after a 295-run victory at the first Test in Perth, but Australia have a formidable record in Adelaide, winning all seven pink-ball Tests they have played at the venue. The visitors chose to retain Jaiswal and KL Rahul as openers in preference to Rohit, who missed the first Test on paternity leave and came in at six. But the plan backfired as Starc sensationally trapped Jaiswal from a swinging first ball, with the left-armer's pumped-up celebration showing how much it meant. The returning Shubman Gill, who was absent from Perth with a thumb injury, then stroked two boundaries in an eventual first over. But the runs dried up and Rahul was at the crease for 40 minutes without scoring when he was given out, caught behind off Boland. Rahul was walking off, but a no-ball was called and he survived. Five balls later he had another life, dropped by Usman Khawaja at slip. Undeterred, the pair battled on, before Starc wove his magic again to remove Rahul for 37 with McSweeney holding a catch low at gully. Virat Kohli roared back to form in Perth with an unbeaten second-innings century but he was no match for Mitchell Starc this time, out for seven when Steve Smith collected a catch in the slips. Gill was impressive in weathering the storm, but his luck ran out just before the first break when he fell lbw on 31 to the relentless Boland.

Ahmed Shehzad slams PCB
over exclusion of key players
Pakistan will face South Africa in 3 T20Is, 3 ODIs, and 2 Tests

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan's top-order batter, Ahmed Shehzad, has expressed concerns over the exclusion of key players from the national squad for the upcoming South Africa series. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Shehzad criticized the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for its selection decisions, particularly the omission of spinner Sajid Khan, top-order batter Fakhar Zaman, and fast bowler Shaheen Afridi from the team. He expressed frustration over Sajid Khan's absence from the squad, particularly after his stellar performance in the Test series against England, where he took 19 wickets in just two matches. "You have dropped Sajid Khan from the South Africa series; are you people blind or out of your minds? Do you think you're the only ones going to play in South Africa, where the entire world doesn't play? And there, you're taking just Noman Ali," Shehzad said. "You should be thanking Sajid because, in the slump Pakistan cricket has been stuck in for the last three and a half years—where it had hit rock bottom and people had started laughing at your cricket—he won matches for you [referring to the England series]. And

this is how you've rewarded him? Just as he was becoming a superstar, you discarded him like a fly from milk," he added. The 33-year-old also defended Fakhar Zaman, who has faced criticism and exclusion following his tweet supporting Babar's omission from the team during the England series. He accused the PCB of being overly harsh on Fakhar. "You've dropped Fakhar Zaman again. Listen to me, we even supported PCB on this matter, agreeing that as a centrally contracted player, Fakhar shouldn't have done certain things. But look at what you've done—you've punished him so harshly, as if the previous punishment wasn't enough. What's next? Are you planning to hang him? Champions Trophy is coming up, and he's your ace player in ODIs. Instead of giving him confidence, you've sidelined him," he said. "What fitness are you talking about? Did Noman or other players pass their fitness tests? You're lying and fooling the public. You've been extremely unfair to Fakhar. Dropping him again is not just an injustice to him but also to the nation and the team. He's the only player who can give you a chance in ODIs. If you don't play him now, then when will you?" "It seems like PCB is taking out its frustration or the selection committee

is just acting as a puppet, like those before them. If they continue working like this, then you might as well sideline them too, just as you've done with other employees," he added. The right-handed batter also commented on the decision to exclude Shaheen Afridi from the Test team to manage his workload, replacing him with Mohammad Abbas, who is set to make his comeback after three years. "So, you've dropped Shaheen, brought in your own group, and what did you achieve by dropping Shaheen? Managing workload, right? Such an excellent job managing workload—you've made Haris Rauf play all the matches. Who are you fooling? You're just fooling the public in the name of workload management," said Ahmed. "You've formed your own little group and are obliging all your favorite players. Is this your vision—to bring in such incompetent people, hand over the entire responsibility of Pakistan cricket to them, and let them ruin it before leaving?" he concluded. Previously, in a statement released by the PCB, Pakistan's interim head coach and selection committee member Aaqib Javed revealed the reasons behind the exclusion of Fakhar, Sajid, and Shaheen from the national team for the aforementioned series.

JP Duminy quits as
SA batting coach
Duminy made this decision
due to personal reasons

JOHANNESBURG: Former South African cricketer JP Duminy has stepped down from his role as the team's white-ball batting coach ahead of the series against Pakistan, scheduled between December 10 and January 7. Duminy decided to quit his position due to personal reasons, according to Cricket South Africa. "Cricket South Africa (CSA) announces that JP Duminy has stepped down from his role as the white-ball batting coach with immediate effect, following a mutual agreement with CSA based on personal reasons," said the organization in an official statement. The 40-year-old, who was appointed in March 2023, played a key role in South Africa's run to the semi-finals of the ODI World Cup that year. In September 2024, the 40-year-old was also named head coach of the Sharjah Warriors in the ILT20. Following Duminy's departure, the South African board has begun the search for his replacement, as the series against Pakistan is set to start next week. The series includes three T20Is, three ODIs, and two Tests, which are crucial for the hosts' preparations for the Champions Trophy 2025, slated for the February-March window. If CSA fails to find a new batting coach in time, they may turn to Imraan Khan, the team's batting lead, to step in temporarily. The T20I series between South Africa and Pakistan will be held on December 10, 13, and 14 at three venues: Durban, Centurion, and Johannesburg, respectively. South Africa T20I Squad against Pakistan: Heinrich Klaasen (C), Ottneil Baartman, Matthew Breetzke*, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Patrick Kruger, George Linde, Kwena Maphaka*, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Ngaba Peter, Ryan Rickelton*, Tabaiz Shamsi**, Andile Simelane, and Rassie van der Dussen. * - Matthew Breetzke, Kwena Maphaka, and Ryan Rickelton will join the squad after completing their Test duties against Sri Lanka. - Agencies

Shammi Silva named
ACC President
Shah vacated the ACC president's
position after completing
three successful terms

WEB DESK

DUBAI: Shammi Silva, who is also the President of Sri Lanka Cricket, has been appointed as the new President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), succeeding India's Jay Shah, who recently ascended to the role of Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Shah vacated the ACC president position after completing three successful terms. Silva is no stranger to the ACC, having previously served as the chairman of its Finance & Marketing Committee. In his statement, the former cricketer expressed his excitement and commitment to his new role. "It is a great honour to lead the Asian Cricket Council. Cricket is the heartbeat of Asia, and I look forward to working closely with all member nations to elevate the game, provide opportunities for emerging talent, and strengthen the bonds that unite us through this beautiful sport," said Silva in a statement. He also took the opportunity to extend heartfelt gratitude on behalf of the ACC to Jay Shah for his exceptional leadership. "Under Mr Shah's stewardship, the ACC achieved remarkable milestones, including the successfully achieving highest value for its commercial rights of ACC Asia Cup tournaments for 2024-31, the introduction of a new pathway events structure, and the continued development and growth of cricket across its member nations," he added.

Bangladesh stun Pak to set up
U19 Asia Cup final with India

WEB DESK

DUBAI: Iqbal Hossain Emon's four-wicket haul, followed by skipper Azizul Hakim's unbeaten half-century helped Bangladesh defeat Pakistan in the semi-final of the ACC U19 Asia Cup here at Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Friday. Bangladesh will face India, who defeated Sri Lanka in the second semi-final, in the U19 Asia Cup final, scheduled on 8 December at the same venue. Pakistan U19, who were undefeated in the group stage, were bundled for a meagre 116 while batting first, setting a paltry total, which Bangladesh easily chased in 22.1 overs after losing three wickets. Bangladesh captain Azizul Hakim played a stellar unbeaten knock of 61 runs from 42 balls with the help of seven boundaries and three sixes. Mohammad Shihab James was another notable contributor with a 26-run knock from 36 balls. For Pakistan, Ali Raza, Abdul Subhan and Naveed Ahmed Khan managed one wicket each. Earlier, Bangladesh U19 opted to field first and Maruf Mridha proved the decision right as he did not allow Pakistan's opening batters to open their accounts, removing them in quick succession. With Pakistan struggling at 7-2, Muhammad Riazullah and captain SaadBaig stitched a 42-run stand to put up a fight before Iqbal Hossain Emon removed the latter. Riazullah also fell prey to Emon after scoring a scratchy 28-run knock from 62 balls, which featured only two boundaries. Farhan



Yousaf top-scored with a run-a-ball 32 with the help of one boundary and three sixes. No other batter could pose much threat against Bangladesh as Pakistan bundled for 116 in 37 overs. Emon led Bangladesh's attack with the figures of 4-24, while Mridha took two key wickets. Al Fahad and DebasishDeba bagged one wicket each. Pakistan U19 Playing XI: Usman Khan, Shahzaib Khan, Muhammad Riazullah, SaadBaig (c)(wk), Naveed Ahmed Khan, Haroon Arshad, Farhan Yousaf, Faham-ul-Haq, Umar Zaib, Abdul Subhan, Ali Raza Bangladesh U19 Playing XI: ZawadAbrar, Azizul Hakim (c), KalamSiddiki, RizanHossain, Mohammad Shihab James, Farid Hasan (wk), DebasishDeba, SaminBasir, Al Fahad, Iqbal Hossain Emon, Maruf Mridha.

Everyone
left me
alone at...

FROM PAGE 01

Gandapur and Bushra Bibi, after they retreated abruptly in the wee hours of November 27. The party leadership suspended the protest after the authorities launched a late-night crackdown on the protesters who had forced their way to D-Chowk, despite several hurdles along the way. Although she appeared only rarely in official photos, shielded from view during court appearances by large white sheets and always wearing a face veil, Bushra Bibi led the rally demanding her husband's release. When the protest was put off, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar told the media that Bushra, CM Gandapur, and others had "made a run for it" after the crackdown. Meanwhile, a video also surfaced showing Bushra Bibi moving from her own car to CM Gandapur's vehicle following the protest's culmination. However, the former first lady said the vehicle was changed as Bushra's car had a flat tyre.

JUI-F warns
govt of...

FROM PAGE 01

confrontation, they would be compelled to act if their demands were ignored. He urged the government to ensure immediate approval to prevent further unrest. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and JUI-F Emir Maulana Fazlur Rehman held a telephonic conversation, said the party. Fazl expressed his concerns regarding the madrasa registration bill to the prime minister, according to the JUI-F spokesperson. The premier, in response, assured him of addressing all concerns related to the bill. He emphasised that the government should avoid turning the "consensus bill" into a controversial matter. He further asserted that no compromise would be allowed on the independence and freedom of madrasas.

Bilawal
emphasises..

FROM PAGE 01

discuss the deteriorating law and order situation in Kurram while calling out the PTI-led provincial government for "practising their extremist politics at the expense of the people". KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi along with representatives of different political parties had criticised the PTI for what they said was the party's "rhetoric centred on violence and conflict", as the party skipped the conference which was hosted by Kundi. The moot was attended by representatives of major political parties including the PPP, JUI-F, ANP, PML-N, QWP, JI and others. A declaration issued after the conference, held at the Governor House in Peshawar, revealed that over 70 security personnel were martyred in 2024, with more than 200 lives lost in armed clashes in the Kurram district.

Bangladeshi
diplomat...

FROM PAGE 01

Islamabad and a case was registered on Thursday under Section 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Pakistan Penal Code. In his complaint, Khalid said that he holds a key position at the Embassy of Bangladesh in Islamabad and has noticed over the past few days that some unknown individuals have been following him and monitoring his movement. These individuals also took Khalid's pictures and then the embassy received a threatening letter addressed to him at the embassy.

FO issues
travel...

FROM PAGE 01

"In view of the recent developments and the ongoing conflict, Pakistani nationals are strongly advised to avoid unnecessary travel to Syria until the situation stabilizes," the MOFA stated in a press release. The recent surge in violence saw HTS rebels storm the central city of Hama after taking Aleppo, further weakening President Bashar al-Assad's regime. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, clashes between rebel forces and Assad's troops erupted after the rebels launched a coordinated offensive, eventually declaring Hama "completely liberated" via their Telegram channel.

New Zealand stumble to 86/5 after Brook's heroics
Brook smashed 11 boundaries and scored 123 runs

WELLINGTON: New Zealand lost five wickets to be on the ropes after England posted 280 courtesy of Harry Brook's century on the first day of the second Test of the Crowe-Thorpe Trophy here at Basin Reserve on Friday. New Zealand were struggling on 86-5, with England capturing the key wicket of Kane Williamson soon before stumps, leaving Tom Blundell at the crease on seven and nightwatchman Will O'Rourke yet to score. It was a fast-moving opening day, in a similar vein to the first Test in Christchurch, which the tourists won by eight wickets in three and a half days. Brook set the tone with his brilliant 123 off 115 balls, following on from his match-winning 171 at Hagley Oval. He again rescued England, who had crumbled in the first hour to 43-4 after being sent in on a green Basin Reserve pitch. New Zealand top order also struggled badly against seam and bounce through an intense last 26 overs of the day against an in-form bowling attack of England. Devon Conway was caught behind off Gus Atkinson for 11 before fellow opener Tom Latham was clean-bowled by captain counterpart Ben Stokes for 17. Rachin Ravindra departed for three, caught by a diving Brydon Carse in close off Chris Woakes.

The lively Carse (2-28) then claimed the scalp of dangerman Williamson, caught by diving wicketkeeper Ollie Pope for 37. Daryl Mitchell, on six, nicked a second catch to Pope, down the leg side off Carse. Williamson had survived some near scrapes early in his knock, including being bowled for a superb delivery from Carse, before

the anguished seamer was found to have bowled a no-ball by overstepping the mark. Earlier, Brook's fifth-wicket partnership with Pope (66) proved decisive, the pair counter-punching their way out of trouble with 174 off just 158 balls. The stand was reminiscent of the first Test when the same pair combined for a rapid 151 to revive their first innings.

Brook was run out on the last ball of the second session after powering England out of trouble to 259-7 before the final three wickets fell quickly after tea. The in-form Brook registered his eighth century in just 23 Tests, having scored 171 at Hagley Oval a week ago. The lanky 25-year-old's power once again couldn't be contained by New Zealand's seam-heavy attack, striking five sixes and 11 fours before his concentration slipped. He set off for a single to short midwicket but Woakes didn't respond and Brook was caught short when bowler Nathan Smith hit the stumps in his follow-through. O'Rourke (3-49) earlier removed Pope, who mistimed a pull shot, and the pace bowler struck again to dismiss Stokes for two, caught behind. Smith (4-86) helped to wrap up the tail, having claimed two wickets with the new ball, along with Matt Henry (2-43). New Zealand's poor catching from Christchurch was quickly forgotten, snapping up three sharp chances in the opening overs. The impressive Henry had Ben Duckett caught by a diving Latham at second slip without scoring before bowling fellow-opener Zak Crawley for 17. Smith had both Jacob Bethell (16) and Joe Root (3) caught behind, with Mitchell grabbing a flyer with one hand at first slip to remove Root. - Agencies



Briefs

Gold price decreases by 1,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed decrease of Rs1,000 and was sold at Rs 274,700 on Friday against its sale at Rs275,700 on previous trading day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs578 to Rs235,511 from Rs236,368 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went down to Rs215,885 from Rs216,671. Per tola and ten gram silver were also traded at same rate at Rs3,400 and Rs2,914.95, respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$10 to \$2,635 from \$2,645, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 06 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Friday depreciated by 06 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.00 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.94. Pakistan's cuisine. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.60 and Rs279.10 respectively. The price of Euro increased by Rs1.25 to close at Rs294.23 against the last day's closing of Rs292.98, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.84, whereas an increase of 80 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs354.83 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs354.03.—APP

PSX stays bullish, gains 814 more points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 814.98 more points, a positive change of 0.75 percent, closing at 109,053.95 points as compared to 108,238.97 points on the last trading day. Pakistan's cuisine A total of 1,697,842,022 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,647,134,799 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 57.487 billion against Rs. 63.229 billion on the last trading day. As many as 468 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 233 of them recorded gains and 200 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 35 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 368,901,309 shares at Rs 1.75 per share, Bank of Punjab with 115,553,351 shares at Rs 10.84 per share and Energyco PK with 93,624,112 shares at Rs.6.87 per share.—APP

Five dead, seven missing in Indonesia floods, landslides

JAKARTA: Flash floods and landslides struck Indonesia's main Java island earlier this week, killing at least five people, the national disaster agency said Friday, as rescuers race to find seven others still missing. Intense rains triggered flash floods and landslides in the Sukabumi district in West Java province on Tuesday, destroying at least 10 bridges and damaging hundreds of houses. "As of Friday at 09:00 (0200 GMT), it was reported that the number of fatalities had increased to five people in total," Abdul Muhari, the spokesman for the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB), said in a statement Friday. "Aside from that, seven people remained missing." He added that efforts to build a temporary bridge to open access to affected areas are ongoing. BNPB chief Suharyanto — who goes by one name — instructed rescuers to optimize the search operation for those missing, noting that rescuers have a seven-day "golden time" to find them.—APP

China requested to develop two model industrial zones

The minister also directed the Board of Investment (BOI) to finalize the availability of land for the SEZ development in Islamabad. The meeting reviewed progress in key sectors, including Energy, Infrastructure, Food & Agriculture and Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday said China has been requested to develop two model industrial zones in Pakistan on a turnkey basis for their replication in other areas of the country. Pakistan's cuisine "These model zones will serve as benchmarks for other industrial zones across the country," he said while chairing a progress-review meeting on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a news release said. The meeting was attended by Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Foreign Affairs Tariq Fatemi, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Planning, members of the Planning Commission, secretaries of various Ministries and Divisions, besides senior officials from relevant departments. The minister also directed the Board of Investment



(BOI) to finalize the availability of land for the SEZ development in Islamabad. The meeting reviewed progress in key sectors, including Energy, Infrastructure, Food & Agriculture and Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The Ministry of Railways and Communications updated on the recent progress of the ML-1 and Karakoram Highway (KKH) projects

and outlined their future course of action. Discussing the ML-1 project, Ahsan Iqbal noted the commitment made by the Chinese Premier for the visit of a team of Chinese technical experts to Pakistan. Pakistan's cuisine During a recent meeting with the Chinese Ambassador, it was also agreed that a team of financial experts would accompany them to ensure the simultaneous

and efficient resolution of all matters related to the project. Regarding KKH, the minister directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) to expedite progress in coordination with the Chinese side to ensure its timely completion, as it was a strategic project under CPEC Phase II. The minister directed the Power Division and PESCO to immediately energize the internal network of Raskhakai

SEZ and provide electricity to meet its current requirements. Regarding Gwadar's tax exemption policy, officials clarified that under the Finance Act, the China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) and other Free Zone businesses were entitled to tax holidays and related incentives. Accordingly, they said notifications have already been issued to relevant departments, confirming there

is no turnover tax on SEZ enterprises operating in Gwadar. The meeting also reviewed progress on the training of 1,000 agriculture graduates in China. The minister directed that experts traveling for agricultural training should be fully facilitated. The trainees, to be selected from public and private sectors on merit, would learn the latest technology and farm mechanization techniques from China and help in modernizing Pakistan's agriculture. Special arrangements for their provision Halal food, including Sehri and Iftar to them during Ramadan, were also instructed. Ahsan Iqbal reiterated the vital role of the agriculture sector in Pakistan's development and noted that the Prime Minister would soon announce the 5Es National Economic Transformation Plan Framework, which is homegrown. "This framework will be integrated into the five-year development plan, followed by the formulation of a comprehensive National Agriculture and Industrial Policy to advance the agriculture sector under a structured policy framework", added.

Kuwait, India strengthen ties with new cooperation agreement

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar conducted an important meeting in New Delhi during Al-Yahya's official visit, which was his inaugural trip to India in his capacity as Kuwait's Foreign Minister. This visit also included a courtesy meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The discussions culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at establishing a Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC) at the level of Foreign Ministers. The JCC is designed to bolster bilateral relations by coordinating joint working groups in various sectors, including trade, investment, education, technology, agriculture, security, and culture. Minister Al-Yahya extended greetings from Kuwait's leadership and acknowledged the enduring friendship and strong partnership between the two countries. In response, Minister Jaishankar expressed India's pride in these robust ties and underscored the collaborative efforts between the nations across multiple domains. The leaders also assessed a broad spectrum of India-Kuwait relations, encompassing political, trade, investment, energy, food security, and cultural exchanges. They shared perspectives on significant regional and international matters, particularly the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Both ministers stressed the importance of collaborative diplomatic initiatives to address the ongoing escalation and to pursue a comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue.—APP

Iraq PM says keeping up diplomacy to 'contain crisis' in Syria

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani on Friday said his country was pressing diplomatic efforts aimed at "containing the crisis in Syria due to its clear impact on Iraqi security." His remarks came ahead of a meeting between the top diplomats of Baghdad, Damascus and Tehran to discuss developments in Syria, which has been in the throes of a shock offensive that has seen militants capture key cities from the government. Islamist-led fighters in Syria were about five kilometers outside of the western city of Homs, the country's third largest and a former bastion of anti-government protests. In a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Sudani on Friday affirmed that "Iraq is continuing intensive diplomatic efforts with the aim of containing the crisis in Syria due to its clear impact on Iraqi security." "Iraq's official, fixed stance is in support of Syria's unity, security and stability," Sudani added, according to a statement from his office. Iraq's Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, during a meeting with his Syrian counterpart Basam Al-Sabbagh, meanwhile expressed "deep concerns" over developments in the neighboring country. The two ministers stressed "the importance of continuing consultation and coordination between the two countries to avoid the repetition of previous experiences and to work to protect regional security." Sabbagh pointed to "the necessity of mobilizing Arab and regional efforts to counter this terrorist threat... and prevent it from moving to other countries," according to the official Syrian news agency SANA. Both Iraq and Syria have scarcely recovered from the Daesh group's takeover of large swathes of territory in both countries, as well as the subsequent wars waged to eject them. Iraq's defense ministry on Monday said it was sending armored vehicles to enhance security along the country's 600-kilometers porous border with Syria. On Thursday, Syrian rebel leader known by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammed Al-Jolani urged Sudani to keep his country distant from Syria's war and prevent armed groups from backing Bashar Assad's forces.—APP

Pak-Uzbek transport link significant for regional integration

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Alisher Tukhtayev on Friday said that the transport link between Uzbekistan and Pakistan is significant for regional economic and trade integration and connecting the region for achieving future economic objectives. The regional connectivity projects, such as the Termez-Kabul and Peshawar railway projects, the recently launched Tashkent-Lahore flight, the Trans-Afghan Railway, and the multimodal Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan transport corridor, are highly significant. They not only promote regional economic integration but also enhance global geo-economic connectivity, stated Alisher Tukhtayev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtayev told media. The Uzbek envoy said the rapid development of Uzbek-Pakistani relations meets the long-term interests of not only regional countries but also has a positive impact on strengthening security and developing trade, economic, transport, communication and humanitarian ties in our regions. He said that transport links between Uzbekistan and Pakistan are of strategic importance for the two countries, but also for the entire region. He said that the current restoration of air traffic, as well as the implementation of projects to develop road and rail infrastructure, will deepen trade, travel and cultural ties. The ambassador said the governments of Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are actively cooperating in the implementation of joint economic and infrastructure projects and one of them is the construction of the Trans-Afghan Railway. He said the "Termez-Kabul-Peshawar" railway project plays an important role in restoring ties of regional connectivity between Central and South Asia. He said that once the project is launched, the volume of trade will increase significantly and shipping costs will decrease. Alisher Tukhtayev said the railway connectivity will contribute hugely to regional stability and overall prosperity by aiding Afghanistan's economic recovery. The ambassador said the project will facilitate the delivery of Uzbek goods to world markets through Pakistani ports and will open up a new route for Pakistan to export its products to Central Asian, CIS, and European markets.—APP

Indonesia, Philippines agree on repatriation of Filipino on death row

JAKARTA: Manila and Jakarta signed an agreement Friday to repatriate Mary Jane Veloso, a Filipino on death row for drug charges in Indonesia since 2015, with officials saying she could return to the Philippines before Christmas. The announcement came following the Philippines' Department of Justice undersecretary Raul Vasquez meeting with Indonesia's senior law and human rights minister Yusril Iha Mahendra in Jakarta Friday, where both ministers signed the agreement. Following the signing, Indonesian authorities will discuss further details with the Philippines' embassy in Jakarta on Veloso's transfer, Yusril said. "We agree to return the person concerned to the Philippines and furthermore the obligation to provide guidance to prisoner Mary Jane Veloso becomes the responsibility of the Philippine government," Yusril Iha Mahendra said Friday. He added that they are hoping the transfer "will be carried out before Christmas, 25 December." Yusril also said Indonesia will respect the Philippines' government decision if Manila decide to grant clemency to Veloso.—APP

Chairmen CDA opens digital smart parking management system

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa inaugurated Digital Smart Parking Management System at F-7 Markaz during the event of Oath Taking Ceremony of Trader's Union of F-7 Markaz, Islamabad. The event was also attended by Member T&D, Deputy Commissioner (ICT) and the relevant CDA officers while the members of the Trader's Union were also present. During the event, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that CDA has been making many efforts to maintain and uplift the Marakazs of Islamabad. He also stressed the needs for the Marakazs having its own revenue stream for their uplift. In this connection, he stated that the digital parking is an important initiative and the revenue generated from the digital parking will be utilized for development and uplift of the Marakaz. The digital parking initiative is being introduced throughout Islamabad in a phased manner. Chairman CDA also highlighted that the Digital smart Parking will not only ensure revenue generation, but will also help in mitigating traffic congestion with better traffic management. The Digital Parking will also provide complete visibility to CDA about the revenue being generated on daily basis. It will also facilitate the public by introducing multiple digital payment options including payment via digital wallets, debit cards and credit cards. During the event, the members of the Trader's Union also presented their suggestions and concerns regarding the development and betterment of Marakazs. Chairman CDA assured the members of the Trader's Union that their suggestion and concerns would be carefully reviewed, and CDA would make its utmost efforts to address those concerns while viable suggestions would be taken into considerations in the policy and decision making.—DNA

RCCI's three-day food fest begins at Ayub Park

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) inaugurated its much-anticipated three-day food festival at Ayub Park. Commissioner Rawalpindi Aamir Khatat and RCCI President Usman Shaukat, accompanied by ambassadors and distinguished guests, officially launched the event. The opening ceremony was graced by Group Leader Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, former presidents, the executive committee, and notable representatives from various business associations, including Shahid Ghafoor Paracha, President of Anjuman Tajran Punjab and Rawalpindi, Sardar Saqib, President of Small Chamber, and members of the Women Chamber. Ambassadors from Morocco, South Korea, and Yemen visited the festival on the

first day, touring the vibrant food stalls. Commissioner Aamir Khatat lauded the efforts of RCCI, stating "The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce deserves praise for fostering business activities and creating

entertainment opportunities for SMEs in the region." RCCI President Usman Shaukat emphasized the festival's significance: "Our goal is to promote traditional and regional cuisines, introduce new flavors, and

support entrepreneurs in developing SMEs. Food businesses represent a substantial portion of our SME sector, and this festival offers them an exceptional platform to showcase their offerings." —DNA

**Macron, defying calls to resign, struggles on in search for stable French govt**

The Socialist Party is, just behind France Unbowed, the second-largest member of the New Popular Front, a broad left-wing electoral alliance that won the most seats, 193, during this summer's snap legislative elections. "We cannot, if we are responsible, say that we are simply for the repeal (of the pension reform), without saying how we are financing it," Faure said. "We're going to discuss with the head of state because the situation in the country deserves it ... that doesn't mean I've become a Macronist"

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron on Friday began his latest search for a new prime minister to lead France's unruly parliament, after rejecting demands he quit to end a crisis he said was driven by the far right and extreme left's "anti-republican front." In a prime time address on Thursday, Macron said he would announce a new prime minister in the coming days to replace Michel Barnier, who was ousted in a no-confidence vote by lawmakers angered by his belt-tightening 2025 budget bill. But it remains to be seen how Macron can cobble together enough support in parliament to pass a 2025 budget bill, or install a prime

minister with any sort of longevity. Macron's best hopes appear to lie with the Socialist Party, a moderate leftist grouping with 66 seats in the National Assembly. The Socialists voted to topple Barnier this week, but have since signaled they might be willing to support another government. If Macron can win their backing, a new prime minister would likely have the numbers to stave off no-confidence motions from Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally and the hard-left France Unbowed. Socialist Party leader Olivier Faure said he would meet with Macron on Friday, with his primary demand being a leftist prime

minister. He also said he would be willing to make concessions on a previous demand for Macron's pension reform to be scrapped. The Socialist Party is, just behind France Unbowed, the second-largest member of the New Popular Front, a broad left-wing electoral alliance that won the most seats, 193, during this summer's snap legislative elections. "We cannot, if we are responsible, say that we are simply for the repeal (of the pension reform), without saying how we are financing it," Faure said. "We're going to discuss with the head of state because the situation in the country deserves it ... that doesn't mean I've become a

Macronist." Faure later said that Macron should also seek to bring in the Greens and Communists. Macron, who sparked France's festering political crisis in June by calling a snap election that delivered a hung parliament, was defiant in his address to nation. "I'm well aware that some want to pin the blame on me for this situation, it's much more comfortable," he said. But he said he will "never bear the responsibilities" of lawmakers who decided to bring down the government just days before Christmas. He said Barnier was toppled by the far-right and hard left in an "anti-republican front" that sought to create chaos. Their

sole motivation, he added, was the 2027 presidential election, "to prepare for it and to precipitate it." Despite pressure for him to resign before 2027, Macron said he wasn't going anywhere. "The mandate you gave me democratically is a five-year mandate, and I will exercise it fully until its end," he said, adding he would name a new prime minister in the coming days and push for a special budgetary bill that rolls over the 2024 legislation for next year. The next government would pursue a 2025 budget bill early in the new year, he said, so that "the French people don't pay the bill for this no-confidence motion.—Agencies

Briefs

Nationwide cases against Imran soar to 188

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Miseries of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former premier Imran Khan continue to increase as total case-load against the incarcerated leader went up to 188 on Friday, Dunya news reported. According to a report of the Ministry of Interior, Khan has now 74 cases registered against him in the capital, Islamabad whereas in Punjab, the former premier has been nominated in 99 cases. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where his party is in power, Khan has two cases registered against him. Moreover, the cricket-turned politician is also embroiled in seven inquiries by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Besides, three cases against him had been landed in the National Accountability (NAB) court as well. In addition, it is also mentioned in the report that the PTI founder's appeal against sentence in Toshakhana case is also pending with the court whereas new cases were also registered against him after the PTI's protest in Oct, Nov and Dec. It must be noted that the Interior Ministry had submitted its report to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Khan's sister Noureen-Niazi's request.

PECA amd bill likely to be introduced on Dec 10

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) Amendment Bill will be likely presented before the National Assembly (NA) session on December 10. As per details, the session of NA is expected to be held on December 10 at 5pm as the government has decided to get the amendments to PECA Act passed to address anti-govt issue. Seven more people have been booked for allegedly engaging in anti-state propaganda and spreading false narratives via social media platforms, sources said. The accused, identified as Muhammad Sohail, Muhammad Junaid, Sheikh Muhammad Ehsan, and others, were reportedly using WhatsApp and X (formerly Twitter) to disseminate propaganda. Authorities have confirmed that efforts are underway to apprehend the suspects. This development follows the registration of cases against 12 individuals a day earlier, whose identities have also been confirmed, according to sources. It is to be noted that the government of Pakistan has decided to amend the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) to tackle the spread of false information and fearmongering on social media, with penalties including imprisonment and fines. According to reports, any content that targets national institutions or individuals, or spreads fear, will be removed in Pakistan.

29 dead in Israeli strikes around Gaza-hospital

WEB DESK

GAZA CITY: Gaza's civil defence agency said 29 people were killed on Friday by Israeli strikes around a major hospital in the northern city of Beit Lahia. Kamal Adwan Hospital, one of northern Gaza's last functioning health centres, was hit by several strikes in the morning, the agency and the hospital director said. "There was a series of air strikes on the northern and western sides of the hospital, accompanied by intense and direct fire," said hospital director Hossam Abu Safieh, adding that four staff were killed. Mahmud Bassal, the civil defence agency's spokesman, said, "At least 29 people were killed and dozens were wounded... since dawn on Friday as a result of the continuing Israeli shelling around Kamal Adwan Hospital."

AP Asia project fosters economic growth in region

EU-Funded AP Asia Empowers Over 2,800 Entrepreneurs Across Four Nations



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: With over 4 years of dedicated effort, the Accelerate Prosperity in Central and South Asia (AP Asia) project – funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by Accelerate Prosperity (AP) through the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) has catalyzed entrepreneurship, transforming lives and businesses across Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. This groundbreaking initiative has supported over 2,800 entrepreneurs across 1,904 businesses, with 29% women-led and 41% youth-led businesses. The supported businesses helped in cre-

ation of 4,746 full-time equivalent jobs from 2020 to 2024, with women constituting 38% and youth 48% of the jobs. The project has made significant contributions in enhancing equitable economic opportunities for women and youth in both rural and urban Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Established by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), Accelerate Prosperity (AP) as an initiative empowers entrepreneurs through innovative business models, mentorship, and access to finance, fostering sustainable development across its operational geographies. The AP initiative has been driving entrepreneurship and

small business growth across Central and South Asia since its inception in 2016. Speaking about the project's achievements, Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation for the EU Delegation to Pakistan, said, "Pakistan and countries in the region can bank on a lot of talented young entrepreneurs. They can create jobs, drive innovation and spur growth. But it takes more than talent and bright ideas to transform start-ups into successful viable businesses. This is where EU support comes in. With EU funded programs like AP Asia, we can give a real push to unleash the full potential of start-ups by bringing together the talent and courage of young entrepreneurs with the expertise

and provision of soft loans. An excellent example of being stronger together!!" Akhtar Iqbal, CEO AKF Pakistan, also stressed on the importance of such entrepreneurship interventions saying, "Collaborations such as the AP Asia Project, supported by the European Union, are pivotal in fostering sustainable economic development across Central and South Asia. By empowering entrepreneurs and facilitating access to essential resources, we are not only creating employment opportunities but also building resilient communities capable of driving long-term growth. AP Asia is a testament to the power of collaboration in fostering entrepreneurship and sustainable development. We are proud to have supported over 4,700 jobs during the project's tenure, with 38% held by women and 48% by youth." The achievements of AP Asia were celebrated at the AP Asia Dissemination Event, that took place at the Serena Hotel in Islamabad. This gathering brought together leading stakeholders—including entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and development experts—to discuss innovative business solutions, regional trade, and the future of entrepreneurial ecosystems in Central and South Asia. Entrepreneurs from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan shared personal stories of growth and innovation, showcasing the transformative impact of AP Asia's support. A Reverse Panel Discussion during the event captured the attention of the audiences as it highlighted the challenges and opportunities of scaling startups in fragile economies. The Founder's Circle session explored experiences of female entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurship ecosystem and the importance of structured support for such business owners.

JCP nominates Justice Shahid as member of Constitutional Bench

Judicial Commission postpones matters related to appointments of additional judges in four High Courts till December 22

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Judicial Commission of Pakistan which met on Friday under the chair of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Yahya Afridi approved the appointment of Justice Shahid Bilal as member of Constitutional Bench of Supreme Court with majority votes. Judicial Commission of Pakistan postponed the matter related to the appointments of additional judges in four High Courts till December 22. Judicial Commission also nominated Justice Adnan Karim and Justice Agha Faisal as judges of the Sindh High Court Constitutional Bench. Justice Muneeb Akhtar remained silent instead of opposing or supporting Justice Shahid Bilal's nomination as head of the Constitutional Bench. During JCP meeting, letter of Justice Mansoor Ali Shah was also discussed. Justice Mansoor Ali Shah had suggested the formation of full court on petitions against the constitutional amendments. Chief Justice Yahya Afridi opposed the proposal of full court. Justice Yahya Afridi said that Constitutional Committee will decide when and how to decide the petitions against the constitutional amendments. Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi's opinion was supported by

the majority of members. Names of three District and Sessions Judges and six lawyers names were suggested for Additional Judges of Peshawar High Court. Kaleem Arshad, Farah Jamshed and Inamullah Khan are among the district and session judges. Lawyers include Junaid Anwar, Mudassar Amir and Aurangzeb. The names of Advocate Jawad Ehsanullah, Salahuddin and Sadiq Ali were also considered. The meeting for the appointment of nine additional judges to the Peshawar High Court began after Friday prayers, while the meeting to consider the appointment of 13 additional judges to the Sindh High Court began at 3 pm. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that "selective sense of justice" doesn't suit the stature of senior Supreme Court judge Mansoor Ali Shah. Taking to X, formerly Twitter, the senior PML-N leader reacted to the letter written by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah to Chief Justice of Pakistan. Justice Mansoor Ali Shah had penned a letter to Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, urging the postponement of the Judicial Commission's December 6 meeting, citing concerns over its constitutional validity. "Respected Mansoor Ali Shah said that the public trust on judiciary could be eroded if there is no implementation on his letter," said Khawaja Asif.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif receives a souvenir from Chief of Naval staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at the closing ceremony of the 7th Maritime Security Workshop in Pakistan Navy War College Lahore. – DNA

S Korea president ordered arrest of own party leader

In the first clear sign his own party may now vote with the opposition, the leader of Yoon's ruling party called for his swift suspension on Friday, saying he posed a "great danger" to democracy if he remained in power

FOREIGN DESK

SEOUL: South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol ordered the arrest of his own ruling party's leader Han Dong-hoon when he declared martial law on Tuesday night. The arrest list also included the leader of the main opposition Democratic Party, Lee Jae-myung, as well as three opposition lawmakers, the National Intelligence Service deputy director said. The president tried to "use this chance to arrest them and wipe them out", said director Hong Jang-won. The revelation came as the country's political parties held emergency meetings throughout Friday, with MPs planning to bring a vote to impeach Yoon. The motion, which is scheduled for Saturday, will pass if two-thirds of MPs vote for it. The opposition have a majority in the 300-seat parliament but need the support of at least eight ruling party MPs to secure the 200 votes required for the impeachment motion to pass. In the first clear sign his own party may

now vote with the opposition, the leader of Yoon's ruling party called for his swift suspension on Friday, saying he posed a "great danger" to democracy if he remained in power. Han Dong-hoon, chief of the People Power Party (PPP), had earlier in the week said his party would not support the opposition's impeachment motion. But on Friday he announced there was "credible evidence" that Yoon had ordered the arrest of key politicians - including himself - on "anti-state charges" on Tuesday. Han said Yoon had planned to jail arrested politicians in a detention centre in Gwacheon, a city south of Seoul. He expressed concern that "extreme actions", such as the martial law declaration, could be repeated if Yoon remained in office. "[These are] putting the Republic of Korea and its people at great risk. South Koreans spent another day waiting to hear about the fate of their president on Friday, as the impeachment vote loomed. In the afternoon, there were reports the president was heading to parliament, which his office denied. But opposition MPs lined up to block entry to the assembly, chanting "impeach, impeach".

Ayub, Raja awarded post-arrest bail

Opposition Leader in NA and Basharat were arrested by Rawalpindi Police a day earlier

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Omar Ayub and Raja Basharat were awarded post-arrest bail in a vandalism case by an anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Friday. Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Ayub, along with Basharat and three other PTI leaders, was arrested by Rawalpindi Police outside Adiala Jail a day earlier. ATC Judge Amjad Ali Shah had ordered Suddar Superintendent of Police Nabeel Ahmed Khokhar to produce the five suspects before court by 7:30pm a day earlier. However, since the police were unable to produce them, the judge issued a contempt notice on the SP for not meeting the deadline and asked the law enforcer to produce them at 9am today. Ayub, Basharat, and Ahmad Nasir Chattha face charges in cases registered at Injra Police Station in Attock and Hassan Abdal Police Station. Meanwhile, Raja Majid Daniyal and Malik Azeem were detained in connection with a case filed at Dhamial Police Station. All five leaders are also named in cases related to the November 24 protest, which include charges of arson, vandalism, obstructing government operations, assaulting police officers, and damaging public property.

IHC grills police over arrests

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court disposed of a case of arrest of common people with critical remarks about police. Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the case against the arrests of common people in the capital. During the hearing, the brother of a vegetable vendor arrested from F-10 testified that police had coerced him to include his brother's name among the "unknown persons" allegedly involved in a protest. "My brother is a vegetable vendor, I am a bike rider, and my father is a driver. We have no connection to the protest. My brother was picked up from a checkpoint," he stated.

Punish if I'm guilty, grant relief if innocent: Qureshi

Former foreign minister seeks "justice" after one-and-a-half years in prison

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi has called for justice as he has been behind bars for one-and-a-half years. "If I am guilty, punish me... if I am innocent, grant me relief," said Qureshi during an informal media talk at an anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore on Friday. He is currently incarcerated in KotLakhat Jail in Lahore. Qureshi, the former foreign minister, criticised the government's approach to handling political dissent and called for dialogue. "The PTI is a major political party, and banning it would be foolish," he said. Qureshi further demanded a judicial commission to investigate the events of May 9, 2023, ensuring accountability for those responsible. During the protests on May 9, miscreants targeted the civil and military installations including - Jinnah House and the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. The military termed May 9 "Black Day" and decided to try the PTI protesters under the Army Act. PTI founder Imran Khan, however, blames "agencies' men" for arson and shooting in some areas during the May 9 violent protests. Qureshi also called for relief for other detained party leaders, including Yasmin Rashid and Ijaz Chaudhry.

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