



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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UK PM Starrmer heads to Golf to talk ME trade

Detailed News On Page-07

Azma accuses Bushra Bibi of using KP funds

Detailed News On Page-08



Skipper Stokes hails England's aggression

Detailed News On Page-06



In a bid to break deadlock

Pro-Establishment politicians float national govt idea

Efforts are afoot to take PTI on board as well; the national government may replace the incumbent Shehbaz regime; PPP, Maulana Fazl tirade against government is not without a purpose

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In an effort to achieve political stability, the Establishment is reportedly advocating for the formation of a national government inclusive of all political parties. As part of this initiative, pro-Establishment politicians, including Sheikh Rashid and Fawad Chaudhry, have been granted access to PTI founder Imran Khan, whom they met at Adiala Jail last week. Following his meeting with Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry—who previously served as Information Minister during the PTI government—voiced support for the creation of a national government. However, he refrained from providing specifics about how such a government would be formed or who would lead it.

Another vocal advocate of the Establishment's perspective, Faisal Vawda, who served as Minister for Water and Power during the PTI tenure,

has predicted that the Shehbaz Sharif-led government may not last much longer. According to Vawda, the current administration has failed to deliver on its promises, leaving it with little justification to remain in power.

Meanwhile, JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari appear to be gearing up for a showdown with the government. Bilawal, ostensibly critical of the federal government's lack of commitment to equitable resource distribution among the provinces, harbors deeper frustrations. When the Shehbaz government was initially installed, Bilawal was reportedly assured that he would be appointed Prime Minister after two and a half years. However, given the current political dynamics, Bilawal's aspiration to become the country's Prime Minister seems increasingly uncertain. He may not align with the preferences of the influential actors shaping the country's political landscape.

Meanwhile, sources indicate that one of the proposals presented to Imran Khan involves holding early elections after three to three and a half years. Until then, he has been urged to participate in the political process and adopt a more conciliatory approach. In response, Imran Khan has reportedly put forth two key demands: the release of all political prisoners and the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate the events of May 9. Notably, he seems to have softened his previous stance, which labeled the incumbent government as illegitimate and demanded the restoration of his mandate. This shift suggests a significant change in his political strategy.

The concept of a national government may seem innovative, but it is largely impractical. The challenge lies in uniting political forces with deeply divergent views on both domestic and international issues, making consensus and effective governance nearly impossible.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior Moin Naqvi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

Amid JAAC long march

AJK President withdraws controversial ordinance

AJK govt directed to release all persons detained under "Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance, 2024"

DNA

MYZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry on Saturday directed the government to withdraw the controversial presidential ordinance that triggered protests in the region. According to a statement, the president wrote a letter to AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, directing the government to release all persons detained under the "Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance, 2024". The statement said the AJK government immediately initiated action on the president's instructions. The development comes after the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) began staging long marches against the contentious presidential ordinance and their arrested activists towards AJK entry points after talks with the committee formed by the government failed. The wheel-jam and shutter down strike called by the JAAC entered third day in several cities across

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12 PTI workers killed, 200 reported missing, says Omar Ayub

Says unarmed protesters were fired upon, resulting in casualties and disappearance

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Opposition Leader Omar Ayub Khan has claimed that 12 PTI workers were shot dead and over 200 reported missing during a peaceful protest in Islamabad on Nov 24. Speaking in Peshawar alongside Asad Qaiser, Shibli Faraz, and Sheikh Waqas Akram, Ayub said unarmed protesters were fired upon, resulting in casualties and disappearance.

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Briefs

Dar, Turkish FM discuss Syria crisis

Shared the details of the efforts by the Government for the safety and security of its nationals

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Turkey, Mr. Hakan Fidan on the unfolding situation in Syria after the rebels take over the Damascus and President Bashar Al Assad's government overthrow. Deputy Prime Minister/ FM Ishaq Dar shared the details of the efforts by the Government of Pakistan for the safety and security of its nationals in Syria. They also discussed possible cooperation between the two countries for the safety of the Pakistan nationals.

Romanian Presidential polls annulled

Georgescu unexpectedly topped the first round of voting on November 24

BUCHAREST: Romania's top court on Friday annulled ongoing presidential elections over alleged irregularities, after far-right candidate Calin Georgescu topped the first round – a decision with precedents around the world in the past two decades. Romanians on Sunday protested outside a voting station near Bucharest together with far-right presidential front runner Calin Georgescu after a top court scrapped the scheduled run-off vote after allegations of Russian interference. Georgescu unexpectedly topped the first round of voting on November 24 in the Nato and EU member bordering Ukraine. But the constitutional court on Friday unanimously decided to annul the entire electoral process as it was "marred ... by multiple irregularities and violations of electoral legislation". – Agencies

Claims country's economy on track

Imran Khan has no future, says Tarar

Information Minister praises the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, stating that positive govt policies had put the economy on the right track

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has said the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has no future, and ensuring protection of minorities' rights remains the government's foremost priority. Speaking at a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony at the Bihar Colony church ground here on Sunday, he criticised the PTI's failed plans to storm Islamabad. He also declared that the country's economy was now on the right track and that any attempts at a civil disobedience movement would fail miserably. He stressed that the PTI and its leader's politics of chaos and violence had been rejected by people, adding that the party had no interest in addressing public issues and had only promoted a culture of unrest and destruction. "The PTI's attempt to stage a sit-in in Islamabad failed badly, and now they are threatening a civil disobedience movement, which, like their past propaganda,

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Vawda criticises PTI's civil disobedience call

Vawda met MQM leaders during a visit to the party's central office in Bahadurabad, Karachi on Sunday

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Senator Faisal Vawda has alleged that the PTI's call for civil disobedience is a strategy to pressure proceedings against former spymaster Faiz Hameed. Vawda met MQM leaders during a visit to the party's central office in Bahadurabad, Karachi on Sunday. Mustafa Kamal, speaking on the occasion, praised Vawda as a "one-man army" striving to unite political forces in Pakistan, a task large party leaders have failed to accomplish. Vawda stressed the importance of respecting all political mandates, including

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PM lauds PCB's stance on CT2024

PM said that Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi's stance reflected the voice of Pakistanis

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has lauded the principled stance of Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi's stance over holding of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan. Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at his residence on Sunday and briefed him about the recent developments regarding the ICC Champions trophy. The tournament is due to be held in Pakistan in February-March next, but the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) refused to send its team to Pakistan after non-issuance of no-objection certificate (NOC) by its government to travel to Pakistan.

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250 Pakistani pilgrims stranded in Syria

Cham Wings confirms cancellation of flights to Lahore and Karachi as rebels close airport

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Around 250 Pakistani pilgrims have been stranded in Syria as the country grapples with worsening turmoil following the lightning offensive by rebels that resulted in the ouster of President Bashar al Assad. Tariq Samiullah, Country Head of Cham Wings, confirmed that the rebels have closed the airport, effectively halting outbound flights. "Our flight scheduled for Lahore today has been cancelled,"

he said, adding that another flight destined for Karachi on December 11 has also been cancelled. Pilgrims reported uncertainty regarding Cham Wings' flight schedule for the day, with no clear updates provided. Meanwhile, the situation in Damascus remains tense, with firing in the Sayyidah Zaynab area creating widespread panic and fear among those present in the vicinity. Syrian rebels declared this morning that they had taken Damascus, sending

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Asad flees as Damascus wakes up in rebel hands

At the dawn call to prayer, some mosques were broadcasting religious chants usually reserved for festive occasions, while also urging residents to stay home with the city engulfed in uncertainty just hours into the rebels' takeover

Official institutions in Damascus to remain under the prime minister who said Syria should hold free elections to allow its people to decide their leadership

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: The Russian Foreign Ministry said on Sunday that Syrian President Bashar Assad had left office and departed the country after giving orders there to be a peaceful handover of power. In a statement, the ministry did not say where Assad was now and said Russia has not taken part in the talks around his departure. "As a result of negotiations between B. Assad and a number of participants in the armed conflict on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, he decided to resign from the presidency and left the country, giving instructions for a peaceful transfer of power. "Russia did not participate in these negotiations," the ministry said. Moscow was extremely worried by events in Syria and urged all sides to refrain from violence, it said. "We urge all parties involved to refrain from the use of violence and to resolve all issues of governance through political means," the statement said. "In that regard, the Russian Federation is in contact with all groups of the Syrian opposition." It said Russia's military bases in Syria had been put on a state of high alert, but that there was no serious threat to them at the current time. Assad fled out of Damascus for an unknown destination

The Collapse of the Assad Regime: Regional Implications

Iran's forward defense strategy faces severe disruption. Dr. Dorsey argued that the loss of Syria as a state ally and critical land bridge to Hezbollah in Lebanon weakens two of Iran's defense pillars, leaving it reliant on ballistic missiles and its nuclear program.

CENTRELINE REPORT

Syria's Internal Collapse

DAMASCUS: Dr. Dorsey leading expert on the Middle East in his recent interview described the Assad regime's disintegration as "a tectonic shift" in the Middle East. Key rebel advances in Homs, Hama, and Aleppo highlighted the brittleness of the Syrian military, which he noted had "fallen apart" unexpectedly quickly. The potential outcomes range from a severely weakened Assad to an internal coup. If Assad falls, rebel factions must navigate deep ethnic and sectarian divisions, leaving Syria's future governance uncertain. The unexpected absence of widespread violence against minorities during the offensive was noted as a "hopeful sign." Iran's Strategic Loss: Iran's forward defense strategy faces severe disruption. Dr. Dorsey argued that the loss of Syria as a state ally and critical land bridge to Hezbollah in Lebanon

weakens two of Iran's defense pillars, leaving it reliant on ballistic missiles and its nuclear program. Hezbollah, already weakened militarily and politically, faces further strain as Syria's role as a transit route for arms is severed. Iran may need to reassess its relationships with non-state actors like Hezbollah. Russia's Position in Syria: Russia's inability or unwillingness to halt Assad's collapse underscores its reliance on local forces, which lacked the resolve to fight. Dr. Dorsey likened Russia's potential withdrawal from Syria to the U.S. exit from Saigon in 1975, calling it a significant geopolitical blow. Speculation about Ukrainian involvement in aiding rebels surfaced but was deemed of limited strategic significance by Dr. Dorsey. Implications for Other Stakeholders Turkey: Positioned as a potential kingmaker, Turkey could benefit if an Islamist-leaning government emerges in Damascus but

Continued on Page 06

on Sunday, two senior army officers earlier said, as militants announced they had entered the capital with no sign of army deployments. A Syrian Air plane took off from Damascus airport around the time the capital was reported to have been taken by militants, according to data from the FlightRadar website. The aircraft initially flew toward Syria's coastal region, a stronghold of Assad's Alawite sect, but then made an abrupt U-turn and flew in the opposite direction for a few minutes before disappearing off the map. Reuters could not immediately ascertain who was on board. Syria's foreign ministry said Sunday that it would continue to serve citizens abroad after rebels seized the capital Damascus. The ministry "and its diplomatic missions abroad will remain committed to serving" and assisting all citizens, its website said, as several other ministries and public institutions called on employees to return to work, reassuring Syrians services would continue. Syrian Prime Minister Mohammed Jalali said on Sunday that Syria should hold free elections to allow its people to decide their leadership. In an interview with Al-Arabiya, Jalali also said he had been in contact with opposition commander Abu Mohammed Golan to discuss managing the current transitional period, marking a notable development in efforts to shape Syria's political future. Syrian state television earlier aired a video statement by a group of men saying that President Bashar Assad has been overthrown and all detainees in jails have been set free. The man who read the statement said the

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Indicators show economy witnessing considerable gains

He said, the government has taken decisive action against smuggled petroleum products, scrutinizing thousands of petrol pumps and shutting down hundreds involved in the illicit trade. The action resulted in a historic growth in documented sales, supporting economic activity and boosting revenue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Finance Minister on Economic and Financial Reforms, Khurram Shehzad said here on Saturday said the country's economy witnessed considerable gains as indicated by various indicators. Highlighting various economic developments, the advisor in a statement issued here said, inflation was under control, smuggling was curbed while remittances are expected to reach historic level of \$35 billion in fiscal year 2024-25. He said decline in inflation was a welcome relief for the masses adding to ensure prices remain affordable, the finance minister, heading the ECC, has initiated a

practice to regularly monitor prices of basic products and commodities. This timely monitoring enabled the government to take effective actions, making policies more impactful and beneficial to the people. He said, the government has taken decisive action against smuggled petroleum products, scrutinizing thousands of petrol pumps and shutting down hundreds involved in the illicit trade. The action resulted in a historic growth in documented sales, supporting economic activity and boosting revenue. Likewise, the government was actively working to shut down smuggled and illegal tobacco sales, particularly in informal markets and bazars. This effort aims to curb the illicit trade, which will have a positive impact on the

economy and public health. On remittances, Khurram quoted Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) as having said the remittances were expected to reach historic levels of \$35 billion in FY25, with an average of \$2.9 billion per month so far. This significant influx of foreign exchange will strengthen reserves, providing a much-needed boost to the economy. Similarly, the SBP is set to launch a new platform, InvestPak, allowing individuals and corporates to invest directly in government securities. By bypassing banks, investors can earn better returns, encouraging a culture of savings and investment in the economy. He said, there also had been a notable shift towards localization of imported raw materials, with top FMCGs

in Pakistan sourcing more materials locally. This import substitution has resulted in a significant reduction in imports, with volumes rising and only 35% of materials now sourced through imports. This trend has contributed to stable forex reserves, currency stability, and overall external de-risking of the economy. For instance, he said, if 70% of the raw material was being sourced through imports earlier, it's now down to around 35%. This import-substitution could be one of the key reasons why imports are not rising as much (4% in 5 months) while exports have shown consistent growth (13% in 5 months), resulting in better forex reserves, currency stability and overall external de-risking of the economy.



KARACHI: Cemal Sangu, Consul General of Türkiye and Khalil Tokar expressing their views on the third day of the four-day 10th Int'l Urdu Festival Karachi 2024 organized by the Arts Council.

Sustainable agriculture stressed to address food insecurity

LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Regional Committee on Food Convener Shahid Iqbal said on Sunday that growing food insecurity crisis, worsened by climate change, population growth, and sluggish economic progress, would also impact Pakistan. Pakistan's cuisine

Talking here to a delegation of industrialists, led by Chaudhry Zahid Iqbal Arain, former vice president of the FPCCI from Vehari, he said timely addressing the hovering threat required immediate, multifaceted action on both domestic and global fronts. He said, "We must prioritise sustainable agricultural practices." Investment in climate-resilient crops, modern irrigation systems, and farmer education can enhance productivity and reduce vulnerabilities to extreme weather. He said policymakers should promote crop diversification to decrease dependence on water-intensive staples like wheat and rice, especially using various kinds of vulnerable hybrids seeds of different crops like rice successfully evolved by the Guard Agriculture Research and Services Ltd in 1999, showing excellent yields.—APP

PM greets newly elected Sindh HCBA President

He hoped that the newly elected president will work tirelessly to strengthen the legal profession and continue efforts to promote justice and democracy in the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday congratulated Barrister Sarfraz Metlo on being elected as President of the Sindh High Court Bar Association. The prime minister also congratulated Ahsan Bhoon, head of

the Independent Lawyers Group (Asma Jahangir Group), on the victory. He expressed the hope that the newly elected President and the Independent Lawyers Group will continue their efforts for the welfare of lawyers, the prime minister said in a statement issued by the PM Office. "I trust that the Asma

Jahangir Group will continue to prioritize the politics of principles and adherence to values, as always," the prime minister remarked. He hoped that the newly elected president will work tirelessly to strengthen the legal profession and continue efforts to promote justice and democracy in the country.

Shafay meets world trade developers delegation

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain here Saturday held a meeting with a delegation from Canada-based company World Trade Developers. The delegation was led by the Chairman of the group, Rana Muhammad Tanveer. The meeting focused on the upcoming World Trade Fair to be held in Canada in July next year. The delegation head extended an invitation to the Provincial Minister to participate in the World Trade Fair, which will host 6,000 businessmen and companies from across the globe. The event aims to foster networking, business matchmaking and B2B meetings between participants. Provincial Minister appreciated the initiative, stating that organizing such a fair in Canada is a commendable step that will enhance business activities. He emphasized the need for practical measures to strengthen trade cooperation between Pakistan and Canada. Pakistan's cuisine The Minister highlighted that the government prioritizes the promotion of sectors like solar energy, electric vehicles, modern agriculture, and livestock. He noted that Canadian advanced technology could significantly contribute to the development of various sectors in Punjab. He also stressed the importance of increasing people-to-people connections to enhance trade cooperation. The minister confirmed Punjab's participation in the World Trade Fair in Canada next year. The delegation included Sajid Malik, Malik Manzoor Hussain and Rao Amjad Iqbal. Dr. Imran Hashmi, Director of the Punjab Board of Investment, along with other relevant officials, also attended the meeting.—APP

Remembering the heroic action by PNS Hangor

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On this day, 53 years ago, PNS Submarine HANGOR created history by sinking INS KHUKRI and crippling INS KIRPAN, first successful engagement of warship by a Submarine, post WWII, and the only such engagement by a conventional submarine. We cannot forget this day and neither can the enemy. This incident was not only part of a tactical battle, executed perfectly, but also a strategic demonstration of Pakistan Navy's resolve to repulse enemy aggression and defend our maritime frontiers, notwithstanding numerical asymmetry. The day reminds us of the courage, tenacity and grit of the HANGOR crew. What



HANGOR achieved for Pakistan Navy is a testimony to Allah SWT's blessing and a true measure of the professionalism, dedication and selfless devotion of our veteran submariners and the inspirational role they played in establishing historic legacies of our Submarine Service. Through professional excellence and

dedication, we can fight against all odds, and continue to enrich our proud heritage. Pakistan Navy has always laid special emphasis on its Submarine Force and the ongoing submarine project in collaboration with China, bears testimony to this fact. Addition of 8 x HANGOR class submarines will boost combat capabilities of Pakistan Navy and bolster its offensive punch. At this moment, while reminiscing our triumph, let us not forget Shuhada of PNS/M GHAZI who laid their lives in the defence of the motherland in 1971. I firmly believe that Submarine Squadron will continue to draw inspiration from their sacrifices, as well as the exemplary feat of legendary PNS/M HANGOR.

Uzbekistan historic gem of Islamic heritage, a growing partner for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Uzbekistan, nestled in the heart of Central Asia, stands as a beacon of Islamic heritage, showcasing a rich history which spans centuries. With its ancient cities, grand mosques and enduring cultural traditions, the country remains an indispensable destination for the Islamic world. Recently, its ties with Pakistan have reached new heights, emphasizing shared history, faith and growing bilateral cooperation. The inauguration of a direct flight between Tashkent and Lahore stands as a testament to the flourishing relationship between the two nations. This initiative is expected to not only boost trade and economic ties but also foster greater people-to-people connections, enabling both nations to explore their rich historical and religious heritage together. Uzbekistan is home to some of the world's most iconic Islamic landmarks. Cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva are treasure troves of Islamic architecture, culture and scholarship. The jewel of Central Asia known as the "Crossroads of Cultures," Samarkand is a UNESCO world heritage site. The city's Registan Square, flanked by three majestic madrasas, stands as a testament to the golden age of Islamic learning and it is also home to the Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum, the resting place of the great conqueror Amir Timur (Tamerlane), and the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, a masterpiece of Timurid architecture. A spiritual epicentre Bukhara, a city over 2,000 years old, has been a center of Islamic spirituality and learning. The Kalon Mosque and Minaret, the Ark Fortress, and the Lyabi-Hauz complex are must-visit sites. Bukhara's role as a hub for Islamic scholars, including Imam Bukhari, has cemented its place in the annals of Islamic history. A living museum, the ancient walled city of Itchan Kala in Khiva preserves the essence of medieval Islamic life. Its labyrinth of mosques, madrasas, and caravanserais transports visitors back in time. For Muslims worldwide Uzbekistan offers a unique spiritual journey. The Imam Bukhari Complex, near Samarkand, draws scholars and pilgrims to honor the legacy of the compiler of Sahih al-Bukhari, one of the most authentic collections of Hadith in Islam. Other significant sites include the tomb of Imam Termezi and the memorial of Sheikh Naqshband in Bukhara. In recent years, Pakistan and Uzbekistan have fostered a robust partnership, rooted in shared faith, cultural heritage, and mutual economic interests. Pakistanis hold Uzbekistan's Islamic heritage in high regard, with scholars and historians often highlighting the historical connections between the two regions. Uzbek leaders have also acknowledged the role of Pakistani scholars in preserving Islamic traditions. The two nations are enhancing trade and connectivity, particularly through initiatives like the Trans-Afghan Railway Project, which aims to link Uzbekistan with Pakistani ports. This project promises to transform the economic landscape of Central and South Asia. High-level visits, such as those by Pakistan's Prime Minister to Tashkent and Uzbekistan's President to Islamabad, have strengthened bilateral ties. Agreements on trade, education, and cultural exchange underscore the growing partnership. Uzbekistan has actively promoted itself as a destination for Pakistani tourists, emphasizing shared Islamic heritage.—DNA

Role of religion in fostering global peace, harmony discussed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a rare and inspiring gathering, scholars and religious leaders representing six different faiths convened at an international seminar to discuss the transformative role of religion in fostering peace, harmony, and justice. The seminar, titled "The Role of Religions in Fostering Peace, Harmony, and Justice" and organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad, brought together voices from Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism to explore how shared ethical values and consciously practiced faith can bridge divides, counter misconceptions, and create a foundation for global unity. This unique event highlighted the potential of



dialogue among followers of different faiths to address contemporary challenges and promote inclusive narratives rooted in mutual respect and understanding. The session, chaired by Justice Dr Qibla Ayaz, member, Shariat Appellate Bench, Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) was addressed by Rev Fr Prof Sarfraz Simon, diocesan director of Catholic

Church, Dr Neelima Shukla-Bhatt of Wellesley College, USA, Dr Kalyan Singh Kalyan of GC University, Lahore, Dr Samantha Ilankoon of University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, Dr Ophira Gamliel of University of Glasgow, and Dr Hafiz Waqas Khan of Riphah International University, Islamabad. This was followed by a panel discussion chaired by Dr Khalid






Masud, member judge, Shariat Appellate Bench, SCP, and Dr Zahid Parvez, rector, Markfield Institute of Higher Education, UK, featuring Dr Mary Hunter, post-doctoral researcher, St Leonard's associate of the University of St Andrews, Scotland, Dr Taimia Sabiha, assistant professor, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Dr Seema Farzad, social activist, and Manzoor Masih, member National Commission for Human Rights. The speakers observed that the adaptability of religious teachings in diverse contexts demonstrates their potential to bridge gaps, transforming dialogue into tangible change and offering hope for a future rooted in shared ethical values. Inclusiveness is inherent in all religions, said Dr Qibla Ayaz. However, the media's attention

to adverse incidents while overlooking positive contributions fuels religious nationalism. He suggested that religious advocates, policy influencers, and followers of religion must take collective responsibility to bridge gaps, promote unity, and use social media to amplify messages of inclusivity. Highlighting Islam's message of peace, justice, forgiveness, and respect for diversity, Dr Hafiz Waqas noted that the term "Islam" itself signifies peace. He emphasized Islam's commitment to equality and the message of reconciliation and moral leadership in fostering harmony and justice, as outlined in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Reflecting on Christianity's ethos of peace, Prof Simon underscored that true peace stems from "trust in God and harmonious relationships."

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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Motorway Police.....9270601-20
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Railway Exchange.....9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



RAWALPINDI: Dean of the African Group and Ambassador of Morocco Mohammad Karmoune visiting stalls during food gala event arranged by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. President RCCI Sahukat Usman is also seen in the picture. —DNA

ICT hospitals asked to release dead bodies immediately

For years, families of deceased patients in Islamabad faced the distressing situation of hospitals refusing to release the body until all medical bills were paid. This caused immense emotional and financial strain as loved ones had to manage funeral arrangements while dealing with the pressure of outstanding charges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark decision, the Islamabad Health Regulatory Authority (IHRA) has issued policy directives instructing hospitals in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) to immediately release the bodies of deceased patients, prohibiting the practice of withholding them over unpaid medical bills. This announcement has been met with widespread public appreciation, marking a much-needed intervention in a practice that has long caused distress to grieving families. For years, families of deceased patients in Islamabad faced the distressing situation of hospitals refusing to release the body until all medical bills were paid. This caused immense emotional and financial strain as loved ones had to manage funeral arrangements

while dealing with the pressure of outstanding charges. Many families, already burdened by medical costs and grief, were forced to settle bills upfront before receiving the body. This issue was particularly common in private hospitals, which often charged high advance fees. Citizens said when patients passed unexpectedly or after prolonged illnesses, families struggled to gather the funds, risking delays in burying their loved ones. They said the directives from IHRA's newly appointed board have brought immense relief to the public, with many taking to social media and public forums to voice their gratitude. Haider Ali, a resident of Islamabad, shared his experience, "This decision is a blessing for families going through the toughest time of their lives." He said, "I recently lost my father to a sudden heart attack, and I was forced to run

from pillar to post to pay bills before we could bury him. It was traumatic. I am so relieved to see this change." Advocate Imran Ali appreciating this move said, "This was long overdue. Families are already shattered by loss, and to add the financial burden of 'paying for the body' is inhumane." He said, "I hope this new rule helps prevent this exploitation. Hospitals shouldn't use death as a business transaction." Medical professionals, too, have expressed support for the move, with many acknowledging that it would ease the pressure on families while encouraging hospitals to adopt a more compassionate approach in such sensitive circumstances. Professor Dr Nasir Ali, a cardiologist at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), commented on the new directives, stating, "While it's essential for hospitals to cover their operational costs, we must

ensure that families are not exploited during their most vulnerable moments. He said, "This directive strikes a crucial balance between financial sustainability and preserving the dignity of the deceased." He recommended that hospitals should set aside funds for such emergencies, as they generate substantial revenue year-round, and deaths, though tragic, are relatively infrequent. He highlighted the issue of holding death certificate by the hospitals to clear their dues which he thinks, is against our religious, social and moral values. This decision aligns with similar practices in many countries worldwide, where the ethical considerations surrounding the release of deceased bodies have taken precedence over financial transactions. In the UK, the National Health Service (NHS) ensures hospitals cannot withhold bodies over unpaid bills, prioritizing dignity for the

deceased and compassion for families. Similarly, in Canada and Australia, hospitals and funeral homes release the deceased without delay, even without full payment, with outstanding bills settled later through insurance or payment plans. While the new directive has been praised, experts warn that hospitals will need a sustainable model to recover costs. They said private hospitals, relying on upfront payments, may face challenges, requiring better financial support and regulation. Citizens were of the view that IHRA's decision was a significant step towards a compassionate healthcare system in Islamabad, ensuring the immediate release of deceased bodies. They said balancing hospital finances and patient welfare will be challenging, the public support highlights the demand for more humane healthcare practices.

ANF recovers over 300 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover over 300 kg drugs worth Rs 20 million and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman. He informed that in an operation, 2 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested in Al-Asif Square area, Karachi. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In another operation, 245 kg hashish was recovered from Jiwani area in Gwadar. 34.8 kg hashish and 7.2 kg opium were recovered from secret cavities of a vehicle intercepted near Barki Road Lahore and 2 suspects were arrested during the operation. 6 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle near Pashtkhara Chowk on Ring Road Peshawar and a suspect was rounded up during the operation. In 5th operation, 3 kg ice was recovered from the secret cavities of a vehicle checked near Glutian Mor, Daska in Sialkot and a suspect was netted.

Pakistan Mathematics Olympiad held

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) has successfully conducted the much-anticipated Pakistan Mathematics Olympiad (PMO) 2024, a landmark initiative in collaboration with the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and the Islamic World Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ICESCO). According to the Federal Board, this prestigious event aims to identify and nurture mathematical talent among secondary and higher secondary students both within Pakistan and abroad. The examination was held simultaneously across 69 examination centers nationwide and at three international centers, providing a unique platform for over 7,500 participants to demonstrate their mathematical abilities. The Olympiad's syllabus, meticulously crafted by the Mathematics Department of LUMS and aligned with international standards, allowed students to engage in rigorous problem-solving, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning exercises.—APP

Aroma of Rwandan coffee spread in MOFA charity bazaar

ISLAMABAD: The aroma of Rwandan coffee filled the air at the Foreign Office Charity Bazaar, organized by the Pakistan Foreign Office Women's Association (PFOWA) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday. High Commissioner Rwandan, Fatou Harerimana was present at the Rwandan stall at the PFOWA Charity Bazaar, welcoming diplomats and the public including students and youngsters with her smile. The Rwandan ambassador's stall was constantly active with the echos, "Ma'am one more cup please". The ambassador along with her staff continued to serve coffee to those who came to the stall whereas, diplomats and attendees enjoyed coffee sips. Talking to APP, High Commissioner of Rwanda to Pakistan Fatou Harerimana said that she was very happy with the popularity of Rwandan coffee at the PFOWA Charity Stall and she had no idea that the people of Pakistan would be so fond of their coffee. She said that Rwandan coffee is popular all over the world and there are many consumers of Rwandan coffee, especially in Canada and the Northern world countries. The high commissioner said that Pakistan is a lively nation and since this morning, different groups of young people have been coming to stall and enjoying the coffee. "We would soon launch a campaign at the public and business level to introduce Rwandan coffee in Islamabad as the people of Pakistan are fond of Rwandan coffee", she highlighted. Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan and Foreign Minister, Muhammad Ishaq Dar visited the Rwandan stall at the PFOWA, Bazaar and praised Rwandan Coffee. He indicated the need to further expand economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Rwanda to strengthen bilateral relations. He congratulated the Rwandan, High Commissioner of Rwanda, Fatima Harerimana for setting up such an excellent stall and expressed his full support for such activities in the future. The deputy prime minister said the bazaar provided a great opportunity for the people of Twins Cities to have a glimpse of the rich culture of different countries, including Rwanda through their food and beverages.—DNA

ICCI to launch Ramzan shopping festival to boost economic activity

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has announced the organization of a grand "Shopping Festival" during the third Ashra of Ramadan, set to take place from the 20th to the 30th of Ramadan. The event will be held across major shopping centers in Islamabad in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Chainstore Association of Pakistan (CAP), Traders Welfare Associations (TWAs), Capital Development Authority (CDA), and IESCO. The festival aims to boost economic activity while benefiting both customers and the business community. The announcement was made by Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, during a combined meeting with office bearers of CAP, TWAs, and other business community leaders at ICCI. The attendees agreed to form a committee to implement the event and ensure its success, with the goal of generating economic activity and contributing to the country's financial well-being. ICCI President Qureshi emphasized



the chamber's dedication to accelerating economic activities by fostering a business-friendly environment for its members. He also acknowledged the challenges faced by the community, particularly bureaucratic red tape, and vowed to address these issues to keep the economic engine running for the benefit of the country. He expressed confidence

that the successful execution of the "Shopping Festival" would be a significant milestone for ICCI and that the chamber would continue to pursue other initiatives to revive economic activities. Rana Tariq Mehboob, Patron in Chief/Co-Founder of CAP, informed the attendees about the core objectives of the association.—DNA

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BASIC HEALTH CHECK Clinical Measurements (Height, Weight, Blood Pressure & Pulse) Visual Acuity Lipid profile HBA1C FBC Uric Acid Liver Function Test Kidney Function Test Urine analysis	COMPLETE WELLNESS CHECK Medical History and Physical Examination by Doctor Clinical Measurements (Height, Weight, Blood Pressure & Pulse) Visual Acuity Lipid profile HBA1C FBC Uric Acid Liver Function Test Kidney Function Test Bone profile (Calcium, Magnesium, Phosphate) Urine analysis ECG Thyroid Function test Stool Occult Blood Medical Report Post Examination Review by Doctor	ULTIMATE VITALITY SCREENING Medical History and Physical Examination by Doctor Clinical Measurements (Height, Weight, Blood Pressure & Pulse) Visual Acuity Lipid profile HBA1C FBC Liver Function Test Kidney Function Test Bone profile (Calcium, Magnesium, Phosphate) Urine analysis ECG Thyroid Function test Stool Occult Blood Vitamin D Ferritin Folate Vitamin B12 Medical Report Post Examination Review by Doctor
ULTIMATE WOMENS HEALTH SCREEN ADD ON Breast Ultrasound/ Mammogram Ultrasound Abdomen & Pelvis Cervical Smear Ovary Tumor Marker	ULTIMATE MEN HEALTH SCREEN ADD ON Prostate tumour marker (PSA) Testosterone Ultrasound Abdomen & Pelvis (Including Prostate)	

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Diplomatic Clinic, Diplomatic Enclave, Islamabad, Pakistan

Karachi Clinic, Pakistan

Briefs

IRSA releases
84,400
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 84,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 42,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1483.92 feet and was 85.92 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 21,900 cusecs and 43,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1148.95 feet, which was 98.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,500 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 29,500, 46,700, 37,700 and 7,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

PTI's final
'missed
call' ends in
embarrassing
failure

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan Sunday lambasted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's recent protest call in Islamabad, labelling it a "flop" and a "missed call" that ultimately exposed the party's black-mailing agenda.

In an interview with a private news channel, he warned the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, accusing them of misleading the nation and employing blackmailing tactics against the state, adding that this blatant disregard for the nation's well-being will no longer be tolerated.

The government has consistently kept the doors open for negotiations, but the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has shown no willingness to engage in serious discussions on any agenda that prioritizes the country's welfare, he said, adding, instead, the PTI's sole focus is on securing a National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) for Imran Khan, which is a clear indication of their self-serving interests. Responding to a query, Rana Ihsan strongly criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, stating that they are deliberately pushing the country towards instability and inflation. He emphasized that the PML-N-led government has successfully controlled inflation and the people are witnessing a significant positive change. Rana Ihsan praised the seriousness and dedication of the current government in addressing the country's economic challenges. He highlighted that the government's efforts to control inflation are yielding results, and the public is taking notice of the positive impact. In contrast, he condemned the PTI's actions as destructive and harmful to the nation's well-being. To another question he strongly condemned the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, asserting that they are responsible for the current uncertainty, uncivilized behaviour and extremist mindset prevalent among the youth. He attributed this to the PTI's reliance on fake statements and propaganda, which has contributed to the toxic environment.—

JICA celebrates 70 years of
assistance with Pakistan

Since Japan initiated ODA in 1954 by receiving trainees from Pakistan, JICA has been committed to fostering sustainable development in Pakistan through diverse initiatives such as education, health, and disaster management, and infrastructure such as road and electricity network

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) proudly commemorates 70 years of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Pakistan, a milestone marked by a captivating photo exhibition showcasing the positive impact of various projects across the country. The exhibition, held in the heart of Islamabad, brings together prestigious guests, including government officials, development partners, and key stakeholders, to celebrate this significant achievement. Since Japan initiated ODA in 1954 by receiving trainees from Pakistan, JICA has been committed to fostering sustainable development in Pakistan through diverse initiatives such as education, health, and disaster management, and infrastructure such as road and electricity network. The photo exhibition highlights the successful JICA's projects, featuring compelling visuals that capture the dedication and joy of communities that have benefited from this long-standing partnership. At the inauguration of the exhibition, JICA's Chief Representative in Pakistan, Mr. Naoki Miyata, addressed "Building reciprocal relationships through continuous dialogues with partner countries



to create solutions is a strong tradition of Japan's cooperation. By leveraging the tradition, JICA is ready to advance co-creation among stakeholders for a better future of Pakistan". Also Chargé d' Affaires of Embassy of Japan, Mr. Shuichi Takano stated "We would like to create our social values together, through

dialogue and cooperation. Japan will continue to collaborate with Pakistan in realizing its vast potential". He event showcases photographs from various successful projects. Each image tells a story of partnership, highlighting the shared commitment to improving the quality of life for millions of Pakistanis. Distinguished guests

at the exhibition included Secretary of Ministry of Economic Affairs, Dr. Kazim Niaz, who emphasized the importance of continued collaboration and innovation in tackling Pakistan's development challenges. Their presence not only underscores the significance of JICA's efforts but also reaffirms the enduring friendship between

Japan and Pakistan.

The exhibition will remain open to the public until 8th of December 2024 from 10 am to 4 pm at white gallery in Lok Virsa, Islamabad, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the rich history of JICA's contributions to Pakistan and to inspire future generations to engage in development efforts.

HEC launches
national faculty
development program

DNA

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, through the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), has launched the National Faculty Development Program (NFDPP) for Interim Placement of Fresh PhDs (IPFP) Fellows at the Training Academy, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS), Lahore. The program commenced with 32 participants who have completed PhD recently, preparing to embark on careers in academia.

The program supports new PhDs as they prepare for their formal entry into the academic job market. The program has always served as a vital stepping stone for new faculty members, equipping them with the skills, tools, and strategies needed to thrive in the academic world. The program's objectives are to inspire educators to create student-centred learning environments, improve research and grant-writing abilities, and prepare participants for future leadership roles in higher education. The program offers com-

prehensive training designed to equip participants with the essential skills for a successful academic career. It covers a range of key areas including effective teaching and learning strategies, course design, and lesson planning. Participants will also focus on communication and presentation skills, along with the use of technology in the classroom to enhance student engagement. In addition, the program emphasizes the importance of assessment and evaluation, as well as the development of research capabilities,

including grant writing and publishing. Further, the training addresses the psychological wellbeing of educators and learners, career management, and provides an orientation on important educational policies and guidelines. The program is a key initiative in the HEC's broader efforts to improve the quality of higher education in Pakistan by investing in the professional growth of new faculty members. The participants will receive comprehensive training and mentorship, ensuring they are well-prepared to contribute meaningfully to the academic community.

RDA accelerates
operation against
illegal housing
societies

RAWALPINDI :Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Divisional Intelligence Committee, has accelerated its ongoing operation against illegal housing societies, said a RDA spokesman. He informed that the Task Force is conducting regular operations against illegal housing schemes and taking action in accordance with the law against the rules violators. The RDA Enforcement Squad conducted operation against the Life Residencia, an illegal housing scheme located in mouza Mohri Khatran, Rawalpindi. During the operation, the team demolished entry barriers, security office, removed advertisement boards, panaflexes, hoardings and sealed site offices of the illegal housing scheme. Earlier here the other day, the RDA, Enforcement Squad conducted operations against three illegal housing schemes namely Ring Road Enclave (A Project of Jawahir City Pvt. Ltd.), Hurtus Floare and Countree Farmhouse and Resorts located in Mouzas Chokar, Gahi Sayedan and Ramdy, Tehsil and District Rawalpindi took action in accordance with the law. The operation led to the sealing and demolition of site offices, boundary walls, guard rooms, road infrastructures and road dividers of the illegal housing schemes, the spokesman informed. Despite warnings, the illegal housing societies continued to operate booking offices and development activities in violation of the rules. The DG RDA Kinza Murtaza said that under the Commissioner's guidance, the crackdown on illegal housing societies would continue and strict action would be taken against the rules violators. She urged the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes. The citizens can visit the RDA website (www.rda.gov.pk) to check status of the housing schemes.—DNA

S Asia's
stability
hinges on
Kashmir
resolution

ISLAMABAD: Pro-freedom leaders and organizations in Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir have reiterated that lasting peace in South Asia is impossible without resolving the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of its people. According to Kashmir Media service, the leaders and organizations in their statements issued in Srinagar emphasized that India's prolonged obstruction of a peaceful resolution has intensified regional instability. Highlighting the implications of India's unilateral actions on August 5, 2019, which stripped occupied Jammu and Kashmir of its special status, the leaders condemned these as illegal and provocative. "These actions have exacerbated tensions in an already volatile South Asia, making Kashmir a potential nuclear flashpoint," they said.—APP

Snowfall spells cheer for
Pakistan's tourism industry

ISLAMABAD: The winter season has brought a surge in tourism to the snow-covered mountains of Pakistan, with thousands of enthusiasts flocking to the slopes to experience the thrill of winter sports, where the mountains, blanketed with a thick layer of snow, have transformed into a breathtakingly picturesque winter wonderland, captivating the hearts of tourists and locals alike. A report on PTV News Channel has revealed that snowfall has brought a significant boost to Pakistan's tourism industry, establishing the country as a top winter destination for tourists. Social media users and vloggers took to their platforms to share stunning pictures and videos of the snow-covered landscapes. According to the report, the snow-covered mountains, frozen lakes and picturesque landscapes have attracted a large number of tourists from across the globe. The report highlighted that the tourism industry in Pakistan has witnessed unprecedented growth, with hotels and resorts in popular destinations such as Swat, Azad Kashmir, Hunza and other Northern parts of the country reporting full occupancy. The report also quoted tourism officials as saying that the government is taking steps to further promote winter tourism in Pakistan, including improving

infrastructure and providing facilities for tourists. In Azad Kashmir, people were seen celebrating the snowfall, with many taking to the streets to enjoy the winter wonderland. "It is a beautiful sight," said Muhammad Iqbal, a resident of Muzaffarabad. "The snowfall has brought a new life to our city. We are thrilled to see tourists enjoying the snow-covered landscapes," said another local. Rukhsana Bibi, a local shopkeeper in Neelum Valley said, "The snowfall has been a blessing for us. Our businesses have flourished and we are earning a good income. We welcome tourists with open hearts and hope they enjoy their stay in our beautiful valley." "We are committed to developing the tourism industry in Pakistan," said a spokesperson for the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation. "We are working to improve the infrastructure, provide better facilities to tourists, and promote our beautiful country as a top tourist destination, he added." "Woke up to a winter wonderland in Hunza! The snow-covered mountains and frozen lakes are a sight to behold." Instagram user. "Exploring the snow-covered streets of Muzaffarabad and it's like a dream come true! The people, the food, the scenery everything is just perfect." Facebook user.

NDMA's
first 40-ton
consignment
departs for
Malaysia's
flood victims

ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) dispatched its first consignment, carrying 40 tons of relief items for Malaysia's flood victims, from Islamabad International Airport to Kuala Lumpur on a chartered flight early Sunday morning. Sent on the prime minister's directives, the consignment included 40 tons of essential supplies, such as tents, blankets, quilts, sleeping bags, mats, and life jackets, for Malaysia's flood victims. The second consignment of the same volume is set to depart next week, further highlighting Pakistan's unwavering commitment to supporting flood-affected Malaysia. The current monsoon season in Malaysia has brought heavy rainfall and flash floods to 09 eastern states, affecting 137,410 people across 38 districts. As a result, 40,922 families have sought refuge in 633 evacuation centers. Nine lives have been lost. The persistent rainfall is expected to continue until February 2025. On November 30, 2024, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif called Malaysian Prime Minister Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim to convey condolences over the recent flood losses. PM Shehbaz offered assistance and announced the immediate dispatch of humanitarian aid. Prime Minister Ibrahim expressed his gratitude. Having faced its own share of natural disasters, Pakistan deeply understands the challenges and hardships such calamities bring.—APP

Clean and Green Islamabad
movement launched

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Clean and Green Islamabad Movement has created a new wave of cleanliness in the federal capital, and citizens have praised the CGIs' efforts in cleaning the parks, calling it an exemplary model of public service. Under the leadership of Chairman Ahsen Zafar Bakhtawari, the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement team not only cleaned the parks in sectors F-8/1, 2, 3, and

4 but also instilled in citizens the importance of cleanliness and the commitment to protect their environment. Ahsen Zafar Bakhtawari personally loaded waste-filled bags into his vehicle and took them to the disposal site, demonstrating his dedication and active participation. This effort was appreciated by the participants. During the waste-picking activity held yesterday, people from various walks of life, including students, local residents, and volunteer organizations, active-

ly participated. The participants cleaned the parks, cleared the areas around trees, and distributed pamphlets to raise awareness. Citizens were also informed about the use of biodegradable waste bags and proper waste disposal methods. Ahsen Zafar Bakhtawari stated that keeping the environment clean is a guarantee of a safe and healthy future for our generations. The goal of the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement is not only to clean but also to involve every citizen in

this movement to make Islamabad a model city. Participants of the campaign expressed their admiration for Ahsen Bakhtawari and his team's efforts. They pledged to continue participating in such activities and contribute to keeping their areas clean. The Clean and Green Islamabad Movement serves as a practical example for the citizens of the capital that if every individual fulfills their responsibility, the dream of a clean and healthy environment can be realized.

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Political division in South Korea

SOUTH Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol unexpectedly declared a state of emergency martial law, triggering a political earthquake that shocked the entire country and garnered widespread international attention. While South Korea has implemented martial law multiple times under military governments, this power has largely become a "dormant clause" in the constitution since the nation's transition to civilian-led governance in 1987. However, Yoon's decision to invoke this clause in an attempt to counter political challenges from the opposition party has backfired. South Korea's political landscape has long been characterized by intense party rivalry and fierce factional conflicts. The major political parties are often at irreconcilable odds, particularly the two dominant forces in contemporary politics: the progressive Democratic Party of Korea and the conservative People Power Party. These two parties have fundamental differences in policies and ideologies, frequently engaging in sharp rhetoric and adversarial strategies that exacerbate tensions. In this political climate, scandals and accusations have become commonplace, with both sides frequently uncovering and exploiting each other's scandals as tools for political attacks or counterattacks. This strategy not only severely damages the political reputations of both parties but also deepens dissatisfaction and divisions among their respective support bases. External factors, such as the situation on the Korean Peninsula, policies toward the US and diplomatic relations with other countries, often become topics - or even instruments - of domestic political contention, further complicating South Korea's internal and external political landscape. One of the main reasons Yoon cited for declaring a state of emergency martial law was the opposition party's alleged involvement in "anti-state activities plotting rebellion," along with his stated intent to eliminate "anti-state forces" within South Korea. This political environment undermines the continuity and effectiveness of the ruling party's domestic and foreign policies and poses significant challenges to the stability and harmony of South Korean society. The negative effects of severe partisan divisions and escalating factional conflicts have spilled over, leading to societal fragmentation and polarization. Behind the intense political struggles in South Korea, a binary oppositional political logic is particularly evident in both the political and social spheres. People tend to show unwavering loyalty to their preferred party, viewing the opposing side not as competitors for compromise or collaboration but as outright "enemies," leading to pronounced "us" vs "them" divisions on political issues. After South Korea's National Assembly passed a resolution to lift martial law, Yoon announced he accepted the decision but continued to harshly criticize the opposition party for "budget abuse" and "repeated impeachment attempts." This episode is seen as a vivid reflection of the "us" vs "them" divisions in South Korea. Of course, amid the political turmoil caused by the "martial law controversy," South Korean politics has not been entirely dominated by partisan struggles and binary oppositional political logic. In the face of the crisis, ruling and opposition parties joined hands to pass a resolution demanding the lifting of the state of emergency martial law.

South Asia a bright spot

IT is difficult to put a positive spin on 2024. Two localised conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have become broader regional and potentially global wars. Meanwhile, flashpoints in the South China Sea, Taiwan Strait and the Korean peninsula are on the brink of escalation. Underlying all of this is the impending uncertainty of a second Trump presidency. In this context, it is easy to forget that South Asia was once regarded as home to the world's most dangerous flashpoint - Kashmir. Former US president Bill Clinton noted this in reference to the disputed territory, which is subject to the competing claims of nuclear-armed China, India and Pakistan. While these disputes have not disappeared, a high degree of restraint has been shown by all parties in the region. Take the China-India relationship: the announcement of a border agreement in October seeks to reset relations following the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, which resulted in the first deaths along the disputed border in over four decades. While there is a long way to go in normalising relations, both sides recognise the need to de-escalate tensions as they face more pressing economic and geopolitical concerns. For China, the border agreement with India signals an effort to stabilise relations with other countries as it prepares for a more volatile relationship with the United States under a second Trump administration. For India, the agreement reflects a recognition that it had backed itself into a corner after the 2020 clash by making de-escalation of border tensions a prerequisite to engagement in other areas, such as the economy. China is India's leading trade partner. New Delhi knows it cannot meet its ambitions of emerging as a global manufacturing hub without components and raw materials from China. India-Pakistan relations have also been surprisingly stable despite the long-standing difficult relationship. While the situation remains precarious, with almost 200 terrorism-related incidents in Jammu and Kashmir in 2024, there has been a steady decline in such incidents from a peak of almost 3,000 in 2001, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal. Moreover, both sides have exercised a relatively high degree of restraint in their actions. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has prided itself on pursuing a more muscular foreign policy, which has included a tougher response to militant attacks, such as "surgical strikes" in 2016 and air strikes inside Pakistani territory in 2019. And yet, when compared to Israel's heavy-handed military response to the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, India's response to attacks on its soil has been quite measured. The same can be seen on the Pakistani side. For example, in March 2022, the accidental launch of a missile by India into Pakistani territory did not trigger a military response by Islamabad. In fact, out of all the countries that Pakistan shares borders with, including Afghanistan and Iran, relations with India have been the most stable in recent years. Recent developments in Kashmir offer cause for further optimism. New Delhi's decision to rescind the special autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 fuelled tensions with Islamabad and Beijing. However, elections in the territory earlier this year after almost a decade were mostly peaceful with a relatively high voter turnout. With the disputed territory being a focal point for instability in South Asia, any good news in Kashmir is good for the region.

A nation between the mountain and the sands

Qamar Bashir



During this period, I also fell in love with reading autobiographies of individuals who significantly shaped human history. Among them, Nelson Mandela deeply inspired me. Mandela spent 27 years in prison, enduring immense suffering, yet he stood resolutely against the apartheid regime in South Africa. His steadfastness ultimately led to the collapse of the powerful white ruling elite, who crumbled before his courage like dry bread. In Pakistan's history, the example of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stands out. Mujib championed the principles and rights dear to the people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh)

DURING our youth in Quetta, we were a vibrant group of energetic souls who found solace and adventure in the embrace of the rugged mountains that surround the city. Every weekend, we set out to conquer a new peak, guided by our trainer, Ibrar Hussain Shah—a Hazara boxer of international acclaim. Before every climb, Ibrar would share invaluable lessons, instilling in us the wisdom necessary for survival and success in the unforgiving terrain. I still remember one of his most profound teachings. He would say, "Never fight the mountain—it will kill you. Do not sprint on its slopes; it will drain your energy. Do not test your endurance against the mountain, for it will always outlast you. Respect the mountain's mood. If it is angry, stay away. It will crush you by shifting the earth beneath your feet, unleash avalanches upon you, drown you in relentless rains, or disorient your mind to lead you to certain death." In this scenario, PTI is the mountain—steadfast, enduring, and rooted in public support, shaped by years of resilience and determination. In contrast, the opposing entities—political parties, the government, and the bureaucracy—are like shifting sands, transient and unstable. Their attempts to challenge the mountain may create temporary disruptions, but they lack the solidity to displace it. Like a passing sandstorm, their efforts may obscure the view for a moment, but the mountain remains unshaken, defining the landscape long after the winds die down. At the start of my professional life, I developed a deep love for reading about some of the most phenomenal personalities in human history. Among them, none impacted mankind more profoundly than our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), who transformed the course of human history in a way unparalleled by anyone else. His entire life offers lessons for humanity, but one episode particularly resonates with Pakistan's current scenario: the forced exile of the Prophet (PBUH) and his followers to Sha'ib Abi Talib. The demand was simple: cease preaching the message of one Allah and stop rejecting the idols. Despite the promise of luxurious lives, the Prophet and his followers stood firm in their faith, enduring untold hardships. Ultimately, the Meccans, exhausted and unable to break their resolve, lifted the embargo. During this period, I also fell in love with reading autobiographies of individuals who significantly

shaped human history. Among them, Nelson Mandela deeply inspired me. Mandela spent 27 years in prison, enduring immense suffering, yet he stood resolutely against the apartheid regime in South Africa. His steadfastness ultimately led to the collapse of the powerful white ruling elite, who crumbled before his courage like dry bread. In Pakistan's history, the example of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stands out. Mujib championed the principles and rights dear to the people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Despite facing military dictatorships armed with tanks, cannons, and an entire army of over 100,000 soldiers, Mujib and the unarmed civilians of East Pakistan demonstrated unmatched determination. Their courage ultimately led to one of the most humiliating defeats in military history for Pakistan during the 1971 war. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report on the East Pakistan debacle candidly stated that it would have been more honorable for the Pakistan Army to embrace martyrdom while fighting bravely rather than surrendering in cowardice to the "worshippers of idols." History offers various examples of heroic conduct even under incarceration. One notable example is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was executed by the regime of a ruthless military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq, following a controversial and widely criticized judicial trial. Despite facing immense pressure and the looming threat of death, Bhutto did not plead for mercy, maintaining his dignity until the end. On the other hand, we have examples of political figures like Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif, Ishaq Dar, and Maryam Nawaz, who, while branding themselves as Pakistan's ruling elite, have demonstrated a different kind of resilience. These businesspeople-turned-politicians, often styled themselves as a "ruling family," have perfected the art of avoiding prolonged incarceration by abandoning their followers, compromising their positions, or seeking refuge in foreign lands when the political tides turn against them. They have transferred vast amounts of wealth—accumulated through both fair and questionable means—to foreign accounts and constructed luxurious sanctuaries abroad. From these comfortable abodes, they wait patiently for a favorable political climate, orchestrating deals, hatching conspiracies, and ensuring their return to power. Once the stage is set, they return, repeat the cycle of rule and accumulation, and retreat again when ousted. Today, however, Pakistan finds itself witnessing

an unprecedented scenario. For the first time in its history, the entirety of the political spectrum, civil and military bureaucracy, and state apparatus has united against a single individual, Prisoner 804. Despite the deployment of the state's brutal machinery, funded by the hard-earned tax money of Pakistan's people, this man remains unbroken. Instead, his resolve strengthens with every passing day, while the forces aligned against him appear to weaken, their unity unraveling as they struggle to maintain control. This time is different, as though a political government exists, it has been reduced to a mere showpiece, with real authority lying elsewhere. Much like the situation in East Pakistan in 1971, the army has directly pitted itself against Prisoner 804 and his followers across the country. For the first time since that tragic chapter in Pakistan's history, the army faces widespread resentment, not just from one province or group, but across the entire nation. From the Baloch to the Pashuns, Punjabis, Swatis, Kashmiris, and even the residents of Islamabad, there is a growing sentiment of alienation and anger against the military establishment. This situation is profoundly alarming for all patriotic Pakistanis. The defenders of the nation—who were nurtured and sustained by the sacrifices of citizens, who diverted their hard-earned incomes to support a military they believed would protect them from external threats—now view their own people as adversaries. The guns that were meant to guard against external enemies are now turned inward, threatening the very fabric of the nation. This perilous path should prompt introspection. When the constitution is disregarded, lawmakers are treated as puppets, genuine representatives of the people are jailed, and the defenders of the nation turn their might against their own citizens, the result is the transformation of a once-formidable institution into shifting sand. Like the tragedy of East Pakistan, where the people's will was ignored, and their demands for autonomy were suppressed with force, history risks repeating itself. Such actions create the illusion of strength, but as history has shown, a mountain cannot be toppled by shifting sand. Unless the lessons of the past are heeded, the nation may once again face a devastating outcome. — Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC

The militarization of the South China Sea

Muhammad Wali Jan



Claimant states such as Vietnam and the Philippines view China's activities as threat to their sovereignty and often seek external alliances to counterbalance China. Contrariwise, non-claimant states like Cambodia and Laos, which rely heavily on Chinese investments, seeks to align with Beijing, even at the expense of ASEAN's collective position

THE South China Sea is a vital region for international trade, maritime security and resource exploitation, yet it remains one of the most contentious geopolitical hotspots in the world. The competing territorial claims involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan have escalated tensions in recent decades, particularly due to China's assertive policies. As a regional organization committed to maintaining peace and stability, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) faces enormous challenges in dealing these disputes. The increasing militarization of the South China Sea, involving not only regional actors but also global powers, has further hampered ASEAN's ability to act as a unified entity. The origins of the South China Sea Disputes are deeply rooted in historical claims and strategic interests. China's assertion of its "Nine-Dash Line" overlaps with maritime zones claimed by ASEAN member states, leading to rivalries involving sovereignty and resource rights. Although an international tribunal ruled in favor of the Philippines in 2016, China has continued to militarize the region by constructing artificial islands equipped with military infrastructure. These actions have disturbed the balance of power in Southeast Asia, invoking reactions from external actors like the United States, which seeks to challenge China's dominance through Freedom of Navigation Operations. ASEAN has a central role in managing the South China Sea disputes but fraught with difficulties.

The organization functions based on consensus and non-interference principles, which, while fostering inclusivity, also complicate decision-making on contentious issues. Member states have diverse standpoint on the South China Sea due to their unique geopolitical and economic interests. Claimant states such as Vietnam and the Philippines view China's activities as threat to their sovereignty and often seek external alliances to counterbalance China. Contrariwise, non-claimant states like Cambodia and Laos, which rely heavily on Chinese investments, seeks to align with Beijing, even at the expense of ASEAN's collective position. The militarization of the South China Sea magnify these divisions. China's deployment of military assets in the region highlight its dominance, while the United States' strategic presence through naval operations and alliances with regional actors adds to the complexity. Other powers, including Japan, Australia, and India, have become involved in the fray, supporting maritime security initiatives that further militarize the region. This foreign involvement, while aimed at maintaining a rules-based order, often make deeper internal divisions within ASEAN, as member states are pressured to align with rival powers. The implications for ASEAN's unity are substantial. The inability to form a cohesive stance undermines the ASEAN's credibility and undermines its potential in negotiations with China over a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea. Furthermore, the disintegra-

tion shifts ASEAN's focus from economic and developmental priorities to managing external security pressures. Without a united front, ASEAN risks marginalization in shaping the region's strategic landscape, potentially allowing foreign powers to dominate its regional affairs. To address these challenges, ASEAN must strengthen its internal integration and strategic autonomy. This requires focusing on collective diplomacy over bilateral negotiations that often undermine regional solidarity. Economic diversification is also significant to lower dependency on China, which exerts significant influence over certain member states. Increasing regional defense cooperation among ASEAN member states can provide a balanced response to militarization without heavily relying on external powers. Furthermore, ASEAN should leverage international legal frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to advocate for peaceful conflict resolution and sustain the region's stability. The militarization of the South China Sea presents a critical challenges for ASEAN's unity and its role in regional diplomacy. The bloc must navigate complexity of geopolitical dynamics with a focus on consensus and integrated action. By adopting a balanced approach that avoids involvement in great power rivalries, ASEAN can maintain its relevance and contribute to a stable and peaceful Southeast Asia. — The writer is student of International Relations at NUML Islamabad muhammadwalijan226@gmail.com

Briefs

Asad flees as
Damascus
wakes up...

FROM PAGE 01
Operations Room to Conquer Damascus, an opposition group, is calling on all opposition fighters and citizens to preserve state institutions of "the free Syrian state." "Long live the free Syrian state that is to all Syrians in all" their sects and ethnic groups, the men said. The leader of Syrian militant group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, Abu Mohammed Al-Jolani, ordered forces Sunday not to approach official institutions in Damascus, saying they would remain under the prime minister until they are "officially" handed over. "To all military forces in the city of Damascus, it is strictly forbidden to approach public institutions, which will remain under the supervision of the former prime minister until they are officially handed over," Jolani said in a statement on Telegram, using his real name Ahmed Al-Sharaa instead of his nom de guerre, and adding: "It is forbidden to shoot into the air."

The Collapse
of the Assad
Regime...

FROM PAGE 01
risks conflict with the Kurds and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's decentralization efforts. The U.S.: Washington's focus on counterterrorism and containing the Islamic State may evolve if Assad falls. Dr. Dorsey highlighted the uncertainty surrounding U.S. policy under the incoming Trump administration, especially given its mixed stance on Syria. Jihadist Groups: The fall of Assad could influence global jihadist strategies, potentially encouraging factions to adopt a more pragmatic or governance-oriented approach.

AJK
President
withdraws...

FROM PAGE 01
the region with markets, business and shopping centres remain closed. Meanwhile, the committee also called to stage a long march today. The JAAC, a coalition of civil society activists advocating for rights in the region, is protesting against the "Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance, 2024", which was suspended by the AJK Supreme Court this week. Despite the suspension of the ordinance, JAAC's core committee member Shaukat Nawaz Mir said that the strike would take place unless the ordinance is repealed by the government formally and until their activists are released.

250
Pakistani
pilgrims...

FROM PAGE 01
President Assad fleeing and ending five decades of Baath rule in the war-torn country. The swift takeover after more than 13 years of civil war took the world by surprise, marking a seismic moment for the Middle East. Syria's army command also notified officers on Sunday that Assad's regime had ended, a Syrian officer who was informed of the move told Reuters. Witnesses reported thousands gathering in a main square in the capital, chanting "Freedom" as rebels declared the end of Assad's regime.

Imran has
no future...

FROM PAGE 01
will flop," he added. Tarar also extended heartfelt Christmas wishes to the Christian community, pledging to stand with them in their joys and sorrows. "A magnificent Christmas tree will be installed in this area, and I will personally come to light it," he said, lauding the sacrifices and contributions of minorities in Pakistan's creation and progress. He highlighted the roles of notable figures such as Haroon William, who sacrificed his life for the nation while serving in the Pakistan Army, and Cecil Chaudhry, who represented Pakistan internationally.

Rising Stars Girls Hockey
Academy players awarded

ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins giving hockey shoes to the emerging player of the Rising Stars Girls Hockey Academy Mamoona Shakir. The High Commissioner of Brunei Kamal Ahmad giving hockey stick to another shining player of the Academy Jawairia Munir, during the practice session, at the Naseer Bundha Hockey ground, Islamabad. Officials of the Rising Stars Hockey Club Sohail Janjua, Mahmood Ahmed, Asif Bhatti and Imran are also seen in the pictures. - DNA

Australia crushes India in
2nd Test to level series 1-1

Travis Head was named Player of the Match for his brilliant 140-run knock

WEB DESK

ADELAIDE: Australia bounced back in style on Sunday, defeating India by 10 wickets in the second Test of the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy. This emphatic victory came after a stellar performance from the Australian bowlers, led by captain Pat Cummins. India, who had shown promise in the first Test, struggled to replicate that form in the pink-ball challenge. After a brilliant six-wicket haul from Mitchell Starc in Australia's first innings, Cummins followed up with a

five-wicket haul in the second innings, reducing India's lead to just 18 runs. The day began with India needing a solid partnership from Rishabh Pant and Nitish Reddy to mount any hope of a comeback. However, Starc quickly extinguished those hopes, dismissing Pant in his very first over of the day. Cummins continued his dominance, swiftly picking up the tail-enders as India failed to put together any resistance. Reddy, who had looked promising with some aggressive strokes, was dismissed before reaching his maiden Test fifty, leaving India with a slim 18-run lead. As Mohammed Siraj

came in to bat, the Australian bowlers turned up the pressure with a barrage of short-pitched deliveries. Despite an occasional boundary, Siraj was eventually dismissed by Scott Boland, giving Australia a minimal target to chase. Australia's openers, Usman Khawaja and Nathan McSweeney, wasted no time in wrapping up the chase, completing the target in just 3.2 overs. Travis Head was named Player of the Match for his brilliant 140-run knock in the first innings. With the win, Australia leveled the series 1-1, setting the stage for an exciting third Test at the Gabba from December 14-18.

"In this Test in particular, on day one, we were 43 for 4, and to be here on the winning side on day three is quite phenomenal. We got bowled out in fifty overs (54.5), but we had 270 runs on the board, which was a good score on that day-one wicket. Then, we obviously had time left with the ball to make some inroads. Scoring 270 and taking five wickets at the end of day one (New Zealand closed on 86 for 5) really set this game up." The left-hand batter also emphasized England's commitment to playing an attacking brand of cricket. "We back ourselves to be able to go out there and change games. We feel there needs to be a bit of impetus put into the game, particularly with the bat. "As a bowler, you want to be able to plonk it on a length and hit the top of off stump over and over again. But sometimes, when a batter is brave enough to take you on and knock you off your length, it's very hard to commit to still doing that." Meanwhile, New Zealand skipper Tom Latham admitted his team struggled against England's pressure, especially Harry Brook, who scored an unbeaten 123 in the first innings and 55 in the second.

Stokes hails England's
aggression against NZ

Stokes explained the strategies that led to their success

LONDON: England skipper Ben Stokes praised his team's aggressive approach following their series win in New Zealand after 14 years at the Basin Reserve on Sunday. The visitors dominated by winning the second Test of the three-match series by a whopping 323 runs to seal the series 2-0. In the post-match presentation, the all-rounder reflected on the team's achievement and explained the strategies that led to their success. "To play the more dominant cricket over the days we have played so far," he replied when asked how this first away win in New Zealand in 16 years had been achieved. Highlighting the turning points of the match, Stokes elaborated:

Pantoja forces Asakura
to tap at UFC 310

Pantoja has won seven in a row and defended his title for the third time

LONDON: Alexandre Pantoja made quick work of Kai Asakura with a second-round submission to defend his flyweight title in the main event of UFC 310 on Saturday in Las Vegas. "This is the level, the UFC level," Pantoja said after the win. Pantoja (29-5) has won seven in a row and defended his title for the third time. Before the submission, both men kept their distance and remained on their feet in the opening round. Despite an initial flying knee from Asakura, Pantoja landed 32 significant strikes to Asakura's 17. Asakura (21-5) was a two-time RIZIN bantamweight champion before vacating the belt in June to join UFC. In welterweight action, Shavkat Rakhmonov outlasted Ian Machado Garry to win by unanimous decision 48-47, 48-47, 48-47. It was the first time in Rakhmonov's career that a match went the distance. He improved to 19-0 and Garry fell to 15-1. Rakhmonov is scheduled to face welterweight champion Belal Muhammad in his next fight. - Agencies

Malik, Waqar lift title in RLK
ITF Masters MT200 c'ship

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Rashid Malik, Waqar Nisar, Shahzad (PAF)/Inam ul Haq and Maj Saeed/Muhammad Saeed lift titles in the RLK ITF Masters MT200 Championship 2024 that concluded at the Sports Board Punjab Tennis Academy. In the seniors 60 plus singles final, Rashid Malik beat Nauman Aleem 6-1, 6-2. Malik displayed his mastery on the court and his precision and consistency left no room for a comeback, earning him a well-deserved title. In the seniors 65+ singles nail-biting final, Waqar Nisar edged out Inam ul Haq by 6-7, 6-3, 10-4.

In the seniors 70 plus doubles final, Maj Saeed/M Saeed beat Salahuddin/Malik Imtiaz 6-2, 7-5. The seniors 40+ doubles final saw Shahzad (PAF) and Inam Gul dominate the court against Talha Waheed and Usama Waheed, with a commanding 6-3, 6-1 win. Rashid Latif, Chairman of RLK Group, graced the concluding ceremony of the ITF Masters as the chief guest, while Mr. Anoush was the guest of honor. The event was further enriched by the presence of prominent personalities, including Col (R) Asif Dar, Col (R) Arif Malik, Haseeb Aslam, Naseem Ahmad, Hassan Said, along with the participating players and their families.

During the ceremony, PLTA SEVP Rashid Malik extended heartfelt gratitude to the RLK Group and its leadership for their invaluable support. "I sincerely appreciate the efforts of Hassan Said and offer special thanks to Rashid Latif, Chairman of RLK Group, for their unwavering commitment towards the game of tennis," he said. "I am also deeply grateful to Punjab Sports Minister Faisal Ayub Khokhar, Secretary Sports Punjab Muzaffar Khan Sial, and DG Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Khizar Afzaal Ch, whose efforts, along with their entire team, were instrumental in making this ITF Masters event a resounding success," Malik added.

12 PTI
workers
killed, 200
reported...

FROM PAGE 01
He alleged that over 5,000 workers have been arrested, while injured members are being intimidated. Ayub accused the government of imposing a "virtual martial law" and compared PM Shehbaz Sharif's mindset and leadership style to Hitler. A prayer ceremony for the deceased will be held on Dec 13, with overseas Pakistanis joining on Dec 15. Shibli Fraz blamed the current unrest on the alleged rigging of the February 8 elections.

Vawda
criticises
PTI's civil...

FROM PAGE 01
the PTI's, while stating that Pakistan cannot afford further unrest, protests, or injustices. He also criticised the alleged mismanagement by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, declaring that lawlessness would not be tolerated. Vawda claimed that the PTI's civil disobedience call was timed to coincide with Faiz Hameed's case proceedings but noted that the hearing might begin earlier.

PM lauds
PCB's...

FROM PAGE 01
The BCCI has demanded to play the tournament on a hybrid model with Indian team's matches and the final to be played in some other country like the UAE. Mohsin Naqvi asked the ICC to allow a similar concession to Pakistan in all the ICC events to be played in India. PM Shehbaz Sharif said that Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi's stance reflected the voice of Pakistanis, adding that Naqvi had represented sentiments of the 240 million Pakistanis before the ICC.

Embracing enlightenment for Pakistan's future



MUHAMMAD IRFAN

IN modern world, European nations are the foundations of economic strength and intellectual advancement, having established societies that encourage scientific progress, critical thinking, and economic development. Despite its rich intellectual history, the Islamic world is behind in both economic and intellectual development. By examining the past, we can understand how nations flour-

ished when they valued knowledge, innovation, and open discourse, while other nations struggled to do so when these values were disregarded. Revisiting these historical patterns can reveal the secrets of what is possible and what we should learn from this. Around 75 thousands years ago, the development of language was a major and transformational milestone for Homo sapiens, marking a major leap in human evolution. Language enabled early humans to communicate complex ideas, share knowledge, and collaborate in ways that weren't possible before. This capacity to share abstract concepts and coordinate efforts allowed humans to develop social structures and pass down cultural knowledge across generations. Once humans could communicate more effectively, they began forming larger, more complex social groups, leading to the emergence of early forms of community and society. With a shared language, they could

now plan, divide tasks, and establish norms that strengthened their social bonds. These social developments set the stage for organized societies and civilizations. Approximately 10,000 years ago, the Agricultural Revolution fundamentally transformed human societies, as humans started domesticating plants and animals, they shifted from a nomadic lifestyle of hunting and gathering to settled communities centered around agriculture. This shift enabled them to produce surplus food, which allowed populations to grow and led to the establishment of the first permanent settlements and cities. The surplus created by agriculture gave rise to the first known civilizations, such as Mesopotamia in the Fertile Crescent, Egypt along the Nile, the Indus Valley Civilization, and ancient China along the Yellow River. These civilizations developed sophisticated social, political, and religious structures. Writing systems, such as cuneiform in Mesopotamia and

hieroglyphics in Egypt, emerged as ways to document agricultural yields, manage trade, and maintain records further enhancing communication and organization within these societies. In essence, the invention of language, the agricultural revolution, and the development of early societies were key steps that laid the foundation for civilizations. Language sparked collaboration, agriculture allowed for settled societies, and these societies grew into civilizations characterized by complex systems of governance, trade, and culture. These developments not only shaped human history but also laid the groundwork for future intellectual revolutions, such as the Golden Age of Muslim society and the later Renaissance and Industrial Revolution in Europe. The arrival of colonial powers in the Muslim world in later centuries further deepened this intellectual and economic decline. European nations exploited the region's resources, imposed foreign governance

systems, and disrupted traditional social structures. The exploitation of resources, combined with economic dependency, left these societies economically weakened and politically fractured. The impact of these two paths was profound. Europe's embrace of intellectual freedom, scientific exploration, and technological advancement propelled it to a dominant position in the world, shaping modern history. Meanwhile, Muslim societies, constrained by restrictions on knowledge and innovation, were left vulnerable to colonialism and unable to compete with Europe's industrial and military prowess. This historical divergence highlights the importance of fostering an environment of open inquiry and innovation—lessons that remain relevant for societies today. For Pakistan, the lessons of history are clear, to build a strong and resilient nation, it must embrace critical thinking, intellectual growth, and rational thought. The decline of the

Muslim Golden Age, marked by a shift away from scientific inquiry and intellectual openness. Investing in education, particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), is a vital starting point. Introducing critical thinking as a core component of the educational curriculum can empower students to question, innovate, and solve real-world problems. Pakistan must also work to promote freedom of thought, protect intellectuals, and create policies that support research and development. In the modern world, a nation's strength lies not just in economic resources but in intellectual capital. Pakistan's potential for growth is immense; however, only by embracing a new age of enlightenment based on rational thinking, tolerance, and innovation can it overcome its historical challenges and emerge as a powerful, self-reliant nation on the global stage. mirfan55685@gmail.com

Briefs

Nations call for stability, end of fighting in Syria

CAIRO: Nations have called for stability and an end of fighting in Syria after president Bashar Assad fled Damascus and militants took control of the capital, ending his 24-year rule. Egypt has called on all parties in Syria to preserve the capabilities of the state and national institutions, the Egyptian foreign ministry said on Sunday, following the surprise ousting of Assad. The foreign ministry, in the first comments on the situation in Syria from an Arab government, said it was following the situation with great care, affirming its support for the Syrian people and the country's sovereignty and unity. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Sunday that international and regional actors should ensure a smooth transition from the Assad government of after Islamist-led militants took Damascus. "We have to work very hard... with Syrian people, not just Turkey, but also regional actors, the international actors, to make sure that there is a good and smooth transition period, no more harm to the civilian people," Fidan said at the Doha Forum in Qatar. In a press conference, Fidan said the Syrian people were not in a position to rebuild on their own and international actors and regional powers had to act with prudence and preserve the country's territorial integrity. —APP

UK leader Starmer heads to Gulf to talk ME, trade

LONDON: Britain's leader Keir Starmer makes his first trip to the Gulf as prime minister from Sunday, Downing Street announced. "There is huge untapped potential in this region, which is why, while here, I will be making the case to accelerate progress on the Gulf Cooperation Council Free Trade Agreement," Starmer said in a statement released Saturday. The meetings will also aim to "deepen our research and development collaboration" and partner on projects in areas including defense and artificial intelligence, Starmer added. The regional tour will end on Tuesday with Starmer meeting President Nikos Christodoulides in Nicosia, the first bilateral talks between the leaders of Britain and Cyprus in over five decades. Starmer is also due to address British troops stationed in Cyprus. —APP

China-Indian Ocean forum to be held in Kunming, China

BEIJING: The Third China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Blue Economy Development Cooperation will be held from December 15 to 17, which is expected to deepen pragmatic marine cooperation and continue to promote global sustainable development. Under the theme of "The Future of the Blue Indian Ocean Development, Practices of the Global South", the forum will include opening and closing ceremonies as well as thematic discussions, subforums and round tables on various topics, according to the China International Development Cooperation Agency. This year's forum features a larger scale, richer content, higher levels of engagement and stronger representation, Zhao Fengtao, deputy head of the agency, said at a news briefing. Nearly 100 high-level representatives from various countries and international organizations have confirmed their attendance, Zhao said. The third forum will feature a dialogue between governments and enterprises for the first time, at which representatives from Chinese, international governments, and companies will discuss feasible pathways and best practices for multi-stakeholder engagement in international development cooperation, Zhao said. —Agencies

CNTAC, BOI sign MoU to setup textile industry park in Pakistan

Combining strategic location, skilled workforce, and vertical integration, Pakistan is uniquely positioned as an ideal partner for Chinese enterprises," Hashmi stated

DNA

BEIJING: China National Textile and Apparel Council (CNTAC) and Pakistan's Board of Investment (BOI) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at the 2024 China Textile Conference in Keqiao, Shaoxing. At present, China's textile industry is at an important juncture of change and transformation. How to take "science and technology, fashion and green" as the guide,

constantly cultivate new productivity, and create the future of the industry and the future industry has become a new issue in front of the industry. According to a report carried by China Economic Net (CEN), Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi addressed the conference and said that signing a landmark MoU between Pakistan's Board of Investment and CNTAC. The robust framework for developing textile parks in Pakistan would enhance bilateral trade, foster technology transfer, and enhance capacity. Focusing on four core topics "Innovation Environment, Materials, Artificial Intelligence, and Production Processes," the guests discussed leading trends in industry innovation, aiming to promote the transformation and optimization of the global textile supply chain. "Secretary Board of Investment and I along with Pakistani leading textile industry representatives attended the annual China Textile Conference organized by China National Textile and Apparel Council (CNTAC) in Shaoxing City. Pakistan was given this exclusive privilege for the first time as the only foreign participant. We highlighted why investing in Pakistan's textile & apparel sector was a mutually beneficial proposition," the Ambassador added, noting that Secretary BOI signed an MoU with the Vice President of CNTAC on cooperation in the field of textiles and apparel including the establish-

ment of parks in this important sector in Pakistan. "Grateful to Shandong Ruyi Group for its support". "The textile sector is the backbone of our economy, a major contributor to our exports. As the second-largest global supplier of cotton cloth, and the fifth-largest exporter of cotton offers unmatched potential for collaboration. Combining strategic location, skilled workforce, and vertical integration, Pakistan is uniquely positioned as an ideal partner for Chinese enterprises," Hashmi stated.

Pakistan embassy showcases cultural heritage at Washington

WASHINGTON: Over 60 embassies in Washington, including Pakistan, showcased the vibrant art, authentic cuisine and handcrafted treasures that make up their cultures at the 11th edition of the Winternational Festival 2024. The event, held at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, DC, drew a large number of visitors. Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, who toured various stalls, including the Pakistani pavilion, underscored the critical role such festivals play in promoting cultural understanding and strengthening ties among nations. "Events like Winternational serve as a vital conduit between communi-



ties, fostering cohesion and understanding through the universal mediums of arts and culture," he said. The Pakistani stall attracted large crowds for its tasty food

items, exquisite truck art, and collection of sparkling gemstones and handcrafted jewelry. Ambassador Sheikh said Pakistan was a rich repository of history and cul-

tural heritage. The Pakistani embassy, he said, remains committed to showcasing the country's rich heritage and bolstering cultural exchange. —Agencies

Pak medical, surgical instrument exports to China surge

BEIJING: Pakistan's exports of medical and surgical instruments to China have experienced a significant boost in the first ten months of 2024, marking a positive trend for the country's healthcare manufacturing sector. According to the latest data from the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC), the export value of medical and surgical instruments to China has risen by 5.189% compared to the same period last year. This surge is attributed to the increasing demand for high-quality medical devices in China and Pakistan's growing reputation for producing reliable and cost-effective healthcare products. Ghulam Qadir, Trade and Investment Counsellor at the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing told China Economic Net that in total, Pakistan has exported medical and surgical instruments worth over \$10.19 million to China from January to October 2024, making it one of the country's key export markets for healthcare products. This growth is seen as a result of strategic efforts by Pakistani manufacturers to meet international quality standards and build strong trade relationships with China, the world's second-largest medical equipment market. "Pakistan's exports of medical, veterinary instruments & appliances crossed \$6.544 million in China while last year in the same period it was \$6.387 million - an increase of 2.47%. Similarly, Pakistan's exports of dental instruments & appliances crossed \$3.158 million in the first ten months of this year to China whereas in the same period of 2023 it was \$2.926 million, marking a surge of 7.9%," he added. Industry experts believe the positive export trend reflects a larger regional shift, as China continues to expand its healthcare sector and invest heavily in modernizing its medical infrastructure. China's demand for medical instruments, which includes surgical tools, diagnostic equipment, and personal protective devices, has increased rapidly in response to the country's aging population and the need for more advanced healthcare services. With its highly competitive manufacturing capabilities, Pakistan stands to benefit from this demand. "Pakistan has long been known for its robust manufacturing of medical instruments, and this surge in exports to China shows the increasing trust global markets are placing in our products," said Ghulam Qadir. "With China's healthcare industry on the rise, we expect these numbers to grow even further in the coming years." —APP

FRIA Chairman calls for achieving long-term financial stability

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) has stressed the need for undertaking economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment so that financial stability can be achieved in the long-run. The newly-elected chairman of FRIA Shehbaz Aslam, in a statement issued here on Saturday, stressed the need for reducing cost of doing business, besides evolving a new price control mechanism, as huge taxation, rising oil prices and constant jump in electricity and gas tariffs have lifted the cost of production to a new high. He warned that bailout packages from the IMF were unlikely to speed up economic growth, as the political instability and lack of reforms would further deteriorate the financial situation in the country. The FRIA Chairman observed that amidst continuous hike in cost of production in the country, what the Pakistan's economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management. The Chairman warned the authorities that high inflation can hurt economic growth and a careful policy is required to keep it in control. He said that the pace of inflation is skyrocketing at a time when the economic activity is slowing down. Shahbaz Aslam said that the anti-business policies would prove detrimental to the industries due to high cost of doing business and will also open the floodgates of inflation. In addition to making the electricity bills costlier and unaffordable for the consumers, the hike in base tariff would escalate prices of all household goods being widely used in every household, he added. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Women taking traditional food from a food stall in Winter Left Christmas Market at sector F-8.

APBF for broadening of tax base through appropriate legislation

Syed Maaz asks govt to ensure that all income earners pay taxes equitably

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the tax shortfall may further widen to around Rs400 billion by the end of Dec 2024, the All Pakistan Business Forum on Saturday recommended the broadening of tax base through appropriate legislation to ensure that all income earners pay taxes equitably, including agriculture income. The Forum President Syed Maaz Mahmood observed that against the target of Rs4.64 trillion, the FBR collected Rs4.29 trillion in five months, achieving a growth of 23%. It needs a 40% growth to reach the annual goal of nearly Rs13 trillion. He said that the IMF will assess December's tax collection before deciding on bringing a new tax-loaded budget. So, the condi-

tion of IMF to rope in agriculture income in the tax net appeared promising in enhancing the tax collection. Otherwise the whole burden will again be shifted to the industry. APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi expressed dissatisfaction with provinces' delay in passing new agriculture income tax laws. This new legislation is one of the conditions agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund as part of the 37-month \$7 Extended Fund Facility. Ibrahim Qureshi said that the federal government has also expressed dissatisfaction with the poor pace of adopting agricultural income tax legislations by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. Punjab is the only province that has enacted the bill through its provincial assembly. Syed Maaz

Mahmood said that it's a long way when the bill will turn into law and the revenue starts supporting the tax net. Undoubtedly, there is a significant progress, both on fiscal and current accounts, showing surpluses and could lead towards a sustainable point. The APBF President said that culture of amnesty schemes should be eliminated as it discourages the honest taxpayers, besides enacting penalties in the law to punish tax evaders. "Appropriate laws should be made to enable the government to seize local assets, in equivalent value, or levy appropriate taxes, if any person holds any kind of assets outside the country for which source of income could not be established" he added. He said that export-oriented industries should be facilitated.

He was of the view that rules, regulations and procedures for export-oriented sectors should be easy so that it could play its due role in economic stability of the country. "It is a matter of concern that exports are showing a low growth besides the fact that country has all resources which is not a good omen" he maintained. We have to focus on investing in the energy sector, lowering of tariffs on smuggling prone items, increasing the share of direct taxes in revenue and lowering the slab of indirect taxes in the forthcoming budget to achieve key economic targets set for the new year. To fill the gap between demand and supply of the energy, maximum funds should be allocated for construction of dams/water reservoirs and tapping of Thar Coal, he added.

The APBF chief said the Protection of Economic Reforms Act", 1992 should be amended appropriately to curb the practice of remitting undeclared income through unofficial channels outside Pakistan and the same being brought into Pakistan through banking channels in foreign exchange. He demanded the government to improve tax structure for developing business and investment. He said that the existing tax structure discourages investment and encourages rent seeking. "A better tax system would help to improve economic growth of the country, but unfortunately, the present tax system promotes rent-seeking while discouraging entrepreneurship as it imposes heavy taxes on business profits of traders" he added.

Provincial cabinet approves Rs3.44b for model bazaars

LAHORE: The Provincial Cabinet has approved Rs3.44 billion for the construction of Model Bazaars in 13 districts of Punjab, an initiative aimed at providing economic relief and boosting local livelihoods. This approval, significantly higher than the initial Rs2.5 billion under consideration, is a major leap forward in addressing public needs and empowering communities. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif lauded the performance of Model Bazaars, saying that these bazaars were offering essential commodities at prices lower than DC-notified rates. "These bazaars are a lifeline for millions, lowering the cost of living and creating jobs for the people of Punjab," the chief minister remarked. She said that the initiative would provide small business owners with affordable monthly rents starting as low as Rs10,000, fostering entrepreneurship and economic inclusivity. The funds will be utilised to expand the network of Model Bazaars at 13 new locations across the province. Currently, 36 Model Bazaars operate in 24 districts, including ten in Lahore, offering a clean and organized shopping environment with daily essentials often priced below notified rates. The 13 new Model Bazaar spots are: Mandi Bahauddin, Okara, Narowal, Chiniot, Sharaqpur, Jhelum, Wazirabad, Khanewal, Muzaffargarh, Bhalwal, Pattoki, Jaranwala and Chunan. The chief minister also praised MNA Afzal Khokhar, who is also chairman of the Punjab Model Bazaars Management Company (PMBMC), for his steadfast commitment to expanding this public welfare initiative. Mr Khokhar, however, said PMBMC Chief Executive Officer Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad and his team made exceptional efforts to secure the enhanced funding. Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad said he had briefed the Planning and Development (P&D) Board about the project's profile and ensuring the cabinet's approval. He said his approach included the acquisition of state land at no cost, significantly reducing project expenses and enhancing the feasibility of constructing 13 new bazaars. With an annual footfall exceeding 60 million customers, the PMBMC has become a benchmark for excellence in public service. The expansion of Model Bazaars is expected to further enhance access to affordable goods, create thousands of jobs, and uplift local economies. Beyond providing public relief, this initiative will open doors for small entrepreneurs, supporting their growth in a structured and economically viable environment. —DNA

India seeks to further strengthen bilateral ties with Moscow

NEW DELHI: Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh began a three-day trip to Russia on Sunday, as New Delhi seeks to further strengthen its military cooperation with Moscow. Russia is India's biggest crude oil supplier and the main source of its military hardware, with their bilateral ties spanning over seven decades. During his visit, Singh is set to commission the Indian Navy's latest warship, a multi-role stealth guided missile frigate INS Tushil in Kaliningrad on Monday, alongside the Chief of the Naval Staff Adm. Dinesh K. Tripathi, the Ministry of Defense said in a statement. He will also co-chair with his Russian counterpart, Andrey Belousov, a meeting of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation on Tuesday. "The two leaders will review the entire range of multi-faceted relations between the two countries in the field of defence, including military-to-military and industrial cooperation. They will also exchange views on contemporary regional and global issues of mutual interest," the statement read. Singh's visit follows a series of high-level meetings between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier this year, which includes their July meeting in Moscow. —APP

South Korean opposition plans new impeachment push

SEOUL: South Korea's main opposition party said Sunday it will try again to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol after his declaration of martial law. Meanwhile police arrested the defense minister in charge of the martial law operation, and the interior minister resigned. Both they and Yoon are being investigated for alleged insurrection. Yoon averted impeachment late Saturday as huge crowds braved freezing temperatures in another night of protests outside parliament to demand the president's ouster. Opposition parties proposed the impeachment motion, which needed 200 votes in the 300-member parliament to pass, but a near-total boycott by Yoon's People Power Party (PPP) doomed it to failure. Lee Jae-myung, leader of the main opposition Democratic Party (DP), said Sunday that they will try again on December 14. "Yoon, the principal culprit behind the insurrection and military coup that destroyed South Korea's constitutional order, must either resign immediately or be impeached without delay," Lee told reporters. —APP

US unveils \$988m aid package for Ukraine

CALIFORNIA: The United States unveiled a \$988 million aid package of new arms and equipment to Ukraine for its ongoing fight against Russia's invasion on Saturday. The package nearly halves the available \$2.21 billion remaining in Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative as the Biden administration works to commit to buying weapons from industry, rather than pulling from US weapons stocks. The USAI funds will be put toward buying ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) made by Lockheed Martin as well as drones and spare parts to maintain artillery equipment, according to the Pentagon. Announcement of the package came on Saturday as the defense industry and policy makers meet at the annual Reagan National Defense Forum in California. The Biden administration has often used Presidential Drawdown Authority, which authorizes President Joe Biden to transfer excess articles and services from US stocks without congressional approval during an emergency. The USAI funds are separate and will go to purchase new weapons from industry. —Agencies

Briefs

PM Shehbaz meets Nawaz

DNA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was looking to take Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif on board over the Madrasah Registration Bill. According to details surfaced on Sunday, PM Shehbaz called on Nawaz at Jati Umr. Both the leaders had also exchanged views on the country's political situation.

The premier had briefed Nawaz on his recently held visit to Saudi Arabia. On the other side, PM Shehbaz had also held a meeting with Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmed Khan. On this occasion, the premier and Khan discussed the matters pertaining to the country's political landscape.

On the other side, PM Shehbaz held a meeting with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi to review the matters in line with the forthcoming ICC Champions Trophy. Naqvi briefed the prime minister on developments regarding the tournament. PM Shehbaz acknowledged Naqvi's principled stance on the Champions Trophy and expressed full confidence in his leadership. "Your position on the Champions Trophy represents the voice of every Pakistani. You have represented the sentiments of 240 million Pakistanis at the ICC. Pakistan's honor comes first, above everything else," the premier maintained.

US will remain in eastern Syria: Pentagon

WASHINGTON/MANAMA: The United States will maintain its presence in eastern Syria and will take measures necessary to prevent a resurgence of Daesh, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East Daniel Shapiro said on Sunday. Speaking hours after Syrian rebels announced they had toppled Bashar Assad's government, Shapiro called on all parties to protect civilians, particularly minorities, and to respect international norms. "We are aware that the chaotic and dynamic circumstances on the ground in Syria could give Daesh space to find the ability to become active, to plan external operations, and we're determined to work with those partners to continue to degrade their capabilities," he told the Manama Dialogue security conference in Bahrain's capital. "(We're determined) to ensure (Islamic State's) enduring defeat, to ensure the secure detention of Daesh fighters and the repatriation of displaced persons," Shapiro added. Hayat Tahir Al-Sham (HTS), which spearheaded the militant advances across western Syria, was formerly an Al-Qaeda affiliate known as the Nusra Front until its leader, Abu Mohamud Al-Golani, severed ties with the global jihadist movement in 2016. - Agencies

Pakistan sends relief aid to Malaysia

More than 122,000 people were forced to leave their homes last week

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Sunday morning dispatched the first consignment of relief goods for the flood-affected people of Malaysia, according to state-run Radio Pakistan. More than 122,000 people were forced to leave their homes last week as massive floods caused by relentless rains swept through Malaysia's northern states. The number surpassed the 118,000 evacuated during one of the country's worst flooding in 2014, and disaster officials feared it could rise further as torrential downpours continued. Nearly 35,000 people were evacuated in Terengganu, with the rest of the displacements reported from seven other states. Heavy rains, which began last week, continued to hammer Pasir Puteh town in Kelantan, where people could be seen walking through streets inundated with hip-deep waters.

A Tribute to Pakistan's Art and Artisans

Serena Hotels, Nomad Art gallery host crafts festival

Andrea Wicke emphasized the importance of cultural exchange and the role of such platforms in promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of artistic traditions



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, in collaboration with Nomad Art Gallery, organized a vibrant two-day Crafts Festival on December 7th and 8th, 2024, celebrating 40 years of Nomad's contributions to art and culture. The event brought together artisans and craftsmen from across Pakistan, showcasing exquisite creations from Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir. The festival featured a diverse array of jewelry, tex-

tiles, and other handcrafted treasures, highlighting the rich cultural heritage and artistic excellence of the country. The Austrian Ambassador, H.E. Andrea Wicke, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and commended the efforts of Serena Hotels and Nomad Art Gallery for their unwavering commitment to preserving and promoting Pakistan's cultural heritage. In her remarks, she emphasized the importance of cultural exchange and the role of such platforms in promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of artistic traditions. This Crafts Festival is part of Serena

Hotels' ongoing Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, a foundation of its mission to support and celebrate the arts. Through events like this, Serena Hotels has been actively working to preserve indigenous traditions, empower artisans, and promote sustainable economic development in the artisan community. Ms. Nageen Hayat, Founder of Nomad Art Gallery, expressed her gratitude for the collaboration, saying, "This milestone of 40 years is a tribute to the resilience and creativity of Pakistan's artisans. Together with Serena Hotels, we aim to honor their artistry and ensure these tra-

ditions thrive for future generations." The crafts festival not only provided artisans with a platform to showcase their skills but also offered visitors a chance to experience the beauty and diversity of Pakistan's cultural landscape. Serena Hotels is renowned for its commitment to excellence in hospitality and its dedication to promoting cultural, social, and economic development through its various initiatives. The Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, under which the crafts festival was organized, highlights the vision to connect communities and promote mutual understanding through art, heritage, and dialogue.

During PTI march

Fake news witnessed massive surge: report

Fake News Watchdog says PTI protests underscored profound impact of false reports on political, institutional dynamics

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: A huge influx of fake news was witnessed during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) recent protest in the federal capital, revealed a report by the Fake News Watchdog, a non-profit organisation fighting disinformation and misinformation. The watchdog said that the bombardment of concocted news played a cataclysmic role all this time. It said the unverified information hurt Pakistan's image globally as well. The PTI protest from November 24-27 caused immense unrest in the federal capital. The party leadership suspended the protest only 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. "The events surrounding the PTI protests from 24-27 November 2024 underscored the profound impact of fake news on political, social, and institutional dynamics in Pakistan. Misinformation during this period did not merely serve as a byproduct of political unrest; it actively shaped the narrative, inflamed tensions, and influenced public actions. Fabricated content - whether through manipulated images, doctored videos, or false statements attributed to key figures - spread rapidly across social media and traditional news platforms, magnifying confusion and mistrust. This phenomenon revealed vulnerabilities in the country's information ecosystem, where unverified claims gained traction in the absence of effective countermeasures," the fake news buster said. As per the report, a fabricated statement attributing to the interior minister about the citizens of Kashmir kept circulating. A fake report about an alleged PTI founder statement was also doing rounds on various platforms. A false report about the arrest of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and former prime minister Imran Khan's wife intensified the protest, the report said, adding that the fake news regarding hundreds of dead bodies at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) and Polyclinic Hospital, Islamabad, also had an adverse effect. Meanwhile, fake reports of PTI leader and former speaker of National Assembly Asad Qaiser's designation as the party's chairman also became a piece of breaking news, the Fake News Watchdog said. The report said workers were incited through a fake account named Sulaiman Isa Khan, the son of the PTI founder.

"News of the PTI founder being transferred from Adiala jail turned out to be fake. Whereas, news of 600 youth resigning from army academies during the protest also proved to be baseless," the report maintained. Another baseless news of the firing on Qaiser and Mahmood Khan Achakzai was also spread. While statements of PTI leader Qasim Suri regarding PTI founder's health had extremely negative impacts, said the Islamabad-based organisation. The report said an old picture of the PTI protest was shown in DPO Attock Ghayy Gul's press conference. The news of the alleged death of a PTI worker after falling off a container during prayer came under discussion at the international level. Whereas, the news about the same person, who fell from a container, meeting the KP chief minister also proved to be counterfeit. The fake news not only troubled the security institutes but the PTI leadership as well. As per the fake news monitor, affectees of the fake news include the government, security institutes and political parties. The watchdog emphasised taking emergency measures to address the challenges posed by the fake news. It pointed out the role of social media in serving as a crucial tool for wrong information.

US announces \$1bn in military aid for Ukraine

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States on Saturday announced a new \$988 million security assistance package for Ukraine as Washington races to provide aid to Kyiv before President-elect Donald Trump takes office. Trump's November election victory has cast doubt on the future of American aid for Ukraine, providing a limited window for billions of dollars in already authorized assistance to be disbursed before he is sworn in next month. The package features drones, ammunition for precision HIMARS rocket launchers, and equipment and spare parts for artillery systems, tanks and armored vehicles, the Pentagon said in a state-

ment. Trump met in Paris earlier Saturday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who said any resolution of the war with Russia should be a "just" settlement that includes "strong security guarantees for Ukraine." The meeting was of huge importance to Zelensky, given fears in Kyiv that Trump may urge Ukraine to make concessions to Moscow. The latest aid will be funded via the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, under which military equipment is procured from the defense industry or partners rather than drawn from American stocks, meaning it will not immediately arrive on the battlefield. It follows a \$725 million package announced on Monday that included a second tranche of landmines as well as anti-air and anti-armor weapons.

South Korea president still on thin ice as he survives impeachment

FOREIGN DESK

SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's future remained uncertain Sunday after surviving an impeachment vote over his brief imposition of martial law. The defence minister in charge when Yoon suspended civilian law late Tuesday was meanwhile reportedly arrested on Sunday and his official residence and office raided. A boycott by Yoon's party killed off the impeachment motion late Saturday even as huge crowds braved freezing temperatures outside parliament to demand his ouster. The deeply unpopular president's survival may be short-lived, with Yoon's People Power Party (PPP) saying that it had "effectively obtained (Yoon's) promise to step down". "Until the president steps down, the president will be effectively excluded from his duties," it said in a statement. PPP leader Han Dong-hoon and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo were set to meet at 11:00 am (0200 GMT) to discuss plans for Yoon's "orderly retreat", the premier's office said. A cabinet meeting will follow at 2:00 pm. The failure of the impeachment motion "means a more protracted political crisis", Vladimir Tikhonov, professor of Korean Studies at the University of Oslo, told AFP. "We will have a political dead president - basically unable to govern any longer - and hundreds of thousands coming to the streets every week until Yoon is removed," he said. On Saturday before the vote, Yoon, 63, reappeared for the first time in three days and apologised for the "anxiety and inconvenience". He said he would leave it to his party to decide his fate. Massive crowds - police said there were 150,000 people, organisers one million - gathered outside parliament into

the evening to pressure lawmakers to oust the president. Many wore elaborate outfits, carrying home-made flags and waving colourful glow sticks and LED candles as K-pop tunes blasted from speakers. "Even though we didn't get the outcome we wanted today, I am neither discouraged nor disappointed because we will get it eventually," said protester Jo Ah-gyeong, 30, after the impeachment vote. "I'll keep coming here until we get it," she told AFP. The opposition has already vowed to try to impeach Yoon again as soon as Wednesday, and many protesters vowed to continue demonstrations next weekend.

"I will impeach Yoon Suk Yeol, who has become the worst risk for South Korea, at any cost," opposition leader Lee Jae-myung said. Regardless of the political situation, police are investigating Yoon and others for alleged insurrection over the extraordinary events of Tuesday night. Early Sunday police arrested Kim Yong-hyun, who quit as defence minister on Wednesday and who was slapped with a travel ban, reports said. Kim's arrest came about six hours after he showed up for questioning at 1:30 am, Yonhap reported. Declaring martial law late Tuesday, Yoon said it would safeguard South Korea "from the threats posed by North Korea's communist forces and eliminate anti-state elements plundering people's freedom and happiness". Security forces sealed the National Assembly, helicopters landed on the roof and almost 300 soldiers tried to lock down the building. But as parliament staffers blocked the soldiers with sofas and fire extinguishers, enough MPs got inside - many climbed walls to enter - and voted down Yoon's move. The episode brought back painful memories of South Korea's autocratic past and blindsided its allies, with the US administration only finding out via television.

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