



# Islamabad POST

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Trump vows to end birthright citizenship, pardon Capitol rioters**

Detailed News On Page-08

**China vows to 'defend' sovereignty**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Rutherford's ton gives WI win over Bangladesh**

Detailed News On Page-06

**Court dismisses govt plea**

## Military courts cannot announce verdicts, says SC

Justice Rizvi inquired how the trial of those involved in the Army Public School attack had been conducted

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed the government's petition seeking to allow military courts to announce case verdicts. "Giving permission would mean recognising the authority of military courts," remarked Justice Musarrat Hilali who was part of the apex court's seven-member constitutional bench. Headed by Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan, the bench also includes Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan, and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. Furthermore, the court also threw out former chief justice Jawwad S Khawaja's petition seeking the postponement of the hearings of cases relating to the trial of civilians in military courts till the 26th Constitutional Amendment issue was decided. The court also slapped a fine of Rs20,000 on the former chief justice. Justice Ayesha A Malik was not part of the bench as the Constitutional Committee observed that since the judge was a member of the earlier bench whose judgment was under challenge, therefore, she could not sit on the constitutional bench for those appeals. During the hearing today, the court questioned Khawaja's counsel, asking:

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## SC restores Adil Bazai's Assembly membership

Supreme Court suspends ECP decision of disqualifying Quetta lawmaker, accused of floor crossing

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision and reinstated Adil Bazai's membership in the National Assembly. The verdict was issued by a three-member bench headed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, which included Justice Aqeel Abbasi and Justice Ayesha A Malik. The court postponed further proceedings until December 12. The election commission had disqualified Bazai, a lawmaker from Quetta, on November 21 following a request by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. Bazai then approached the Supreme Court to challenge the disqualification. Previously, the commission had acted after PML-N President Nawaz Sharif accused Bazai of defying party policy by siding with the opposition during the 26th Constitutional Amendment's passage. Bazai was

de-seated by the ECP under Article 63-A, according to Taimoor Aslam, counsel for the petitioner. He argued that the election commission neither conducted a proper review of the facts nor summoned Bazai for an inquiry. Aslam contended that the issue of Bazai's affidavits was already under consideration in a civil court, raising questions about the ECP's jurisdiction in the matter. Justice Shah questioned whether the ECP had the authority to take notice of an issue pending before a civil court. He highlighted that Bazai had two affidavits and claimed he had only signed one of them. Justice Ayesha also questioned whether the ECP could initiate an inquiry into allegations of fraud, suggesting that the scope of the ECP's authority needed clarification before proceeding further. Justice Shah emphasised the gravity of de-seating an elected representative,

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### Briefs

#### Afghan envoy calls on DPM Ishaq Dar

Discussed the deep-rooted ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan and agreed to strengthen mutually beneficial ties

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Ahmad Shakeeb, the Chargé d'Affaires of Afghanistan, met with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Monday at the Foreign Office, APP reported. During the meeting, they discussed the long-standing ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan and expressed their commitment to strengthening mutually beneficial relations. Ambassador (retired) Mohammad Sadiq, the Special Representative for Afghanistan, was also present at the meeting.

#### Helicopter crash in Turkiye claims 6 lives

Pakistan expresses grief; offers condolences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The people and government of Pakistan express deep sorrow over the tragic helicopter crash in Isparta, Turkiye, which claimed the lives of six military personnel, including Isparta Army Aviation School Commander Brigadier General Isa Baydilli. Our heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyrs and the people of Turkiye. May the departed souls rest in eternal peace. We pray for the swift recovery of the injured. Pakistan stands in solidarity with our Turkish brothers and sisters in this moment of grief.

## Threatens civil disobedience PTI ready for talks with everyone: Omar

"A national govt is not the solution to the problems being faced by the country," says PTI leader

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Just days before the Imran Khan-founded PTI's proposed civil disobedience movement, the former ruling party has announced that it is ready for dialogue, be it with humans or 'farishtay' (angels) – a tacit reference to the establishment. Apparently diverging from the former ruling party's previous stance, PTI senior leader Omar Ayub Khan explained his party's fresh negotiation policy, saying: "We are ready for talks, be it with humans or farishtay [angels]." Previously, the Imran Khan-founded was of the view that they would hold talks only with the military establishment instead of the government. Last week, the incarcerated PTI founder warned the government of launching a "civil disobedience" movement if his demands, including the judicial probe into the crackdown on party supporters, are not met. Taking to X (formerly Twitter), Imran – who claimed to have a "trump card" – announced the constitution of a five-member

Continued on Page 06

## Gohar refutes Aleema's claim of Imran release deal

Aleema claimed govt facilitated PTI chairman's meeting with founder in exchange of staging protest at Sangjani

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has refuted Aleema Khan's claim about being offered her brother and party founder Imran Khan's immediate release. Barrister Gohar said that the talk of releasing the PTI founder within 20 days in exchange for ending the sit-in was wrong. "I had neither mentioned anything about the release nor did the government promise to release the PTI founder

Continued on Page 06

## Fazlur Rehman accuses govt of sowing seeds of division

Ulema conference adopts resolution urging govt to maintain existing system of religious schools

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Amid the ongoing tussle between the government and the JUI-F over the Societies Registration (Amendment) Bill 2024 that deals with the registration of seminaries, party chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has accused the incumbent regime of creating divisions among religious scholars after the latter called for "keeping madrassas issue separate from politics". "Conspiracy being hatched to create division among the clerics [...] why are scholars being pit against each other," the religio-political leader questioned while addressing a press conference in Charsadda on Monday. Maulana Fazl remarks came shortly after the conclusion of the Conference on Madrassa Registration and Reforms, wherein a resolution urging the government to maintain the existing system of religious schools was approved. During the conference – which was attended by scholars and administrators of religious institutions from all schools of thought, the clerics called against turning the madrassas registration issue into a "political arena". Reacting to the conference, Fazl said that his party doesn't want confrontation with the state, but registration of seminaries.

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## Tarar for finding out solution of issue

Objective of that legislation was to bring seminaries into national mainstream

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that extensive consultations were being done to find out a solution to seminaries registration issue, acceptable to all stakeholders. Delivering speech at Conference on Madrassa Registration and Reforms, he said that input of Ulama and Mashaikh regarding the registration and Madrassa reforms was important. The minister said a few years back, a system was devised after extensive consultations to bring religious seminaries into the mainstream. Tarar said that the objective of

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### NATIONAL DAY OF QATAR



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Ambassador of Qatar Ali Bin Mubarak Al-Khater cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of Qatar. – DNA

## Lebanon to support for evacuation Shehbaz for ensuring safe evacuation of Pakistanis from Syria

The safety of Pakistanis' lives and property in Syria is our top priority," the prime minister said while instructing to utilize all available resources for this purpose

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the authorities concerned to formulate an action plan for the safe evacuation of Pakistanis, wishing to return from Syria, via neighboring countries as soon as possible. The prime minister was chairing a meeting held here to review the current situation of Syria and safe evacuation of Pakistanis present in that country. He said: "All possible steps should be taken to ensure the safe evacuation of Pakistanis from Syria." "The safety of Pakistanis' lives and property in Syria is our top priority," the prime minister said while instructing to utilize all available resources for this purpose. He also directed the Pakistan Embassy in Damascus to

Continued on Page 06

## New era starts in Syria as world keenly watches

Multiple countries welcome end of more than 50 years of Assad family's rule; Moscow gave asylum to Assad and his family

CENTRELINER REPORT / DNA

MOSCOW: Syrians awakened on Monday to a hopeful if uncertain future, after rebels seized the capital Damascus and President Bashar al-Assad fled to Russia, ending a 13-year civil war and more than 50 years of his

Continued on Page 06

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# Urgent action needed to tackle education emergency: Minister

Dr. Siddiqui lamented the lack of execution despite numerous policies, frameworks, and roadmaps since 1951

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, has emphasized the urgency of the National Education Development Framework 2024, describing it as a vital necessity. He stressed the need to accelerate its implementation as part of the educational emergency, warning that if the younger generation is not prepared, artificial intelligence could render a billion people irrelevant. Addressing the launch ceremony of the framework prepared by the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with provincial education departments on Monday, the minister highlighted Pakistan's indecision on the medium of instruction—whether in the mother tongue, national language, or global languages. He called for prioritizing the education of the youth in artificial intelligence, engineering, mathematics, and IT. "Ignoring reality or avoiding the truth will not bring any meaningful progress," he remarked. Pakistan's cuisine. Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Education Farah Naz, Federal Secretary of Education and Professional Training Mohiuddin Wani, provincial education officials, and representatives from the development sector were present at the event. Dr. Siddiqui lamented the lack of execution despite numerous policies, frameworks, and roadmaps since 1951. He stated that the Ministry of Education is focused on policy formulation post the 18th Amendment, while provinces are responsible for

implementation. He urged attention to why implementation continues to falter. Highlighting pressing challenges such as over 26 million children out of school, teacher shortages, and population issues, he called for collective solutions. Drawing comparisons, he noted that neighboring China and India lifted 500 million and 150 million people, respectively, out of poverty over two decades. He pointed out that Pakistan's entrenched feudal system, sustained by poverty, remains a significant obstacle. Criticizing past decisions, he claimed education was "feudalized" rather than nationalized in 1972. He also questioned why "ghost schools" proliferate while opening new schools remains challenging. Federal Secretary of Education Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani elaborated on the framework, calling it a comprehensive document developed in consultation with experts and provincial representatives. It identifies critical issues in Pakistan's education sector, addressing areas such as school education (from early childhood to higher secondary), non-formal education, adult literacy, higher education, and technical and vocational training. Pakistan's cuisine The framework outlines problems in access, quality, and equity, emphasizing market-aligned technical education and diversified career pathways. Highlighting Pakistan's poor ranking—164th among 193 countries—he noted a literacy rate of only 62% and 26 million out-of-school children. He underscored severe deficits in foundational skills, higher education access (limited to 12%), and alignment with market

needs. The lack of resources and challenges from Pakistan's diversity impede policy implementation. Director General of the Pakistan Institute of Education, Dr. Mohammad Shahid Soroya, highlighted the National Education Development Framework 2024 in his presentation. Minister Rahila Durrani, in a video message, stressed learning from each other and maintaining education among top priorities. She invited federal and provincial counterparts to collaborate in addressing Balochistan's educational challenges, including teacher shortages and facility deficiencies. Special Secretary for Schools Muhammad Iqbal reported progress on implementing the framework and digital solutions for recruitment and transfers. Punjab plans to integrate its education sector plan with the national framework within three months and enhance school councils for improved infrastructure and resources. Special Secretary for Education Syed Junaid highlighted Sindh's school upgrading, early childhood education, transgender policies, and out-of-school reintegration initiatives. Secretary Masood Ahmad noted the impact of terrorism, extremism, and natural disasters on education in the province. He emphasized the provincial government's commitment to promoting girls' education and leveraging the framework for policy reforms and stakeholder engagement. Pakistan's cuisine The event underscored a collective resolve for education reforms, urging collaborative efforts across provinces to overcome challenges and align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi meeting with Wafaqul Madaris' Patron-in-Chief Maulana Fazl Rahim Ashrafi.

## 5 arrested in APP fake appointments case

ISLAMABAD: Five individuals who were allegedly involved in the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) fake appointment case were taken into custody after the dismissal of their interim bail by the Special Judge FIA Court, Hamayoun Dilwar, on Monday. The accused include former Manager Accounts Arshad Majeed, his son Taimoor Arshad, Saad Yousaf, Qaiser Javed and Fawad Khan. FIA initiated the case, alleging the involvement of the accused in facilitating fraudulent appointments without the APP. Investigation Officer Ehtesham Gondal opposed the pre-arrest bail petitions, arguing that sufficient evidence had been collected to substantiate the charges. The court, after hearing the arguments, rejected the pleas and ordered the arrest of the accused. Representing APP, lawyer Hussain Haider Thaheem argued that Arshad Majeed played a pivotal role in enabling the disbursement of salaries to 20 individuals appointed without legitimate documentation.

## Navy War College celebrates 53rd HANGOR Day

LAHORE: The Pakistan Navy celebrated 53rd HANGOR Day to commemorate the historic event in which the Pakistan Navy Submarine HANGOR sank Indian Navy Frigate KHUKRI and crippled INS KIRPAN during the 1971 war in a spectacular display of naval warfare. To pay special tribute, the Pakistan Navy observes December 9 as HANGOR Day, a reminder of the unmatched courage and unwavering commitment demonstrated by submarine HANGOR during the war. According to PN Public Relations Wing, an impressive ceremony was held at Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore. Former Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Abdul Aziz Mirza (Retd) graced the occasion as the chief guest. Submarine HANGOR remains a symbol of pride for Pakistan Navy. Her gallant

action during 1971 war was not only a remarkable tactical achievement that resulted in the sinking of Indian Navy's Frigate but also effectively thwarted and marginalized Indian aggression, particularly on the Western front. The event holds a distinguished place in naval history as the first and only successful kill by a conventional submarine since World War II. On the occasion, Vice Admiral Ahmed Tasnim (Retd), who served as the Commanding Officer of Submarine HANGOR during the operation, paid rich tribute to the valiant crew for their service in defending the motherland. He highlighted that HANGOR is a luminous chapter in Pakistan Navy's history and will always be remembered. He also elaborated on the factors that contributed to the development of extraordinary leadership

skills among all ranks and emphasized their significance in leading the nation during times of adversity. Pakistan Navy Submarine HANGOR was the first of the Daphne Class submarines acquired from France. Commissioned in 1969, it served Pakistan Navy with honour until its decommissioning in 2006. In recognition of their bravery, the valiant crew of HANGOR was awarded four Sitara-e-Jurat, six Tamgha-e-Jurat, and sixteen Intiaz Asnaad. To honour its legacy, the submarines being jointly manufactured by Pakistan and China have been named HANGOR Class submarines. The ceremony was attended by a large number of serving and retired PN officers, CPOs/Sailors, Navy civilians, MARSEW participants, faculty members from various public and private universities, and students from Bahria College, Lahore.—DNA

## GB minister stresses Ulmas' role in promoting peace

GILGIT BALTISTAN: Interior Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Shams Lone has urged religious scholars to advocate for peace, brotherhood and harmony. He highlighted that the true beauty of Gilgit-Baltistan lies in its tranquility and mutual respect for diverse beliefs. Speaking to media representatives in Gilgit he commended the positive and pivotal role played by scholars of all sects in maintaining peace in the region. He advised Ulmas to recognize the sensitivities of Gilgit-Baltistan and refrain from making irresponsible or prejudiced statements. "Unnecessary ambiguity or confusion among the public must be avoided," he emphasized. — DNA

## UNDP hosts workshop to address climate change in KP

PESHAWAR: UNDP Pakistan's Scaling Up of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood Risk Reduction in Northern Pakistan Project (GLOF-II) organized a divisional level Stakeholders' Communication and Coordination Workshop in Swat on Monday. Pakistan's cuisine This divisional level event brought together community members and key representatives from government departments to tackle communication and coordination challenges in addressing the impacts of climate change and disaster risk reduction. Participants included officials from Planning and Development Department, Provincial Disaster Management Authority, On-Farm Water Management, Climate Change, Forestry Environment and Wildlife Department, Environmental Protection Agency,

Pakistan Meteorological Department, Soil and Water Conservation Department and community members from Upper and Lower Chitral, Upper Dir and Swat. The workshop aimed to advance dialogues between stakeholders and community members from four districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to share insights, voice concerns and exchange experiences. The discussions led to identifying key communication and coordination challenges and developing actionable strategies to address them. The event also strengthened relationships among stakeholders, promoting trust and collaboration. "This workshop not only brought together community members from various districts but also gave us a platform to

exchange ideas, concerns and lessons learned. Seeing government officials keenly listen to our concerns and commit to addressing them was truly encouraging," shared Rashida Khanum, a resident of Reshnu Valley, Upper Chitral. UNDP's GLOF-II project works in 16 valleys of Gilgit Baltistan and 08 valleys of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It empowers communities to identify and manage risks associated with GLOFs and related impacts of climate change, strengthens public services to lower the risk of disasters related to GLOFs, and improves community preparedness and disaster response. Pakistan's cuisine. The project also supports the development of sustainable livelihood options in project areas, with a particular focus on the participation of women in ensuring food security and livelihoods.

## Bakhtawari pays Rs 430,000 in fines to free 6 prisoners

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, Member of the Central Core Committee UBG (FPCCI), and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, paid fines amounting to Rs. 430,000 to secure the release of six prisoners from Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, on the occasion of International Human Rights Day. During his special visit to Adiala Jail yesterday, he met with Superintendent Abdul Ghafoor Anjum and facilitated the release of six individuals incarcerated for minor offenses. These individuals—namely Itikhar, Ishaq, Khishna Rehman, Sohail Khan, Muhammad Saleem, and Muhammad Shah—were unable to pay their fines due to financial constraints. The freed individuals expressed their gratitude to Ahsan Bakhtawari for his noble gesture, describing it as a new beginning filled with hope. Superintendent Abdul Ghafoor Anjum lauded the initiative, calling it an exemplary act. He urged other philanthropists to follow in Bakhtawari's footsteps by contributing to the release of prisoners, enabling them to lead better lives and contribute to their families' well-being and national progress. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari remarked, "Prisoners convicted of minor offenses often remain in jail due to financial difficulties, which compounds their struggles. To safeguard human rights, all segments of society must work together. The reintegration of such individuals into society, through education and employment opportunities, is the path to building a crime-free society." He further appealed to philanthropists to join this mission and play their role in helping those in need, emphasizing that addressing the root causes of crime and supporting rehabilitation efforts are vital for societal harmony and development.—DNA

## RCCI Pindi Food Fest ends on high note



RAWALPINDI: The three-day food festival, "Pindi Food Fest 2024" organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), concluded with great success at Ayub Park, attracting a record-breaking crowd and widespread appreciation from the public and the business community. The event drew a remarkable attendance of over 400,000 people in just three days, setting a new milestone in the history of RCCI. Citizens, families, and food enthusiasts thronged the festival to enjoy a diverse array of cuisines, cultural activities, and entertainment. The festival was graced by the presence of ambassadors

from Morocco, Yemen, South Korea, Hungary, Indonesia, and Uzbekistan, who toured various food stalls alongside RCCI President Usman Shaikat. Their participation highlighted the event's international appeal and its contribution to cultural exchange. President RCCI, Usman Shaikat, emphasized the festival's aim of promoting traditional and regional cuisines, introducing new flavors, and providing entrepreneurs with a platform to showcase their culinary ventures. He stated: "The food festival was an opportunity to promote SMEs, particularly women entrepreneurs, and highlight the richness of Pakistan's culinary diversity. The response was overwhelming, with thousands attending the event and enjoying the vibrant atmosphere." More than seventy Food Stalls were placed featuring flavors from Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Punjab, as well as international cuisines. Special opportunities were provided to female business owners in the food industry to showcase and launch their brands aiming to promote Women Entrepreneurs, he added. Live Cooking Demos: Renowned chefs conducted live cooking sessions, sharing tips and engaging with the audience. Entertainment: Musical evenings featuring local artists and famous singers, along with a kids' carnival, added a festive touch to the event. Community Engagement: Families enjoyed a socially enriching experience, celebrating Pakistan's cultural and culinary heritage. — DNA

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### DECEMBER

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

### Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



### Enquiry

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



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Guests admire the beautifully decorated Christmas tree at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. The hotel hosted a tree lighting ceremony as part of its celebrations to embrace the joy and spirit of Christmas. —DNA

## 5th Pakistan-America Business Forum Summit

# Baker highlights US Pakistan economic partnership

Chargé d'Affaires also acknowledged Pakistan's potential, particularly its dynamic young population and emerging opportunities in technology, trade, climate resilience and security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaking at the Fifth Pakistan-America Business Forum Summit, Chargé d'Affaires Andrew Baker emphasized the importance of US Pakistan economic ties and the role of private sector collaboration in fostering growth and resilience in both nations. Pakistan's cuisine Organized by the Pak America Business Forum and the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, the summit brought together leaders, entrepreneurs and investors to explore opportunities to deepen bilateral trade and investment. In his address, Baker underscored the significance of the United States as Pakistan's largest export market, accounting for 16% of its total exports. Over the last decade, US Pakistan trade has grown substantially, driven by strong partnerships and American investments that have contributed to job creation and community develop-

ment. "Over 80 US firms in Pakistan directly employ 120,000 people and indirectly support over a million livelihoods," Baker stated, highlighting the values of transparency, innovation and responsible corporate citizenship that these businesses bring. He also acknowledged Pakistan's potential, particularly its dynamic young population and emerging opportunities in technology, trade, climate resilience and security. "We believe that unlocking the po-

tential of the private sector is pivotal to Pakistan's growth and we are committed to supporting this transformation," Baker said. Key initiatives like USAID's Pakistan Investment Promotion Activity were spotlighted, which have facilitated foreign direct investment and bolstered bilateral trade by millions. Baker also encouraged Pakistani businesses to engage with programs like SelectUSA, which promote investment in the United States. Pakistan's cuisine Concluding his remarks,

Baker urged the Pakistani diaspora and local business leaders to take advantage of the opportunities presented by these initiatives to strengthen the US Pakistan partnership.

"This summit is a testament to our shared commitment to a brighter, more prosperous future for both our countries," Baker noted. The summit served as a platform for fostering new collaborations and reaffirming the critical role of economic diplomacy in the bilateral relationship.

## Murree snowfall, Rescue-1122 put on high alert

RAWALPINDI: District Emergency Service Rescue -1122 remained alert is actively working in the Murree areas during the snowfall. According to the details, Rescue-1122 Murree is continuing to provide timely response to road traffic accidents, medical emergencies and other emergencies in the district as per the 'season snowfall emergency cover plan' of the district administration. The rescue service has been deployed during the snowfall with its utmost priority of medical first aid road accidents. Media coordinator, Muhammad Usman informed APP that emergency transfer of critically ill patients from Civil Hospital Murree to various hospitals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad is also among the swift emergency operations as and when required. He said that the Rescue 1122 control room remained operational 24/7, timely relief operations were underway on every call received on the helpline 1122. orders have also been issued to the rescue personnel to remain alert to deal with any emergency situation. According to the spokesperson of Rescue 1122 Murree, Rescue 1122 Murree is actively working for the safety of the citizens. "Rescue-1122 is ensuring round-the-clock measures in case of any emergency", he said. The administration also completed the snow clearance process from the roads to the first snowfall of the winter season. Moreover, the administration has set up Facilitation Centers at 13 different locations to provide necessary information and guide the tourists. It is worth mentioning that PDM had already forecasted the snowfall in Murree for Sunday and Monday.—DNA

## Mushaal slams world's silence as IIOJK becomes graveyard for kids

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of unlawfully incarcerated Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik, expressed her deep concern over the international community's silence on the atrocities committed by Indian Occupation forces in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), saying the region had been turned into a graveyard for children. Mushaal, Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organisation, strongly condemned the atrocities committed by Indian forces in the occupied valley, drawing parallels with the Zionist forces' brutal actions against children in Gaza. She emphasized that both regions have become graveyards for children. She made these remarks while speaking as chief guest at Human Rights Photo Exhibition, organized by Human Rights Council Pakistan at Pak China Friendship Centre here Monday. Pakistan's cuisine The

chairperson said that the fascist forces unleashed a wave of terrorism and committed war crimes in the occupied valley, as they converted the region into a slaughterhouse and killing field. She highlighted that the top Hurriyat leaders including her husband Yasin Malik were kept in unlawful incarceration by implicating in absurd, concocted and fabricated cases. However, Mushaal rued that ironically the so-called human rights organizations and world powers observed criminal silence in this regard largely because of the economic and financial interests. She urged the international community to take immediate action to stop the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and Kashmiris, particularly children, who have borne the brunt of these conflicts. The chairperson revealed the shocking truth about the fascist occupation troopers' brutality in the scenic valley, where 922 children have been martyred over the past 36 years, adding that more disturbing

was the deafening silence from human rights and child rights organizations, who failed to speak out against these atrocities. The hurriyat leader expressed utter shock and dismay at the lack of response from these organizations, emphasizing that the children's deaths were a result of the notorious regime's policy of ethnic cleansing of Kashmiris. Mushaal highlighted the disturbing reality of Indian forces' brutality in Kashmir, where children, women, and youth were deliberately targeted. Since 1989, 2,353 women have been killed, 11,265 molested, and 22,980 widowed due to Indian state terrorism. The chairperson noted that, historically, women and children have been recognized as non-combatants, deserving protection in conflicts. However, she lamented that this principle has been grossly violated in Kashmir and Palestine, where women and children have become disproportionately vulnerable to violence, displacement, and egregious human rights abuses.

## AIOU wins three awards at Chrysanthemum Exhibition

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has got three positions in the three-day "Chrysanthemum and Autumn Flowers" exhibition held at Rose and Jasmine Garden, Islamabad from December 6 to 8, 2024. The exhibition was arranged by the National Horticultural Society of Pakistan, in collaboration with the Capital Development Authority (CDA). Various institutions, including Arid Agriculture University, Parks and Horticulture Authority Rawalpindi, Dr. A.Q. Khan Research Laboratories Kahuta, Islamabad Club, Pakistan Air Force Islamabad, CDA Nursery, and Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Islamabad, participated in the event, said a press release issued on Monday. AIOU competed in three different categories and secured two first positions in first two categories and got second position in the 2nd category of the flowers show. Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood also congratulated the university's gardeners on their achievement and has expressed pride in their efforts. He stated, "By winning awards every year at flower exhibitions, our gardeners continue to bring honor to the university."

## Chairperson NAVTTC commends NSU for transformative role in skills education

ISLAMABAD: The Chairperson of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC), Ms Gulmina Bilal Ahmad, on Monday lauded the National Skills University Islamabad (NSU) and its sub-campus, Sarmad Tanveer Campus Muridke, for contributing to advancing skills education. Speaking as the chief guest at the skills certificates distribution ceremony, Ms Ahmad praised the institutions for their remarkable contributions to developing a skilled workforce and finding opportunities nationally and internationally, said a press release. "NSU and its sub-campus in Muridke have emerged as leading institutions in skills education," Ms Ahmad stated. "I am delighted to hear the success stories of boys and girls receiving their certificates today.—APP



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## Briefs

## Unilever Pakistan launches program

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Unilever Pakistan has implemented new measures for 'skin fitters' in order to address safety and livelihood challenges in the outdoor advertising sector. Unilever Pakistan's 'Safety First' program include enhanced safety standards, increased wages, and access to health and life insurance, making it an industry first initiative.

Advertising skin fitting is a high-risk job that involves working at significant heights, often without adequate safety equipment or financial safeguards. Historically, Pakistan's out of home (OOH) advertising workers have faced poor remuneration and limited access to essential protections. This is a workforce tasked with installing and maintaining outdoor advertisements under hazardous conditions. As part of this initiative, Unilever has ensured that skin fitters receive state-of-the-art safety gear and comprehensive training to mitigate workplace hazards. In addition, monthly wages have been increased to PKR 51,000, aligned with a fair living wage benchmark.

## Pakistan to export skilled manpower to Bahrain

ISLAMABAD: Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) an attached department of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) would export skilled and unskilled manpower to the Kingdom of Bahrain in the construction sector. An official source told APP, he said that in this regard OEC is collecting the documents from the interested candidates across the country till December 18, 2024. He said that already OEC exporting skilled workforce around 40 countries of the world. He said that interested candidates could apply for the following job positions including Laboratory Manager, with BSc Engineering / B-Tech / Graduation / DAE Civil; Minimum 15 years of experience with relevant 5 years of experience. The Laboratory Manager (LM) will be responsible for managing laboratory staff and activities related to the laboratory. The LM is expected to oversee LS provide safety oversight of day-to-day lab and field operations and provide a safe work environment to anyone using the lab.—DNA

## Pakistan-China Hospital in Gwadar serves 21,000 patients in 7 months

Patients seeking treatment in areas such as gynecology, orthopedics, neurology, gastroenterology, cancer care, dentistry, pediatrics, infectious diseases, diabetes, and hypertension have been flocking to PCFH, which is hailed as a model public good program under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

DNA

ISLAMABAD: More than 21,000 patients, especially women and children, have received free medical services at the Pak-China Friendship Hospital (PCFH) in Gwadar since its launch and operation over the last seven months. The number of patients has surged due to the high-quality, no-cost healthcare services provided. Patients seeking treatment in areas such as gynecology, orthopedics, neurology, gastroenterology, cancer care, dentistry, pediatrics, infectious diseases, diabetes, and hypertension have been flocking to PCFH, which is hailed as a model public good program under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). "Creating a hundred percent paperless environment has ensured convenience, ease, and comfort for patients, particularly those from the illiterate coastal community, preventing them from getting caught in lengthy and complicated procedures," said Aslam Khan, PCFH Operations Manager, in an interview with Gwadar Pro. "If Pak-China Friendship Hospital (PCFH) Gwadar had not been operational, I could have lost my second child during the final stages of labor," said Aaman Tasleem Baloch, who came to the hospital for a routine check-up on December 7. In an interview with Gwadar Pro, she explained, "The free medical care provided during my second pregnancy at PCFH ensured a safe delivery, and I was blessed with a healthy daughter who is now three months old."



Aaman Tasleem Baloch is just one of many patients who have benefited from the hospital's free services. The hospital provides seamless medical care not only to Gwadar's local population but also to people from surrounding areas, offering state-of-the-art medical equipment, a conducive environment, and hassle-free amenities. In addition to gynecology, PCFH is dedicated to treating patients in orthopedics, neurology, gastroenterology, cancer, dentistry, pediatrics, neonatal medicine, and family medicine.

Built at a cost of \$100 million, with financing from the Chinese government under the framework of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Hospital is equipped with 150 beds and a fully functional Outpatient Department (OPD), winning the hearts of the local people. Spanning over 68 acres of land, the hospital was established under the Gwadar Development Authority's (GDA) Business Plan. It consists of six blocks: a medical block, a residential block, a nursing block, a par-

amedical institute block, a medical college block, and a central laboratory block, along with other allied facilities, medical equipment, and machinery. After completion, the hospital was handed over to the Gwadar Development Authority and is now managed and operated by the Indus Hospital & Health Network (IHNN), a non-profit organization that serves the ailing community. Nadir Ali Baloch, Deputy Manager of Administration at PCFH, said the hospital's "Help Desk Initiative," launched on September 16, has been providing health services to communities throughout the coastal area and other localities such as Turbat, Jiwani, Surbandar, and Catcheh, as well as distant districts. "The Help Desk Initiative operates as a 'One Window Facility,' where patients can get information on doctor appointments, medical tests, and emergency aid, all free of cost," he added.

In response to a query, Baloch explained that the hospital had already made significant

strides in providing health services to the local community with the opening of the Outpatient Department (OPD), marking a milestone in offering state-of-the-art, no-cost medical care to Gwadar's impoverished residents. The hospital's mammography service, aimed at treating cancer patients, is progressing at full speed. The service includes screening mammography, diagnostic mammography, ductography, and needle localization, all provided by dedicated female technologists under the supervision of a radiologist, he added.

## Pakistani Salt gains traction in Chinese market

As the year progresses, stakeholders in the salt industry are hopeful that the momentum will be sustained, with plans to participate in trade fairs and exhibitions in China to showcase the quality and versatility of Pakistani salt products, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday

ISLAMABAD: In a remarkable shift in culinary preferences, Pakistani salt is rapidly gaining popularity in China, captivating consumers with its unique flavor and natural purity. From January to October of this year, Pakistan exported an impressive 29,475.923 tons of salt to China, worth \$4.98 million, according to the latest data from the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC). Asif Jalil, owner of Little Lahore Cuisines across China, said that as health-conscious Chinese consumers increasingly seek authentic and high-quality ingredients, the demand for Pakistani rock salt has surged, leading to a significant uptick in exports. "Renowned for its rich mineral content and distinctive taste, this natural seasoning is not only enhancing the flavors of traditional Chinese dishes but also finding its way into gourmet kitchens across the country. With the backing of improved trade relations and a growing appreciation for authentic products, Pakistani salt is poised to become a staple in Chinese households, marking a new chapter in the evolving landscape of international food trade," he added. Karim Aziz Malik, CEO of Himalayan Pink Salt, said that the rise in salt exports is attributed to several factors, including the growing demand for high-quality salt in China, which is increasingly being used in food processing, pharmaceuticals, and various industrial applications. Pakistani rock salt, known for its purity and mineral content, has gained popularity among Chinese consumers and businesses alike. "Pakistan's rock salt is not only a staple in kitchens but also a valuable resource for various industries. The growing awareness of the health benefits associated with natural salt has further fueled demand in China," he stated. In response to the rising demand, local producers are ramping up their production capabilities and exploring new marketing strategies to enhance their presence in the Chinese market. Several Pakistani salt exporters have reported establishing long-term contracts with Chinese distributors, ensuring a steady flow of exports in the coming years. As the year progresses, stakeholders in the salt industry are hopeful that the momentum will be sustained, with plans to participate in trade fairs and exhibitions in China to showcase the quality and versatility of Pakistani salt products, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.—DNA

## ICCI President calls for urgent privatization of loss-making SOEs

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has expressed frustration over the government's failure to privatize loss-making state-owned entities, such as Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM), and Pakistan Railways (PR). He said that despite the government's repeated claims about the massive burden of these entities on the national exchequer, not a single public entity has been privatized, despite Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb's statement acknowledging the Rs. 6 trillion cost over the past decade. Qureshi emphasized that privatization is crucial for reducing losses from these entities, yet the government still needs to take action. He also mentioned that plans to privatize Pakistan Steel Mills were abandoned. Qureshi argues that privatization, liberalization, and deregulation are essential for economic stability and the country's progress. Additionally, Qureshi highlighted bureaucratic hurdles hindering the ease of business in the country despite the business community's determination to drive economic growth. He also highlighted the ICCI's efforts to foster closer ties between the business community and government through its uninterrupted measures.—DNA

## Death anniversary of former PM Feroz observed

ISLAMABAD: Fifty-fourth death anniversary of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Sir Feroz Khan Noon was observed on Monday. Born in 1893 in Lahore, Noon practiced law at Lahore High Court from 1917 to 1926 and then joined politics. He was appointed as Minister of Health and Education in the Punjab cabinet. Feroz Khan Noon served as High Commissioner for India in London from 1936 to 1941. He also held the position of Defence Minister of India from 1942 to 1945. In October 1947, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah sent Noon as his special envoy to some countries of the Muslim world.—APP

## Corruption – A menace destroying our noble norms

FAKHAR-E-ALAM

ISLAMABAD: Unchecked permeation of corruption in almost all walks of life since decades had severe effects on our economy, policing, justice system, businesses, social fabric and morality, distracting the nation from revered philosophy of our religion and creation of Pakistan. Despite tall claims of rooting out this menace by different regimes and rulers, this curse continued travelling deeper into our society with any organization rarely claiming to be corruption free. Since, corruption does not simply mean to take bribes and misuse of authority, even dealings in daily routine matters and businesses where innocent people are deceived, is also an offshoot of corruption. Similarly, willful negligence in performing official, religious and social duties, adulteration, short measuring, selling substandard commodities, power pilferage, smuggling, property grabbing, usurping others rights and much more; are also different genres of corruption. As corruption and transparency often provide basis for a good or bad governance, economic growth and overall well-being of its citizens, then if corruption dominates transparency, it lays foundation for annihilation of any society or nation. "Consequences of corruption are lethal and far-reaching," remarked Professor Dr. A.H. Hilali, former Chairman, Political Science Department University of Peshawar. "It promotes inefficiency in public and private sectors and diverts resources from critical development

sectors to pockets of influential." "Corruption hampers economic growth, fosters a culture of nepotism, deprives people of their rights, keeps nations poor, illiterate and backward where merit is often disregarded for personal gains," he explained. Contrarily, he said, transparency in government and institutional operations is vital for successful implementation of policies and accountability. "Failing to address corruption and ensuring transparency leads to widespread dissatisfaction and hinder country's progress." Effective decision making is guaranteed in systems; transparent and free of any corruption. Sharing policies with public, inviting their suggestions and provide them digital platforms can lead to good governance. "People in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are equally a victim to this menace. Even the recent governments could not ensure transparency and good governance," said Ikhair Wali Khan, PMLN KP Information Secretary. "Masses often speak of alleged corruption of rulers in public sector development projects. But, their voices go unheard." He also mentioned to reported financial irregularities in much propagated BRT and Billion Tree Tsunami projects in the province and informed, "BRT is facing about Rs3.2 billion annual losses and delay in construction of its commercial plazas at Dabgari Gardens and Hayatabad had reflected poor planning and maladministration of the rulers." He said NAB and Peshawar High Court have taken over Billion Trees Project that exposed the tall claims of good governance by the PTI government.

"PTI has closed down its own created Ehtessb Commission within few months after it started exposing alleged corrupt practices of rulers." Even in an era of rampant corruption, experts and common people still have hopes for eradicating this curse and improving governance by manifesting commitment, strengthening institutions, promoting transparency and fostering public participation. "Good governance is essential for sustainable development, economic growth and societal well-being of people as weak institutional structures and poor accountability hamper progress and damage public trust," said human rights activist, Amjad Ali Mughal Advocate. "We would have to be callous and straight forward to ensure good governance," he said. "We need to strengthen our institutions, ensure their independence and free them from any kind of political and administrative influence." He suggested to facilitating public servants in honestly performing their duties and having a mechanism to effectively monitoring their performance to reduce corruption and promote transparency in the society. Role of elected representatives and media, in this scenario, bears pivotal importance. If they collectively monitor corruption in government project, the situation can improve within months. Therefore, they both must join hands to rescue nation from the clutches of corruption. "Good governance and corruption are interrelated and inversely proportional. If corruption erodes public trust, honesty and good governance show them

a ray of hope," remarked Hameed Gul, a local elected representative. "Developing mechanism to control corruption and establishing independent bodies to prosecute corruption cases can help control this problem." He argued to ensure political stability, educating citizens about their rights and engaging them in the decision-making and above all supremacy of law to ensure good governance, accountability and transparency for controlling corruption. "These factors would strengthen public trust in institutions, reduce occurrence of corruption in the society and positively affect growth and development in the society," he said. As corruption usually emanates from the top, the responsibility of the elected governments is manifold to root out this menace weakening our governance system and essences of a good society like nobility, honesty, efficiency and dutifulness. Commenting on this issue, Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Anti-Corruption, Mossadiq Abbasi said the government is focusing this issue and has taken robust initiatives to eradicate corruption from the province. "We have decided to hold regular Khuli Kacheris on first Tuesday of every month besides an inclusive governance strategy to unearth corruption and citizens are encouraged to submit their complaints at the regional offices of Anti-Corruption Department," he said. "This initiative underscores the government's commitment to transparency, accountability and fostering a corruption free society," he added.



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## Syria has a bright future without Assad

Today we are witnessing the emergence of a new Syria, one that exists without the Assad regime. This marks the end of more than five decades of rule, from Hafez Assad to his son Bashar. This change represents not only a shift for the Syrian people, but also a transformation for the region as a whole. We are seeing the beginnings of a new Middle East, free from the external interventions that have long troubled the region. What we have observed over the past few days, with Syrian opposition forces advancing in the north and gradually entering cities without destruction or bloodshed, signifies the transition to a new phase. This phase does not involve reopening old grievances with Syrian figures from the previous government, nor does it aim to provoke civil wars. This sentiment is shared not only by the opposition but also by many former officials who recognize the necessity of moving beyond Bashar Assad's rule. There has been cooperation and coordination among various factions to ensure a smooth transition to a new governance structure that embodies the aspirations of the Syrian people, who have endured significant sacrifices. People want a Syria that is governed by its citizens, not by a family that has long prioritized its own narrow interests over those of the country. The goal is to create a military that represents all Syrians, protecting the rights and interests of the populace instead of retreating to specific strongholds. This transition calls for emphasis on state institutions over individual power, fostering a civil, secular or liberal state that aligns with the diverse identities of the Syrian people. As Syrians, we strive to depict the most optimistic vision of what can be achieved. However, we must acknowledge that challenges may arise along the way. Nevertheless, I believe that the country is on a path toward stability and the reestablishment of normal relations with neighboring countries, leading to a future where Syria becomes a crucial part of the axis of moderation in the region. Syria should foster relations with both the East and the West, focusing on reconstruction – not just rebuilding infrastructure but also reshaping the entire state. There is a dire need for comprehensive changes in various sectors, from educational curricula to the internal operations of governmental institutions. The events we have witnessed in recent days are a dream come true for countless Syrians. I am confident this transformation will contribute to stability in Syria and beyond. This new chapter could pave the way for comprehensive peace among Syrians and with Israel, as there are no insurmountable differences. The future Syria will be friendly to all nations. Half of the Syrian population living abroad has gained valuable experience and holds high aspirations, positioning them to participate effectively in the country's reconstruction. We must pursue the vision of an inclusive Syria, one that stands as an exceptional model, having emerged from the shadows of one of the worst regimes in history.

- Ghassan Ibrahim



## Genocide rewarded

The US backed al Qaeda takeover of Syria follows Israeli retreat from Lebanon. Within hours of the Israeli-Lebanese cease fire - essentially an Israeli retreat after making no progress against Hezbollah in the ground war in south Lebanon, indicted war criminal Netanyahu turned his attention to Syria, warning Syrian President Bashar al Assad that he was "playing with fire." The Israelis had long attacked Syria and wanted to remove the independent state as the key link between Iran and Lebanon, a conduit for material support to both the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance. At a NATO summit, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said Syria's key allies - Russia, Iran and Hezbollah - "had all been distracted" by their own problems, and "it looks like HTS took advantage of that fact." More to the point, Washington, "Israel", and Turkiye took advantage of that fact. According to Palestinian journalist in Washington Saeed Arikat, the HTS attack was coordinated by the Biden administration with Turkiye and "Israel" and "came as a result of American-Israeli emergency plan" as part of "an American vision" for the second day of the ceasefire agreement in Lebanon, "especially in light of the failure of the Israelis to achieve a decisive victory" against Hezbollah and that this is "an effort to inflict a defeat on Iran and its allies in the region" such as the Syrian Army which regained control of Aleppo eight years ago. The plan was a tremendous success. The rapid collapse of the Syrian army in city after city - Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus - made the takeover seem an almost bloodless coup. In the absence of any real resistance to the Turkish backed and equipped invasion (Erdogan's Muslim Brotherhood partners, the Qataris, have also been funding HTS), President Assad and his family fled the country (apparently to Russia) and his Prime Minister Mohammed Gazi Jalali surrendered to HTS. The "rebel" leader al-Jolani made some placating noises about no reprisals and leaving public buildings intact, but the history of this group is bloody and sectarian. Clearly, some sort of deal was made, in part to save lives - but details are unclear. We do know who gained. The Israelis have been rewarded, probably beyond their expectations, by the removal of the key link between Iran and the Palestinian and Lebanese Resistance. Netanyahu has been more than compensated for the Israeli defeat in south Lebanon and effectively rewarded for his genocide in Gaza. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham is the successor to Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda franchise in Syria which has been semi-covertly backed by Washington and other NATO regimes, especially that of Erdogan in Turkiye, which has stationed Turkish troops in North Syria for several years. Unlike the Resistance groups Hamas, PIJ, and Hezbollah, which are only listed as "terrorist" in the Anglo American states and their allies, HTS is banned by the UN Security Council. It remains to be seen how Washington and its hangers on will try to recognise a "government" led by a group still branded as "terrorist" under both US and international law. The HTS regime was also supported by the three foreign states which still militarily occupy Syria: Turkiye, "Israel", and the USA. Some rebranding is on its way; but that is a US specialty. Friendly relations between HTS "rebels" (many of whom are non-Syrians) and "Israel" are well known. Several years earlier Israeli hospitals were patching up al-Qaeda fighters and sending them back into Syria. "Israel" had then helped evacuate fighters and their crisis actors, The White Helicopters, to Israeli territory, in 2018. More recently, HTS has sent reassuring messages to the Israelis, assuring them that their fight was only with the Assad government.

## Syria: Trampled like grass

Qamar Bashir



Donald J. Trump, the USA President Elect in his latest statement released on his personnel account on X, gleefully broke the news of Bashar al-Assad's imminent fall. He announced that opposition fighters in Syria, in an unprecedented move, had taken control of numerous cities in a highly coordinated offensive and were now on the outskirts of Damascus, seemingly preparing for a major push to oust Assad. Trump pointed out that Russia, deeply involved in the ongoing war in Ukraine and having suffered significant losses, including over 600,000 soldiers, appeared incapable of halting this advance through Syria – a country Russia has long protected

When Israel was carrying out its military operations against Palestine, I initially believed that the scale and magnitude of Israel's actions were disproportionate to Palestine alone and that Israel, along with its benefactor, had a larger strategic objective. This objective eventually came into focus: the weakening of Bashar al-Assad's Shia regime in Syria. Interestingly, the U.S. played a crucial role. It first identified the main factors that kept Assad in power: Russia and Iran. On one front, Russia became entangled in a prolonged war in Ukraine, where, with the support of the U.S. and Europe, Ukraine was able to limit Russia's advances and push it back on multiple fronts. This prolonged war drained Russia of precious resources, and whatever resources it had were poured into its own conflict, leaving its allies, like Syria, high and dry. At the same time, the U.S., with its ally Israel, sought to stretch Iran's resources in the Middle East by involving it in a series of regional conflicts. Iran was forced to commit significant resources to supporting Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, and securing its own interests, which left its support for Syria's Assad regime weakened. This was a critical moment for the anti-Assad militias, supported by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other Sunni powers in the Middle East. These countries provided money and USA and its allies including Israel provided military aid, and superior guerrilla tactics and reconnaissance technologies, giving the militias an edge over the forces supporting Assad. Without adequate funding, ammunition, and strategic guidance, Assad's regime and its affiliated militias lost momentum, leading to a decisive advantage for the opposition groups backed by Sunni powers. Donald J. Trump, the USA President Elect in his latest statement released on his personnel account on X, gleefully broke the news of Bashar al-Assad's imminent fall. He announced that opposition fighters in Syria, in an unprecedented move, had taken control of numerous cities in a highly coordinated offensive and were now on the outskirts of Damascus, seemingly preparing for a major push to oust Assad. Trump pointed out that Russia, deeply involved in the ongoing war in Ukraine and having suffered significant losses, including over

600,000 soldiers, appeared incapable of halting this advance through Syria – a country Russia has long protected. He suggested that, just like Assad, Russia might be forced out, which he claimed could, in the end, be beneficial for them. However, in his signature style, Trump reiterated his isolationist stance, saying, "THE UNITED STATES SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. THIS IS NOT OUR FIGHT. LET IT PLAY OUT. DO NOT GET INVOLVED!" Despite his rhetoric, it was clear that the U.S. had been deeply involved in the Syrian conflict for years, both directly and through support of various opposition groups, and it continued to be a significant player in the region. The situation in Afghanistan echoes the recent developments in Syria. After the U.S.-led invasion in late 2001, NATO and its allies successfully removed the Taliban from power, replacing them with Hamid Karzai's government, followed by Ashraf Ghani in 2014. Despite massive investments of billions of dollars, the training of the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the continued presence of NATO forces, the Afghan government struggled with corruption, insurgency, and internal divisions. The Taliban gradually regained strength, and by 2021, after the U.S. signed the Doha Agreement to withdraw troops, the Afghan government quickly collapsed. In August 2021, as the Taliban swept through the country, President Ghani fled, and the Afghan government crumbled. The chaotic and rapid departure of both Ghani and U.S. forces marked a humiliating defeat, as the coalition's two-decade effort to stabilize Afghanistan ended in disaster. Despite the U.S. pouring resources into the country, the regime failed to survive without the backing of foreign forces, drawing comparisons to the weakening of Assad's regime in Syria amidst shifting global dynamics. The Syrian war, which began in 2011, is a complex and devastating conflict involving a mix of internal and external actors pursuing divergent goals. Bashar al-Assad's government, supported by Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah, seeks to maintain power, while opposition forces range from moderate groups to extremists like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, with backing from the U.S., Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Kurdish forces, crucial in the fight against ISIS, are allied with the U.S. but face

Turkish opposition due to PKK ties. Regional players such as Iran and Russia aim to bolster Assad, while Turkey targets Kurdish ambitions, and Saudi Arabia and Qatar support Sunni rebels to counter Iran's influence. ISIS, though territorially diminished, remains a disruptive force. Global actors like the U.S. and Russia pursue strategic interests, further entrenching the conflict. This multi-dimensional proxy war has devastated Syria, complicating efforts for peace and prolonging human suffering. Now when Rebel forces have entered Damascus, have freed prisoners and have surrounded Assad's resident, the future of Syria remain uncertain for decades to come. With Assad's ouster and taking over Syria by U.S.-backed militia, Syria's next decade would likely see a fragile transition marked by internal divisions, ongoing insurgencies, and regional power struggles. A transitional government, heavily influenced by U.S. and Gulf interests, would face legitimacy challenges, while rebuilding efforts focus on restoring infrastructure and reviving the economy. Kurdish demands for autonomy could heighten tensions with Turkey, and Iran might escalate proxy warfare to undermine the new regime. Though aligned with Sunni Arab states, Syria could remain a battleground for geopolitical rivalries, with external interference stalling democratic reforms. Persistent extremist threats, corruption, and sectarian divides would jeopardize stability, leaving the country vulnerable to cycles of unrest and underdevelopment. First Iraq, then Libya, later Afghanistan, and now Syria—nations that were once navigating their own challenges like any other—have been plunged into chaos through entanglement in complex geopolitical rivalries. Once peaceful, these countries now lie in ruins, their physical infrastructure decimated, their economies shattered, and their social fabric torn apart. Children have been orphaned, women widowed, and countless lives lost, leaving behind rubble where thriving communities once stood. The staggering human cost is a sobering reminder of the price of becoming a pawn in the games of powerful nations. For fragile and impoverished countries, the lesson is clear: steer clear of the battles of giants, or risk being trampled like grass underfoot.

## BRICL: Brick by Brick

Dr M Ali Hamza



The business research in life sciences can also assist in bringing efficiency for supply chain management and resource utilization that are crucial in life sciences, where production costs can be high, and timelines are critical. Business research can identify bottlenecks and suggests process optimizations to enhance operational efficiency

The life sciences field, encompassing biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, environmental sciences, and healthcare, plays a pivotal role in addressing humanity's most pressing challenges. From combating global pandemics to ensuring food security, this domain profoundly influences quality of life and global sustainability. Likewise, the life sciences field holds immense potential for transforming Pakistan's economy and addressing critical challenges. The life sciences industry operates at the intersection of scientific discovery and market application. Despite groundbreaking research and innovations, many organizations face challenges in commercializing their products and services, securing investments, and navigating complex regulatory landscapes. Business research provides a structured approach to addressing these challenges by offering insights into market trends, consumer behaviour, supply chain optimization, and strategic planning. Countries like the United States, Germany, Switzerland, and Singapore have excelled in life sciences by integrating business research with scientific innovation. Their focus on academia-industry collaboration drives sustainable growth and global leadership in life sciences. However, in Pakistan the sector struggles to realize its full potential due to a lack of integration between scientific innovation and business acumen. Business research in life sciences is vital for bridging this gap by guiding commercialization strategies, market development, and efficient resource utilization. In Pakistan, the importance of business research in life sciences is starkly underappreciated. While scientific research has seen some progress, universities and research institutions largely neglect the business dimensions of these advancements. Though few efforts are made to translate laboratory innovations into market-ready solutions,

leaving innovative discoveries underutilized or abandoned. Regulatory hurdles, inadequate funding strategies, and a lack of collaboration with industry exacerbate the problem. Moreover, the existing academic curriculum often fails to emphasize interdisciplinary studies, particularly the integration of business principles with scientific research. This creates a talent gap where graduates lack the skills to navigate the complex market and regulatory environments of the life sciences sector. The scope of business research in life sciences is vast, encompassing multiple dimensions critical to industry growth and societal impact. For instance, understanding market demand and end-user is essential for life sciences products, which often cater to niche or highly specialized segments. Consumer insights is central for product design, communication strategies, and post-market surveillance. It is market research that analyses trends, customer needs, and competitive landscapes, guiding companies in developing and positioning their offerings effectively. The business research in life sciences can also assist in bringing efficiency for supply chain management and resource utilization that are crucial in life sciences, where production costs can be high, and timelines are critical. Business research can identify bottlenecks and suggests process optimizations to enhance operational efficiency. Human capital is a critical resource, therefore business research in life sciences field can identify skill gaps, understand workforce trends, and develop targeted training programs through data-driven insights. Furthermore, research data can help create rational and pragmatic understanding to shape curricula of higher education institutions, that prepare graduates for real-world challenges, ensuring the life sciences sector has skilled,

adaptable professionals to drive innovation and growth. Alas! Pakistan lacks this data severely. The strategic alliance and partnership between academia, industry, and government are a hallmark of the life sciences sector. Business research can contribute in evaluating potential partners, models of collaboration, and shared value creation strategies. In this context, the Business School of University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore took an initiative to host the first-ever business research conference focused on the life sciences field, is both timely and groundbreaking. The first Business Research International Conference in Life Sciences (BRICL) 2024 can serve as a platform to explore the critical intersections of science, business, and societal impact. The engagement of international scholars from New Zealand, Australia, UK, Germany, France, UAE, China, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia will definitely bring in the bank of knowledge needed for the country. Indeed, the organizers of BRICL 2024 are sensitive to the matter and future oriented. The conference is expected to have far-reaching implications for the life sciences sector. The success of this conference could lead to an annual tradition, further solidifying UVAS Business School as a leader in this interdisciplinary domain, and would invite other institutions to follow. To unlock the business potential of life sciences in Pakistan, institutions must prioritize business research. Collaborative initiatives, such as establishing innovation hubs, fostering industry-academia partnerships, and hosting dedicated business conferences, that can ignite change. Without addressing these shortcomings, Pakistan risks falling behind in a field critical for its economic and social development. This is only possible brick-by-brick, and BRICL might turn out to be the foundation brick. Wish them all the beginner's luck.



## Briefs

## Military courts cannot announce...

FROM PAGE 01  
"Do you recognise the constitutional bench?" In response, the counsel said: "I do not accept the jurisdiction of the constitutional bench." Justice Mandokhail, addressing this remark, said: "Then you may leave the courtroom." The counsel further asserted that the current constitutional bench was nominated by the Judicial Commission. At this, Justice Mandokhail inquired whether the 26th Constitutional Amendment had been invalidated? He was joined by Justice Mazhar, who observed: "You are employing delaying tactics. At every hearing, some new request emerges." "If the 26th Amendment is annulled, judicial decisions will be safeguarded. Even those detained under military courts desire this outcome," added Justice Mazhar. The bench then called Hafeezullah Niazi to the rostrum. Justice Mandokhail asked him: "Do you wish to proceed with this case?" Niazi affirmed: "Yes, I want to proceed."

## Fazlur Rehman accuses...

FROM PAGE 01  
"They wanted to give us a new system in 2019, but it was just an agreement," he said. Following the agreement, the Directorate General of Religious Education (DGRE) was established under the executive order. The JUI-F chief said there had been an agreement on the madrasas registration bill before the passage of the 26th Constitutional Amendment, and a draft was prepared. "All relevant stakeholders, including the agencies, agreed on the bill, which was later passed by the National Assembly and the Senate," he said, asking why the amendment bill was returned by President Asif Zardari. He further said that every seminary was "free to register itself anywhere", then why they were being brought under the control of the directorate. "They [the government] were associating the seminaries with an act or agreement," he said, adding: "We are affiliating the madrasas with law."

## Tarar for finding out solution...

FROM PAGE 01  
that legislation was to bring seminaries into national mainstream, besides eradicating some negative perceptions in this regard. The most important aspect of that system was to ensure that the students graduated from seminaries do not face any discrimination and get equal opportunities, he added. "Registration of 18,000 Madrasas is the result of the efforts of the Department of Religious Education", he said adding that efforts of the Director General of Religious Education were worth appreciation. He also thanked the role of Ulema and Mashaikh for their cooperation in this regard. About the Madrasa Bill, he said it could not become law due to some legal complications.

## Shehbaz for ensuring safe...

FROM PAGE 01  
establish an information desk and a helpline to facilitate the Pakistanis. Until the security situation improves, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Crisis Management Unit and information desks at Pakistani embassies in Syria and its neighboring countries should remain operational round-the-clock, the prime minister directed. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Cheema, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi, and senior officials from relevant departments. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif spoke with Mr. Najib Mikati, Prime Minister of Lebanon, this evening.

## Pakistan under go intense training ahead of first T20I

The T20I series opener kicks off on Tuesday

## SPORTS DESK

DURBAN: The Pakistan cricket team intensified preparations for the upcoming three-match T20I series against South Africa. The squad engaged in robust drills, focusing on honing their skills in batting, bowling and fielding. The first T20I match will take place tomorrow, followed by the second game in Centurion on December 13, and the series finale in Johannesburg on December 14. Newly appointed Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan has experienced a mix of success and challenges in his captaincy tenure so far. He led the team in the recently concluded ODI and T20I series against Australia, where the Men in Green made history by defeating the Aussies 2-1 in the ODI series, their first win on Australian soil in 22 years. However, the team faced a setback in the T20I series, suffering a 3-0 whitewash at the hands of the hosts. Pakistan then traveled to Zimbabwe for a series of ODIs and T20Is, where they claimed the ODI series 2-1. Rizwan was replaced by Salman Ali



Agha for the T20I series, which Pakistan won 2-1. After the T20I series, Pakistan and the Proteas will lock horns in a three-match ODI series, with the first ODI scheduled for December 17 in Paarl, the second on December 19 in Cape Town and the final on December 22 in Johannesburg. The tour will conclude with a two-match

Test series, beginning with the first Test in Centurion on December 26, and the second Test in Cape Town on January 3, 2025. The two-match series is part of the ongoing ICC World Test Championship (WTC) 2023-25 cycle, with South Africa currently sitting in second place with six wins in 10 matches and a win percentage of 59.26.

Pakistan, on the other hand, is in seventh place with four wins in 10 matches and a win percentage of 33.33.

Pakistan T20I squad: Mohammad Rizwan (captain & wk), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Haris Rauf, Jahandad Khan, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Hasnain, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omaid Bin Yousuf, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Suyyan Moqim, Tayyab Tahir and Usman Khan (wk)

South Africa T20I squad: Heinrich Klaasen (c), Ottneil Baartman, Matthew Breetzke, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Patrick Kruger, George Linde, Kwena Maphaka, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Ngaba Peter, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Andile Simelane, Rassie van der Dussen.

Pakistan's tour of South Africa schedule:

- 10 Dec – First T20I, Durban
- 13 Dec – Second T20I, Centurion
- 14 Dec – Third T20I, Johannesburg
- 17 Dec – First ODI, Paarl
- 19 Dec – Second ODI, Cape Town
- 22 Dec – Third ODI, Johannesburg
- 26-30 Dec – First Test, Centurion
- 3-7 Jan – Second Test, Cape Town

## Siraj, Head penalized for on-field altercation

It was the first offence by both Head and Siraj in a 24-month period

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday, reprimanded Australia's left-handed batter Travis Head and India's right-arm pacer Mohammed Siraj for their heated argument during the recently-concluded second Test. The incident occurred in the 82nd over of Australia's first innings after the 30-year-old, who had

cruised to a magnificent century, smashed Siraj for a six. Siraj responded with a deadly yorker on the next delivery and cleaned up the Australian batter. As the left-handed batter trudged back to the dressing room, the angry pacer gave him a fiery send-off, pointing to the dressing room and gesturing him to leave. Head, visibly frustrated,

replied with a few words. As a result, Siraj has been fined 20 per cent of his match fee for breaching article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel which relates to "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon dismissal."

Furthermore, one demerit has been added to the right-arm pacer's disciplinary record. On the other hand, Head was awarded one demerit point for breaching article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to the "abuse of a player, player support personnel, umpire or match referee during an international match." Notably, it was the first offence by both Mohammed Siraj and Travis Head in a 24-month period. According to the ICC, Head and Siraj have accepted their respective offences and accepted the sanction proposed by Ranan Madugalle of the ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, thus, eliminating the need for a formal hearing. The charge was levelled by on-field umpires Chris Gaffaney and Richard Illingworth, alongside third umpire Richard Kettleborough and fourth umpire Phillip Gillespie. For the unversed, Level 1 breaches may result in penalties ranging from an official reprimand to a fine of 50 per cent of a player's match fee and one or two demerit points. – Agencies



## Zohaib earns No 1 position in U-14 Pak tennis rankings

## AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's young tennis sensation Zohaib Afzal Malik has achieved the coveted No 1 position in the Under-14 category of the Pakistan Tennis Federation rankings, updated on September 12, 2024. This milestone marks a significant chapter in Zohaib's burgeoning tennis career and is a testament to his relentless hard work and dedication. Zohaib's success would not have been possible without the steadfast support and expert guidance of several individuals and organisations. ACE Tennis played a pivotal role in his journey, while Pakistan's tennis stalwarts, including Aisam-ul-Haq (also the owner of ACE Tennis Academy), longest serving Pakistan No. 1 and Coach Aqeel Khan, Coach Muhammad Khalid, and Trainer M Arshad Javed, provided invaluable mentorship and encouragement. Their collective efforts have been instrumental in shaping Zohaib's path to excellence. Zohaib extended special thanks to SA Gardens for their sponsorship and Lahore Grammar School (LGS) Phase 5 for their all-out support, which enabled Zohaib to pursue his passion at the highest level. Zohaib also expressed his appreciation for Troops Academy in Thailand, which played a vital role in honing his skills and preparing him for future challenges on the international stage. With a promising future ahead, Zohaib vowed to continue making strides in the world of tennis and earning more and more accolades for his country at international level as well.



## SC restores Adil Bazai's Assembly membership

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noting it was not a trivial matter and required a thorough examination of all aspects. Bazai had challenged the ECP's decision to de-seat him as the National Assembly member from NA-262 Quetta.

## Gohar refutes Aleema's...

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within 20 days," he contended. The PTI chairman further said that he had made no contact in this regard on November 24 or before. No discussion was held with the government about meeting the PTI founder, he added. Aleema, the PTI founder's sister, on Saturday claimed that the government came under pressure when the convoys began to arrive in Islamabad for the protest, prompting them to send Barrister Gohar to meet Khan in jail with assurances of his release within 20 days.

## Security forces neutralize...

FROM PAGE 01  
two Khwarij were sent to hell, while one Kharji was apprehended in injured condition. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from these Khwarij, who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against the security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Kharji found in the area, as security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country.

## Nation remembers heroic...

FROM PAGE 01  
Hussain Shaheed displayed unparalleled courage and extraordinary devotion to duty. By identifying enemy tanks and directing the crew of recoilless rifles, he contributed to the destruction of 16 enemy tanks. During this valiant act, he was struck in the chest by enemy machine-gun fire and embraced the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. The anniversary of Sowar Muhammad Hussain Shaheed stands as an enduring testament to the unwavering commitment and supreme sacrifices of the Armed Forces of Pakistan in safeguarding the sovereignty and dignity of the motherland.

## PTI ready for talks...

FROM PAGE 01  
negotiation committee comprising Omar Ayub, CM Gandapur, Sahibzada Hamid Raza, Salman Akram Raja and Asad Qaiser. The committee, he said, would negotiate with the federal government on two points – the release of "political prisoners" facing trial and the constitution of a judicial commission to probe the events of May 9, 2023 and a late-night crackdown on PTI protesters on November 26. "If these two demands are not accepted, a civil disobedience movement will be launched from December 14," the jailed former premier said, adding that the government would be responsible for the results of this movement.

## New era starts in...

FROM PAGE 01  
family's brutal rule. The lightning advance of a militia alliance spearheaded by Hayat al-Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a former al-Qaeda affiliate, marked one of the biggest turning points for the Middle East in generations. Assad's fall wiped out a bastion from which Iran and Russia exercised influence across the Arab world. Moscow gave asylum to Assad and his family, Russian media reported and Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's ambassador to international organisations in Vienna, said on his Telegram channel on Sunday. International governments welcomed the end of the Assads' autocratic government, as they sought to take stock of a new-look Middle East.

## Rutherford's ton gives WI win over Bangladesh

BASSETERRE: A stunning maiden century from Sherrane Rutherford propelled the West Indies to a thrilling five-wicket win over Bangladesh in the first ODI match at Warner Park on Sunday. Rutherford's powerful 113 off 80 balls, which included seven fours and eight sixes, guided the West Indies to chase down Bangladesh's total of 294/6, falling just seven runs short of the highest-ever successful run chase at the venue. The 26-year-old, playing in just his 10th ODI, was named Player of the Match for his remarkable contribution. He joined the crease with the West Indies at 94/3, still needing 200 runs to secure victory. Rutherford quickly found his rhythm, forging a crucial 99-run partnership for the fourth wicket with captain Shai Hope, who contributed an important 86 from 88 balls. However, after Hope's departure, Rutherford continued his assault, adding 95 for the sixth wicket with Justin Greaves, who remained unbeaten on 41. His aggressive knock took the West Indies to 295/5 in just 47.4 overs, clinching the win with over two overs to spare. Speaking about his performance, Hope praised his teammate's growth with the bat: "I think he's really improved his batting." – Agencies

## Quaid-e-Azam Games set to take place in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) is ready to host the Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games 2024, a week-long celebration of sports from December 13 to December 19 at the Pakistan Sports Complex. According to press released issued here on Monday, This exciting event will bring together athletes from across the country, representing Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Islamabad. The Games aim to promote unity and engage the youth through inter sports, including athletics, badminton, karate, squash, swimming, table tennis, and wrestling. Both male and female in individual and team events with sprint, hurdles and thrilling football standing performances, PSB has prizes. Individual gold medalists will bronze medalists will be awarded respectively. Team event participants phy and medal distribution worth an will ensure fairness allowing athletes regional criteria. Any misconduct or and disqualification. Competitions will local adjustments made under the guidance to watch the events live, with free entry passes available on a first-come, first-served basis at the Pakistan Sports Complex. This initiative aims to create an engaging atmosphere for both participants and fans. As the Games approach, the Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games 2024 promises to reignite Pakistan's passion for sports and provide a platform for the next generation of talent to shine.



## South Africa overpower SL to sweep series

Maharaj took three of wickets to fall on the fifth morning to complete his 11th five-wicket haul in Tests

## WEB DESK

GQEBERHA: South Africa moved a step closer to the World Test Championship final with a 109-run victory over Sri Lanka in Gqeberha. The Proteas needed just 14.1 overs to take the five remaining Sri Lanka wickets on day five in the Eastern Cape and secure a 2-0 series win that takes them above Australia to the top of the WTC table., external Temba Bavuma's side will guarantee their place in the Lord's final in June if they win both Tests in their two-match series against Pakistan that begins on Boxing Day. Sri Lanka opened the day on 205-5, needing another 143 to win at St George's Park, with Dhananjaya de Silva and Kusal Mendis continuing a stand that had reached 83 on day four.



However, left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj broke the partnership in the fourth over of the day as Mendis edged to slip. Kagiso Rabada had Dhananjaya caught behind 14 balls later and the tourists quickly crumbled to 238 all out - the last five wickets going down for 19 runs. Maharaj took three of the wickets to fall on the fifth morning to complete his 11th five-wicket haul in Tests. Centuries from Kyle Verreynne and Ryan Rickelton helped set up the victory for South Africa, while 35-year-old seamer Dane Paterson claimed his maiden Test five to earn them a narrow first-innings lead. Bavuma and Aiden Markram then made half-centuries in the hosts' second innings to set a challenging target of 348 that ultimately proved beyond Sri Lanka.



## Briefs

## Rupee gains 03 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Monday appreciated by 03 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs277.97 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.00. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.50 and Rs279.00 respectively. The price of Euro decreased by 54 paise to close at Rs293.66 against the last day's closing of Rs294.20, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.84, whereas a decrease of one paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs354.82 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs354.83. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham remained stagnant and closed at Rs75.68 while the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paise to close at Rs73.99.—APP

## Gold price increases by Rs 2000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs.2000 and was sold at Rs. Rs 276,400 on Monday against its sale at Rs 274,400 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 1,734 to Rs.236,698 from Rs 235,254 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs.217,221 from Rs 215,650. Per tola and ten gram silver were also traded at same rate at Rs 3,400 and Rs 2,914.95, respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$20 to \$2,652 from \$2,632, the Association reported.—APP

## Zelensky urges 'stronger' aid from German chancellor candidate Merz

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday asked for more support from Germany against Russia while meeting with opposition leader Friedrich Merz, who is leading opinion polls ahead of German elections in February. "We are counting on stronger, more decisive actions from Germany, from you personally. We are counting on it very much," Zelensky said, mentioning Ukraine's request for an invitation to join NATO and for long-range missiles. Merz, leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union, visited Kyiv one week after centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz went there. Both candidates have pledged sustained support for Ukraine in defending itself against the Russian invasion, but Merz has argued in the past that Berlin should send more powerful weaponry. He has urged Scholz to send Ukraine the long-range Taurus missile system, which could fire deep into Russian territory — something Scholz has refused to do for fear of escalating the conflict.

"President Zelensky knows our position on Taurus missiles... As it stands today, at the beginning of December 2024, it remains the same," Merz said in Kyiv. Merz, who arrived by train from Poland in the morning, earlier said on social media that "the war in Ukraine must end as soon as possible. Only if Ukraine can defend itself will Putin enter into negotiations". The statements come as combat has intensified ahead of the inauguration of Donald Trump as US president, who has repeated he would end the conflict swiftly — raising fears he could force Kyiv into a deal on Moscow's terms. Zelensky on Sunday said Kyiv needed an "enduring" peace to protect it from Russia, after talks in Paris with Trump, who said he would "probably" reduce aid to Ukraine.—APP

## Despair grips Afghan women healthcare students facing ban

The authorities have made no official comment or confirmation, nor have they responded to the numerous condemnations and calls to reverse a decision that further blocks women's access to education

KABUL: For Saja, studying nursing at a healthcare institute in Kabul was her last lifeline to make something of herself after women were banned from universities in Afghanistan two years ago. But the Taliban government has crushed this ambition by ordering, according to multiple sources, the exclusion of Afghan women from medical training, sparking panic across institutions. When she heard the news, Saja, who had been at university before women were barred, said it felt like "re-living the same nightmare". "This was my last hope to do something, to become something," said Saja, not her real name. "Everything has been taken away from us for the crime of being a girl." The authorities have made no official comment or confirmation, nor have they responded to the numerous condemnations and calls to reverse a decision that further blocks women's access to education. Since their return to power in 2021, the Taliban government has

imposed reams of restrictions on women, making Afghanistan the only country in the world to ban girls from education after primary school. Multiple directors and employees of health training centres have told media outlet they were informed in recent days of the order, issued by the Taliban supreme leader and passed down verbally by the health ministry, to expel women students until further notice. Institutes across the country — which many women had turned to after the university ban — were given a few days to just over a week to organise final exams. But without a clear announcement or document clarifying the rules, confusion reigns in the institutions.

Some told media outlet they would operate as normal until they received written orders, others closed immediately or scrambled to hold exams before shutting. Still others refused to comment, saying they'd been warned not to speak to the media.

"Everyone is confused, and no one is sharing what is really happening," said Saja, who was in her first year at a private institute. "We have been given two or three exams each day... even though we already finished our exams a few months back," said the 22-year-old, adding they had to pay fees to sit the exams. "We received a lot of concerned messages from students and teachers wanting to know what is going on and asking 'Is there any hope?'" said the director of a Kabul private institute with 1,100 students, of which 700 were women. 35,000 women students "No one is happy," he told media outlet from his office steps away from women's classrooms, where the last lesson on the board advised how to manage stress and depression in patients. According to a source within the health ministry, 35,000 women are currently students in some 10 public and more than 150 private institutes

offering two-year diplomas in subjects such as nursing, midwifery, dentistry and laboratory work. The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) non-governmental organisation, which trains 588 women in institutes managed in collaboration with the health ministry, was verbally informed classes were "temporarily suspended". This has to be taken "equally seriously as a written document", said NAC country director Terje Magnusson Watterdal, adding that "there are a lot of people high up within the current government that are quite opposed to this decision". He hopes, at the minimum, public institutes will be reopened to women. International organisations such as the United Nations, which has said Afghan women are victims of a "gender apartheid", have already warned of devastating consequences of the plan, in a country where maternal and infant mortality are among the

highest in the world.

Midwifery students in particular are passionate about their studies, according to Magnusson Watterdal. "So many of these young women have been motivated to become a midwife because they have lost a mother or an aunt or a sister in childbirth," he said. "It's not just a profession that you choose, it's a vocation. So, of course, there's great desperation" among students and staff. Small protests have been held in various parts of the country, according to sources and images circulated on social media. Assal, another student also using a pseudonym, received an expedited diploma last week, but still has little hope of finding a job in a country where unemployment is widespread and opportunities for women are increasingly limited. "I wanted to practise medicine and study further," the 20-year-old told media. "They had already taken everything from us. Next thing we won't even be allowed to breathe.—Agencies

## UAE calls for unity of Syria, integrity of national state

RIYADH: The United Arab Emirates said on Monday it is closely monitoring the ongoing developments in Syria. "The UAE foreign ministry calls on all Syrian parties to prioritize wisdom during this critical juncture in Syria's history," foreign ministry official Afra Al-Hameli said on X. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on all Syrian parties to prioritize wisdom during this critical juncture in Syria's history, in a manner that fulfills the aspirations and ambitions of all segments of the Syrian population. The UAE is closely monitoring the ongoing developments in Syria, and reiterates its commitment to the unity and integrity of the Syrian state, as well as to ensuring security and stability for the brotherly Syrian people, the statement added. Furthermore, the Ministry stressed the need to safeguard the Syrian national state and its institutions, and to prevent any descent into chaos and instability.—Agencies

## Iran in direct contact with groups in new Syrian leadership

DUBAI: Iran has opened a direct line of communication with rebels in Syria's new leadership since its ally Bashar Assad was ousted, a senior Iranian official told Reuters on Monday, in an attempt to "prevent a hostile trajectory" between the countries. The lightning advance of a militia alliance spearheaded by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, a former Al-Qaeda affiliate, marked one of the biggest turning points for the Middle East in generations. Assad's fall as president removed a bastion from which Iran and Russia exercised influence across the Arab world. Hours after Assad's fall, Iran said it expected relations with Damascus to continue based on the two countries' "far-sighted and wise approach" and called for the establishment of an inclusive government representing all segments of Syrian society. There is little doubt about Tehran's concern about how the change of power in Damascus will affect Iran's influence in Syria, the lynchpin of its regional clout. But there is no panic, three Iranian officials told Reuters, as Tehran seeks diplomatic avenues to establish contact with people whom one of the officials called "those within Syria's new ruling groups whose views are closer to Iran's." "The main concern for Iran is whether Assad's successor will push Syria away from Tehran's orbit," a second Iranian official said. "That is a scenario Iran is keen to avoid." A hostile post-Assad Syria would deprive Lebanese armed group Hezbollah of its only land supply route and deny Iran its main access to the Mediterranean and the "front line" with Israel.—APP

## Dozens of schools receive 'hoax' bomb threats in New Delhi

DELHI: At least 40 schools in India's capital New Delhi received bomb threats via email on Monday, with the sender demanding a payment of \$30,000, according to Indian media reports. In response to the threats, police officials have initiated searches at the affected school premises, although no bombs have been found so far. The emails threatened to detonate explosives unless the specified ransom was paid. Authorities have not yet confirmed whether the threats are genuine or part of a hoax. The bomb threats come amid a troubling increase in similar incidents across India in recent months, including hoaxes targeting schools, airports, and railway stations. In light of the threats, parents were seen picking up their children from schools as a precautionary measure. The Delhi Police are working to trace the origin of the emails and identify those responsible for the threats.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: The Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar received the Egyptian candidate for Director General UNESCO, Dr. Khaled El-Enany. They reaffirmed the historic brotherly ties between Pakistan and Egypt and strong commitment to strengthening these relations. Deputy Prime Minister Dar and Dr. El-Enany discussed the importance of cultural exchanges and cooperation in multilateral platforms including UNESCO.—DNA

## Explosion in central Israel 'likely' drone launched from Yemen

JERUSALEM: A drone, likely launched from Yemen, exploded on the top floor of a residential building in the central Israeli city of Yavne on Monday, causing no injuries, the Israeli army and emergency services said. "Following the initial report, a UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) that likely originated in Yemen impacted in the area of Yavne," the army said. A spokesperson for Israeli emergency service MDA said reports were received of "an explosion on the 15th floor balcony" of the building in Yavne, and that after a search, no injuries were reported. Houthi rebels in Yemen, supported by Iran, have launched several attacks against Israel, saying they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, where Israel has been at war with militant group Hamas for over a year. In July, a Houthi drone attack in Tel Aviv killed an Israeli civilian, prompting retaliatory strikes on the Yemeni port of Hodeidah. The Houthis, who control large parts of Yemen, also regularly target ships linked to Israel, the United States and the United Kingdom in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, despite strikes by the US and British militaries aimed at securing the vital trade route. The Gaza war was triggered by Hamas's unprecedented large-scale attack on southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,208 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP count based on official data. During the attack, militants also kidnapped 251 hostages, 96 of whom remain in Gaza, including 34 who have been declared dead by the army.—APP

## India envoy in Bangladesh to smooth months of tensions

DHAKA: India's top career diplomat was in Bangladesh on Monday to defuse tensions between the two neighbors arising from the August overthrow of autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina in a student-led revolution. Hasina's iron-fisted rule was strongly backed by India and the 77-year-old remains in New Delhi where she took refuge after her ouster, despite Bangladesh announcing it would seek her extradition. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, leader of an interim government tasked with implementing democratic reforms, has condemned acts of "Indian aggression" that he alleged were intended to destabilize his administration. Vikram Misra, the secretary of India's foreign ministry, arrived in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka on Monday for the first in-person meeting between top officials of both countries since Hasina's ouster. "It needs to be recognized that there has been a qualitative shift in the relationship between the two countries," Bangladesh's de facto foreign minister Touhid Hossain said Sunday, ahead of Misra's visit. "Acknowledging this reality, the relationship must be carried forward." Misra was slated to meet with Touhid and Yunus while in Dhaka. Yunus, 84, faced numerous criminal proceedings during Hasina's regime that her critics say were concocted to sideline one of her most high-profile potential rivals. He has been a vocal critic of India for backing Hasina's rule to the hilt despite the mounting rights abuses seen over her 15-year tenure.—APP

## Pressure grows on France's Macron to name new PM

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron was on Monday set to hold a series of consultations with party bosses as pressure grew on him to name a new prime minister and defuse a political crisis. Last week far-right and hard-left lawmakers joined efforts to oust the minority government of Prime Minister Michel Barnier in a historic no-confidence vote following a standoff over an austerity budget. Macron was on Monday morning to receive independent MPs from the centrist Liot group, Green party bosses led by Marine Tondelier and the Communists. Parliamentary speaker Yael Braun-Pivet said a new head of government should be appointed "within the next few hours." She urged the president's centrist camp to join forces with the right-wing Republicans (LR), independent MPs and the Socialists. "You would have a majority, so there is no longer any possibility of censure," she said on Sunday. The successful parliamentary no-confidence vote, a first in more than six decades, deepened a political crisis and sparked calls for Macron, 46, to step down and call early elections. A defiant Macron said last week he planned to serve out the remainder of his term, vowing "30 months of useful action" and promising to name a new prime minister in the "coming days." At the weekend he had a brief respite from the domestic political upheaval, hosting world leaders including US president-elect Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for the re-opening of Notre Dame cathedral in Paris after a devastating fire in 2019. Macron is now under huge pressure to form a government that can survive a no-confidence vote and pass a budget for next year in a bid to limit political and economic turmoil. It took the French president more than 50 days to choose Barnier, from the Republican party, following inconclusive legislative elections in the summer that resulted in a hung parliament. Allies have urged Macron to move quickly this time. "We can't go on like this," Macron's centrist ally Francois Bayrou said on Sunday, warning the French did not want uncertainty to continue. Bayrou heads the MoDem party, which is allied to, but not part of, Macron's centrist force. He has been tipped as a possible contender for prime minister. "If I can help us get through this, I will," he said. However many do not support his candidacy. "Mr Bayrou's political line did not win the legislative elections," Tondelier told broadcaster RTL ahead of Monday's meeting with Macron. "We need a personality who is compatible with the left," added Raphael Glucksmann, founder of progressive left-wing movement Place Publique, adding he was hoping to bring on board Communist and Green MPs. The left-wing New Popular Front (NFP), which was put together to prevent the far-right from coming to power, emerged as the largest bloc in the National Assembly after the summer elections. The broad alliance includes the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI), the Socialists, Communists and Greens. Its leaders have long insisted Macron should appoint a prime minister from their ranks. The president earlier ruled that out. Macron — who has hoped to prise the Socialists away from their pact with the LFI — received a boost when Socialist Party leader Olivier Faure said he was ready to negotiate with the president's centrists and the right. LFI's veteran leader Jean-Luc Melancon said his party had given the Socialists "no mandate" to negotiate a deal with Macron. On Friday, Macron met leaders of the parliamentary factions of his own centrist forces, the Socialist Party and the Republicans. The far-right National Rally (RN) has not so far been invited to talks.—DNA

## Chinese business delegation explores investment opportunities in Sindh

During discussions, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah emphasised Sindh's strategic economic position, robust infrastructure, and policies designed to promote foreign investment. The delegation, representing industries including medical technology, biochar, livestock, photovoltaic energy, and manufacturing, expressed strong interest in forming partnerships with the Sindh government

## DNA

KARACHI: A 15-member Chinese business delegation met with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to explore investment opportunities in the province's various sectors. The meeting highlighted the potential for collaboration in agriculture, renewable energy, livestock, and industrial production. The meeting was held at the CM House and was attended by provincial ministers Sharjeel Memon and Nasir Shah, as well as other officials, including Syed

Qasim Naveed, Secretary to the Chief Minister Rahim Shaikh, and Khurram Shahzad, Secretary of Investment. The Chinese delegation included representatives from nine medical companies, such as Meng Xiaowei, Agricultural Biochar Cooperation's Dr M Shahbaz, and livestock specialist Hong Pizheng. Other members represented photovoltaic companies Wu Liangliang and Zhou Guohao, large-scale livestock importers Mr Weng Gang, masterbatch businesses Liu Wenbo, as well as solar energy companies Xu Zhigang and the agriculture sector. Paki-

stani interpreters M. Ali Akbar, Li Wenjie, Idrees Gigi (leading the Chinese delegation), Sheikh Tehseen, and Muhammad Imran were also part of the group. During discussions, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah emphasised Sindh's strategic economic position, robust infrastructure, and policies designed to promote foreign investment. The delegation, representing industries including medical technology, biochar, livestock, photovoltaic energy, and manufacturing, expressed strong interest in forming partnerships with the Sindh government. Mr Shah noted that

there are numerous economic opportunities in Sindh, especially in the agriculture, renewable energy, and industrial sectors. He mentioned that the provincial government has established Special Economic Zones (SEZs), including the operational Kahirpur SEZ and the under-development Dhabaji Economic Zone. He also highlighted investment-friendly policies and various incentives launched by the provincial government. The visiting Chinese delegation discussed potential investments in several areas, including collaboration in medical technology and pharmaceuticals, advance-

ments in bio-char for sustainable agriculture, opportunities in livestock farming and export, and renewable energy projects focused on solar and wind power. The meeting concluded with the decision to form joint working groups for targeted projects. Chief Minister Shah assured the delegation of full support from the provincial government, emphasizing the importance of enhancing bilateral trade and investment. The discussions ended with optimism about future collaborations that promise economic prosperity for both Sindh and Chinese businesses.



## Briefs

### China vows to 'firmly defend' sovereignty

BEIJING: China vowed on Monday to "firmly defend" its sovereignty and insisted Taiwan was an "inalienable" part of its territory, after the island said it had detected Chinese warships and coast guard vessels in its waters. "China will firmly defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said, as the island's military launched combat readiness drills. Taiwan's defence ministry said it also spotted Chinese coast guard vessels and that Beijing's People's Liberation Army (PLA) had restricted the airspace off the Chinese coast. There has been intense speculation about the possibility of China launching military drills in response to Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's trip to the Pacific which included stopovers in Hawaii and Guam. Asked about the possibility of drills around the island and the claims by Taipei, Mao insisted: "Taiwan does not have a ministry of defence." "Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory and the Taiwan issue is China's internal affair," Mao said. Taiwan regards itself as a sovereign nation with its own government, military, and currency. - Agencies

### Naqvi meets Rahim Ashrafi

#### BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Maulana Fazl Rahim Ashrafi, Patron-in-Chief of the Wafaq ul Madaris and other eminent scholars at Jamia Ashrafia. The interior minister inquired about the health of Maulana Fazl Rahim Ashrafi and expressed his best wishes for him. During the meeting, the seminaries' bill was discussed in detail. Maulana Fazl Rahim, while talking to federal interior minister, said that there should be no politics on the issues of seminaries. He stated that we would play our positive role on the issue of seminaries. He further said that the seminaries in Punjab should also be under the Education Department like the federal government. The interior minister thanked Maulana Fazl Rahim for his assurance of playing a positive role regarding seminaries. Later, Maulana Fazl Rahim Ashrafi offered prayer for the security, development and prosperity of the country.

## Mountain Melodies show at ISH

# Honoring Pakistan's Folk music and cultural heritage

Serena Hotels remains at the forefront of promoting Cultural Diplomacy through various initiatives that celebrate and preserve Pakistan's rich heritage



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, as part of its Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, joined hands with Aga Khan Cultural Services Pakistan and the Aga Khan Foundation to celebrate and promote the rich cultural music and heritage of Pakistan through a delightful evening of folk music. The event was a mesmerizing journey into Pakistan's vibrant traditions, featuring melodious tunes and captivating performances that showcased the essence of the nation's cultural identity. Renowned artists, including Dr.

Masuma, Ustad Noor Bakhsh, Ustad Doshambay, and talented students from the Leif Larsen Music Centre, performed live, leaving the audience fascinated with their artistry and passion. The Leif Larsen Music Centre, founded in April 2011 at the historic Altit Fort, serves as a beacon of the revival of folk music of the region. It provides invaluable facilities for traditional musicians and performers from Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, enabling them to mentor youth in diverse traditions and genres of mountain music, ensuring the continuity of these cherished art forms. The event was further graced by the Norwegian



Ambassador H.E. Per Albert Ilsaas, who attended as the Chief Guest. In his address, the Ambassador highlighted the profound impact of cultural initiatives in bridging communities and promoting mutual understanding. He highly praised the collaboration between Serena Hotels, Aga Khan Cultural Services Pakistan, and the Aga Khan Foundation as a shining example of how cultural exchange can celebrate diversity, preserve heritage, and strengthen the bonds between different cultures. The Ambassador emphasized that events like these not only showcase the richness of Pakistan's traditions but also serve as a universal language that unites people

across geographical and cultural boundaries. Serena Hotels remains at the forefront of promoting Cultural Diplomacy through various initiatives that celebrate and preserve Pakistan's rich heritage. These include the Satrang Art Gallery, dedicated to exhibiting contemporary art; crafts festivals that honor and support the work of local artisans; and the musical platform Sarangi, which promotes traditional musical talent. Through these endeavors, Serena Hotels reaffirms its commitment to preserving cultural traditions while encouraging interchange and artistic collaboration on both national and international levels.

## NAB recovers Rs3.8tr in one year: Chairman

### Says corruption, in any form, is the greatest barrier to sustainable development

#### MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman retired Lt Gen Nazir Ahmed said on Monday that the bureau had set a historic record by recovering Rs3.8 trillion, or \$13.57 billion, in just one year. Speaking at a special event in connection with Anti-Corruption Day, the NAB chairman said that the bureau had directly or indirectly recovered Rs6.1 trillion since its establishment. He commended the outstanding performance of NAB Karachi, NAB Sukkur, and NAB KPK. NAB Karachi and Sukkur regions have collectively saved Rs2.4 trillion and Rs1.1 trillion, respectively, by recovering forest land across an area of 1.8 million hectares. Similarly, NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has achieved indirect and consequential savings of Rs 194.937 billion, he said. In addition, the NAB has processed 22,000 applications. Due to reforms, the filing of false complaints has been discouraged, leading to a reduction in such complaints from 4,000 per month to just 400 per month, the Chairman expressed. The chairman NAB emphasized that corruption, in any form, is the greatest barrier to sustainable development and economic prosperity. He reiterated NAB's commitment to fighting corruption, safeguarding

national assets, recovering embezzled funds, and returning them to the public. The event was attended by NAB Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir, the UNODC Representative in Pakistan, and a large number of senior NAB officers. The NAB Chairman stated that 65 percent of the country's population is under the age of 30, and the youth represent the future. He highlighted that a comprehensive plan has been developed to engage them in the anti-corruption movement. To achieve this, a public awareness program will be launched with the support of educational and research institutions, along with various stakeholders. He mentioned that NAB is not only dedicated to combating corruption but has also shown exceptional performance in safeguarding national assets, recovering stolen funds, and returning them to the public. The Chairman also noted that NAB has implemented a visitor feedback system, which not only aids in controlling corruption but also enhances the institution's performance. Additionally, work is being carried out in the power sector with the cooperation of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), and its positive impact will be felt soon. He urged NAB officers to work with utmost dedication and enthusiasm to swiftly provide relief to victims in the real estate sector.

## Fin Min stresses private sector's role in growth

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of foreign investors and business professionals, mostly based in the United States, called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, at the Finance Division today. The delegation put together by Ambassador Ali Jehangir Siddiqui of the JS Bank comprised leading entrepreneurs, business practitioners and professionals from diverse sectors, including technology, academia, and finance, with lead members such as Mr. Auren Hoffman, Chief Executive Officer of SafeGraph, Mr. Kristen Edwards Marqua (Hakluyt & Company), Michael Levi (The D.E. Shaw Group), Dr. Jeff Chang (Rad AI), and others. Ambassador Ali Jehangir Siddiqui opened the discussion by apprising the Finance Minister about the composition of the delegation, the purpose of their visit and their interaction with different stakeholders during the visit so far. Advisor to the Finance Minister Mr. Khurram Shehzad and senior officers of the Finance Division and FBR were also present. The Finance Minister welcomed the delegation and briefed them about the country's recent macroeconomic progress, highlighting significant achievements in

overcoming longstanding challenges. "Pakistan has historically struggled with twin deficits; however, due to improved export performance, the economy is now operating with a surplus in both fiscal and current accounts. Foreign exchange reserves have crossed the \$12 billion mark, inflation has been brought down to single digits, and the policy rate is moving in the right direction," he noted. He further elaborated on the government's comprehensive reform agenda, encompassing privatization, SOE restructuring, rightsizing of the federal government, and pension reforms. Senator Aurangzeb also addressed two existential challenges faced by Pakistan: rapid population growth and climate change. "With a population growth rate exceeding 2%, we face severe implications for food security, child stunting, and out-of-school children. Climate change exacerbates these vulnerabilities, making it imperative to secure both financial and technical assistance to tackle these issues effectively," he remarked. He also mentioned that he has emphasized the importance of these priorities in discussions with international partners, including World Bank President Ajay Banga. - DNA

## Trump vows to end birthright citizenship

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump has said he will look at pardons for those involved in the 2021 US Capitol riot on his first day back in office next month. "These people are living in hell," he told NBC's Meet the Press in his first broadcast network interview since winning November's election. The Republican also vowed to end automatic citizenship for anyone born in the country, but offered to work with Democrats to help some undocumented immigrants who were brought to the US as children. In the wide-ranging sit-down, which was recorded on Friday, Trump promised to issue "a lot" of executive orders, including on immigration, energy and the economy, after he is inaugurated on 20 January. While he suggested he would not seek a justice department investigation into Joe Biden, he said that some of his political adversaries, including lawmakers who investigated the Capitol riot, should be jailed. Trump was asked whether he would seek to pardon the hundreds of people convicted of involvement in that riot, when supporters of his stormed Congress three months after his defeat in the 2020 election. "We're going to look at independent cases," he said. "Yeah, but I'm going to be acting very quickly." "First day," he added. Trump continued: "You know, by the way, they've been in there for years, and they're in a filthy, disgusting place that shouldn't even be allowed to be open." - Agencies

## PHC grants bail to Omar Ayub, others

#### SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court on Monday granted transit bail to several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, including opposition leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub. Justice Sahibzada Asadullah heard the bail plea of Omar Ayub, whose counsel argued that multiple cases had been filed against Ayub in Islamabad and Punjab, making his court appearances challenging due to fear of arrest. The court granted him transit bail until January 8 and directed him to appear before the relevant courts. Similarly, Justice Asadullah also approved a 20-day transit bail for PTI leader Umair Niazi, instructing him to appear before the concerned

courts. Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Ishtiaq Ibrahim presided over hearings for transit bail applications from other PTI leaders, including Shandana Gulzar, Arbab Amir Ayub, Asif Khan, and Arbab Sher Ali. During the proceedings, Omar Ayub submitted an additional plea, claiming he had been arrested in Rawalpindi during a previous court appearance despite holding protective bail. The court granted him transit bail until January 9 in a Faisalabad case while extending the earlier transit bail in other cases until January 8. Advocate Moazzam Butt informed the court that his clients faced cases in Islamabad and Faisalabad, which were lodged following the D-Chowk protest. He also mentioned that Arbab Sher Ali was out of the country when the charges were filed against him.

## Pakistani Youth to Visit Japan under the JENESYS Program



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: On the invitation by the Government of Japan, the first batch of six Pakistani youth will be visiting Japan from December 10 to 17, 2024 under the JENESYS (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) program. A total of 41 youths have been invited from the SAARC countries in this program which is being held under the theme of "Energy". JENESYS is a youth exchange program between Japan and the Asia Pacific region launched by the Japanese Government which aims at promoting mutual respect and understanding among the peoples of Japan and the Asia-Pacific region. With focus on the theme of "Energy", the invitees from the SAARC countries during their stay in Japan will be provided opportunities to learn and deepen further their understanding of Japan's economy, society, history, politics, and diplomatic relations, and also experience Japan's diverse culture through lectures and visits. The Embassy of Japan held today a pre-departure orienta-

tion session for the visiting youth to give them useful information before their departure for Japan. H.E. Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, the Ambassador-designate of Japan to Pakistan, while speaking on the occasion, hoped their stay in Japan will be a fruitful experience and advised the visiting group to make best use of this opportunity and learn as much as possible about Japan during this short period. He also mentioned that the homestay in Japan would be a highly valuable opportunity, not only to experience life in Japan but also to offer the Japanese people a unique chance to learn about Pakistan's rich and historic culture and gain a deeper understanding of the country. He wished that the visiting youth can play the role of a bridge for further promoting mutual understanding and friendly relations between Japan and Pakistan. The Government of Japan invites every year several groups of youth from SAARC countries to participate in this short term invitation. The program is expected not only to promote capacity building but also to develop mutual understanding among youths of Japan and that of SAARC countries.

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