



# Islamabad POST

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**What happened in Syria plotted by US, Israel, Iran's Leader**

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**Pakistan to enhance ties with Tajikistan**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Sabalenka wins WTA Player of Year award**

Detailed News On Page-06



**PM Shehbaz 'decides' to expand cabinet**

Sardar Yousaf, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Barrister Aqeel, Hanif Abbasi expected to join the Cabinet

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has decided to expand the federal cabinet, planning to add 10 new members. According to sources, the expansion is expected to be announced this month. The move is seen as an effort to bring in experienced and seasoned politicians, as desired by PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif. The new additions to the cabinet are expected to include PML-N leaders including Sardar Yousaf, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Barrister Aqeel, Hanif Abbasi, Saad Waseem, and Sheikh Aftab, whereas two women leaders are likely to be included to the cabinet. In May this year, PM Shehbaz Sharif expanded his federal cabinet by inducting MNA Ali Pervaiz Malik. The prime minister approved the appointment of Ali Pervaiz Malik as state minister. Following PM's approval, PML-N MNA Ali Pervaiz took the oath of the office of Minister of State here on Friday. President Asif Ali Zardari administered the oath to Ali Pervaiz in a ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

**Entire PTI responsible for May 9**

Condemns PTI's violent politics, affirming that evidence implicates leadership in May 9 incidents

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar has held the entire PTI leadership responsible for the May 9 incident, criticising their attempt to divert attention from the issue. Reacting to Barrister Gohar Ali's statement, Tarar accused the PTI of fabricating false narratives about gunfire. He challenged the party to provided evidence and questioned their escape from the scene. He stated the armed miscreants attacked federal institutions on November 26 as well, leaving security personnel martyred and injured. Tarar demanded accountability for the loss of life and dismissed the PTI's claims of casualties, urging them to present proof. He condemned the PTI's violent politics, affirming that evidence implicates its leadership in the May 9 happenings.

**Fifa confirms KSA as 2034 WC host**

Of the 15 stadiums identified to hold matches, 4 have been built so far

SPORTS DESK

RIYADH: The 2034 men's football World Cup will be held in Saudi Arabia, while Spain, Portugal and Morocco will be joint hosts for the 2030 tournament, world governing body Fifa has confirmed. Three matches in the 2030 tournament will also be held in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay to mark 100 years of the competition. The hosts for both World Cups were confirmed at Wednesday's Extraordinary Fifa Congress meeting following a vote. All 211 of Fifa's member nations were represented at the meeting over a video link. The hosts for both tournaments, and of the 2030 centenary celebrations, were confirmed via two separate votes. The first selected Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina as the centenary hosts.

**Amid civil disobedience threat**

## PTI, govt 'return to table of dialogue'

According to reports, it was decided to use Parliament as the platform for negotiations

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The federal government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have resumed contacts to lower the political temperature. PTI leaders met National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq at the Speaker's House, where Barrister Gohar, Omar Ayub, Sahibzada Hamid Raza, and Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazir Tarar were also present. According to reports, it was decided to use Parliament as the platform for negotiations. The Speaker proposed using Parliament for talks, a suggestion accepted by both PTI and the government. The negotiations will take place without any preconditions. The objective is to reduce political instability and ongoing tensions in the country. Both parties will soon announce the names of their negotiating committee members after consultation. PTI initiated contact with the government for talks and has even stepped back from its previous demands.

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**SC Judge calls phone tapping law 'ambiguous'**

Justice Mazhar says as per the law, only a judge can permit phone tapping

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail has termed the existing law allowing spy agencies to tap phones "ambiguous", saying that the case would also impact the pending cases. The SC judge made these remarks during the hearing of the case, conducted by a seven-member constitutional bench on Wednesday. The incumbent government, in July 2024,

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**Kurram crisis**

## Grand jirga 'fails to reach consensus'

Kohat peace talks continue for almost a week amidst critical shortages in restive Kurram

SHAMIM SHAHID

KOHAT: The Kohat Grand Peace Jirga convened to address the ongoing crisis in Kurram district failed to reach a consensus a day earlier. The talks, ongoing for about a week, will continue today, focusing on restoring peace and reopening the region's central highway, which remains blocked. The deteriorating security situation has severely disrupted daily life in Kurram. Food, petrol, and medical supplies are critically low, with residents struggling to access essential services. Gas shortages have forced the closure of tandoors and restaurants, exacerbating the community's hardships. Meanwhile, addressing the grand jirga, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Adviser on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif urged unity and collaboration to restore peace. "Hatred must end for war to cease," he said. Saif assured participants that the provincial government is taking measures, including the delivery of medicines via helicopters and exploring the restoration of

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## Tarar requests Gandapur to collaborate with Kundi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazeer Tarar emphasised the importance of provincial autonomy and urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government, led by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, to collaborate with Governor Faisal Kundi on resolving the Kurram crisis. The law minister addressed the National Assembly on Wednesday and assured the House that his government gives priority and respect to

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## Outgoing Bangladeshi HC pays farewell call on PM

PM Shehbaz Sharif appreciated the remarkable contributions made by the High Commissioner for promotion of Pakistan-Bangladesh relations



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The outgoing High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan, Ambassador Muhammad Ruhul Alam Siddique, paid a farewell call on the Prime Minister of Pakistan, today. The High Commissioner is returning to Bangladesh, on completion of his four-year tenure in Pakistan. Prime

Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif appreciated the remarkable contributions made by the High Commissioner for promotion of Pakistan-Bangladesh relations. He stressed that Pakistan greatly valued its relations with Bangladesh, which were rooted in shared history, common faith and cultural similarities. While conveying his warm

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## NATIONAL DAY OF ROMANIA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Adviser on Foreign Affairs Tariq Fatemi, Dan Stoenescu Romanian ambassador to Pakistan, Dr Riina Kionka EU ambassador and others are cutting cake on the occasion of National Day of Romania. - DNA

## Taliban minister Haqqani 'killed in Kabul blast'

Ishaq Dar, expressed sorrow over the death of Acting Afghan Minister Khalil ur Rehman Haqqani

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: The Afghan Taliban's acting minister for refugees, Khalil Rahman Haqqani, has been killed in a blast in the country's capital Kabul, his nephew Anas Haqqani said on Wednesday. Khalil Haqqani became a minister in the Taliban's interim government after foreign forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021. He was a senior leader of the Haqqani network, a group blamed for major attacks during the 20-year war.

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## Soldier martyred, 7 terrorists killed

Operations conducted in Miran Shah, Spinwam areas on reported presence of terrorists, says ISPR

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: A Pakistan Army soldier has embraced martyrdom while seven terrorists were killed in two separate engagements in North Waziristan district on December 10-11, the military's media wing said on Wednesday. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the security forces conducted an operation in the Miran Shah

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## Calls for a commission Provide justice, don't push us to protest again, Gohar tells NA

"It is a positive step that opposition has decided to discuss matters in house," says law minister

Dar offers PTI

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has urged the National Assembly to ensure justice for his party, warning against compelling them to return to the streets in protest. Speaking on the floor of the lower house of parliament on Wednesday, Barrister Gohar criticised the state's handling of the peaceful protests, highlighting alleged injustices and violence faced by PTI supporters. "Our people were wronged... bullets were fired at them. In any civilised nation, such actions against peaceful protesters are unthinkable," he said. The PTI leader called for the formation of an independent commission to investigate the events of May 9. He also urged lawmakers to address institutional failures, claiming the assembly had yet to protect its members and their families adequately.

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## Return 2018 mandate in exchange for 2024

DPM suggests that if there are any issues regarding February 8 elections, courts would be available to address them

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has proposed a solution to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, offering to return the 2018 electoral mandate in exchange for a period of governance until the 2024 elections. Speaking in the Senate, Dar said, "If you return the 2018 mandate to us, we will take charge, govern, and then you can hold the 2024 elections as scheduled."

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## Law to decide Imran Khan's military trial

'Imran Khan and Faiz Hameed were involved in all matters'

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said that PTI Imran Khan and Faiz Hameed were involved in all matters. Speaking to the media outside the Parliament House, Khawaja Asif said that Faiz Hameed was foremost among those who brought former Prime Minister Imran Khan to power. Their partnership began before the 2018 elections and remained intact on May 9. If evidence emerges, the situation may take different directions. Khawaja Asif noted that in the 2018 elections, PTI received substantial facilitation, with Faiz Hameed playing a role in the Senate Chairman and other elections. He

asserted that time will reveal how political opponents were oppressed and looted. He also mentioned that many civilians were tried under military courts during the PTI government, asking why PTI leaders do not address the martyrdom of security personnel. He added that during the PTI era, opponents were imprisoned, fake cases were fabricated against them and their families, and corruption took place with a major business tycoon involving PTI's founder and his wife. Earlier, in Parliament, Khawaja Asif commented that there were differences within PTI, with various statements being made. He noted that Bushra Bibi claimed her people had abandoned her,

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# Governor KP terms tolerance vital for interfaith harmony

KP Governor, Chaudhry Salik Hussain chair Interfaith harmony conference at Governor House

DNA

PESHAWAR: A high level conference on interfaith harmony jointly chaired by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi and Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Chaudhry Salik Hussain was held here at Governor House on Wednesday. Besides others, the conference was attended by All Pakistan Hindu Rights Community, Bahi and Kalash community, representatives of Wafaqul Madaras, Khateeb Mohabat Khan mosque, members of different schools of thoughts, political and social personalities in large numbers. The Conference was addressed by the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Intedfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain and representatives of different schools of thoughts. In his key note address, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi said that tolerance, respect, love and warmth were imperative for mutual coexistence, peace and interfaith harmony in society. Congratulat-

ing the Ministry of Religious Affairs for successful conference on such important topic, the Governor said that presence of leadership and representatives of all schools of thoughts in this important conference strongly reflected their love, warmth and affection for each others, which is also the beauty of the province. The conference of all faiths signified that we all are united for establishment of peace and development of Pakistan, and that the mutual brotherhood, coexistence and strong social connections can guarantee our collective success. The Governor said that our country carried a unique example of interfaith harmony and it is our collective responsibility to stop emergence of hatred and intolerance in society.

Expressing his deep concerns over incidents of terrorism, the Governor said that province was confronted to the monster challenge of terrorism and great responsibilities rest on leadership of all religious scholars to keep unite to frustrate the nefarious designs of terrorists.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor said that precious lives were lost during Kurram conflict and we all have to play constructive role for the province's peace and stability. He said that progress and development of all sectors including tourism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were linked with durable peace and it was right time to work together for prosperity of the province. Faisal Karim Kundi said that Pakistan was our identity and protection of its honour and dignity was our prime duty. Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain said that people of all schools of thoughts and minorities enjoy complete religious freedom in Pakistan. He said that minorities has played significant role in developing and prosperity of Pakistan and expressed the hope to work with more dedication to achieve economic heights. The Federal Minister said that promotion of interfaith harmony was imperative for durable peace and mutual coexistence. Later, the religious deliberated on different aspects of interfaith harmony and presented proposals.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the UAE, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al Zaabi, called on Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

## Resolution of traders' issues top priority: Khalid

ISLAMABAD: Former Chairman of the Founder Group, Khalid Iqbal Malik, stated that the unity of traders and resolving their issues have always been his top priorities. Speaking at a luncheon he hosted in honor of the newly elected officials of Jinnah Super Market and Super Market, he commended them for providing excellent services to traders and assured them that the Founder Group would play its full role in protecting traders' rights. The luncheon was attended by Jinnah Super Market President Asad Aziz, Super Market President Shehzad Shabbir Abbasi, United Business Group Pakistan Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, former ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry Owais Satti, ICCI Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Raja Muhammad Yaseen, Amir Qureshi, and other notable figures. Addressing the gathering, Zafar Bakhtawari emphasized the need for chambers and trader leaders to work together for the development of Islamabad's markets and the facilitation of traders. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the necessity for the government and chambers to take further steps to improve the infrastructure and provide facilities in the markets. Asad Aziz and Shehzad Shabbir Abbasi expressed their gratitude, acknowledging the support of Khalid Iqbal Malik and other leaders in addressing traders' issues.—APP

## CM KP orders early completion of federal PSDP projects

DNA

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, on Wednesday held a meeting with Chairman of the Prime Minister Inspection Commission, Muzaffar Ali Ranjha, and discussed progress on development projects under the Federal Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). The meeting, held at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar, and attended by the Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries

and other senior officials, said a press release issued here. During the meeting, it was agreed to accelerate the pace of work on these projects and ensure their timely completion. Participants emphasized the importance of better coordination among departments to remove obstacles hindering the implementation of these projects. Federal and provincial departments were instructed to take necessary measures to achieve this goal. The meeting discussed key

projects including the Chitral-Shandur Road, Peshawar Northern Bypass, CRBC Lift Canal, Hangu Road and other significant initiatives. Speaking on the occasion, CM Gandapur highlighted the importance of completing these projects for public welfare, reaffirming the provincial government's commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities. Muzaffar Ranjha assured that the federal PSDP projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be prioritized and completed on time.

## KP Police, AWKU to provide free education to martyrs' kids

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police and Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to provide tuition fee concessions for the children of police personnel, including martyrs, injured, and serving employees.

The MoU was signed by DIG Welfare Muhammad Kashif Mushtaq Kanju on behalf of the police department and Vice-Chancellor Dr Zahoor Shah from AWKUM.

AIG Welfare Hameedullah Khan and university representatives were also present on the occasion.

Under the agreement, 100 percent waiver would be given to martyrs' families, while AWKUM would offer 14 annual seats with full tuition waivers to children of police martyrs.

Similarly 30 percent fee concession based on need and to be approved by the university's Vice-Chancellor for the children of serving police personnel was also agreed between the two institutions. Speaking on the occasion Dr Zahoor Shah, Vice-Chancellor of AWKUM, commended the sacrifices of the KP Police in the fight against terrorism, describing their bravery and dedication as unmatched. He highlighted the exemplary courage of police officers who risked their lives, sometimes embracing martyrdom, to protect their communities. Dr Shah stated, "When police officers can offer their lives for our safety, it becomes our duty to ensure their children receive quality education." He emphasized AWKUM's strong academic track record and pledged continued support for the police department in the future. He said that this collaboration underscored the shared commitment to recognizing the sacrifices of the police force and ensuring their families have access to quality education.

## NDMA sends 40 tons of aid to flood-hit Malaysia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) sends a second aid consignment of relief assistance to Malaysia's flood victims, with a chartered plane carrying 40 tons of supplies departing for Kuala Lumpur tonight. NDMA sends 40 tons of aid to flood-hit Malaysia Following the Prime Minister's directive, a

chartered plane carrying essential supplies such as tents, blankets, quilts, mats, sleeping bags, and life jackets will from Islamabad International Airport for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The initial consignment of equal volume sent on December 8 for flood affectees in Malaysia, bringing the total volume to 80 tons of relief assistance from Pakistan. The send-off ceremony was held at Islamabad International Airport. It was attended by Federal

Minister for Kashmir & GB Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam, officials of Malaysian Embassy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NDMA. The minister expressed sincere condolences for the loss of lives due to the floods in Malaysia and assured every possible assistance from the Government and people of Pakistan. He commended the dedicated efforts of NDMA teams and related officials for their swift mobilization of this relief initiative.

## Barrister Saif for lasting peace at Kurram grand jirga

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, addressed the Kurram Grand Jirga held in Kohat, urging the elimination of hatred as a crucial step toward ending conflict in the region. Speaking at the gathering, Barrister Dr. Saif emphasized the need for unity and collaboration to restore peace. "We must eliminate hatred; wars will cease automatically," he said, expressing optimism about achieving a peaceful resolution to long-standing issues in Kurram District. He announced that the central highways of Kurram District, closed due to security concerns, would soon be reopened for public transportation. Additionally, he assured that bunkers on the main highways would be dismantled with the cooperation of local communities. Dr. Saif highlighted the importance of disarming the region of heavy weaponry to ensure lasting stability. He also announced that the provincial government would continue supplying essential medicines through helicopter services, while the restoration of air transport services is under consideration, with a decision expected shortly. Acknowledging the desire for peace among both parties involved in the conflict, Dr. Saif pointed out that some elements benefit from ongoing tensions. He called for public cooperation to identify these elements and pledged that the government would take strict action against them.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Additional Secretary Africa Hamid Asghar Khan giving details about collaboration between Ministry of Foreign Affairs and PTDC for Pakistan Travel Expo which is going to be held Karachi.

## Harerimana urges business community to leverage trade opportunities in Rwanda

RCCI President Usman Shaukat warmly welcomed the High Commissioner and presented an overview of the Chamber's initiatives and contributions to promoting trade

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Fatou Harerimana, the High Commissioner of Rwanda, paid her maiden visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). The visit aimed to foster bilateral trade relations and encourage the business community to explore trade and investment opportunities in Rwanda.

RCCI President Usman Shaukat warmly welcomed the High Commissioner

and presented an overview of the Chamber's initiatives and contributions to promoting trade. He also shared key insights into the existing trade data between Pakistan and Rwanda, highlighting key sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, machinery, textiles, and tourism as promising areas for collaboration. "The current bilateral trade volume is negligible, and there is a need to significantly enhance trade relations through strategic partnerships and joint ven-

tures," he emphasized. In her remarks, H.E. Fatou Harerimana commended RCCI's efforts in fostering trade activities and underscored Rwanda's business-friendly environment, particularly its Ease of Doing Business (EODB) policies. She emphasized the need for enhanced economic ties, stating, "Pakistan and Rwanda share friendly relations based on mutual respect and growing economic cooperation. The private sectors of both countries must play an in-

strumental role in expanding these relations further." The High Commissioner also highlighted the opportunities available in Rwanda for Pakistani investors and businesses, inviting them to explore joint ventures and investment possibilities. Accompanying the High Commissioner were Mutuyimana Charlotte, Executive Assistant to the High Commissioner, and Maryam Zafar, Mission Receptionist. The visit concluded on a positive note, with both parties reaffirm-

ing their commitment to strengthening economic collaboration and exploring new opportunities for growth and prosperity.

The event was attended by Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, Group Leader Sohail Altaf, members of the Executive Committee, women entrepreneurs, and other distinguished RCCI members. Group Leader Sohail Altaf participated in presenting a memento to the High Commissioner to mark the occasion.

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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



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Edhi Ambulance.....115  
PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Enquiry.....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

# Grand opening of Silk Road Centre in the Capital

Many countries, including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Iran, set up special stalls showcasing a variety of delicacies and traditional items unique to their cultures. Guests eagerly visited these stalls, showing keen interest in the items on display

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Silk Road Culture Centre (SRCC) proudly launched, an event that brought together diplomats, ambassadors, and cultural enthusiasts from around the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad to witness the launch of this landmark initiative. Many countries, including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Iran, set up special stalls showcasing a variety of delicacies and traditional items unique to their cultures. Guests eagerly visited these stalls, showing keen interest in the items on display. The Chairman of the Silk Road Culture Centre (SRCC) Jamal Shah expressed heartfelt gratitude to the ambassadors, diplomats, and participating countries for their invaluable support in making the grand launch of the SRCC a resounding success.

In his remarks, the Chairman acknowledged the full cooperation extended by the countries who contributed artworks, cultural artifacts, and other items for display at the SRCC. These contributions not only enriched the event but also beautifully showcased the diverse cultural heritage of the Silk Road nations. "The remarkable cooperation and generosity of our international partners have truly brought the spirit of the Silk Road to life," said the Chairman. "Your contributions have made this center a



vibrant space for cultural exchange, reflection, and learning. It is through these collaborative efforts that we have been able to create an inspiring and meaningful launch for the Silk Road Culture Centre." Addressing the gathering, the Chairman of SRCC highlighted the center's

mission as a "beacon of unity, diversity, and mutual respect," dedicated to fostering cultural understanding and collaboration among nations. The SRCC aims to celebrate the rich heritage of the countries connected by the historical Silk Road through exhibitions, workshops,

performances, and educational programs, inspiring future generations to appreciate cultural diversity and shared values. The Chairman expressed heartfelt gratitude to the ambassadors and diplomats for their presence and to the sponsors and partners whose contribu-



tions were instrumental in bringing this vision to life. Special acknowledgment was given to Zong Pakistan, Serena Hotel Islamabad, Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), Hunerkada Islamabad, and the Sir Syed Memorial Society (SSMS) for their unwavering support.

"The Silk Road Culture Centre is more than a venue; it is a platform where art, history, and tradition converge to create meaningful connections," the Chairman remarked. "This iconic building symbolizes the strength of cultural collaboration and the beauty of togetherness."

The event served as a testament to the power of cultural exchange in fostering global harmony. As the SRCC opens its doors, it aspires to become a cornerstone of cultural and academic brilliance, uniting nations and individuals in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding.

## 'Ruling elite responsible for failure of democracy in Pakistan'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: To commemorate International Human Rights Day, the Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights organized a seminar on the "Role of Parliament in the Protection of Human Rights" at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Studies in Islamabad today. The seminar was graced by Mr. Afrasiab Khattak, former member Senate of Pakistan, as the chief guest. Among the other distinguished speakers were Ms. Shaista Pervaiz, Ms. Aasiya Nasir, Mr. Riaz Fatyana, Dr. Shoaib Suddle, Mr. Shafique Chaudhry, ED PCHR and Mr. Zafar Ullah Khan. M. Riaz Fatyana, who welcomed the seminar participants, highlighted the ongoing decline in the state of human rights in Pakistan, noting that the space for democratic governance continues to shrink. He stressed that Human Rights Day serves

as a crucial occasion to reaffirm the nation's commitment to safeguarding the human rights of all citizens. "Human rights are the foundation of any democracy," he asserted. "Unfortunately, our journey to fully realize human rights remains in its nascent stages." Mr. Muhammad Shafique Chaudhry, shared the journey of the Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights since its inception and highlighted the key legislative achievements through PCHR intervention. Later in his presentation, Mr. Shafique provided a brief overview of the current state of human rights in Pakistan. Dr. Shoaib Suddle in his address acknowledged that, while Pakistan has the core elements of democracy in place, challenges in governance, the rule of law, accountability, and integrity within public office remained major obstacles. He noted that Parliament needs to assert its constitutional powers

and mandate as custodian of peoples' rights. In terms of providing safeguarding the current system has so failed to deliver. Mr. Zafar Ullah Khan highlighted that while Pakistan possesses an abundance of laws, well-crafted constitutional guarantees, and an elaborate legal system, the country still ranks among the worst globally in terms of human rights and governance. He pointed out that numerous commissions have been established, yet the expected outcomes have not been realized. In light of this, he stressed the urgent need to revisit existing policies to ensure the full realization of human rights in the country, emphasizing that legal frameworks alone are not enough without effective implementation. Ms. Zahra Wadood, a Member of the National Assembly (MNA), echoed the importance of personal accountability and responsible behavior, es-

pecially when engaging in dissenting opinions. She noted that both public and parliamentary discourse often lack the necessary respect and decorum, with people failing to uphold the standards of civil discussion. Ms. Wadood underscored that fostering a culture of mutual respect and personal responsibility in dialogue is crucial to strengthening democratic practices and creating a more constructive and inclusive atmosphere in both public and legislative settings. Mr. Afrasiab Khattak, the chief guest, underscored that the failure of democracy in Pakistan can largely be attributed to the ruling elite. He called for an immediate cessation of political engineering, emphasizing that the current political system cannot be classified as truly democratic, but rather resembles a form of "hybrid martial law."

## ICCI hosts academia linkages conference Nasir for long-term economic policies to address pressing challenges

Qureshi also called for proactive initiatives to develop long-term economic policies that address the needs of the next 15 to 20 years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Industry-academia-government collaboration is crucial to overcoming the economic challenges facing the country. On Wednesday, this was the consensus at the 'Industry-Academia Linkages Conference' held at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). Over thirty-five representatives from regional universities attended the important event. In his welcome address, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, emphasized the Chamber's commitment to boosting economic growth, innovation, and collaboration between academia and industry. He outlined several initiatives, including startup expos, a competition for university students to promote entrepreneurship, skill development programs, industrial automation, and an

upcoming Energy Conference. He also revealed plans for conferences on topics such as Green Initiatives, Economic Development, Health, and Tourism, which would bring all stakeholders together to provide key recommendations to the government for implementation. He stressed that universities must align curricula with industry needs, foster joint research, and facilitate the commercialization of research. Qureshi also called for proactive initiatives to develop long-term economic policies that address the needs of the next 15 to 20 years. ICCI member Naeem Siddiqi stressed the importance of a focused approach to analyze challenges and develop sustainable solutions. Participants praised ICCI for taking initiatives in the best interest of the country and the business community. They suggested that by bridging the gap between academia and industry, the Chamber

could create a more conducive business environment, promote entrepreneurship, and drive economic development. The suggestion was made to establish ICCI desks at various universities to facilitate research on specific targets. Notable attendees included Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, Vice Chancellor of National Skill University, Dr. Arshad Zia of the International Islamic University, Brig. (R) Salman Zafar from NUTECH, Air Commodore (R) Fawad Waheed of Air University, Huma Akbar from HEC, Dr. Asif Naeem from FAST, Sana Maqbool from NUST, Ahmed Rafi from IST, and Dr. Serish Saba from STMU. Adnan Mukhtar, Convener of the Higher Education Commission ICCI, highlighted a roadmap for bridging the gap between industry and academia, emphasizing the need for skill-based education to meet industrial requirements.

## Benazir Hunarmand Programme to empower deserving individuals

ISLAMABAD: The internationally acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has envisioned to empower underprivileged segments of society by launching the Benazir Hunarmand Programme soon. According to an official source, around 40 semi-skilled individuals from deserving backgrounds will receive international-standard skill training in the pilot phase of the initiative. The programme aims to equip participants with advanced vocational skills while facilitating their employment opportunities abroad. This initiative aligns with Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's enduring legacy of uplifting the underprivileged and promoting self-reliance through skill development. The programme is expected to expand in the future, providing many more individuals with the skills to improve their livelihoods and contribute to the nation's development. Chairperson, BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid has been engaged with the national and international organizations for collaborations to provide skill training to the deserving beneficiaries. According to the Chairperson BISP, Rubina Khalid, "Economic empowerment is the solution to all problems, and this concept aligns with the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. Skill is the greatest asset." She said that BISP has been actively engaging with international organizations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Lives and Livelihood Fund, Islamic Development Bank, and other skill training institutions, to introduce high-quality skill training programs for its beneficiaries. Around 9.6 million families are currently benefiting from the program, with the number expected to reach 10 million soon. The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is one of Pakistan's largest social safety net initiatives, launched in July 2008 with the aim of reducing poverty and providing financial assistance to the most vulnerable segments of society. Pakistan's cuisine The program primarily targets women as direct beneficiaries, empowering them financially to support their families through unconditional cash transfers and other social protection measures. The program uses a scientifically designed poverty scorecard and a National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) to identify eligible families. Over the years, the BISP has expanded its scope to include several initiatives such as Education Stipend, Benazir Nashonuma, Undergraduate Scholarship Programme etc. besides providing targeted financial support during natural disasters and health emergencies. Since its inception, BISP has gained international recognition as a model social safety net program. —DNA

## 3,962 dengue cases reported in ICT

ISLAMABAD: No new dengue case was reported in Islamabad over the past 24 hours, due to the extensive anti-dengue measures implemented by the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration. This was stated during a high-level meeting chaired by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon to review the dengue situation in the Federal Capital, said the spokesman of ICT administration. The meeting was attended by all Assistant Commissioners (ACs) who presented updates on the latest data and ongoing anti-dengue operations. The meeting was told that a total of 3,962 dengue cases have been recorded in Islamabad this season. However, due to effective strategy and measure taken by ICT administration, no new case was reported in the last 24 hours. The DC expressed gratitude for the collaborative efforts that contributed to this milestone. "Alhamdulillah, not a single case of dengue has been reported in the last 24 hours," he said. Memon emphasized that this achievement was made possible due to the coordinated efforts of various institutions and the active participation of the public. DC said that anti-dengue operations would continue in the city as administration remains committed to preventing a resurgence of dengue.

## NACTA holds two-day workshop to prevent violent extremism

ISLAMABAD: A two-day workshop on developing effective communication strategies to enhance outreach and prevent violent extremism was organized in Islamabad under the auspices of the National Counter-Terrorism Authority. During this workshop, eminent academicians, scholars, ulemas, civil servants and media persons from all over Pakistan participated in the workshop. They proposed recommendations for effective communication strategies to prevent violent extremism in the light of Paigham-e-Pakistan. In her welcome remarks, Director General Communication and Outreach Saleha Zakir Shah briefed the participants about the aims and objectives of the workshop. She said that the aim of this workshop is to obtain recommendations from experts with the help of which effective communication strategies can be developed. Saleha Zakir Shah further said that communal efforts are required to curb the menace of violent extremism. She said that establishing sustainable peace in the society is indispensable for the country's development. Director General Islamic Research Institute Dr. Zia-ul-Haq briefed the participants about the Paigham-e-Pakistan. He said Paigham-e-Pakistan is a document that helps us to counter extremism in the country. Addressing the participants, Communication expert Dr. Zafar Iqbal gave a comprehensive overview of the worldwide strategies adopted to counter violent extremism. Highlighting the significance of alternate narrative.—DNA



## Briefs

## 80,000 SIMs blocked for spreading fake news

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Cabinet Division Sajid Mehdi informed the National Assembly on Wednesday that approximately 80,000 SIMs have been blocked for disseminating fake news. Responding to a calling attention notice regarding the spread of false news on social media platforms, which has caused significant public concern, he said that the government is actively taking steps to address the issue. He said that a joint task force has been established, and it has already submitted its report to the Prime Minister. He highlighted the need to address shortcomings in the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 and said amendments would be made in the act to expedite the trial of cases related to the dissemination of false news. —APP

## Crackdown on professional beggars intensifies

ISLAMABAD: The district administration has intensified its efforts to curb the menace of professional begging in the federal capital, with 13 individuals arrested in recent operations. According to the spokesman of the administration, in a recent move, the district administration, under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner (Rural), arrested 13 professional beggars. The arrests were carried out in the jurisdictions of Lohi Bher and Humak police stations. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, has urged residents to actively support the ongoing drive against professional begging. He stressed the importance of collective action to tackle this issue and appealed the residents to cooperate with authorities and report incidents of organized begging. Memon called upon the public to avoid giving money to individuals begging at public places, as it could inadvertently support these networks. —APP

## Naqvi reviews progress on F-8, Serena Chowk interchange projects

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange and Serena Chowk Interchange project sites to assess construction progress and ensure timely completion. During the visit, Minister Naqvi announced that the underpass at the F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange will be opened for traffic on December 25. He commended the contractor and the Islamabad administration for completing the underpass within an impressive 43 days. The complete F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange project is expected to be inaugurated in the second week of February, while the Serena Chowk Interchange will be operational by the first week of January, completed in just 60 days. Naqvi directed construction teams to maintain 24/7 operations to meet deadlines. —APP

## CASS experts stress innovation, agility in air and space power

In his Keynote Address on 'Future of Air and Space in National Defence and the Global Innovation Economy', Air Marshal Zulfikar Ahmed Qureshi, explored the transformative role of unmanned systems, precision-guided munitions and space-based intelligence in reshaping air and space operations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, concluded a roundtable on the 'Wings of Influence: Air Power's Role in Recent Conflicts.' The roundtable brought together high-ranking military professionals to analyse the use of air power in contemporary conflicts over the past two years, its operational evolution, and its profound impact on modern warfare. The moderator of the roundtable, Air Vice Marshal Nasser ul Haq Wyne (Retd), Director (Aerospace Warfare) at CASS, set the stage for the discussions by pointing to the pivotal role of air power in modern warfare, shaped by rapid technological advancements and evolving geopolitical landscapes. He highlighted how air power has become a critical factor in influencing conflict outcomes and guiding military strategy. In his Keynote Address on 'Future of Air and Space in National Defence and the Global Innovation Economy', Air Marshal Zulfikar Ahmed Qureshi, explored the transformative role of unmanned systems, precision-guided munitions and space-based intelligence in reshaping air and space operations. He emphasised how these advancements have extended the reach and precision of military operations, enabling the development of new concepts of operations tailored to diverse and evolving conflict scenarios. Air



Marshal Qureshi also discussed how air power had evolved to meet the challenges of modern warfare, particularly in regions like South Asia and the Middle East, where hybrid conflicts and asymmetric threats are prevalent. In the context of Pakistan, he addressed the increasing integration of indigenous UAVs and electronic warfare capabilities, underscoring the importance of self-reliance and cost-effective technologies. He also talked about the strategic role of space-based systems for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in strengthening national defence and maintaining a competitive edge in the global innovation economy. Air Marshal Qureshi introduced the concept of

a New Air Superiority framework and a littoral air defence approach, advocating for agility and innovation to address the demands of an ever-evolving security landscape. Pakistani handicrafts Speaking on 'Applications and Impact of Air Power in Ukraine, Gaza, Syria and Yemen', Air Commodore Fawad Zahir discussed the initial dominance of Russian air superiority in Ukraine and the subsequent adaptation by Ukrainian forces, as well as the strategic use of UAVs and electronic warfare across all theaters. He underscored the importance of targeting strategies, technological advancements, and the effective use of low-cost platforms in modern conflict scenarios, particularly for resource-constrained states.

Air Commodore Zahir also examined non-kinetic methods such as electronic warfare and cyber capabilities, which have emerged as critical tools in air power strategies. He stressed the evolving nature of conflict, highlighting the integration of technology and the need for adaptable doctrines to manage hybrid warfare challenges. Addressing the humanitarian and strategic dimensions of conflicts, he stressed the role of air power in minimising civilian casualties while maintaining operational effectiveness. Air Vice Marshal Nasser ul Haq Wyne (Retd) addressed critical issues of air power during his presentation on 'Strategic Outcomes, Doctrinal Shifts, and Future Considerations.' Highlighting strategic outcomes

and doctrinal shifts, he emphasised the evolving role of air power from traditional air superiority to a central force in multi-domain operations. He outlined the pressing need for developing nations to adopt strategies that integrate emerging technologies, ensure resilience against cyber threats, and strengthen operational frameworks to address modern hybrid warfare. Focusing on future considerations, Air Vice Marshal Wyne stressed a paradigm shift in air power strategies, advocating for multi-domain integration and agility in doctrinal frameworks. He proposed actionable pathways for resource-constrained nations, including prioritising cost-effective solutions like UAVs, cyber capabilities, and dual-use technologies.

## PTA launches Cybersecurity awareness week 2024

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has launched Cybersecurity Awareness Week 2024, which will run from December 9 to 15. This week-long initiative aims to bolster awareness of digital safety at the individual and consumer levels. It will focus on online security, data privacy, and the legal aspects of cybercrimes under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016. According to a news release, the PTA will host expert discussions to equip individuals and organizations with essential knowledge to protect themselves from emerging cyber threats. PTA invites citizens, businesses, and educational institutions to participate and strengthen Pakistan's cybersecurity environment by following our social media handles and posting and resharing our content. —APP

## On Int'l HR Day, DPM Dar reaffirms Pakistan's commitment

ISLAMABAD: As the international community observes International Human Rights Day on Tuesday, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to ensuring the fundamental rights and freedoms of all individuals, regardless of race, religion, gender, or nationality. The deputy prime minister, in his message, said that the Day symbolized international community's shared resolve to respect and uphold human dignity and to promote the human rights agenda without any distinction or discrimination. "This year's theme for Human Rights Day, 'Our rights, our future, right now,' remains relevant for millions of people across the globe, from the Occupied Palestinian Territories to Indian-Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), who continue to suffer under occupation and gross human rights violations in their just struggle for inalienable right to self-determination," he said. Besides, DPM Dar said that the alarming surge in Islamophobia worldwide, fuelled by discriminatory laws, populist politics, and xenophobic narratives, also remained a challenge for the international community. He said that Pakistan had made significant progress in the advancement of the human rights agenda through a range of legislative, institutional, and policy measures and was committed to fulfilling its obligations under the international human rights framework. —APP

## Two-day olive gala tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research, in collaboration with key development partners, is set to host the Grand National Pak-Olive Gala 2024 on December 13-14, aiming to promote and accelerate large-scale olive cultivation in the country for achieving the goal of self-sufficiency in edible oil production. The two-day event will also highlight the significant progress and potential of edible oil production in Pakistan, showcasing the country's growing capabilities in this vital sector, said Dr Tariq, National Project Director for Pakistan's Promotion of Olive Cultivation. Talking to APP here on Tuesday, he said that olive output during the current was expected to grow by 22 per cent as compared to the output of the corresponding period of the last year, adding that over 140 tons of olive oil were extracted during the last crop season. During the current season, olive output is expected to cross 160-180 tons as output in terms of olive fruit and oil had witnessed significant growth of 22 per cent, he said adding that estimation was based on the area under crop cover, which he added could be further increased. In an effort to boost local edible oil production and support the government's initiatives to increase green cover and mitigate potential climate impacts on the ecosystem, over 1 million olive plants will be planted during this year's tree plantation drive, he added. Dr Tariq further informed that these olive plants will be planted during two tree plantation drives: the first drive will take place from September to November, and the second from March to April. Over 5.6 million plants have already been planted and there is large-scale cultivation of olive trees for olive oil. About 500,000 to 800,000 olive oil nursery plants are planted every year, he added. In addition to the olive plantation efforts across potential areas of the country, a target has been set to install drip irrigation systems over 10,000 acres of water-stressed areas, he said adding that this initiative aims to facilitate olive cultivation on marginal lands and enhance the farm income of local farmers. Meanwhile, he noted that matching grants would be provided for the installation of processing plants through public-private partnerships. This support will facilitate the proper processing and value addition of farm produce, ensuring a fair rate of return for local farming communities. Dr Tariq further informed that matching grants would also be provided to local olive farmers for the purchase of storage containers. This will help ensure quality and adherence to international standards for the production of extra-virgin olive oil, ultimately boosting the country's exports. There is significant potential for wild olive grafting in areas such as AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, and FATA. A grafting drive was launched in these regions, which proved successful, resulting in a large number of wild olive trees being grafted to produce olives, he added. He said that the government was also working to enhance the value addition of olive products to promote the cottage industry to enhance the income of rural women to make them economically empowered and independent. —DNA

## FOSPAH, PNCA host successful art exhibition

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace (FOSPAH), in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), hosted an Art Exhibition on "Workplace Harassment: Its Forms and Impact" on December 10, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. The event, held at the PNCA in Islamabad, showcased the creative talents of students from across Pakistan who used art to shed light on workplace harassment, its many forms, and its profound impact on individuals and society. As part of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence, FOSPAH organized an art competition for bachelor's, master's, and college-level students across Pakistan. The exhibition featured an inspiring collection of artworks that captured the challenges and resilience associated with harassment in workplaces. The event honored the winners of FOSPAH's nationwide art competition, with prizes awarded to exceptional young artists whose works stood out for their creativity, emotional depth, and advocacy for change. The exhibition was graced by esteemed guests, including Fauzia Vigar, Hon'ble Ombudsperson, FOSPAH, Ayub Jamal, Director General, PNCA, and Hassan Nasir Jamy, Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division. In his address, Hassan Nasir Jamy said, "This exhibition is a testament to the power of art in creating awareness and inspiring change. The creativity and courage displayed by these young artists remind us all of the responsibility we bear to address workplace harassment and ensure dignity for everyone." —DNA

## Law Minister welcomes opposition

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday lauded the opposition for utilizing the parliamentary forum to raise issues, emphasizing this as a hallmark of democracy. Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, he said, "It is encouraging to see opposition members using the parliament for discussing the issues rather than confrontation. This is the essence of de-

mocracy." He highlighted that the people of Pakistan have entrusted their elected representatives to discuss their issues in the supreme forum of the nation and work towards effective solutions. The minister stressed the importance of engaging in constructive dialogue within parliament and said that taxpayers' money is being used to run the proceedings, and it is vital to respect the platform for meaningful debate. Addressing points raised by the opposition, the minis-

ter said that inflation had decreased due to the government's policies, and the interest rate had dropped from 23% to 15%, with further reductions anticipated. He also highlighted the stock exchange's positive performance and expressed optimism about the growth of business and investment in the country. He urged opposition members to engage in constructive criticism and appreciate the government's steps to stabilize the economy. He added that the prime

minister actively holds daily meetings on economic issues, business development, and export growth to boost investment. Responding to a question, he said that the prime minister has directed the government to take parliamentary business seriously and ensure that ministries address issues raised in the house. He also noted that parliamentary rules allow secretaries to respond to questions and calling attention notices in the absence of ministers.

## PM's aide highlights climate adaptation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam emphasized the urgent need to address the relentless impacts of climate change, which are threatening the planet's precious natural resources. Speaking at an event to mark International Mountain Day, she highlighted the critical role of mountains in sustaining life and the growing risks posed by climate disruptions. "Our mountains, crowned with ancient glaciers that house the most vital source of life—water—are now at risk as climate change disrupts

their natural course," said Romina Alam. "The glaciers, which have long been a source of life, are receding at an alarming rate. Currently, over 10,000 glaciers in our mountain ranges have already retreated, with 2023 marking the 36th consecutive year of glacial loss rather than gain." Alam stressed that this disruption is threatening not only ecosystems but also the communities that depend on these natural resources. The Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, she said, stands in full alignment with this year's theme for International Mountain Day, which focuses on strengthening mountain

solutions for a sustainable future through innovation, adaptation, and active engagement of youth. "Our mountainous regions, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, have been severely impacted by rising global temperatures," she continued. "Climate-induced disasters, such as torrential rains, floods, and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), have devastated homes, infrastructure, and ecosystems. However, despite these challenges, we remain committed to accelerating climate adaptation strategies in these vulnerable areas." Romina Alam further highlighted the efforts under-

way to safeguard these regions, including the installation of advanced early warning systems, support for indigenous practices, and the promotion of ecosystem-based approaches. "Our commitment to protecting these natural treasures and the people who depend on them remains unwavering," she said. "Together, we strive for a sustainable and climate-resilient future for Pakistan's mountains and their guardians." In her opening remarks, Aisha Humera Moriani, Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change, underscored the importance of promoting eco-friendly tourism by utilizing local re-

sources and involving local communities. She stressed that mountains are home to many vulnerable plant and animal species, and protecting these ecosystems is crucial for maintaining biodiversity and supporting the livelihoods of local communities. The event concluded with a renewed call for collective action to address the growing climate challenges facing Pakistan's mountains and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come and attended by government officials, representatives of various international development organizations including UNDP Pakistan, EVK2cnr (Italy).

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## The rise of HTS

**A**FTER more than 50 years of repressive autocratic rule, over 13 years of bloody civil war that displaced more than 12 million people and a 12-day lightning offensive by opposition forces, the Assad family's dominance of Syria has ended. With elation comes deep uncertainty about what comes next in Syria and its implications for the region and beyond. A fundamental question prevails: will Syria transition from a secular dictatorship to a stable representative government or hardline Islamist authoritarianism, or something in between? The politically and diplomatically correct reply is to express cautious optimism that Syria will pursue the path of a brighter future for its people. But most indications point to a greater cause for caution than optimism. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which spearheaded Bashar al-Assad's downfall, arguably remains the strongest opposition force in Syria, yet is listed as a terrorist group by the United States, European Union, Turkey and others. The US has a US\$10 million bounty on HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, a former Islamic State (ISIS) fighter, despite attempts to rebrand himself and his group as mainstream Islamists. So far, HTS has been preaching what most, at home and abroad, want to hear: political moderation and inclusion of minorities. But its iron-fisted governance of Syria's northwestern Idlib province points to the need for extreme vigilance of the group's intentions and long-term agenda. Two weeks to Damascus: how Syrian rebels toppled the Assad regime To provide assurances, HTS must genuinely reach out to a wide range of opposition parties within an all-embracing political framework. This is key to an orderly transition that guarantees security and stability at home and the broader region. In the longer term, a new national compact is needed. A zero-sum approach by HTS, or any other opposition group, will backfire. The alternative is internal fragmentation, sectarian warfare and spillover into the region and beyond. Lessons from the recent past include Libya's divisions since Muammar Gaddafi's ouster in 2011 and the years of sectarian bloodshed in Iraq. Although external powers will seek to influence Syria's transition, they will be initially reduced to a wait-and-see role as the political process unfolds. For now, it will be primarily driven by Syrians, with HTS leading. Other factions will aggressively jockey for their share of power hoping that HTS, and like-minded groups, will curb their Islamist tendencies for the sake of the greater good. While such groups will proceed with utmost caution in their dealings with HTS, sceptics will dismiss their attempts as wishful thinking. For Russia and Iran, Assad's downfall marks a clear humiliation and devastating strategic blow to their influence in the Middle East and beyond. How the Assad family stayed in power in Syria for more than 50 years Iran loses its land bridge extending from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, often referred to as the "Shia Crescent". But Iran still retains formidable loyal proxies in Iraq and Yemen's Houthi rebels who continue to destabilise the region and disrupt global trade and shipping in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa. Russia faces a major strategic reversal with the likely loss of key overseas naval and air bases in Syria that project its influence in the Middle East and Mediterranean, and serve as a conduit to growing operations in Africa. Vessels and warplanes have reportedly departed.



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## Trumpian economics

**W**HAT kind of wild and crazy trade policies does the incoming Donald Trump presidency have in store for China and the world? Seasoned observers are already speculating his unorthodox economic team is preparing – this time for China – the 21st century version of the Plaza Accord, a deal that ruined Japan's economy for several generations. Some Washington wit has already suggested calling it the Mara-Lago Accord. It's all part of an economic war. As usual, it's China's fault. In this telling, Beijing's unfair manipulation of the yuan and exploitation of global trade has meant the "stealing" of American jobs and the hollowing out of US manufacturing. That, in turn, has turned the United States from the world's biggest creditor into its largest debtor. Then as now, America needed someone to blame. In the mid-1980s, that scapegoat was Japan, which was in a similar position to China today – a manufacturing powerhouse that enjoyed a big trade surplus with the US. So Washington insisted on depreciating the US dollar – or rather having several leading currencies, especially the yen, strengthening – to reduce the country's trade deficit with Japan, hence the Plaza Accord. The strengthened yen helped create the mother of all bubbles and we all know what happened next. How will Plaza Accord 2.0 work against China? Well, tariffs. High tariffs tend to be inflationary, as US importers pass on the new costs to consumers. Investors and consumers don't like inflation, and the Trump team knows it. So, what to do? The Trump team is betting it won't get to the inflationary stage as it brings about both the slashing of Chinese exports and weakening of the dollar. Tariffs alone may achieve the former but not the latter. For both to happen, China will have to, like Japan before it, appreciate its currency. But why would Beijing do that? China is not Japan. Well, it would do so under the threat of even higher tariffs, Treasury secretary nominee Scott Bessent told Bloomberg. He said making tariff threats was to set up a "maximalist negotiating position" to pursue a weaker dollar. The logic is simple, even simplistic: the Chinese may find that high tariffs hurt more than an appreciating yuan. However, for the Chinese, the Plaza Accord has long been a byword for economic capitulation. One reason Xi Jinping ruthlessly deflated the mainland property sector despite the pain it caused across the board was reportedly his fear of a Japanese-style real estate bubble burst. In reality, American complaints about China are misdirected, perhaps deliberately. They are the consequence of US policy choices, over many years, to deindustrialise and financialise its key industries. One consequence is the offshoring of once-domestic production. China happened to be there at the right time and place. It's not China's fault that it turned into the world's manufacturing powerhouse rather than becoming just another banana republic. The US switch from industrial to financial capitalism was made possible because of US dollar dominance. It has meant cheap borrowing costs and affordable foreign, usually Chinese-made, goods for US consumers and government. But maintaining dollar dominance means the US must allow the free flow of capital in and out of its economy. That means absorbing – or borrowing via its massive bond market – the savings from trade imbalances of other countries, especially China and its surpluses.

# Anti-Assad militias turn their guns on Israel

Qamar Bashir



The anti-Assad militias, after conquering Syria, have redirected their focus toward attacking Israel to avenge Palestinian casualties in Gaza and "liberate" Jerusalem (Al-Quds). This would, like Afghanistan, Iraq and Lybia, would create a significant security and geopolitical crisis. Israel would face an unprecedented threat from a coalition of Islamist forces operating close to its borders, particularly in the Golan Heights. Such attacks would likely escalate into a broader regional conflict, potentially drawing in actors like Hezbollah from Lebanon and Iran, further destabilizing the region

**T**HE USA, in recent history, has committed grave strategic blunders and, interestingly, managed to make others pay for these mistakes while cleverly insulating itself from the consequences. In the wars against Iraq and Libya, the USA, often with its allies coerced into joining under false pretenses, fabricated reasons, and manufactured evidence of weapons of mass destruction, invaded Iraq. This invasion destroyed the country, killed hundreds of thousands of people, and reduced what was once one of the richest and fastest-developing nations in the Middle East to rubble. Not satisfied with the devastation in Iraq, the USA turned its attention to Libya, orchestrating the overthrow and eventual killing of Muammar Gaddafi. Gaddafi had kept Libya's society, composed of many warring and independent tribes, united and stable. Under his leadership, Libya prospered, and its people enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. Moreover, the country provided employment to thousands of workers from other nations to support its rapid development. The removal of Gaddafi plunged Libya into chaos, destabilizing the region and unleashing a wave of violence and tribal conflicts that persist to this day. Like Iraq, Libya was reduced to rubble, and the entire Middle East was destabilized. Poverty became rampant, and in search of better lives, people began migrating to Europe on unsafe, overcrowded boats. Many of these boats sank in the middle of the sea, killing their passengers, while the few that reached European shores created a refugee crisis in multiple European countries. Meanwhile, the USA, far beyond the reach of these small boats, remained largely unaffected by the consequences of this crisis. Similarly, the predatory nature of the USA led to the so-called conquest of Afghanistan, where it remained for over a decade before suffering a humiliating retreat. This withdrawal left behind all Afghans who had sided with the USA in grave danger. Afghanistan was plunged into the darkness of the dark ages, destabilizing the entire region. Tons of lethal weapons were left behind, falling into the hands of the Taliban, insurgent groups, and factions like TLP, which are now destabilizing the social fabric of Pakistan and other countries in the region. Meanwhile, the USA and its European allies remained largely insulated from the aftermath

of their humiliating defeat in Afghanistan. While the USA and its allies in Europe and the Middle East were gleefully celebrating the success of Anti Assad Militias their own creation, they perhaps did not anticipate that the leaders of the militias, after conquering Syria, would announce their next target: the liberation of Al-Quds (Jerusalem), avenging the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gaza and elsewhere, and pledging not to rest until Israel is reduced to a position where it has no ability to impose its hegemony in the region. These statements are likely giving sleepless nights to Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. They must also be deeply concerning to Israeli leadership and to leaders in the USA, who likely never imagined that the very forces they helped raise—with their sweat, blood, and hard-earned money—to insulate Israel from the Syrian threat under Assad, would turn their guns with lightning speed toward Israel. This turn of events is the very outcome the USA and its allies sought to avoid when they intervened to remove Assad, who was supported by Russia and Iran. While building the anti-Assad militias, the USA and its allies, in their haste, empowered various groups with money and weapons, overlooking their deeply entrenched and divergent ideologies and objectives. The militias were led by figures with different goals: Riad al-Asaad and Salim Idris of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) advocated for a secular, democratic Syria; Abu Mohammad al-Julani of Jabhat al-Nusra, aligned with al-Qaeda, aimed to establish an Islamic state; Zahran Alloush of Jaish al-Islam sought a Sunni Islamic government; and Hassan Aboud of Ahrar al-Sham pursued an Islamic state under Sharia law. Leaders like Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of ISIS aimed for a global caliphate. Although their common goal was to overthrow Bashar al-Assad's Alawite-dominated regime, their ideological divides—ranging from secular democracy to hardline Islamism—led to fragmentation and competition, complicating their ability to present a united front. The anti-Assad militias, after conquering Syria, have redirected their focus toward attacking Israel to avenge Palestinian casualties in Gaza and "liberate" Jerusalem (Al-Quds). This would, like Afghanistan, Iraq and Lybia, would create a significant security and geopolitical crisis. Israel would face an unprecedented

threat from a coalition of Islamist forces operating close to its borders, particularly in the Golan Heights. Such attacks would likely escalate into a broader regional conflict, potentially drawing in actors like Hezbollah from Lebanon and Iran, further destabilizing the region. For Israel, this would necessitate a robust military response, including preemptive strikes and heightened defense measures, leading to a protracted and destructive confrontation. For the United States, the scenario would highlight the blowback of supporting anti-Assad factions during the Syrian Civil War. Having indirectly empowered groups now attacking its closest ally, U.S. credibility and regional strategy would come under severe scrutiny. The U.S. would face pressure to provide military and diplomatic support to Israel, entangling itself further in Middle Eastern conflicts. This could strain relations with Arab allies, many of whom might face domestic unrest as public sentiment in their countries sympathizes with actions against Israel, challenging their governments' ties with the U.S. and Israel. Regionally, the conflict could destabilize Arab states that have normalized relations with Israel, such as the UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, putting agreements like the Abraham Accords at risk. Iran, already an opponent of Israel, might exploit the situation to bolster its influence by aligning with militias or intensifying its rhetoric of resistance. The ensuing instability could disrupt global oil supplies, escalate terrorist recruitment worldwide, and embolden extremist movements. Ultimately, this scenario would deepen divisions between pro- and anti-Western factions, jeopardizing regional and global peace. The history of mankind, which we meticulously document for various purposes, serves as a tool for learning and avoiding the strategic, tactical, and ideological errors that have led to the destruction of societies and civilizations. Yet, our own recent history suggests that even nations at the apex of civilization fail to learn from their past mistakes. Despite the lessons of history, these uncalculated blunders continue to wreak havoc on societies and communities worldwide, leaving a trail of chaos and suffering that may persist for generations to come.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)  
Former Press Minister at  
Embassy of Pakistan to France  
Former MD, SRBC

# Bilad al-Sham in crisis: A call for unity in the Muslim world

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Economic disparities within and among Islamic countries also play a significant role. While some nations boast immense wealth due to natural resources, others struggle with poverty and underdevelopment. This disparity breeds resentment and weakens the collective bargaining power of the Islamic world

**T**HE situation in Syria remains a critical focus for the Middle East and the broader Islamic world, with repercussions that extend beyond its borders to countries like Pakistan. Known historically and spiritually as Bilad al-Sham, Syria is central to Islamic history and tradition. The Quran and Hadith highlight its sanctity, with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) referring to it as a blessed land. Verses in the Quran speak of blessings upon the lands surrounding Masjid al-Aqsa, which include Syria, further underscoring its importance. This historical and spiritual legacy makes the current turmoil in Syria all the more tragic. From the Assyrians and Romans to the Islamic Caliphates, Syria has been a cradle of civilizations. It flourished as a hub of culture, trade, and governance during the Umayyad Caliphate, with Damascus serving as the capital of an empire that shaped Islamic identity. However, this legacy of glory contrasts sharply with Syria's present condition—a land ravaged by war and division. The Syrian civil war, triggered by domestic grievances but exacerbated by international interference, has transformed the country into a battleground for competing global and regional interests. External powers have exploited sectarian divides, backing opposing factions to advance their strategic goals. The chaos has benefited arms manufacturers, proxy militias, and nations seeking to redraw the region's political map, ensuring Syria remains fragmented and dependent. Beneath the surface lies a deeper conspiracy—one aimed at diminishing Arab solidarity and weakening resistance against external intervention. The plight of Syria is not an isolated case but a reflection of broader challenges faced by many Islamic countries. The factors behind such situations are deeply rooted in historical, political, and socio-economic dynamics. Analyzing these factors helps us understand why the Islamic world remains vulnerable to such crises and what steps are needed to avoid similar catastrophes in the future. One of the most significant reasons is the legacy of colonialism. The arbitrary borders drawn by colonial powers fragmented the Muslim world, creating artificial nation-states that often-grouped disparate ethnicities and sects together or divided cohesive communities. This sowed the seeds of

conflict, as these nations struggled to forge unified identities amidst deep-seated divisions. Another factor is the absence of strong and transparent governance in many Islamic countries. Autocratic regimes, corruption, and a lack of political inclusiveness led to widespread disenfranchisement and discontent among the populace. These conditions create fertile ground for uprisings, which external actors can exploit for their own interests. The lack of democratic mechanisms and effective institutions further exacerbates instability, making it difficult for nations to withstand internal and external pressures. Economic disparities within and among Islamic countries also play a significant role. While some nations boast immense wealth due to natural resources, others struggle with poverty and underdevelopment. This disparity breeds resentment and weakens the collective bargaining power of the Islamic world. Furthermore, the wealth of resource-rich countries often attracts external meddling, as global powers seek to control these resources by propping up regimes or fueling conflicts. Sectarianism and the misuse of religious differences have been weaponized to divide the Muslim world. Instead of focusing on unity, certain actors amplify sectarian divides to further their agendas, pitting Shia against Sunni or different ethnic groups against each other. This deliberate strategy weakens Islamic countries from within, diverting attention from common goals and shared challenges. The lack of unity and cohesion among Islamic countries is another critical issue. While platforms like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) exist, they have often failed to play an effective role in addressing the crises facing member states. Disputes between Islamic nations, competing regional ambitions, and the influence of foreign powers have hindered collective action. Without a unified front, the Muslim world remains susceptible to external manipulation and internal strife. Foreign intervention is a recurring theme in the crises faced by Islamic countries. Global powers often intervene in the internal affairs of these nations under the guise of promoting democracy or fighting terrorism. In reality, such interventions frequently exacerbate conflicts, destroy infrastructure, and destabilize the region. Syria, Iraq, Libya,

and Afghanistan are prime examples of how external interference has led to prolonged instability. Lastly, the lack of investment in education, technological advancement, and economic diversification has left many Islamic countries lagging behind in global competitiveness. This stagnation limits opportunities for growth and progress, leaving these nations vulnerable to exploitation and unable to assert themselves on the global stage. To address these challenges, the Islamic world must prioritize unity and self-reliance. This involves fostering collaboration among nations, resolving internal disputes through dialogue, and strengthening institutions to ensure transparency and accountability. Economic cooperation, technological innovation, and investment in education are essential to reducing dependency on external powers and building a resilient future. The situation in Syria and other crises in the Islamic world serve as stark reminders of the consequences of division and disunity. They call for a renewed commitment to the values of justice, compassion, and collective responsibility as prescribed in Islamic teachings. Only by embracing these principles can the Muslim world overcome its challenges and reclaim its rightful place as a beacon of peace and progress. The crisis in Syria and similar conflicts in the Islamic world serve as painful reminders of the consequences of division and disunity. To overcome these challenges, the Muslim world must prioritize unity, self-reliance, and collective action. This requires fostering collaboration among nations, resolving disputes through dialogue, and strengthening institutions to ensure good governance and accountability. Economic cooperation, technological innovation, and investment in education are critical to reducing dependency on foreign powers and building resilience. As Syria endures its trials, the lessons of the Quran and Hadith remind the global Muslim community of its duty to alleviate suffering and foster justice. The Quranic assurance that "after hardship comes ease" offers hope for a better future—not just for Syria but for all nations striving for peace, justice, and harmony. The Syrian crisis is a call to action for the Muslim world to reclaim its strength and uphold the values of justice, compassion, and unity that lie at the heart of Islamic teachings.



## Briefs

PTI, govt  
'return to  
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Earlier, PTI leaders Salman Akram Raja and Asad Qaiser also met Speaker Ayaz Sadiq. It is noteworthy that PTI approached the government for talks, and the government accepted PTI's offer to create an environment of reconciliation. Government sources said that in order to foster an atmosphere of reconciliation, PTI's offer for talks was accepted, emphasizing that dialogue, not discord, is the way forward in politics. PTI has backed away from its previous demands and is now seeking a judicial commission for the May 9 and November 26 events.

SC Judge  
calls phone  
tapping...

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gave a nod to the country's premier spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to intercept and trace calls and messages in the apprehension of an offence against national security. The notification, issued by the Ministry of Information Technology, said that the authorisation was granted to the ISI under Section 54 of the Pakistan Telecommunication (Re-organisation) Act, 1996. During today's hearing, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar — who is part of the seven-member bench — inquired whether any legislation was carried out regarding the phone tapping. Responding to the query, Additional Attorney General Amir Rehman said the law has been in place since 2013 and ISI and Intelligence Bureau (IB) were officially granted permission to tap phones. "The procedure for phone tapping is part of the law, and judicial supervision is also in the law," he told the court.

Grand jirga  
'fails to  
reach...

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air travel services to the region. He emphasised the urgency of removing private bunkers from the central highway and disarming the area of heavy weaponry. Saif went on to say that both tribes desire peace, but certain elements have vested interests in perpetuating conflict, which he said cannot be identified without the collaboration of public. He also pledged strict action against those hindering peace efforts. The KP Cm's aide urged the grand jirga participants to find a permanent solution to the conflict and also expressed hope that the ceasefire deal would be followed on a long-term basis.

Tarar  
requests...

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provincial autonomy. Speaking in the lower house, Azam Tarar said maintaining law and order is a provincial matter, and the federal government intervenes only when assistance is requested by the province. He mentioned that Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has also been directed to stay in contact with the provincial government to resolve the Kurram crisis. However, the federal law minister expressed concern that while KP Governor Faisal Kundi convened an All-Parties Conference (APC) on the Kurram crisis, KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur did not attend.

Provide  
justice...

FROM PAGE 01  
"Oppression grows but ultimately fades away," he said, emphasising the need for accountability and reform to prevent recurring injustices. Gohar reiterated that the PTI's protests were peaceful, with no evidence of weapons among demonstrators. While the party has not announced to take to the streets once again, he said that it would begin a civil disobedience movement later this month if the government does not accept its demands, including the repealing of the 26th Constitutional Amendment.

## Babar drops, Shaheen and Rizwan soar in T20I rankings

Only two Pakistan batters sit among the top 50 T20I batters

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: Pakistan's star cricketers Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Afridi experienced significant jumps, while Babar Azam faced a decline in the latest ICC Men's T20I rankings. Wicketkeeper-batter Rizwan has moved up two spots, from eighth to sixth, with 713 rating points. His knock of 74 runs in the first T20I against South Africa played a key role in his ascent. On the other hand, Babar has dropped two positions, from fifth to seventh, with 710 rating points. The 30-year-old was dismissed for a duck in the same match, which contributed to his fall. Apart from Babar and Rizwan, no other Pakistan batter is currently in the Top 50 of the T20I rankings. Australia's Travis Head remained the top-ranked T20I batter with 855 rating points, followed by England's Phil Salt (829 points) and India's Tilak Varma (806 points). In the T20I bowling department, Pakistan's left-arm pacer Shaheen Afridi has climbed six spots, moving from 26th to 20th, following his stellar performance, where he picked up three wickets, bringing his tally to 100



wickets in T20I cricket. However, pacer Haris Rauf has seen a slight decline, dropping three places from 20th to 23rd with 588 rating points. All-rounder Imad Wasim also dropped to 40th. England's Adil Rashid holds the top spot with 701 rating points, followed by Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga in second (696 points) and Australia's Adam Zampa in third (694 points).

in the 100th spot. Despite this, Haris Rauf retains his place at 15th with 605 points. Afghanistan's Rashid Khan continues to dominate as the number one ODI bowler with 687 points, followed by Shaheen Afridi in second (675 points) and South Africa's Keshav Maharaj in third (674 points). In the ICC Test rankings, Pakistan's vice-captain Saud Shakeel remains steady in ninth place with 724 points. Babar Azam has climbed to 18th, followed by Salman Agha (19th) and Mohammad Rizwan (20th). Harry Brook has overtaken Joe Root as the number one Test batter with 898 points, with Root dropping to second (897 points) and New Zealand's Kane Williamson in third (812 points). Pakistan's spinner Noman Ali has returned to the top 10, moving to 10th spot with 759 points. Meanwhile, Shaheen Afridi has dropped two places to 18th with 667 points. Spinner Sajid Khan has fallen to 38th, and young pacer Naseem Shah is just behind at 39th. India's Jasprit Bumrah continues to hold the top spot in the Test bowling rankings with 890 points, followed by South Africa's Kagiso Rabada (856 points). Australia's Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins round out the top four.

## Lions register first win in Champions T20 Cup

Panthers were bundled out for 123 runs in their first innings

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Lions registered their first win in the Champions T20 Cup with an emphatic eight-wicket victory over Panthers at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. After being asked to bat first, Panthers were bowled out for a modest total of 123 runs in 19.2 overs. The innings got off to

a shaky start after Sharjeel Khan was dismissed for just five runs, leaving the Panthers at 17/1 in 3.1 overs. Despite a promising partnership between Umar Siddiq and Haider Ali which saw them add 45 runs for the second wicket, the Panthers' innings ultimately faltered. Siddiq was dismissed for 26 off 28 balls by Khushdil Shah, leaving the Panthers at 62/2 in 8.4 overs.

Danish Aziz was the standout batter for the Panthers, scoring 34 runs off 27 balls. Haider Ali also contributed with 26 runs off 20 balls, but apart from them, no other batter managed to reach double figures. With the ball, Shahid Aziz was the standout performer for Lions, taking impressive figures of 4/20 in 3.2 overs. He was well supported by Khushdil Shah and Musa

Khan who each took two wickets, while Awaiz Anwar added one more. In reply, the Lions made a confident start to their chase, with openers Hasan Nawaz and skipper Imam-ul-Haq putting together a solid 79-run partnership for the first wicket. However, their first setback came in the 10th over when Hasan Nawaz was dismissed for 44 off 31 balls, which included four boundaries and three sixes. Imam continued to anchor the chase, forming a 43-run partnership with Shahzaib Khan for the second wicket, bringing the team closer to victory. However Imam failed to hit the winning runs as he was dismissed after scoring 45 runs from 38 deliveries which included five boundaries. Shahzaib remained unbeaten on 28 off 17 balls, while Awaiz Anwar (4) hit the winning runs, guiding Lions to chase down 124 after losing two wickets in just 14.3 overs. Shahid Aziz was named Player of the Match for his exceptional bowling performance.



## Rauf crowned ICC player of month

Rauf dethrones India's Jasprit Bumrah and South Africa's Marco Jansen

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf has been nominated for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for November 2024, surpassing India's Jasprit Bumrah and South Africa's Marco Jansen to claim the prestigious recognition. Rauf's exceptional form across formats played a pivotal role in Pakistan's historic series win in Australia, earning him the monthly award. The 31-year-old was instrumental in Pakistan's first ODI series win in Australia in 22 years, finishing with an impressive 18 wickets. His standout performance came in the second ODI of the series against Australia, when Pakistan found themselves trailing 1-0. Rauf delivered a fiery pace-bowling display in Adelaide, claiming career-best figures of 5/29. His spell reduced Australia to just 163 runs, setting up Pakistan's emphatic nine-wicket victory and levelling the series. The right-arm pacer's exceptional form carried over into the crucial third ODI, as he claimed two more wickets, playing a pivotal role in Pakistan's 2-1 series triumph. His all-round impact earned him the Player of the Series accolade. In the subsequent T20I series, Rauf maintained his superb form, taking five wickets, including a four-wicket haul in Sydney, which marked his fourth in T20Is. He then traveled with Pakistan to Zimbabwe, where he added three more wickets to his tally in three ODIs, helping Pakistan secure a 2-1 series win.

## Brook replaces Root as world No. 01 Test batter

Travis Head and Temba Bavuma among batters and Pat Cummins and Matt Henry among bowlers to have moved up this week

WEB DESK

LONDON: Joe Root isn't the No. 1 Test batter in the world anymore. The man he said was "far and away the best player in the world at the minute", Harry Brook, has gone to the top of the pile following his 123 and 55 in the second Test in New Zealand, which came on the back of a 171 in the first Test, which had taken him to the second spot. It's a slender lead at the top for Brook, though, just one point, with Root doing his cause no harm with a 106 in the second innings of that second Test, which England won by 323 runs to go 2-0 up in the three-Test series. Indeed, how the two of them go in the third Test, starting December 14 in Hamilton, could well determine if Brook stays No. 1 or Root takes back his crown almost

immediately. Root had held the top spot since he went past Kane Williamson — currently No. 3 — in July this year. He has been the top batter in Test cricket nine times over his career. Brook was named Player of the Match in Wellington and Root was quick to shower praise on his younger colleague. "Brooky is by far and away the best player in the world at the minute," he had said. "He can absorb pressure, he can apply it. He can whack you over your head for six. He can scoop you over his head for six. He can smack spin. He can smack seam." Just 25, Brook has scored 2280 runs from 38 innings across 23 Tests, and currently averages 61.62. Those numbers include eight centuries, including a mammoth 317 against Pakistan in Multan in October 2024. It has been a busy time for Test cricket on the whole, with Australia hosting India in a five-

match series — of which two have been played so far — and SA beating Sri Lanka 2-0 at home earlier this week. Travis Head, who hit 141 in the first innings of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test in Adelaide to set up Australia's ten-wicket win, has zoomed up six spots to fifth, while Temba Bavuma's 78 and 66 in the second Test in Gqeberha took him up three places to seventh on the table. Bavuma, in fact, was named Player of the Series for his tally of 327 runs. Marcus Labuschagne, who signalled a bit of a return to form in the pink-ball Test in Adelaide, has also moved up following his 64 in the first innings, going up three spots to get to 13th. Jasprit Bumrah, the top-ranked Test bowler, strengthened his position with a four-wicket haul in the first innings in Adelaide, but Kagiso Rabada, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins are not too far behind.

Outgoing  
Bangladeshi  
HC pays  
farewell...

FROM PAGE 01  
wishes to Chief Advisor Dr. Muhammad Yunus, the Prime Minister remarked that the existing goodwill between Pakistan and Bangladesh needed to be translated into tangible cooperation. He wished the High Commissioner success in his future endeavors. The High Commissioner thanked the Prime Minister for the facilitation, courtesies and privileges extended to him during his stay in Pakistan.

Law to  
decide Imran  
Khan's...

FROM PAGE 01  
yet she was with them when PTI members fled D Chowk. Khawaja Asif also mentioned that Ali Amin Gandapur's guards fired on their workers, and government employees and policemen in plain clothes were brought from KP. He emphasized that the Chief Minister of KP is responsible for maintaining peace in his province, yet he left it to launch an attack on Islamabad, which failed for the third time.

Return 2018  
mandate in  
exchange...

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He further suggested that if there were any issues regarding the February 8 elections, the courts would be available to address them. Dar went on to highlight the cooperation between the government and PTI when it came to key appointments. "We appointed the person nominated by you, the chief election commissioner, and we made the individual you wanted chairman of NADRA," he said, adding that the 2018 mandate had not been disputed at the time. Addressing PTI's actions around protests, he questioned why D-Chowk was specifically chosen for protests when other areas, such as Sangjani, were offered.

Taliban  
minister  
Haqqani...

FROM PAGE 01  
according to the US State Department. Khalil was the brother of Jalaluddin Haqqani, who founded the feared Haqqani network. The deceased minister was also the uncle of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the current interior minister of Afghanistan. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Ishaq Dar, expressed profound shock and sorrow over the death of Acting Afghan Minister Khalil ur Rehman Haqqani and the tragic loss of lives in a terrorist attack targeting the Afghan Refugee Ministry in Kabul earlier today. In an official statement, Ishaq Dar extended heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and reiterated Pakistan's firm stance against terrorism. "Pakistan unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations," he said.

Soldier  
martyred, 7  
terrorists...

FROM PAGE 01  
area of North Waziristan district on the "reported presence of khwarij [terrorists]". During the conduct of operation, it said, the security forces effectively engaged the terrorist location and "as a result of which four khwarij were killed". In another encounter in Spinwam area, the security forces successfully gunned down three more terrorists. However, during the intense fire exchange, Lance Naik Muhammad Amin, 34, a resident of district Faisalabad, embraced martyrdom. "Sanitisation operation is being conducted to eliminate any other khwarij found in the area," the ISPR said, adding that the security forces were determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism. Pakistan has witnessed a spike in terror attacks on security forces and civilians — especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan — since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021 following the withdrawal of US and NATO forces.

## West Indies beat Bangladesh to win ODI series

West Indies wins first bilateral ODI series against Bangladesh in 10 years

ST. KITTS: West Indies cruised to a comfortable seven-wicket victory over Bangladesh, securing their first bilateral ODI series win against the visitors in 10 years. The win was powered by a career-best bowling performance from Jayden Seales, who claimed four wickets for 22 runs. His outstanding spell set the tone as West Indies bowled out Bangladesh for 227 before comfortably chasing down the target with 13.1 overs to spare. Opting to bowl first in St. Kitts, the decision proved to be a masterstroke as Seales made early inroads. He struck thrice in his opening spell, sending Soumya Sarkar, Litton Das and Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz back to the pavilion cheaply inside the powerplay. Despite a counterattack from Tanzim Hasan, who scored a brisk 46 off 33 balls, Bangladesh were left reeling at 64/4 in the 11th over. A brief recovery followed as Mahmudullah and Afif Hossain combined for a 36-run partnership. However, the West Indies spinners continued to dominate, with Gudakesh Motie claiming two key wickets to leave Bangladesh struggling at 104/6 in the 21st over. Mahmudullah then found a

steady partner in Tanzim Hasan Sakib and the pair forged a gritty 92-run stand for the eighth wicket, rescuing their team from further collapse. Mahmudullah's half-century came off 84 balls, and together with Sakib, took Bangladesh past the 200-run mark. However, the breakthrough came when Roston Chase took a brilliant return catch

to dismiss Sakib, who fell just five runs short of a well-deserved half-century. Seales returned to dismiss Mahmudullah soon after, and Shoriful Islam's late cameo of 15 runs helped Bangladesh reach a total of 227 before they were bowled out in the 46th over. In reply, the West Indies got off to a strong start, with Brandon King

and Evin Lewis putting on 109 for the first wicket. King took the aggressive route early on, while Lewis, initially struggling at the crease, found his rhythm with a flurry of boundaries. Lewis took on Sakib with three consecutive boundaries including a six in the ninth over to bring up the team's fifty, and by the end of the powerplay, West Indies were well-placed at 54/0. Lewis continued to push on, hitting a couple of sixes off Mehidy, but was dismissed for 49 when Rishad Hossain had him caught and bowled. King, who had brought up a 52-ball fifty, remained firm at the crease, anchoring the chase as Keacy Carty joined him for a 66-run partnership. Carty was the core aggressor of the stand, hitting seven boundaries in his 47-ball knock before falling five runs short of a half-century. With just 31 runs needed for victory, Sherfane Rutherford provided the finishing touch with an explosive cameo. His quick-fire 24 off 15 balls, including two sixes and a four, sealed the win for West Indies, who finished with 228/3 and wrapped up the series with more than 13 overs to spare. — Agencies





## Briefs

## Rupee sheds 11 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 11 paise against the US dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs278.16 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.05. Pakistan's cuisine However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs277.70 and Rs279.20 respectively. The price of Euro decreased by Rs1.09 to close at Rs292.11 against the last day's closing of Rs293.20, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.82, whereas a decrease of 18 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs354.48 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs354.30. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 01 paise to close at Rs75.73 and Rs74.01, respectively.—APP

## PSX turns around, gains 1,913 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 1,913.57 points, a positive change of 1.76 percent, closing at 110,810.22 points as compared to 108,896.65 points on the last trading day. Pakistan's cuisine A total of 1,080,023,483 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,548,302,320 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 47.139 billion against Rs. 68.805 billion on the last trading day. As many as 472 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 288 of them recorded gains and 130 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 54 companies remained unchanged.—APP

## Gold price increases by Rs3,100 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs.3,100 and was sold at Rs 280,500 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs 277,400 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewelers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.2,658 to Rs.240,484 from Rs 237,826 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs.220,443 from Rs 218,007. Per tola silver increased by Rs.50 to Rs 3,450 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.42.86 to Rs.2,957.81. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$31 to \$2,693 from \$2,662, the Association reported.—APP

## Israeli action in Syria violates pact that ended Yom Kippur war

MOSCOW: Israeli action in Syria violates a 1974 treaty between Israel and Syria that ended the Yom Kippur war, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday, calling Israeli air strikes on Syria a matter for serious concern. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Tuesday that his country aims to impose a "sterile defense zone" in southern Syria as the Israeli military said a wave of its air strikes had destroyed the bulk of Syria's strategic weapons stockpiles. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told a news briefing Israel's actions did not serve to stabilize the situation in Syria and called on it to show restraint. The Kremlin on Wednesday played down the damage to Russian influence in the Middle East from the fall of Syrian ally Bashar Assad, saying that its focus was Ukraine and that Moscow was in contact with the new rulers of Syria.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Visitors taking interest in pieces of art on the occasion of International Mountain Day event organized by the Kyrgyz embassy.—DNA

## Toppling of Syria's Assad result of US-Israeli plan: Khamenei

"What happened in Syria was mainly planned in the command rooms of America and Israel. We have evidence of this. A neighboring government of Syria was also involved," Khamenei said in a speech reported by Iranian state media

DUBAI: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the toppling of Syrian President Bashar Assad was the result of a plan by the United States and Israel. One of Syria's neighbors also had a role, he said. He did not name the country but appeared to be referring to Türkiye, which has backed anti-Assad militants. Assad's overthrow is widely seen as a major blow to the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance" political and military alliance that op-

poses Israeli and US influence in the Middle East. "What happened in Syria was mainly planned in the command rooms of America and Israel. We have evidence of this. A neighboring government of Syria was also involved," Khamenei said in a speech reported by Iranian state media. The neighbor had a "clear role and continues to do so," he said. NATO member Türkiye, which controls swathes of land in northern Syria after several cross-border incursions



against the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, has been a main backer of opposition groups aiming to topple Assad since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. Iran spent billions of dollars propping up Assad during the war and deployed its Revolutionary Guards to Syria to keep its ally in power. 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 in-

clusive government representing all segments of Syrian society. In his speech, Khamenei also said the Iran-led alliance would gain in strength across the entire region. "The more pressure you exert, the stronger the resistance becomes. The more crimes you commit, the more determined it becomes. The more you fight against it, the more it expands Khamenei said. "Iran is strong and powerful—and will become even stronger," he said.—Agencies

## Farewell reception for SCO Secretary General held in Beijing

BEIJING: A farewell reception for the completion of diplomatic mission of Zhang Ming as Secretary General of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was held in Beijing. Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi, ambassadors of other SCO member-states and senior diplomats attended the event. Pakistan's cuisine The senior Chinese diplomat and Zhang Ming's colleagues from SCO member states expressed their strong faith in the group's future growth and solidarity. History will continue to testify to the strong vitality of the Shanghai Spirit. The future of the SCO is full of hope, and there are heavy responsibilities on the way forward, Zhang said in his speech at the event. The outgoing SCO secretary-general, said he expects the group to be more practical, deliver more tangible benefits to the people, keep pace with the times through steadfast modernization and reform, and further improve its efficiency, dynamism and the capacity of implementation. On Jan 1, 2022, Zhang took office for a term of three years. During this period, the SCO expanded to include two new member states and eight dialogue partners. It now has 10 member states, two observer nations and 14 dialogue partners. Zhang noted that in the past three years, the group has explored the establishment of an SCO financing mechanism by removing traditional bottlenecks that hinder cooperation, and has actively facilitated its modernization and reform. His foreign colleagues also voiced appreciation on behalf of their countries for Zhang's dedication to the continuously evolving group. In July, China took over the SCO's rotating presidency and will host the 25th SCO Summit next year. Liu Bin, China's assistant foreign minister, said, "We are ready to take this opportunity to act on the presidency slogan, 'Upholding the Shanghai Spirit: SCO on the Move', and join hands with all member states to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders." Beijing will work to improve the SCO mechanism for addressing security threats and challenges, work on the SCO Development Strategy through 2035, and stay committed to its sustainable development goals, Liu added. Kazakh Ambassador to China, Shakhmat Nuryshev highly appreciated Zhang's achievements on behalf of the leadership in Kazakhstan. "President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has decided to award you with the Order of Dostyk of the second degree," he added.—DNA

## Prudent economic policies yielding desired results

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Finance Minister on Economic and Financial Reforms, Khurram Schehzad said on Wednesday that the prudent policies introduced by the current government had started yielding the desired results, as reflected in a recent survey conducted by a world-leading firm. "Pakistan's Global Consumer Confidence Index has improved, surpassing Türkiye for the first time in two years, while India, China, and Brazil have seen declines," he said in a statement, quoting a survey by global market research firm Ipsos that revealed a significant shift in public perception regarding Pakistan's economic trajectory. The survey, which includes responses from all four provinces as well as Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), showcased a promising outlook for the country as it navigates economic challenges. Khurram Schehzad highlighted several key positive takeaways from the fourth-quarter 2024 Ipsos survey, underscoring a wave of optimism among the Pakistani populace. He said the survey indicated that belief in Pakistan "heading in the right direction" has nearly doubled, rising to 19 percent — the highest level in 36 months.—APP

## Digital trucks beam Kashmir freedom messages around UN on HRs Day

NEW YORK: The World Kashmir Awareness Forum (WKAF), a prominent advocacy group, Tuesday highlighted the grave human rights violations over the years by Indian occupation forces in Jammu and Kashmir, and called on the United Nations to use its influence in putting an end to those abuses. Marking International Human Rights Day, the forum drew attention to the 77-year-long rights crisis in Kashmir. With over 100,000 civilian deaths and nearly as many missing as well as suppression of civic, political and economic life, the Kashmiri people are facing erasure from history. To amplify the cause of Kashmir and the rights of the occupied people, the forum rented digital advertising trucks in New York City to remind the United Nations and representatives of major NOG's of the political and human rights situation in Indian occupied Kashmir. The electronic screens on the digital trucks flashed messages such as: "Indian Atrocities at its Peak: Kashmiris Want World to Speak: 'Election in Kashmir is Ruse: India Committing Human Rights Abuse'; Indian Forces on Killing Spree: Kashmir Needs to be Set Free"; "Kashmiris Reject Indian Occupation: UN Resolution only Solution"; "Indian Brutality in Kashmir Galore: World Community Cannot Ignore"; "Kashmir Facing Existential Threat: United Nations Needs to Act"; "Hold India accountable for war crimes in Kashmir"; "Land Grab Operation in Kashmir is Economic Terrorism"; "Freedom for all: Freedom for Kashmir," and "India: Stop Demographic Terrorism in Kashmir." The digital advertising trucks drove around the United Nations headquarters, the Indian Mission; the Freedom Tower; the Times Square; the Indian Consulate and various other Missions to the UN. Dr. Ghulam N. Mir, President of the World Kashmir Awareness Forum and Chairman of the Kashmir Diaspora Coalition, said that the proclamation of Human Rights Day by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948, was a major achievement, but the world body has failed to protect the basic rights of Kashmiri people. "The world is drifting inexorably towards total dehumanization of Kashmiri and Palestinian people, and there are no signs of their plight changing for the better," he said, adding that it was time to do something to ameliorate their situation. Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman of the World Forum for Peace & Justice underscored the role the right of self-determination in resolving festering disputes and bringing freedom to the occupied people. "Let us hope that the stage is set to put the Kashmir conflict on a road to a durable and permanent settlement," Dr. Fai said. "Too often," Dr. Fai said, "the international community closes its eyes to the brutal reality of Kashmir because of India's hegemony in South Asia and its potentially attractive consumer market. It has crowned India with a veto power over outside intervention. A shocking affront to the Security Council itself. Yet, India has the temerity to seek a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council." In this context, Dr. Fai said, "Kashmiris are facing an existential crisis." Professor (Dr.) Imtiaz Khan, a Kashmiri American scholar said that "On Human Rights Day, the situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for justice and the need for accountability in the region, underscoring the importance of respecting the basic human rights of all individuals, including the right to life, liberty, freedom of expression, and protection from arbitrary detention." Dr. Imtiaz Khan added that, "The observance of Human Rights Day can be an opportunity to amplify the voices of Kashmiri civilians, human rights defenders, and activists who continue to call for the protection of their rights and for international attention to the ongoing crisis.—Agencies

## Ankara hosts photographic exhibition 'Frames of Friendship: a photographic tribute to eco cultures

ANKARA: The Embassy of Pakistan in Ankara in collaboration with the Economic Cooperation Organization Cultural Institute (ECO CI) and Kecioren Municipality, organized a photographic exhibition under the theme "Frames of Friendship: A Photographic Tribute to ECO Cultures", showcasing the rich and diverse cultures of ECO member states. The exhibition was attended by Turkish Member Parliament Burhan Kayaturk, Ambassador of Pakistan Dr. Yousaf Junaid, Deputy Mayor of Kecioren Mr. Atilla Zorlu, diplomats from the ECO countries, civil society and media. Before the inauguration of the exhibition, a moment of silence was observed for the martyrs who lost their lives in a helicopter accident yesterday. The exhibition featured the stunning works of renowned photographers who captured the breath taking nat-

ural beauty, varied topography, and unique architectural heritage that define the ECO region. From the majestic mountains of Pakistan to the vibrant landscapes of Afghanistan and the scenic vistas of Central Asia,

each photograph told a story of friendship, unity, and shared heritage among ECO member states. Emphasizing on the significance of cultural diplomacy in fostering respect and stronger ties between nations, Mem-

ber Parliament Burhan Kayaturk stated that the exhibition was a celebration of bonds of friendship and shared values between ECO countries. Speaking at the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Yousaf Junaid stated that ECO

region is a crossroad of civilizations, where ancient empires, nomadic tribes and vibrant modern culture intersect. From bustling bazaars of Baku to intricate handicrafts of Multan and the grand mosques of Istanbul, the displayed photographs reflect our culture, traditions and way of life. Deputy Mayor Kecioren Mr. Atilla Zorlu appreciated the efforts of Pakistan Embassy and ECO CI in bringing the enriching event to Ankara, providing an opportunity to experience the rich tapestry of ECO cultures through the lens of artistic expression. President ECO CI, Dr. Saad Sikander Khan highlighted that one of the key objectives of ECO is to promote sustainable development and regional cooperation. He encouraged the audience to feel the beauty of landscapes and the diversity of the ECO countries reflected through the photographs.—Agencies



## Israeli strike on northern Gaza kills 26

CAIRO: Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed at least 26 people overnight and into Wednesday, including one that hit a home where displaced people were sheltering in the isolated north, killing 19, according to Palestinian medical officials. That strike occurred in the northern town of Beit Lahiyah near the border with Israel, according to the nearby Kamal Adwan Hospital, which received the bodies. Hospital records show that a family of eight were among those killed, including four children, their parents and two grandparents. Another strike in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza killed at least seven people, according to the Awda Hospital. Records show the dead included two children, their parents and three relatives. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. Israel has been waging a renewed offensive against Hamas militants in northern Gaza since early October. The military says it tries to avoid harming civilians and accuses militants of hiding among them, putting their lives in danger.—DNA

## Amsterdam football violence trial opens

AMSTERDAM: The trial opened Wednesday of five suspects facing charges including one of attempted manslaughter after last month's hit-and-run attacks in Amsterdam on Israeli football supporters. The men, ranging in age from 19 to 32, are to face a three-judge bench at the Amsterdam District Court in staggered appearances. Two more suspects are to appear on Thursday. All seven have been charged with public violence, Dutch prosecutors said. Supporters of Maccabi Tel Aviv were assaulted in the early hours of November 8 in various parts of the city. The violence sparked outrage in Israel and among Dutch politicians, who described them as anti-Semitic. The attacks followed two days of skirmishes that also saw Maccabi fans chant anti-Arab songs, vandalize a taxi and burn a Palestinian flag. Police said they were investigating at least 45 people in connection with the violence, which saw five Maccabi fans briefly hospitalized. First up before the judges Wednesday was a 19-year-old man from the town of Monnickendam, just northeast of Amsterdam, followed by four others. The first man stands accused of committing public violence around the Johan Cruyff Arena, including shouting anti-Semitic slogans and throwing rocks at the police. He also faces a charge of sharing information about public violence and illegal possession of fireworks.—APP

## Malaria cases up again in 2023, African kids worst hit, WHO reports

LONDON: There were around 11 million more cases of malaria in 2023 than in 2022, up to an estimated 263 million, according to a new World Health Organization report, marking another year of negligible progress against the age-old killer. There were 597,000 deaths, a similar total to 2022, the vast majority among African children aged under 5 years old, the WHO said. "No-one should die of malaria; yet the disease continues to disproportionately harm people living in the African region, especially young children and pregnant women," said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, in a statement. Malaria cases and deaths fell significantly between 2000 and 2015, but since then progress has stalled and even reversed, with a particular jump in mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Case numbers are not only going up as populations grow. In 2015, there were 58 cases for every 1,000 people deemed to be at risk; in 2023, there were 60.4, nearly three times higher than the WHO's target. There were 13.7 deaths per 100,000 people at risk, more than twice the target.—APP



## Briefs

### PIA eyes revival of UK flights by THIS month

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan's aviation industry is poised for another breakthrough as preparations are underway to resume Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flights to the United Kingdom.

According to the Director General of Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA), Nadir Shafi Dar, a delegation from the UK Department for Transport (DfT) will visit Pakistan next month. He further revealed that an online meeting is also scheduled for the third week of December, followed by an official visit to the UK in January 2024.

The DG expressed optimism, stating that PIA flights to the UK could resume as early as March, following successful evaluations similar to those conducted by the European Union (EU). Pakistan's positive assessment by the EU is expected to pave the way for PIA UK flight operations.

A PIA spokesperson noted that Pakistan previously operated 21 weekly flights to the UK, including ten to London, nine to Manchester, and two to Birmingham. Resumption of flights to Europe and the UK is expected to significantly boost the national airline's revenue. PIA on December 7, announced that it will resume flights to Europe in January, starting with Paris, after the EU aviation regulator lifted a ban on the national flag carrier. PIA's authorization to operate in the EU was suspended in June 2020 over concerns about the ability of Pakistani authorities and its CAA to ensure compliance with international aviation standards.

### 86,000 SIMs blocked over anti-Pakistan activities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As many as 86,000 SIMs have been blocked for anti-state activities, Parliamentary Secretary Sajid Mehdi told the National Assembly (NA) on Wednesday. He was responding to a call-to-attention notice regarding the spread of fake news on social media platforms in the National Assembly by AsiyaNazTanoli. Parliamentary Secretary Sajid Mehdi admitted that the government had blocked the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) to curb misinformation, adding that 86,000 SIMs have also been blocked over anti-state activities. He told the NA house that amendments to the Electronic Crimes Act are expected soon to strengthen regulations against fake news. Mr. Mehdi also confirmed that VPN usage has also been restricted to control the flow of misinformation. "A task force has been established under the Prime Minister's directive to tackle fake news."

# Japan announces US\$3.1 mln polio program's support grant

To date, the grant and loan contribution from the Government of Japan has amounted to approximately US\$ 242.194 million dollars to support the Polio programme in Pakistan through UNICEF



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has announced a new US\$ 3.1 million grant to procure essential oral polio vaccines as part of its continued support to polio eradication efforts in Pakistan. Pakistan Polio Programme will use these funds to procure more than 20.22 million doses of vaccines to support polio campaigns in 2025. Pakistan is one of only two countries globally that has yet to stop polio. So far in 2024, Pakistan has reported a total of

59 cases of polio. With the current surge in polio cases in the country, the Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with its partners, is set to implement an extensive and strategic action plan in 2025 aimed at eradicating this life-threatening disease among children. Each national immunization drive targets over 45.4 million children under the age of five, with more than 400,000 frontline workers, predominantly women, playing a crucial role in ensuring the Polio Programme's outreach. "The challenges faced in 2024 have underscored the critical need to accelerate

our efforts to eradicate polio. With Japan's continued support, we are further strengthened to intensify our efforts, aiming to achieve zero polio cases by mid-2025 under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif," stated Prime Minister Focal Person on Polio Eradication Ms. Aysha Raza Farooq. "The unwavering support of the Government of Japan has been instrumental in helping us get closer to reaching zero cases. We are thankful to the Government and people of Japan for their continued support towards polio eradication in Pakistan," Ms. Aysha

Raza Farooq added. Mr. TAKANO Shuichi, Charge d' Affaires ad interim of Japan to the Pakistan, said "Japan has supported Pakistan to eradicate polio for nearly 30 years despite hindrance such as floods, COVID, and terrorist attacks. "Since this year marks the 70th anniversary of Japan's ODA to Pakistan, we would like to renew our commitment to continue to promote routine immunization including polio vaccination in Pakistan." The new funding is part of the continuous support from the Government of Japan to the Polio Eradication programme since 1996. To date, the grant and loan contribution from the Government of Japan has amounted to approximately US\$ 242.194 million dollars to support the Polio programme in Pakistan through UNICEF.

"We appreciate the government's commitment to making all-out efforts to ensure all children receive the essential vaccine." "We believe that vaccines, the most effective way to strengthen children's immunity, will be used effectively with the understanding of parents and communities and the efforts of frontline workers." "We sincerely hope that all the polio campaigns of this year will be conducted successfully toward zero polio cases," said Mr. MIYATA Naoki, Chief Representative, JICA Pakistan Office. "The sharp rise in polio cases this year is a reminder of the urgent need to protect every child with vaccines through campaigns and routine immunization. As long as there is polio anywhere, every child will remain at risk until the virus is eradicated," said Abdullah Fakil, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan. "With steadfast support from partners like Japan, UNICEF remains committed to vaccinating every child to achieve a polio-free Pakistan."

## Pak keen to enhance ties with Tajikistan: Leghari

MoUs, protocols signed at Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commission

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The seventh Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commission meeting, held here on Wednesday, culminated in a major breakthrough, with the signing of two landmark Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and protocols. The commission meeting, Co-Chaired by Federal Minister for Power Division, SardarAwaisLeghari and Tajik Minister for Energy and Water Resources, Jum'adaler-Shofaqir was hosted by Ministry of Economic Affairs. According to details, the first MoU forges a historic partnership between the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Tajikistan's Khatlon province, paving the way for enhanced cooperation and mutual development. The second MoU seals a thrilling collaboration between the Pakistan and Tajikistan Football Federations, poised to elevate the sports landscape in both nations. On December 13, 2024, a business-to-business (B2B) forum has been arranged for the businessmen of both countries in order to strengthen the B2B ties. Meanwhile, speaking on the

occasion, SardarAwaisLeghari emphasized the historical, longstanding, close, and cordial relations between the two countries, noting that Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize Tajikistan's independence in 1991, and emphasized their shared religious, historical, and cultural bonds. Leghari reiterated Pakistan's commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation, particularly in the areas of trade, energy, agriculture, education, and industry, where both countries have significant comparative advantages. He stressed the importance of developing a Plan of Action to boost trade, remove barriers, and establish a Joint Coordination Committee on Transit Trade under the Tajikistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. Furthermore, he emphasized the strategic importance of Pakistan's location at the crossroads of Central and West Asia, offering ideal opportunities for Tajik investments, as well as facilitating trade corridors under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program. Pakistan's cuisine Leghari also expressed the hope for the swift completion of the CASA-1000 energy project, which would significantly benefit both countries.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel and President Pakistan Muslim League (N) Azad Jammu and Kashmir Shah Gulam Qadir call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar is also present). - DNA

## No reason for West to fear Syria, says HTS leader

DAMASCUS: The West has no reason to fear Syria following the ousting of Bashar Assad's regime, Abu Mohammed Al-Golani, leader of the group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), told during an interview on Wednesday. In his first interview with a Western outlet since Assad fled, Al-Golani insisted that Syria is on a path to stability. "The fear stemmed from the regime's presence. Syria is now on a path toward development, reconstruction, and stability," he said during an interview in Damascus with Sky News' international news editor, ZeinJaafar, and Middle East producer, Celine Al-Khalidi. Golani, a former member of the Daesh of Iraq who previously led Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria before severing ties in 2016, is now trying to present himself as a more moderate leader. However, HTS remains designated as a terrorist organization by the UN, US, UK, and other nations. Despite his reassurances, HTS's rapid rise to power has fueled fears among Syria's minorities, including Kurds, Alawites, and Christians. "The country isn't ready for another war, nor will it enter one," Golani stated, emphasizing that Syrians are weary from years of conflict. He also described the removal of Iranian militias, Hezbollah, and Assad's regime as essential for Syria's recovery. "Their absence is the solution. The current situation rules out a return to panic," he said. Golani praised his fighters, claiming they took charge of Syria without any foreign support or interference. In a pointed reference to Russian and Iranian backing of the Assad regime, he said all former "colonizers" had failed to control the country. Syria's new interim Prime Minister, Mohamed al-Bashir, has called on Syrians who fled the Assad regime and are seeking asylum across the globe to "come back". - Agencies

## UK court convicts father, step-mother of Sara Sharif

Father, stepmother of Sara Sharif convicted of murder as her uncle Faisal Malik found guilty of allowing her death

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Three members of British-Pakistani Sara Sharif's family have been found guilty over the 10-year-old's death after years of horrific abuse. Her father Urfan Sharif, 42, and stepmother Beinash-Batool, 30, were found guilty of her murder and her uncle Faisal Malik, 29, was convicted of causing or allowing her death following a trial at the Old Bailey. Justice Cavanagh adjourned sentencing until next Tuesday, telling jurors the case had been "extremely stressful and traumatic". Sara was beaten to death four years after taxi driver Urfan was awarded custody, despite accusations of abuse against him, jurors heard. Prosecutor William Emlyn Jones KC said Urfan had gone on to create a "culture of violent discipline", where assaults on Sara had "become completely routine, completely normalised". He alleged Urfan had meant to cause her serious harm and the other two defendants took part in the abuse, encouraged or helped him. The defendants had fled to Pakistan after Sara died at the family home in Woking, Surrey, on August 8 2023.

## AKF resumes supply to Gaza

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan has resumed its humanitarian assistance supplies to Gaza. President of the Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan, Professor Dr. Hafeezur Rehman, shared details about a new consignment of relief goods dispatched to Gaza from Jordan, facilitated by the Jordan Royal Medical Services and the Pakistani Embassy in Jordan. The shipment includes essential medicines and food items. Dr. Hafeezur Rehman stated that the Alkhidmat Foundation has so far sent a total of 20 consignments to Gaza. These include 15 by air, three via sea routes, and two by road. The consignments have contained food packages, flour, rice, water, medicines, hygiene kits, delivery kits, baby kits, tents, jerrycans, winter packages, family packages, blankets, and mattresses.

## Pak, China complete Warrior-VIII joint drill

Troops from Pakistan and China earn praise for professionalism in annual Warrior-VIII exercise

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army and the People's Liberation Army of China concluded their three-week joint military exercise, Warrior-VIII, focused on counter-terrorism operations, on 11 December 2024, according to an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release. The exercise, held annually as part of bilateral military collaboration, marked its eighth edition this year. The event culminated with a Distinguished Visitors' Day (DVD) ceremony on December 10 at the Tilla Field Firing Range, attended by high-ranking officials

from both countries. Commander Rawalpindi Corps, Lieutenant General ShahidImtiaz, served as the chief guest, while the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan and other Chinese dignitaries were also present at the ceremony. During the event, dignitaries praised the participating troops for their high standards of professionalism and the successful execution of complex training objectives. According to the ISPR, Warrior-VIII highlights the strengthening defence ties between Pakistan and China, reflecting their shared commitment to regional stability and counter-terrorism efforts. General Syed AsimMunir, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), met with the Pakistan Army team that

secured the prestigious gold medal in the "Exercise Cambrian Patrol," held in the United Kingdom from 4 to 13 October 2024. The Cambrian Patrol is renowned as one of the most challenging military exercises globally. This year, 143 teams participated, and the Pakistan Army contingent stood out for its exceptional skill and resilience. This marks the sixth time that the Pakistan Army has earned the coveted gold medal in this event. According to a news release from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the exercise took place in the unforgiving mountainous terrain of mid-Wales and tested participants on physical endurance, tactical acumen, and mental fortitude.



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