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Abbas calls for full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip

Detailed News On Page-08

KSrelief stands by Pak in thick and thin: Envoy

Detailed News On Page-04



Imad once again takes retirement

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Announcement of 85 civilian cases verdicts

SC's conditional permission to military courts

The top court, in its unanimous verdict by a five-member bench, on October 23 last year declared civilians' trials in military courts null and void after it admitted the petitions challenging the trial of civilians involved in the May 9 riots

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's constitutional bench has granted conditional permission to military courts to announce verdicts in cases involving 85 suspects — allegedly involved in the May 9, 2023, riots. In its order on the hearing of the appeals against civilians' military trial, the constitutional bench said judgements of military courts would be conditional to the top court verdict on the cases pending before it. "The suspects eligible for clemency should be granted it and released, while those who cannot be released should be transferred to prisons after being sentenced," the constitutional bench said. The bench, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard intra-court appeals challenging military court decisions. The bench also included Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. The top court, in its unanimous verdict by a five-member bench, on October 23 last year declared civilians' trials in military courts null and void after it admitted the petitions challenging the trial of civilians involved in the May 9 riots. However, on December 13, 2023, a six-member bench of the apex court — with Justice Hilali differing with the majority — suspended its October 23 order on petitions challenging the earlier verdict. The PTI called the Supreme Court's 5-1 decision to suspend its ruling of nullifying military trials of civilians a "judicial coup". The more than 100 civilians facing military trials were

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Islamabad protest Imran, Bushra Bibi booked over Rangers personnel deaths

FIR lodged at Ramna Police Station also nominates CM Gandapur, Omar Ayub, and others

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi, and other party's top leaders on Friday were booked in a "triple murder case" involving three Rangers personnel who died during the opposition party's "do-or-die" protest last month. A first information report (FIR) was lodged at Islamabad's Ramna Police Station, stating that the incident occurred in accordance with a "plan orchestrated at Adiala Jail" — where former premier Imran Khan is incarcerated for more than one year.

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ISLAMABAD: Energy Minister of Tajikistan Daler Juma calls on PM Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

Routes closure causing hardship for Kurram people

The final decision of the Grand Jirga is awaited

A A ALIZAI

PESHAWAR: Due to the closure of transportation routes in Kurram district for two months, food items, oil, gas and medicines have run out in the area, while the Grand Aman Jirga, which has been going on for a week in Kohat, has come to an end. Due to incidents of firing on convoys of passenger vehicles in Kurram district and tribal clashes, traffic routes have been closed for two months due to the closure of the main highway and the Afghan border. Edible oil, gas and medicines have run out due to which Citizens are suffering from severe problems. Former IG Syed Irshad Hussain said that due to the closure of the roads,

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Stresses low-cost power projects

Shehbaz orders further reduction in power tariff

Premier directs swift implementation of modern system for transmission of low-cost electricity

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: As the incumbent government making efforts to tackle multi-prong challenges in the power sector, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to reduce power tariffs further and expedite the implementation process of the action plan for future power generation projects. The premier issued the directives while chairing a meeting to evaluate and discuss the country's future electricity and power plans. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ahmad Khan Cheema, Awaiz Leghari, Dr Musadik Malik, Minister of State Ali Pervaiz Malik and other officials. During the meeting, he was informed about the progress of the ongoing hydropower projects across the country. Stressing the need to prioritise low-cost power projects based on local resources, PM Shehbaz said such projects produce environment-friendly and affordable electricity. He further directed that the current electricity generation capacity should also be

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Pak, Tajikistan agree to further promote coop

The Tajik Minister thanked the Prime Minister for the warm welcome and hospitality

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Tajikistan on Friday agreed to further promote cooperation in sectors such as communication, particularly land-based connectivity, energy, education, and agriculture. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Energy Minister of Tajikistan Daler Juma who called on him at the PM House. Regional connectivity projects, including CASA-1000, were also

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Briefs

Govt open to dialogue with JUIF

Says, there is no deadlock with Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah categorically reaffirmed the PML-N government's unwavering commitment to fostering inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders and expressed eagerness to initiate constructive table talks with Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman, whom he lauded as a pragmatic, democratic and visionary leader. In an interview with a private news channel, Sanaullah stated that there is no deadlock with Fazl Ur Rehman and that issues related to Madaris (Islamic seminaries) will be resolved through negotiation.

Senate passes NFA bill

Bill aims at transforming NFA project into independent agency to enhance forensic capabilities across country

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday passed the National Forensics Agency Bill, 2024 unanimously with certain amendments to enhance forensic capabilities across Pakistan with key initiatives including establishing a digital forensic lab. The bill, aimed at transforming NFA project into a full-fledged, independent agency, was introduced by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on October 17.

Holiday Notice

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

Alleges 'martial law' in Punjab

'No talks' being held with govt: Asad Qaiser

"I visited Speaker Ayaz Sadiq's residence for condolences," clarifies PTI leader, says media reports wrong

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Asad Qaiser clarified on Friday that his party is not engaged in any talks with the government, dismissing reports suggesting that dialogue might have kickstarted. The Imran Khan-founded party has set forth multiple demands, including the release of its leader and revocation of the 26th Constitutional Amendment, to stop its ongoing agitation. Numerous times this year, the PTI has taken to the streets and marched to Islamabad, seeking the fulfilment of its demands, but the party and the government have not yet reached an agreement. In his speech at the National Assembly, Qaiser said: "I visited Speaker Ayaz Sadiq's residence for condolences. No discussion regarding negotiations took place with the [NA] speaker." Citing media reports that he spoke to the NA speaker about talks between the government and his party, Qaiser clarified that they are "absolutely wrong". He admitted that

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KP CM demands accountability for loss of lives

K-P CM reaffirms support for the military, accusing politicians of trying to pit it against people

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur condemned the violence that led to the deaths and injuries of several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters. Addressing a gathering in Peshawar on Friday, he asserted that 12 PTI supporters had been martyred and over 100 were wounded. Referring to media personnel who had downplayed the incident, he urged them to show

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Security forces kill 43 terrorists in KP, Balochistan

These operations will continue till peace in the area is restored and terrorists are eliminated

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Since 9 December 2024, 43 terrorists have been sent to hell by the Security Forces during extensive Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan causing a major setback to Fitna-Al-Khwarizj & other terrorist groups operating in Balochistan. On night 12-13 December, security

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Pakistan warns, TTP could become al-Qaeda's arm

The TTP, he said, was fast emerging as an umbrella organization for other terrorist groups, aimed at destabilizing Afghanistan's neighbours

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Pakistan has warned the international community that the Tehrike Taliban Pakistan (TTP), "the largest terrorist group" operating in Afghanistan, could emerge as al-Qaeda's arm with a regional and global terrorist agenda. "Terrorism within and from Afghanistan poses the single most serious threat to the country, to the region, and to the world," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, acting permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Thursday. "While the AIG (Afghan Interim Government) is fighting ISIL-K (Daesh), the threat from various other terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, the TTP and others has yet to be addressed," he said while speaking in a debate on the situation in Afghanistan. Highlighting the ranking of 6,000-fighters strong TTP as the largest, listed terrorist organization, Ambassador Jadoon said, "With safe havens close to our border, it poses a direct and daily threat to Pakistan's security." "In countering the TTP's cross border operations, our security and border officials have confiscated some of the modern weapons acquired by the AIG from stocks left behind by foreign forces," the Pakistani envoy said,

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Syria Evacuation 318 stranded Pakistanis return

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A special chartered plane carrying 318 Pakistanis, who were stranded in Syria due to the evolving situation and later reached Lebanon, from Beirut landed at Islamabad International Airport (IIA) in the early hours of Friday. Upon arrival, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal, along with representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting, Overseas Pakistanis and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), welcomed the returning Pakistani citizens. A special desk has been set up by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis to facilitate

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Efforts afoot for enhancing edible oil production

The minister said that the agricultural products of Pakistan including vegetables, fruits, rice and wheat were unique in taste and aroma and were in high demand, adding that local farmers and exporters could capture the international markets by improving their packaging, labelling and branding

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain on Friday expressed the government's firm resolve to facilitate oil seed farmers attaining self-sufficiency in edible oil production and reducing imports. Addressing the two-day Grand National Olive Gala 2024, the minister said that agriculture sector development was a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and development, adding that the sector during last financial year contributed about 6.5 per cent to national GDP growth. The event was organized by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, in collaboration with key development partners aimed at promoting and accelerating large-scale olive cultivation in the country to achieve the goal of self-sufficiency in edible oil production. The minister said that the agricultural products of Pakistan including vegetables, fruits, rice and wheat were unique in taste and aroma and were in high demand, adding that local farmers and exporters could capture the international markets by improving their packaging,

labelling and branding. Tanveer said that the edible oil import bill was the second largest bill after the import bill of petroleum products, adding that the initiative undertaken to promote and develop olive oil in the country would help in reducing the reliance on imported commodity. The minister said that the National Olive Gala would also help to highlight the significant progress and potential of edible oil production in Pakistan, besides showcasing the country's growing capabilities in value addition of olive products. He said that the promotion of olive cultivation would provide employment opportunities for rural youth, and create entrepreneurship skills for them by encouraging its value addition, adding that it would also strengthen the government's efforts to overcome climate-related challenges. Pakistan's cuisine The Minister expressed satisfaction over the progress made in olive cultivation on a commercial scale and said that the country was now able to produce different varieties of olive plants locally, which also helped to reduce the reliance on imported plants. The minister stressed the urgent need for diversification of the olive sector to produce quality products, adding that the leading financial institutions were now

also starting to finance SMEs and the agriculture value-added sector that would enhance the farm income of small growers. The Minister for National Food Security asked the Pakistan Oil Seed Development Board to expedite efforts to promote the cultivation of oil seeds on marginal land to reduce the import bill of edible oil as well as increase the income of the people of such areas. Speaking on the occasion Dr Muhammad Tariq, National Project Director for Pakistan's Promotion of Olive Cultivation informed 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. 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. Addressing the event Senior Vice President of the National Bank of Pakistan expressed the commitment to ensuring access to finance for olive farmers and said that the bank was providing financial services for the installation of processing units and purchase of plants.



ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador Donald Blome called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday.

KP Governor, TRC Head for strengthening humanitarian ties

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday met with Mr. Omar Merken, Country Head of the Turkish Red Crescent delegation to Pakistan, to discuss humanitarian collaboration and ongoing relief operations in the province. Governor Kundi highlighted his directives to the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter, which is tirelessly working to provide critical relief and assistance to temporary displaced persons (TDPs) from District Kurram, currently taking refuge in Thal Tehsil, District Hangu.

The Governor commended the PRCS team for their unwavering dedication, which has been instrumental in alleviating the hardships of those displaced due to the ongoing unrest in the area. Expressing concern over the prevailing insecurity in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Governor emphasized the urgent need for coordinated efforts to address the humanitarian challenges arising from displacement and instability. Recognizing the importance of international cooperation, Governor Kundi extended an invitation to Mr. Omar Merken to visit Dera Ismail Khan to further explore avenues for strengthening humanitarian initiatives and enhancing collaboration between local and international relief organizations.—APP

CJ PHC seeks security for all judges

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court, Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, on Friday called for provision of security to all judges, criticizing instances where police withdraw security from judges following rulings against them. During a special hearing on security issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa he noted that all judges should be provided with security, adding that the Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners were enjoying security, but when a judge rules against the police, his/her security is withdrawn due to resentment. He said that such practice must be shunned. A two-member

special bench, comprising Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Ejaz Anwar, was hearing a petition concerning security conditions in the province. The petitioner's counsel informed the court that three meetings had been held in compliance with the court's previous orders. He highlighted the significant workload in Peshawar, noting that 55,000 to 60,000 FIRs are registered annually in the city. Additional Advocate General Inam Yousaf informed the court that SOPs had been drafted for judges' security. He told the court that as per the orders of the Home department, security measures have been put in

place for judges in high-risk areas. However, he acknowledged that judicial magistrates were not included in the current notification for security provision. A representative from the Home Department mentioned that police resources would be occupied next week due to polio vaccination campaigns. Justice Ejaz Anwar suggested forming a separate force for polio campaigns to alleviate the burden on the police, ensuring their availability for other pressing security duties. The court emphasized the importance of addressing these issues promptly and ensuring adequate security measures for all judicial officers.

KP govt forms climate change technical working group

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has formed a Technical Working Group (TWG) to tackle climate change challenges, including adaptation, mitigation, and carbon credit initiatives. A notification issued by the chief minister Secretariat said here Friday that the TWG would be led by MNA Faisal Amin Gandapur, as Convener, with Prof Yasir Kamal as Provincial Coordinator and Joint Convener. The other members would include officials from key departments such as the Environmental Protection Agency, forestry, local councils, energy, planning, and universities, alongside climate experts like Dr Shakeel Hayat and Tahir Khan. The TWG would develop a provincial climate action plan, integrate climate strategies into policies, design projects for water, agriculture, forestry, and energy and secure funding from national and international sources. It would also represent KP at national and global climate forums and build partnerships with global organizations and explore innovative financing such as green bonds. The group would prioritize capacity-building, monitor environmental laws, promote renewable energy, and develop carbon credit programs. Vulnerable sectors like agriculture and water resources would also be targeted for climate resilience efforts. This initiative positioned KP as a leader in climate action, aiming to strengthen resilience and align with global climate goals.—APP

CTP gears up ongoing operation against unfit PSVs

DNA

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi have geared up their ongoing operation against public service vehicles (PSVs) plying without fitness certificates and without route permits. According to a CTP spokesman, senior Traffic Officers also visited different areas and reviewed the ongoing crackdown under the supervision of circle officers and gave strict

instructions to all the officers and field staff to take strict action against unfit vehicles. He informed, Traffic Police officers had been warned that negligence on part of the officers concerned would not be tolerated. The spokesman said that CTP Rawalpindi had issued 13,346 challan slips to unfit and without route permit public service vehicles during the campaign launched on Aug 25, 2024 while fines were also imposed on the rules violators. On violation of the route permits, 6534 challans were issued while on

fitness certificate violations 5748 vehicles were imposed fines. 1064 without driving license drivers were also penalized during the campaign, he said adding, FIRs were lodged against 52 drivers of PSVs and 2254 vehicles were impounded in different police stations. Fitness certificates of 28 vehicles were also sent to the authorities concerned for suspension, he added. As many as 12,118 smoke-emitting vehicles were also issued challan tickets during a campaign launched on Sept 14, this year, he informed.

Awareness session on 'Maryam Ki Dastak'

SARGODHA: A delegation from the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) visited the Deputy Commissioner's office on Friday to conduct an awareness session regarding Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's innovative program, 'Maryam Ki Dastak'. The program aims to provide dignified employment opportunities to educated youths while ensuring doorstep delivery of public services across Punjab. The session was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner General (ADCG) Umar Farooq, Joint Director Faisal Mumtaz, Senior Program Manager Anam Khan, Program Officer Naveed Irfan, and System Network Administrator Muhammad Umar. Officials from PITB shared that the 'Maryam Ki Dastak' program is successfully operational in 32 districts, including Sargodha. Discussions focused on the program's roadmap and strategies for further success. During the session, PITB urged district heads to actively raise awareness about the program, highlighting its user-friendly features. Through the PITB-designed Dastak portal, citizens can access over 31 public services at minimal fees. These services are delivered by trained facilitators, who visit citizens' homes to collect necessary documents and provide the requested services. Earlier, an awareness seminar was held at the University of Sargodha for students and faculty. Speaking at the seminar, ADCG Umar Farooq and PITB officials emphasized that the Maryam Ki Dastak program, in line with the vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, is revolutionizing public service delivery in Punjab. Citizens can utilize the Dastak helpline (1202), mobile app, or web portal (dastak.punjab.gov.pk) to access services such as domicile issuance, birth certificates, FIR copies, marriage certificates, learner driving licenses, e-stamping, motor vehicle transfers, and international driving license renewals. In Sargodha, 83 trained facilitators have been onboarded to ensure smooth implementation of the program. Each facilitator is equipped with special identification cards and authority letters. The seminar also included an interactive Q&A session for students, further enhancing their understanding of the program.—DNA

Murad, WB discuss \$3.1b uplift portfolio, focus on K-IV augmentation

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah held a high-level meeting with a World Bank team led by Country Director Najib Benhassine via video link to review the progress of a \$3.1 billion active portfolio encompassing 13 developmental projects in the province. The discussion focused on accelerating the K-IV Augmentation Project, producing a Root Cause Analysis (RCA) report on the recent gate failure incident in Sukkur Barrage, along with solar energy initiatives, infrastructure rehabilitation, and advancements in urban mobility, said a statement on Thursday. During the meeting, the Chief Minister emphasised

the significance of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project (KWSSIP), which aims to improve access to safe water and enhance the operational efficiency of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB). He outlined the project's three main components: operational reforms, infrastructure investments, and project management. Murad announced that work on the K-IV Augmentation Project, a \$256 million component of the KWSSIP, will begin on December 30, 2024. He said that land acquisition and necessary corrective measures are expected to be completed by February 2025. He urged the World Bank to expedite the release of funds to ensure the pro-

ject's completion by the end of 2025. The World Bank responded with assurance of support and suggested that the Sindh government utilise its own funds initially, with a promise for reimbursement later. The Chief Minister instructed the Chief Secretary to facilitate the release of funds to commence the K-IV Augmentation works. The other important projects discussed in the meeting included the Sukkur Barrage Rehabilitation, where the preparation of the RCA report for gate failures is in progress, and the establishment of a Maintenance, Repair, and Operations (MRO) division was announced. Additionally, progress on the Akram Wah Rehabilitation and the Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation






Project (SWAT), which aims to improve agricultural water productivity and support flood-affected farmers, was also reviewed. Another key focus of the meeting was the Karachi Mobility Project (KMP), a \$382 million initiative designed to enhance mobility and accessibility through the development of the Yellow Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The project has achieved 12 per cent physical progress, with designs already approved, and the World Bank team expressed satisfaction with the ongoing efforts. The discussions also included the Sindh Solar Energy Project (SSEP), a \$100 million initiative aimed at enhancing solar power generation and improving electricity access in the province.

The first shipment of Solar Home Systems (SHS) kits arrived on December 11, with additional shipments scheduled for February and March 2025. The CM underscored the importance of solarizing public buildings, with 19 sites expected to be completed by December 2024 and the remaining four by January 2025. Progress on solar power parks was reviewed, with land lease agreements and advisory services currently in progress. The Sindh Flood Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project (SHEHRP), funded with \$500 million, was praised for its efficiency and the quality of work. So far, \$383.3 million has been released, significantly contributing to the province's flood recovery efforts.

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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
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- Dec 18/Niger National Day
- Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day
- Dec 23/Japan National Day

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IIA President urges CDA chief to resolve Industry problems

The business leaders emphasized that while the industrial community plays a significant role in contributing to the national economy, it faces numerous hurdles that hinder growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An urgent meeting of the Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA) was convened at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), led by IIA President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, who also serves as the President of ICCI. The meeting aimed to discuss the growing concerns of the industrial community in Islamabad, particularly those related to the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and local administrative issues. The attendees highlighted several pressing challenges faced by local industries, particularly the issuance of notices regarding trade license fee ranging from Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 200,000 by the Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA). Other concerns raised included the lack of metro bus service for the industrial area, delays in the dualization of the Dry Port Road, and the uncertainty surrounding its future, especially in light of the planned bus terminal in sector



I/11. The business leaders emphasized that while the industrial community plays a significant role in contributing to the national economy, it faces numerous hurdles that hinder growth. They criticized the bureaucratic inefficiencies and irrational decisions that, rather than supporting business development, create obstacles and discourage investment. IIA

President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi assured the attendees that he would engage with relevant government officials to address these issues. He pledged to prioritize a meeting with the Chairman of the CDA, inviting him to the Chamber House to discuss and resolve concerns regarding the Authority's operations. Qureshi stressed the importance of unity within the

business community, asserting that only through collective efforts could they overcome these challenges and drive the growth of the industrial sector. Tariq Sadiq, Chairman Founder Group at ICCI, also voiced his frustration with the ongoing harassment of businesses by DMA personnel. He noted that such actions were demoraliz-

ing for the business community and could ultimately lead to the closure of industries and rising unemployment. Sadiq called for urgent intervention to stop the mistreatment and create an environment conducive to business growth. Senior Vice President of IIA, Mahmood Ahmed Warich, moderated the meeting, which included key figures from the industrial sector such as Naeem ur Rehman Paracha, Karim Aziz, Mohammad Ahmed, Zakria Zia, Hafiz Bilal Muneer, M. Rizwan, Mehmood Elahi, Mian Arif Hussain, and Imran Sadiq. The meeting concluded with a commitment to working closely with government agencies to resolve the issues at hand and create a more supportive environment for local industries. The IIA leadership vowed to continue advocating for policies that will enable businesses to thrive and contribute even more significantly to Islamabad's economic growth.

Tarar assures transparency in Islamabad's uplift projects

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar stated on Friday that the allotment of 485 kiosks in Islamabad is being handled lawfully, recruitment at CDA Hospital is merit-based, and the capital's master plan is under review. In response to Senator Kamran Murtaza's question during the Senate's question hour on Friday, Azam Nazeer Tarar stated that the kiosk issue in Islamabad is being addressed legally, and no one will lose their job. The kiosks allotment issue has been discussed with the relevant parties and will be reviewed at the next CDA board meeting. Meanwhile, the recruitment process at CDA Hospital is ongoing, with hiring being conducted based on merit and transparency. In response to questions from Senators Danesh Kumar, Dost Muhammad Khan, and Kamran Murtaza, Tarar stated that the federal capital's master plan is under review, development work is progressing swiftly, and a technical commission is being established for the master plan.—APP

ICT admin all set for major digital overhaul: DC

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration is set to undergo a major digital transformation, with key reforms entering into final stages. This was stated during a meeting on digital policy, chaired by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, said an ICT administration spokesperson. In the meeting, key decisions were made to implement a digital policy aimed at modernizing administrative processes and public services. The meeting was briefed on digital system for payment of fines and decision was made to digitize the payment system, which aims to provide a transparent method for processing transactions, including fines. The office affairs of the district administration will also be shifted to a digital framework, with the introduction of a record management system. It was decided in the meeting that a record management system would also be established under an automated system. One of the key highlights of the new digital policy is the decision to make land records available online. This move is expected to make the process of checking and updating land records quicker and more accessible, benefiting both residents and administrative staff. Speaking at the meeting, DC Irfan Memon said that these digital reforms are designed to enhance transparency in district administration and ensure smoother operations. Administrative affairs will be completed on time with an automated system, he added. The meeting was attended by the Assistant Commissioner Saddar and IT experts.—APP

PPP vows to prioritize Fazal's concerns

ISLAMABAD: Vice President of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Senator Sherry Rehman Friday declared that the longstanding issues surrounding Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman's madaris registration will soon be a thing of the past and emphasized that the concerns of the Maulana will be addressed with utmost priority. Senator Sherry Rehman emphasized in an interview with a private news channel that Parliament is the ultimate platform for resolving pressing issues, highlighting that negotiation is the most effective way to address all political problems. She assured that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) remains committed to fulfilling its promises, steadfastly believing in the democratic process and proudly following in the footsteps of its leadership. Responding to a query, Senator Sherry Rehman lambasted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, asserting that they consistently promote divisive and confrontational politics. "They have cultivated a culture of division and aggression," she condemned. Rehman also recalled a recent address by Bilawal Bhutto in Parliament, where he urged the PTI to take responsibility for their actions and apologize to the nation for the incident of violence. She said Bilawal emphasized the need for the PTI to approach discussions with maturity and engage in constructive dialogue within the parliamentary framework. She emphasized the importance of peaceful protests and democratic practices and urged politicians, particularly those from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), to follow suit and adhere to democratic principles.—DNA

NA offers Fateha for late sister of Shehryar Afridi

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly of Pakistan on Friday offered Fateha for the departed soul of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf member of the House Shehryar Afridi's sister. Ali Muhammad Khan led the prayer after the beginning of the session, following the recitation of the Holy Quran and Naat, at the request of Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, who was in the chair. Later, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah on Friday suspended the House's proceedings due to the absence of ministers during the question hour. The Deputy Speaker expressed his displeasure over the matter and said that he had written a letter to the Prime Minister, conveying the House's displeasure regarding the ministers' non-attendance.

Regular breaks advised from screens to prevent 'Dry Eye' syndrome

DAN

ISLAMABAD: Head of the Ophthalmology Department at Jinnah Medical & Dental College, Karachi, Prof. Dr. Shahid Azeem Mirza on Friday advised regular breaks from screens to prevent dry eye syndrome. In a recent interview with a private news channel, he revealed that when we stare at digital screens, our blink rate decreases by a staggering 60 to 70% and that this reduction in blinking significantly increases the risk of developing dry eye syndrome. As people spend more time staring at

digital devices, they tend to blink less, disrupting the natural tear flow and leading to dry, irritated eyes. If left unchecked, dry eye syndrome can cause discomfort, blurred vision, and even long-term damage to the eyes, he warned. To combat dry eye syndrome (DES), Prof. Dr. Shahid Azeem Mirza recommends incorporating a simple yet effective blinking exercise into your daily routine. He suggests setting reminders on your digital devices to pop up every few minutes, serving as a prompt to blink and reduce DES symptoms. Prof. Dr. Shahid Azeem Mirza empha-

sized that blinking plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy eyes by replenishing the tear film. However, he noted that when we focus on screens, our blinking frequency significantly decreases, disrupting this essential process. Azeem Mirza cautioned against the excessive use of screens among children, citing the potential for long-term damage to their eye health. He emphasized that children's eyes are still developing, making them more susceptible to the negative effects of prolonged screen time. The ophthalmologist urged parents to monitor and limit their children's screen

time, encouraging alternative activities that promote physical and mental well-being. By setting boundaries and promoting healthy habits, parents can help protect their children's eye health and reduce the risk of developing dry eye syndrome and other vision-related problems, he added. Mirza also highlighted another common culprit behind eye strain: glare from screens. To avoid this, he recommended maintaining a safe distance from devices, suggesting that keeping them at arm's length can significantly reduce glare and alleviate eye strain.

RDA conducts operation against four illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Divisional Intelligence Committee has conducted operation against four illegal housing schemes and took action in accordance with the rules against the violators. According to a RDA spokesman, the RDA Task Force has accelerated its operations against illegal housing schemes. The RDA Enforcement Squad in an operation against four illegal housing schemes, Top View City (D-17) Project of Orbit International, Al-Baraqa Garden, Kohsar extension, F-Block and Nabeel Block near Kohsar extension, located in Mouzas Wnni, Paswal, Chokar, Pind Gondal and Chongian. Tehsil and District Rawalpindi took action and demolished road infrastructure, security offices, sewerage lines, containers, removed advertisement boards, and panaflexes of the illegal housing schemes. The operation was conducted under the supervision of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Muhammad Abdul Aamer Khattak Engineer, along with the Director General (DG) RDA, the Additional DG RDA, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi, and the City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi. The DG RDA Kinza Murtaza said that on the directives of the Commissioner, the crackdown on illegal housing societies will continue and strict action in accordance with the law will be taken against the rules violators. She urged the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes and visit RDA website (www.rda.gov.pk) to check status of legal and illegal housing schemes.—DNA

Iranian envoy, Minister discuss strengthening bilateral ties, trade

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, paid a courtesy call on Federal Minister for Privatization, Investment Board and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan, here Friday to discuss matters of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation. Pakistan's cuisine During the meeting, both officials engaged in discussions on enhancing bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran. The meeting discussed the potential for increasing trade and investment, as well as the potential for stronger cooperation in areas like road infrastructure and trade corridors. Minister Aleem Khan emphasized the strong religious and historical ties that bind Pakistan and Iran, underlining the

importance of further enhancing these connections. He also expressed Pakistan's desire to continue strengthening its relationship with Iran in various sectors. Pakistan's cuisine "We must work towards increasing cooperation between the two countries in all fields, and address any obstacles hindering trade and investment," said Aleem. He also noted that Pakistan's improving economy offers attractive opportunities for foreign investments, adding that both nations could benefit from sharing experiences and expertise. The discussion also focused on the role of cooperation in the transportation sector and the challenges that need to be addressed on priority. Aleem reiterated that Pakistan is committed to increasing foreign investment through a well-structured road map.



Briefs

IRSA releases 83,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 83,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 42,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1478.38 feet and was 80.38 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,900 cusecs and 41,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1143.65 feet, which was 93.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,500 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 45,800, 42,600, 35,000 and 6,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 1,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Crackdown against wrong parking in full swing

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) launched a campaign on Friday targeting those who park their vehicles incorrectly, obstructing the smooth flow of traffic by occupying footpath areas. During the ongoing Year, the ITP also issued more than 1,06,000 fine tickets to those involved in wrong parking while several vehicles were impounded at police stations for not vacating footpath areas. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, directed all Zonal DSPs to ensure the implementation of traffic laws and take action against those involved in creating problems for traffic discipline in the city. He said that it is the right of pedestrians to use footpaths and no parking would be allowed there.—APP

Street artists show art on main avenue of Capital for entertainment

ISLAMABAD: Street artists, Goldman and Silverman, known for their striking costumes, are entertaining passersby on the main avenues of the capital. The trend of these artists has declined in recent years as most of them changed their line of professions due to losing the interest of people in Goldman's art. Muhammad Ishfaq, who modified himself as a Goldman costume, basically belongs to Gujranwala and has been performing the art of Goldman for over the last two years as he got inspiration from one of his acquaintances who performed a similar art form.—APP

KS relief food security support project to benefit over 1million Pakistanis



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) on Friday announced the launch of its latest food security initiative in Pakistan for 2024-2025. As part of its global commitment to humanitarian assistance,



ISLAMABAD: Visitors taking interest in various paintings depicting cultural and historical heritage of Central Asia, during an exhibition in Islamabad.—DNA

Senate passes National Forensic Agency Bill unanimously

Sharing the details, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar said that through NFA, the existing conventional forensic labs and establishing a digital forensic lab would also provide services to all provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and government/private forensic labs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday passed the National Forensic Agency Bill, 2024 unanimously with certain amendments. Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on behalf of the Minister for Interior piloted the bill in the House. The bill aimed at transforming the National Forensics Agency (NFA) project into a full-fledged, independent agency in order to enhance forensic capabilities across Pakistan. Sharing the details, Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar said that through NFA, the existing conventional forensic labs and

establishing a digital forensic lab would also provide services to all provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and government/private forensic labs. He said establishing an independent NFA in Pakistan is essential to address the challenges arising from the current fragmented forensic services that lead to inconsistent standards and capabilities across the country. The minister said that currently there was a forensic laboratory in Lahore which was set up by the incumbent prime minister Shehbaz Sharif in 2010. The laboratory had already overloaded and there was need of the hour that all provin-

cial governments should also include setting up such labs in their respective provinces, he added. He said that setting up a state-of-the-art forensic laboratory would also help eradicating crimes. Senators Qurat ul Anin Marri and Zamir Hussain Ghumro moved their amendments which were passed by the House. Meanwhile, As many as six reports of various standing committees including Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, La and Justice and Functional Committee on Governmental Assurances were presented in the Senate on Friday. Chairperson, Standing Committee on Climate Change

and Environmental Coordination Sherry Rehman presented a report of the committee in the House on a Bill further to amend the Pakistan Trade Control of Wild Fauna and Flora Act, 2012 [The Pakistan Trade Control of Wild Fauna and Flora (Amendment) Bill, 2024] while Farooq Hamid Naek Chairman, Standing Committee on Law and Justice presented the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2022] (Amendment of Article 62) in the House. Chairman, Functional Committee on Government Assurances, Abdul

Shakoor Khan presented reports of the Committee about the construction of Korang Bridge underpass on Islamabad Expressway, on the repair/reconstruction of Ayub Bridge in Havelian, District Abbottabad on N-35 Highway, on the present status of work on the project for converting the land leased out to Army Heritage Foundation (AHF) in Chaklala Cantonment Board, adjacent to Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi into an entertainment park for general public and on the rehabilitation of the existing 132KV transmission line from Hub Chowki to Vinder and 66KV transmission line from Vinder to Bela Grid.

Experts discuss future of electric vehicles in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) at its recent roundtable brought together industry experts and stakeholders to discuss the future of electric vehicles (EVs) and their potential to drive economic growth in Pakistan. The roundtable titled "Electric Vehicles and Economic Growth: Industry Perspectives on Pakistan's EV Transition", highlighted key opportunities and challenges surrounding the shift to EVs in the country, said a press release issued here on Friday. Ahad Nazir of SDPI, kicked off the discussion emphasizing the strong link between EV

adoption and sustainable economic development. Nazir pointed out that the transition to EVs could offer significant benefits for Pakistan, particularly by reducing its dependency on imported fuel, which has long been a burden on the country's economy. "The EV sector holds great promise for economic growth, job creation, and export opportunities, making it crucial to develop a comprehensive plan that includes infrastructure development," he said. Kimsha Rehan, from PRIED, noted that Pakistan's automotive industry is witnessing a growing interest in EVs. However, she highlighted the urgent need for a tailored en-

ergy vehicle policy to ensure the effective integration of EVs in the market. Rehan also pointed out the growing use of two-wheelers, which number around 24 million and consume a large portion of imported oil. "Lithium-ion batteries, the most expensive component of EVs, should be viewed as an essential product rather than a luxury item," she suggested, emphasizing the need for better policy support to make EVs more accessible. Engr. Ubaidur Rehman Zia, Head Energy Unit at SDPI, discussed the international frameworks shaping the EV conversation, notably the Baku Declaration on Urban Decarbonization.—APP

Efforts afoot for promotion of tourism sector in GB

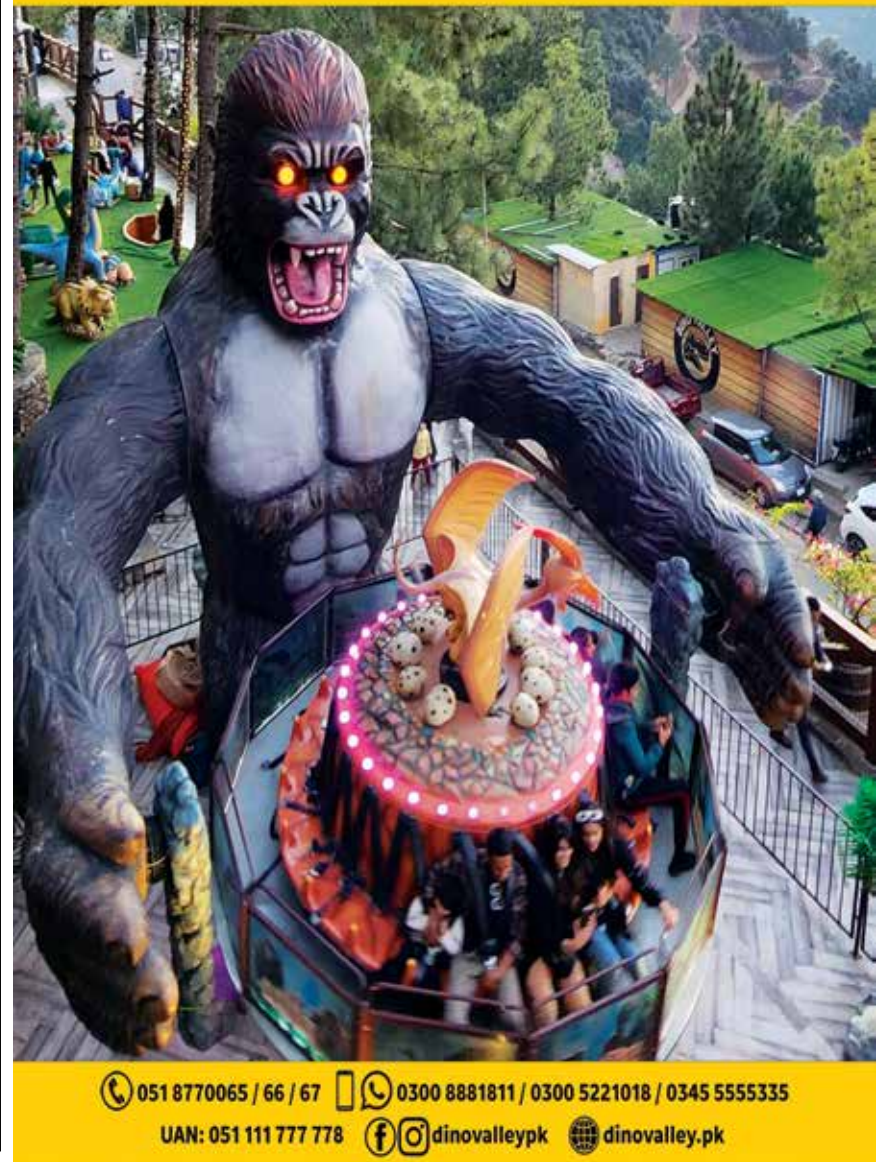
ISLAMABAD: The development and prosperity of Gilgit Baltistan were the top priority of the Federal Government and in this regard, various projects of development had been launched for the promotion of the tourism sector, health facilities, improvement in the education sector and mitigate the pressure of unemployment in this area. An official source told media here on Friday, he said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently announced a series of mega development projects for the development of the remote areas of the GB. He said the incumbent regime also focused on developing the road network and connectivity of slum areas with each other to facilitate the local community. The local government also upgrading the basic health units in the far-flung areas of the GB. He underlined that tourism is a lucrative business of the local community and in this regard, GB government provides training facilities to the youth of the area. Tourism is the best source of income for the local population, as millions of tourists visit this area every year. He commended the federal government's efforts in promoting tourism and emphasised the need for its enhancement. He proposed the establishment of camping sites and tourism facilitation centres across all provinces aimed at facilitating tourists and promoting local attractions. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of extensive promotion of the Salam Pakistan portal, a dedicated platform designed to guide and assist tourists visiting Pakistan. He stressed the significance of leveraging technology to provide seamless experiences for travellers.—APP

13 feeder buses to connect N-5 metro station to B-17 from Jan 1

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi stated on Friday that 13 feeder buses will commence operations from N-5 Metro Stations via Chungi No. 26 to B-17 on January 1 next year. In a written reply to the question of Rana Mahmood ul Hassan, Naqvi revealed during Senate question hour that a Capital Development Authority (CDA) feasibility study identified 13 potential feeder routes, including one from N-5 Metro Station to Sector B-17, to ensure safe and affordable public transport in Islamabad. CDA has partnered with National Radio & Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC) for the procurement, operation, and maintenance of electric buses on feeder routes.—APP



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PEMRA resolves 390 complaints against TV channels

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar stated on Friday that Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has resolved 390 complaints about entertainment and news channels in the last two years. During the question hour in the Senate session, Tarar responded to questions from Senator Haji Hidayatullah Khan, Senator Dinesh Kumar, Senator Shibli Faraz, and Rubina Kaim Khani, stating that the Council of complaints is operational. The complaints include issues related to broadcast content and violations of the code of conduct, he said adding that TV channels have faced fines, and disciplinary actions have been imposed on them, covering both news and entertainment channels. He stated that the government is committed to ensuring merit and transparency in all sectors.—APP

Week-long anti-polio campaign launched in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Friday launched a seven-day anti-polio campaign, aiming to vaccinate 461,125 children up to the age of five years. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, kicked off the campaign by administering anti-polio drops to children under five years of age at a local bus stand. Speaking on the occasion, Memon said that the campaign would continue till December 22 and polio teams will go door-to-door across union councils to vaccinate children. The teams will also be stationed at bus stands, schools, and other public locations to ensure full coverage. Memon said, in addition to vaccinations, an awareness drive will run simultaneously to inform citizens about the importance of the polio vaccine.—APP

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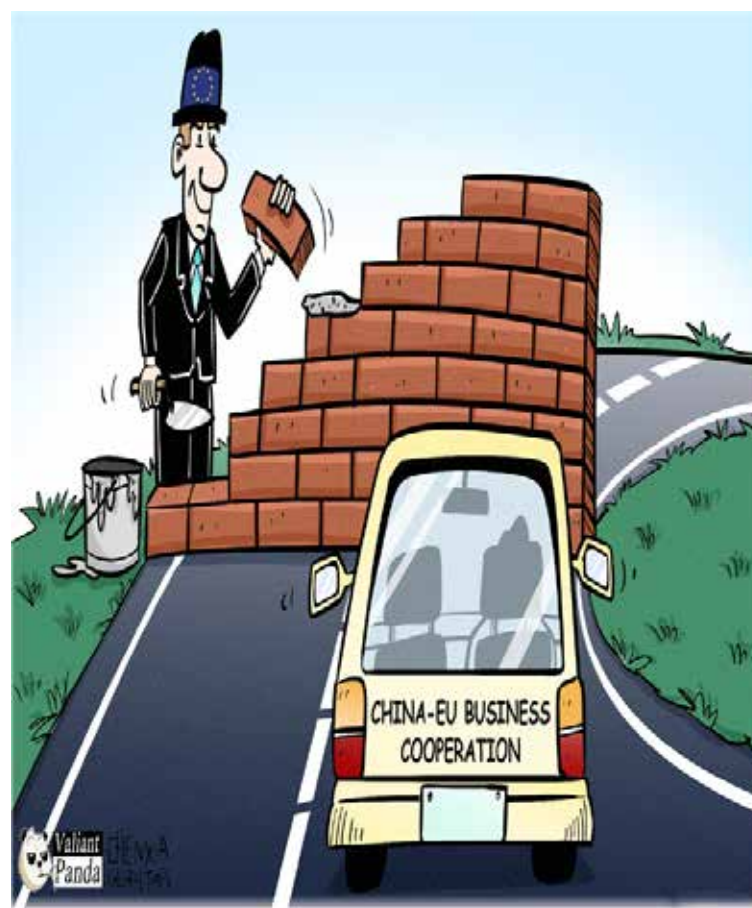
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Heroic doctor of northern Gaza

DR. Taghreed Al-Amawi chose to remain at the heart of the battle in northern Gaza, refusing to evacuate. She carried an indescribable courage within her to continue her humanitarian mission to save lives amid the Israeli genocide. On the day the Israeli war on Gaza began, Taghreed did not hesitate to fulfill her professional duty, continuing to work at Kamal Adwan Hospital despite the intensifying bombardment and the dangers threatening her life and those around her. Twenty days later, in an unexpected moment, her third child, Mohammad, was born two months prematurely, necessitating his placement in an incubator and support with a ventilator. Taghreed was unable to stay long beside her child, as the dire security conditions due to the Israeli bombardment prevented the transfer of Mohammad to another hospital. This forced her to leave the hospital physically, while leaving her heart with her little one. She continued to monitor his health daily, despite the destruction of her home and the ongoing bombardment that left no safe place. As days passed, amid wavering hope and constant anxiety, Taghreed tried to find solutions to save her child's life. She managed to secure some necessary medications with the help of her colleagues in the enclave, but the crisis worsened with the depletion of fuel in the hospital and the shutdown of ventilators. In a moment of hope, Taghreed transferred the only available oxygen tank from her clinic to the hospital, where it was used to keep Mohammad alive for a time. On November 20, 2023, after a bitter struggle with illness, Mohammad passed away as a martyr. The farewell was not as a mother would wish; Taghreed recounted her testimony, which was followed by the Palestinian Information Center and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights. She lost her right to hold her child one last time and even the chance to bury him in a dignified place. Instead, Mohammad was buried in the courtyard of Kamal Adwan Hospital, in a scene that words cannot describe. The tragedy did not stop there. With increasing bombardment and continuous displacement, Taghreed found herself displaced in the Jabalia Boys Preparatory School, among thousands of other displaced individuals. Despite injuries and suffocation caused by gas bombs, Taghreed decided to be a bearer of hope, offering medical services to the displaced while the bombardment continued everywhere. This is the challenge she faced, but the spirit of solidarity and hope she embodies drove her to continue this humanitarian battle. Her message was clear: despite the deep wounds the war has inflicted on her heart, she still demands the world to take action. "To everyone who has the capacity to help," Taghreed says, "we in Gaza are facing a brutal genocide targeting the lives of children and women. We urge you to take immediate action to stop this horrific war." This is the story told by Taghreed: a mother who lost a child but did not lose hope. A story of a doctor who chose to be on the front lines to protect the lives of others, sacrificing everything to save an innocent life in the heart of a merciless war.



Canada's new Beijing sanctions

WELL, monkey see, monkey do. Following Uncle Sam, Canada has imposed new sanctions on eight former and current senior Chinese officials for alleged human rights violations in Xinjiang, Tibet and against the Falun Gong religious cult. "Canada is deeply concerned over reports that China has arbitrarily detained more than 1 million people in Xinjiang since 2017, many of whom were held in camps and faced psychological, physical and sexual violence," Ottawa said in a statement, repeating the highly disputed 1 million figure. Psychological, physical and sexual violence? Well, that pretty much covers any and all kinds of treatment for someone under detention. In US prisons, many inmates are regularly subjected to cavity searches and inspection, often in degrading positions. Is that sexual violence? It's hard to know what Canada hopes to gain from this round of sanctions when there is no new development or urgency other than to irritate the Chinese. Perhaps Ottawa just needed to prove Donald Trump right. In the past two weeks, the incoming US president has referred to Canada as "becoming the 51st state of America" and its prime minister as "Governor Justin Trudeau of the Great State of Canada". You really wonder how many insults this prime minister of the Great White North can take with a straight face. As the US military likes to say, you salute the rank, not the man. Trump has been insulting Canada and all its citizens, not just Trudeau personally, because he is their elected leader. As for Xinjiang, here's an investigative report last year from Britain's Sky News. "In total, we visited 22 sites. Of the 14 locations listed as re-education camps, 13 were visibly no longer being used as detention camps, with little visible active security infrastructure," it said. "Eight were schools, two were abandoned, another two were being used as Communist Party offices or training centres. We couldn't determine the precise use of one site, but it appeared to be at least partly empty." Perhaps Ottawa should take the words of Woo Yuen Pau, the independent senator from British Columbia, more seriously, from a recent courageous speech he delivered in the Canadian parliament condemning the country's complicity in the "slaughter of Palestinians". "It seemed to me at the time [when he was a young man in college] that the establishment of a Palestinian state was both just and inevitable and very likely ... in my lifetime," he said. "Forty-four years on, we not only do not have a Palestinian state, but we are witnessing before our very eyes the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza and the forced relocation of civilians from their places of residence, presumably to make way for Israeli settlements - in effect a continuation of the Nakba [the catastrophe of mass displacement and deportation of native Palestinians at the founding of Israel]." Even the International Criminal Court, after much delay because of threats from the United States and Israel, has issued arrest warrants against the Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence chief Yoav Gallant for suspected war crimes and crimes against humanity. Sanctions against the state of Israel are long overdue, not just those that have been no more than a slap on the wrist against extremist Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

Crisis in South Korea and regional tension

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



While Yoon's declaration did not explicitly reference North Korea, developments on the Korean Peninsula likely influenced the decision. Pyongyang's increased military activities, including missile tests and rhetorical threats, have heightened security concerns in South Korea.

By linking domestic opposition to North Korea sympathizers, Yoon attempted to portray martial law as a safeguard against both internal and external threats. This strategy, however, risked deepening domestic divisions

ON December 3, 2024, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol took the extraordinary step of declaring martial law, accusing the opposition Democratic Party of engaging in "anti-state activities" and attempting to obstruct governmental operations. This sudden decision sparked an immediate response from lawmakers, with 190 of South Korea's 300 parliamentarians convening to demand its revocation. Under the South Korean Constitution, the president is obligated to respect such an order, and Yoon ultimately rescinded the declaration within hours. This event posed a critical test of South Korea's democratic resilience, its regional geopolitical role, and the durability of its alliances.

Martial law in South Korea suspends civilian authority and grants broad powers to the military. Under such a regime, the president can dissolve parliament, restrict public demonstrations, and impose additional measures deemed necessary to restore order. In this case, Yoon's declaration included the dissolution of parliament, a ban on public demonstrations, and an order for striking medical interns and residents to return to work within 48 hours. The president justified these measures by citing a constitutional crisis and accusing the opposition of undermining the state. However, the opposition Democratic Party argued that the declaration was an overreach, designed to stifle dissent and consolidate executive power. The swift parliamentary vote against the declaration underscored the strength of South Korea's democratic institutions and the commitment of its lawmakers to preserving constitutional norms. At the heart of Yoon's decision was the political impasse between his administration and the opposition-controlled parliament. The Democratic Party had blocked critical legislation, including the 2025 budget bill, which left the government unable to address urgent economic and social issues. Additionally, efforts to impeach prosecutors who

had declined to charge Yoon's wife with alleged investment fraud further exacerbated tensions. Beyond political gridlock, labor unrest, particularly in the healthcare sector, contributed to the sense of crisis. Striking junior doctors and other medical workers disrupted essential medical services, creating public discontent. By declaring martial law, Yoon sought to reassert control and compel a return to normalcy. However, his framing of these issues as "anti-state" activities drew criticism for conflating legitimate political opposition with subversive threats.

While Yoon's declaration did not explicitly reference North Korea, developments on the Korean Peninsula likely influenced the decision. Pyongyang's increased military activities, including missile tests and rhetorical threats, have heightened security concerns in South Korea. By linking domestic opposition to North Korea sympathizers, Yoon attempted to portray martial law as a safeguard against both internal and external threats. This strategy, however, risked deepening domestic divisions. Critics argued that equating political dissent with national security threats undermined democratic freedoms and diverted attention from genuine security challenges posed by North Korea. Moreover, a government preoccupied with internal disputes would be less effective in addressing external threats, potentially emboldening Pyongyang to exploit the situation. The invocation of martial law had significant implications for South Korea's regional and international standing. Domestically, it threatened to erode public trust in democratic institutions and revive memories of past authoritarian regimes. Internationally, it raised concerns about the stability of a key U.S. ally in East Asia and its ability to uphold democratic values. The United States, with approximately 28,500 troops stationed in South Korea, has a stake in the country's stability. A prolonged period of martial law could have strained the U.S.-South Korea alliance, com-

plicating joint efforts to counter North Korean aggression. It could also have disrupted trilateral cooperation with Japan, which is critical for maintaining the regional balance of power. Moreover, South Korea's democratic backsliding could have undermined its credibility as a proponent of liberal values in the Indo-Pacific region. This, in turn, could have provided propaganda fodder for authoritarian regimes seeking to challenge the global democratic order. The swift parliamentary response to Yoon's declaration demonstrated the resilience of South Korea's democratic institutions. Lawmakers from across the political spectrum united to defend constitutional norms, forcing the president to revoke martial law within hours. This outcome reinforced the principle that executive power is subject to legislative oversight, even in times of crisis.

Civil society also played a crucial role in resisting the imposition of martial law. Protests and statements from advocacy groups highlighted the importance of safeguarding democratic freedoms and holding the government accountable. These efforts underscored the maturity of South Korea's democracy and its capacity to withstand challenges to its constitutional order. The December 3 declaration of martial law serves as a cautionary tale about the limits of executive authority in a democratic system. It underscores the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between legitimate political dissent and threats to national security. It also highlights the risks of using extraordinary measures to address routine political disputes. For South Korea, the incident underscores the need for continued vigilance in protecting democratic norms and institutions. It also points to the importance of dialogue and compromise in resolving political and social conflicts. In the absence of such mechanisms, crises are likely to recur, with potentially destabilizing consequences for the nation and the region.

Trump 2.0 could offer a reprieve from US hegemony, but only briefly

Peter T. C. Chang

That said, even if he prevails in pushing non-interventionism, this will be Trump's final four-year term and it is uncertain whether his policies will endure beyond his presidency. Despite Trump's isolationist disposition, there is no indication that the US body politic has abandoned its belief in the "shining city upon a hill". Evangelical Christians, a core part of Trump's Republican base, still uphold a missionary vision to transform the world. Meanwhile, establishment figures in the Democratic Party seem to embrace the end-of-history thesis of political...

FOR all the anticipated unpredictability and chaos, Trump 2.0 may offer the world a reprieve from ideological entanglement and military intervention. However, this respite could be short-lived, as the United States may quickly revert to its familiar pattern of ideological and military overreach. US president-elect Donald Trump has threatened Brics nations with tariffs if they attempt to undermine the dominance of the US dollar. He has also issued similar threats against China, Mexico and even Canada, linking tariffs to issues like immigration and fentanyl. While US President Joe Biden has also used tariffs, his approach has largely focused on China. In contrast, Trump's strategy involves imposing tariffs indiscriminately, targeting both adversaries and allies alike. Beyond his mistrust of allies, Trump's expansive tariff threats highlight his rejection of the US' self-assigned role as defender of a rules-based international order. Unlike Biden, who frames the current great power rivalry as a struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, Trump seems to exhibit little interest in protecting or leading the free world. Trump's focus remains singularly nationalistic. He wants to "Make America Great Again" by prioritising and defending core US interests, particularly through rebuilding the country's economic dominance. This could signal a crucial turning point in the ongoing reconfiguration of the Western-centric world order. Trump's approach may allow the Global South to advance its pursuit of a more balanced economic system without becoming entangled in ideological disputes over democracy and human rights. Although Trump's mercantilism is disruptive, he is not a rigid ideologue intent on imposing values globally. Rather, he is transactional, driven by a pragmatic focus on reshaping the global economic system to benefit US interests. Trump is back: what's next for China, Asia and the world? | Talking Post with YondenLhatoo Another notable distinction from Biden is Trump's aversion

to war, albeit largely just rhetorical. He has vowed to stop wars, not start a new one. Indeed, Trump may decide against involving US troops in distant conflicts under the guise of defending liberty. For example, as the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria was faltering, Trump tweeted that the US should avoid becoming ensnared and stay out of the conflict. This marks a significant development: while unpredictable and chaotic, Trump 2.0 could offer a rare window to reconfigure the global economic order without ideological embroilments or military threats. However, this opportunity may be fleeting, providing only temporary relief. To begin with, some of Trump's key appointees hold contrasting world views. US senator Marco Rubio, Trump's nominee for secretary of state, is a staunch China hawk and an anti-communist ideologue, bent on advancing what he perceives as democracy and freedom. Meanwhile, Pete Hegseth, the nominee for secretary of defence, is sceptical of traditional alliances like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation but advocates for a more assertive and unilateral US military presence on the global stage. If confirmed, these nominees could complicate Trump's foreign policy agenda. However, during Trump's first term in the White House, similar hawkish figures such as Mike Pompeo and John Bolton were part of his administration. Trump, who has little tolerance for dissent, may sideline hardliners who conflict with his foreign policy approach. That said, even if he prevails in pushing non-interventionism, this will be Trump's final four-year term and it is uncertain whether his policies will endure beyond his presidency. Despite Trump's isolationist disposition, there is no indication that the US body politic has abandoned its belief in the "shining city upon a hill". Evangelical Christians, a core part of Trump's Republican base, still uphold a missionary vision to transform the world. Meanwhile, establishment figures in the Democratic Party seem to embrace the

end-of-history thesis of political scientist Francis Fukuyama, advocating for the global spread of liberal democracy. As Biden and former US president Barack Obama showed, they are willing to deploy US military power to achieve this objective. Even within the Republican Party, figures like vice-president-elect J.D. Vance have called for ending the Ukraine war, not out of a desire for peace, but to redeploy US military assets to contain what they perceive as the real existential threat to US dominance - China. 'US compelled us': Pyongyang says Washington to blame for North Korea's nuclear first-use law Trump's non-ideological stance and aversion to war is an anomaly in US foreign policy. The American establishment - both Republican and Democrat - is still deeply committed to the belief in American exceptionalism. Once Trump leaves office, both parties are likely to keep pursuing policies aimed at maintaining US global hegemony, even through military intervention if necessary. In the Global South, US efforts to promote democracy have often failed to deliver greater liberty. Misguided military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, resulted in prolonged chaos and instability. As the pre-eminent military superpower, US actions have frequently caused more harm than good, particularly for developing nations that bear the brunt of these conflicts. Herein lies the paradox of American global leadership: in the name of combating evil, generations of US leaders have waged wars, often with what seems like indifference to their devastating consequences. In recent times, it has taken an "irreligious" Trump to acknowledge the horrors of war and pledge to stop them. As 2025 approaches, Trump 2.0 - for all its unpredictability and chaos - may offer the world a brief respite from the US "norm". However, a greater challenge looms: the resurgence of an imperialistic US. Trump's return may be disruptive but what follows could be even more destabilising.

Briefs

SC's
conditional
permission...

FROM PAGE 01
those who had allegedly ransacked military installations across the nation on May 9, following PTI founder Imran Khan's arrest in a graft case. At the outset, Justice Mandokhail remarked that arguments should focus on whether the annulled provisions of the Army Act align with the Constitution. He questioned whether amendments to the Army Act could bring all individuals under its purview, noting that the act was enacted prior to the 1973 Constitution. Justice Mazhar asked for reasons behind the annulment of provisions in the judicial verdicts.

Imran,
Bushra Bibi
booked...

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It added that the martyrdom of the paramilitary personnel took place "at the behest of the PTI founder" and "some inmates and employees of the jail's undercover police are witnesses of the plan". PTI central leaders including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan, Sheikh Waqas Akram, Salman Akram Raja, Murad Saeed, Zulfi Bukhari, Raof Hasan, Hammad Azhar, and others were also among nominated persons in the case.

Pakistan
warns...

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adding that the terrorist group also receives external support and financing "from our adversary" - an obvious reference to India. The TTP, he said, was fast emerging as an umbrella organization for other terrorist groups, aimed at destabilizing Afghanistan's neighbours. "We have evidence of its collaboration with other terrorist groups like the Majeed Brigade that is utilizing terrorism to disrupt Pakistan's economic cooperation with China, especially CPEC," Ambassador Jadoon said. "Given its long association with al-Qaeda, the TTP could emerge as al-Qaeda's arm with an Al-Qaeda's arm and global terrorist agenda."

318 stranded
Pakistanis...

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the citizens, besides refreshments and transport for home drop were arranged for the passengers. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Iqbal said the evacuation of Pakistani citizens via Beirut was made possible by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's tireless efforts, which included daily review meetings for the evacuation of Pakistanis stranded in Syria. He also mentioned that the Prime Minister spoke with the Prime Minister of Lebanon to facilitate the evacuation, while Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar contacted the Turkish Foreign Minister for the purpose.

Routes
closure...

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the shops of edible fruits and vegetables are empty in the markets and patients especially children are dying due to lack of medicines, therefore it is safe to open the roads immediately. Sayed Irshad Hussain says that in Kurram district, land and due to the closure of the airways, millions of inhabitants have been trapped in the area and people are facing a painful situation

Security
forces kill...

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forces conducted an IBO in Lakki Marwat District. Own troops effectively engaged the khwarji location and resultantly six khwarji were killed. Since 9 December 24, eighteen khwarji have been sent to hell in KP Province. In Balochistan, on 13 December, the security forces, after an intense fire exchange, successfully neutralized ten terrorists in two separate IBOs conducted in Musa Khel and Panjgur Districts.

Beyond boundaries: Australia
empowering girls through cricket

High Commissioner Hawkins celebrated the enthusiasm and confidence of the players and congratulated the schools, and all involved for making this event possible

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission (AHC) and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), with the support of Serena Hotels, today hosted the 8th AHC-PCB Girls' Cricket Cup in Islamabad. The event brought together young players from Islamabad's schools, celebrating girls breaking barriers and batting for gender equality. Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins, joined 60 girls from four schools to watch the final match of the tournament. In the week leading up to the final match, PCB first-class coaches conducted an intensive five-day coaching clinic, preparing the girls to shine on the field and feel more confident off the field. High Commissioner Hawkins celebrated the enthusiasm and confidence of the players and congratulated the schools, and all involved for making this event possible. "The smiles on the girls' faces says it all. Sport is a great motivator - it builds teamwork and confidence. Of course, cricket is a passion that binds Australia and Pakistan, it makes perfect sense for us to support this wonderful event." The Australian High Commission has been sponsoring girls' cricket in Pakistan since 2016, starting with one tournament in Islamabad. Today it has grown to Lahore and Ka-



rachi, empowering girls across the nation. "It's not just about boundaries on the pitch but also overcoming boundaries in life. Every ball bowled, every catch taken, helps promote gender empowerment. Pakistan faces many challenges as we all know, but they can only be overcome if the potential of ALL Pakistanis - men and women - is utilised." Mr Hawkins said.

Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, echoed the sentiment: "This is an outstanding platform that empowers young girls by providing access to professional coaching and opportunities to develop their cricketing skills. This initiative not only nurtures future talent but also serves as a launchpad for their cricketing careers. Serena Hotels, in collaboration with the Australian High Commission and the Pakistan Cricket Board, conceived this idea seven years ago to inspire and empower young girls through the transformative power of sports." The AHC-PCB Girls' Cup Islamabad featured teams from four schools: Mashal Model School Bari Imam, SOS Children's Village H-11, Islamabad Model School for Girls - F-6/1 and Islamabad Model School for Girls I-9/1 Islamabad. With cheers echoing through Islamabad, these girls showcased not just their cricketing skills but also the promise of a brighter, more inclusive future.

Champions Trophy 2025
ICC 'gives nod' to Pakistan
proposed hybrid model

Development comes following agreement between PCB and BCCI, claims Indian media

WEB DESK

DUBAI: The controversy surrounding the next year's Champions Trophy has come to an end as the International Cricket Council (ICC) reportedly green-lighted a "tit-for-tat" hybrid model proposed by Pakistan over India's refusal to send its team to the neighbouring country, Indian media claimed on Friday. The development - deemed as a victory of Pakistan's stance - came following an agreement between the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), according to a report published in India Today. The eight-team tournament hit a snag last month when the BCCI told the ICC that their side would not compete in Pakistan

over security fears and political tensions. Under the hybrid model, Pakistan will host the group matches but its high-profile clash with India will be played at a neutral venue. The final would be held at neutral venue or Lahore depending on whether the Indian side makes it through. Furthermore, the publication - in its report - stated that both cricket boards have reached a consensus on the 2026 T20 World Cup, deciding that Pakistan will not travel to India for the league-stage clash against India, which will instead be held in Colombo. It was reported that the PCB will not receive any "financial compensation" for this arrangement, while Pakistan also secured hosting rights for an ICC Women's tournament to take place af-

ter 2027. "The agreement has been well-received by all stakeholders, ensuring smooth planning for these marquee events while addressing logistical and geopolitical concerns," it added. The 2025 Champions Trophy is scheduled to take place from February 19 to March 9, with eight teams divided into two groups. The top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals, followed by the final. Earlier, sources claimed that the BCCI objected to the tit-for-tat condition on its own hosting and to the proposal to play the final in Lahore if India do not qualify. The arch-rivals only meet in ICC multi-national events, with the last bilateral series held when Pakistan toured India in 2012-13. Pakistan were also forced to host last year's Asia Cup on a hybrid

model, with India's matches and the final hosted in Sri Lanka. India are set to co-host the next Twenty20 World Cup with Sri Lanka in 2026 in addition to the Champions Trophy in 2029 and co-host the 2031 World Cup with Bangladesh. Pakistan has not hosted an ICC event since the 1996 World Cup with India and Sri Lanka. In recent years, the ICC has made sure that India play Pakistan at least once in each of the global cricketing events, ensuring a major chunk of revenue from this game. The India-Pakistan match at the 2023 World Cup drew unprecedented interest, with 173 million viewers on Indian TV and 225 million digital viewers. The 2021 T20 World Cup match between the two sides reached 167 million viewers and drew 15.9 billion minutes of engagement in India alone, highlighting Pakistan's role in generating cricket viewership and revenue figures.

Imad Wasim
once again takes
retirement

'Every moment wearing the green jersey has been unforgettable,' says Pakistan's all-rounder

LAHORE: Pakistan's all-rounder Imad Wasim has once again announced to retire from international cricket. Taking to social media, the seasoned all-rounder bid farewell to international cricket after being absent in the green jersey since the T20 World Cup this year. "To all fans and supporters: After much thought and reflection, I have decided to retire from international cricket," he posted. Reflecting on his journey with the green jersey, the left-handed batter called it the "greatest honour" of his life. "Representing Pakistan on the world stage has been the greatest honour of my life, and every moment wearing the green jersey has been unforgettable," he said. He expressed gratitude to his fans for supporting him unconditionally through thick and thin throughout his career. "Your unwavering support, love, and passion have always been my biggest strength. From the highs to the lows, your encouragement has pushed me to give my best for our beloved country," he added. Imad clarified that he will continue to play domestic and franchise cricket. "While this chapter comes to an end, I look forward to continuing my journey in cricket through domestic and franchise cricket, and I hope to keep entertaining you all in new ways," Imad clarified. Earlier this year, after the emphasis from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), the 35-year-old reversed his retirement decision ahead of the T20 World Cup 2024. In the mega event, he scored just 19 runs in two innings and bagged three wickets in three games. Overall, he represented Pakistan in 75 T20Is and 55 ODIs in which he scored a total of 1540 runs, including six half-centuries, and picked up 117 wickets. - DNA

'No talks'
being held...

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although a committee has been formed for talks, the committee when it thinks is right and the government shows some seriousness, then they will take directions from Khan for further action. Citing sources a private news channel reported that the PTI leader and Sadiq had agreed to ease political tensions. The two leaders discussed the importance of reducing polarisation and finding common ground for the greater national interest, the well-placed sources added.

KP CM
demands...

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respect for the victims, describing them as martyrs who sacrificed their lives for freedom. In his speech, Gandapur alleged that state forces had opened fire on his people, killing them in cold blood. He called for the nation to honour these martyrs and offer prayers for the injured. He stressed the significance of attending an upcoming event on December 15 to pay tribute to those who had given their lives for the cause of freedom.

Shehbaz
orders...

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shifted to solar energy. Globally, electricity is being produced from environmentally friendly, low-cost solar energy, he noted, adding that Pakistan was fortunate in this regard as the country had vast potential for solar energy. The premier was also briefed on the progress of phasing out inefficient power plants that consume more fuel but produce less electricity. He ordered the immediate closure of such outdated power plants adding that closing these plants would not only save valuable foreign exchange, but also reduce electricity costs for consumers.

Pakistan,
Tajikistan
agree to...

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discussed in the meeting. Daler Jumma is visiting Pakistan to participate in the Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commission. The prime minister welcomed Daler Jumma to Pakistan and expressed satisfaction with the progress made in bilateral cooperation between the two countries in various sectors during the Joint Commission. Recalling his visit to Tajikistan and his recent meetings with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon in Riyadh and Baku, the prime minister extended his best wishes to the Tajik President and expressed hope that President Rahmon would visit Pakistan soon.

Morocco, Portugal and Spain
officially FIFA 2030 World Cup hosts

ZURICH: Morocco, Portugal and Spain have officially been appointed as host countries for the 2030 FIFA World Cup by the FIFA Congress, gathered Wednesday in an extraordinary session by videoconference. During the same session, chaired by FIFA president Gianni Infantino from Zurich, Congress members also approved awarding the three centenary matches to Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay, while Saudi Arabia was confirmed as the host country for the 2034 World Cup. The three bids were approved by acclamation of FIFA's 211 member federations, who voted separately on the nomination procedure adopted by FIFA and on each of the respective bids. Speaking on the occasion, Infantino said that "in today's divided world (...), to be able to agree on something like this is an extraordinary message". "We live unity. We live inclusiveness. We live soccer," he stated solemnly. For his part, President of the Royal Moroccan Football Federation (FRMF) Fouzi Lekjaa expressed his gratitude to FIFA's member federations for having made possible "this moment of shared happiness, a moment rich in many ways, starting with this universal representation, rarely seen or experienced in other fields". "I would like to thank you for having placed your trust in my country, Morocco, and its two partners, Portugal and Spain, to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup together," he said in a pre-recorded speech broadcast during the Congress. "This

trust placed in my country by retaining its candidacy as part of the tripartite bid is further testimony to the progress made both in the specific preparations for the event and in the country's overall progress, led by the enlightened vision of HM King Mohammed VI, may God assist Him," Lekjaa stressed. "It will not only contribute to the organization's success," he continued, "but also to achieve what we have always defended, namely that sport, in general, and soccer, in particular, is a lever for socio-economic and human development". "The tripartite bid will stand out in history. This is the first time that this universal event has been organized simultaneously in Africa, the cradle of Humanity, and on the Old Continent, Europe", the President of the FRMF concluded. Furthermore, an official from the independent auditor (BDO), commissioned by FIFA to verify the compliance of the bids for the 2030 and 2034 World Cups, concluded that both bidding procedures had been conducted with "objectivity, integrity and transparency". Sole candidate in the running for the 2030 World Cup, the Moroccan-Iberian "YallaVamos 2030" bid took another decisive step forward at the end of November following the publication by FIFA of the evaluation report, which deemed that the tripartite bid stands out for its "overall quality" and exceeded the "minimum organizational requirements" set out in the technical evaluation, awarding it a score of 4.2 out of 5. - DNA

Bowling by Stallions earn them solid comeback

Usman Tariq remains most economical bowler for the Stallions

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A solid bowling performance by Stallions earned them a comeback after the last loss in the Champions T20 Cup here at Pindi Cricket Stadium. Usman Tariq, the most economical bowler for the Stallions against the Dolphins, bagged an important wicket of well-set Sahibzada Farhan to bring back his team while defending 190. When Farhan and Qasim Akram stitched a 46-run partnership, the Dolphins were in complete control at one stage. But, Usman removed Farhan in the 13th over to give Stallions a return in the game. Farhan managed to score 59 including six boundaries and two maximums. Later, Mohammad Ali joined Usman to remove another set batter Qasim who contributed worthy 37 runs. Usman and Hussain Talat took two wickets in quick succession to dent the Dolphins further.



However, skipper Faheem resisted a bit, scoring 25 runs before being unlucky to get run out. Mehran Mumtaz, who was returning to the playing, also bagged two wickets for the Stallions. Ubaid Shah, the younger brother of Hunain Shah, defended 14 runs in the last over to give Stallions a 5-run victory. It was the Stallions' third victory in the tournament. After being sent into bat first, the Stallions scored 190 runs. Yasir Khan and young Maaz Sadaqat provided a steady start to their team with a 38-run opening stand. Faheem was the first one to strike for the Dolphins as Maaz, the star performer of the previous match, walked off after scoring 23 off 16. Hussain (57*) and Mohammad Mohsin (55) led the Stallions to a composing 19-run total. They both garnered 109 runs together for their team. For the Dolphins, Mohammad Rameezjr took two wickets whereas Faheem picked up one.

Briefs

**Bloody
siege ends
Myanmar
army control
of western
border**

YANGOON: The end, when it came for the BGP5 barracks, was loud and brutal. First, a crackly speaker calling out for their surrender; then, a thunderous barrage of artillery, rockets and rifle fire that tore chunks out of the buildings in which hundreds of soldiers were hiding. BGP5 – the letters stand for Border Guard Police – was the Myanmar military junta's last stand in northern Rakhine State, which lies along the border with Bangladesh. Video by the insurgent Arakan Army (AA) which was besieging the base shows their rag-tag fighters, many barefoot, firing an assortment of weapons into the base, while air force jets roar over their heads. It was a ferocious battle – perhaps the bloodiest of the civil war which has consumed Myanmar since the military seized power in a coup in 2021.

"They had dug deep ditches filled with spikes around the base," an AA source told the BBC. "There were bunkers and reinforced buildings. They laid more than a thousand mines. Many of our fighters lost limbs, or their lives, trying to get through." For the coup leader, General Min Aung Hlaing, this has been yet another humiliating defeat after a year of military setbacks. For the first time his regime has lost control of an entire border: the 270km (170 miles) dividing Myanmar from Bangladesh now wholly under AA control. And with only the Rakhine State capital Sittoung still firmly in military hands, though cut off from the rest of the country, the AA is likely to be the first insurgent group to take complete control of a state.

The army has been in headlong retreat from the Arakan Army since the beginning of the year, losing town after town. The last army units withdrew in September to BGP5, a compound covering around 20 hectares just outside the border town of Maungdaw, where the AA laid siege.

BGP5 was built on the site of a Muslim Rohingya village, Myo Thu Gyi, which was burned down during the violent expulsion of much of the Rohingya population by the armed forces in 2017. It was the first of many burned villages I saw on a visit to Maungdaw right after the military operation in September of that year, a mass of charred debris in among the lush tropical vegetation, its inhabitants killed or forced to flee to Bangladesh.—APP

**Russian forces
advance toward
strategic city in
Ukraine's east**

MOSCOW: Russian forces are just 1.5 kilometers outside the Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk after Russian units pushed up from the south toward the road and rail hub which had a pre-war population of 60,000 people, a prominent pro-Russian blogger said on Friday. Russia controls a chunk of Ukraine about the size of the American state of Virginia and is advancing at the fastest pace since the early days of the 2022 invasion, according to open source maps. Yuri Podolyaka, a prominent Ukrainian-born, pro-Russian military blogger, said Russian forces were now just 1.5 km from the city after a push from the south. Podolyaka said members of Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups, special forces which penetrate the front ahead of the advance, were already in the city. Reuters was unable to verify battlefield accounts from either side due to reporting restrictions. Ukraine's military said in recent days that Russian troops destroyed or captured several Ukrainian positions near the city. The fall of Pokrovsk, an important logistics center for the Ukrainian military, would be one of Ukraine's biggest military losses in months. Control of the city, which the Russian media call "the gateway to Donetsk," would allow Moscow to severely disrupt Ukrainian supply lines along the eastern front and boost its campaign.—DNA

IT sector key to economic growth: Aurangzeb

The Governor SBP updated the committee on measures that have been taken to address these challenges, including streamlining account opening procedures, awareness campaigns, improving complaint resolution mechanisms and prioritizing the IT sector in banking frameworks

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Friday underscored the IT sector's critical role as a rapidly growing industry contributing to Pakistan's economic growth. Pakistan's cuisine "The IT sector has the potential to be a cornerstone of foreign exchange generation through exports remittances. A collaborative approach, consistent policies, and targeted reforms are essential to unleash its full potential and repatriation of foreign earnings," he stated while chairing a high-level meeting of the Prime Minister's Committee on IT Export Remittances. The meeting was convened to explore ways for boosting the flow of IT export remittances, which are crucial for Pakistan's economic growth and digital economy, said a press release issued by finance ministry. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for IT & Telecom Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja; Advisor to the Finance Minister, Khuram Schehzad; Chairman FBR; Governor SBP; CEO Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB); Secretary and Special Secretary IT & Telecom; Member IT & Telecom; and senior officials from the Finance Division. The meeting highlighted the sector's opportunities and challenges, focusing on improving the ease of capital movement to boost IT export remittances. Participants noted that while IT exports are steadily increasing,



a substantial portion of revenue remains unremitted. Discussions emphasized the need for simplified procedures, consistent tax exemptions for freelancers, and addressing issues related to remote workers classification and small IT firms to create a more favorable environment for IT businesses to remit their earnings back into the country. It was noted that Pakistan is home to 2.32 million freelancers, contributing 15% of IT exports, yet only 38,000 hold bank accounts. While 500 new accounts are be-

ing opened weekly, as per SBP data, retaining these account holders and encouraging others to follow the course is of crucial importance. The Governor SBP updated the committee on measures that have been taken to address these challenges, including streamlining account opening procedures, awareness campaigns, improving complaint resolution mechanisms and prioritizing the IT sector in banking frameworks. Participants also explored leveraging the

Freelancers Association. The group will focus on harmonizing data, identifying significant issues, simplifying processes, enhancing transparency, and ensuring continuity of progress made by SBP and other stakeholders. The Finance Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to fostering the IT sector as a vital contributor to the economy. He urged all stakeholders to work collectively to overcome challenges, promote IT exports, and establish Pakistan as a competitive player in the global IT industry.

itate international remittances for IT companies and freelancers. The discussion stressed the urgent need for access to global payment gateways like PayPal and creation of similar payment solutions at home to empower IT professionals and freelancers and enhance Pakistan's global competitiveness. Pakistan's cuisine To ensure data-driven discussion and effective policy-making, it was decided to form a working group comprising representatives from FBR, SBP, the IT Ministry, P@SHA, and

Palestinian president calls for full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza

ROME: President Mahmoud Abbas Friday met with his Italian counterpart Sergio Mattarella in Rome, where they discussed the latest developments in the Palestinian issue in light of the ongoing Israeli aggression. Upon arriving at the Presidential Palace today, President Abbas was welcomed by an honor guard before being received by President Mattarella and senior Italian officials. During the meeting, President Abbas briefed his Italian counterpart on the latest developments in Palestine, focusing on the severe humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip as a result

of the ongoing brutal Israeli aggression, which has led to tens of thousands of casualties and missing people and the widespread destruction of infrastructure, homes and properties. The Palestinian President also discussed the escalating violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the ongoing crimes committed by Israeli colonists against the defenseless Palestinian people. The President also briefed his Italian counterpart on the occupation's ongoing killings, raids into Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, colonial expansion and the desecration of holy sites, particularly in

occupied Jerusalem. President Abbas stressed the urgent need to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2735, calling for an immediate ceasefire, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and swift humanitarian assistance to avert the risk of a major humanitarian catastrophe in the Strip. He also called for enabling the Palestinian Authority to resume its full responsibilities in Gaza. President Abbas provided an update on Palestine's diplomatic, political and legal efforts in international forums to end the Israeli occupation and establish a Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

He reiterated the importance of adhering to the UN General Assembly's resolution regarding the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion to end the occupation. Additionally, President Abbas emphasized the importance of mobilizing support for Palestine's bid for full UN membership and securing further international recognition of Palestinian statehood. The President called on Italy to officially recognize the State of Palestine. The two leaders also discussed the strong bilateral ties between Italy and Palestine and the importance of enhancing these relations.—APP

Israel orders troops to 'prepare to remain' throughout winter in Syria

JERUSALEM: Minister of military affairs Israel Katz has ordered Israeli troops to "prepare to remain" throughout the winter in Syria including the strategic Jabal al-Shaykh mountain which they occupied after the fall of President Bashar al-Assad. In an announcement on Friday, Katz said he had issued the order during an assessment the previous day with the Israeli army's chief of staff Herzl Halevi, and other officers. "Due to the situation in Syria, it is of critical security importance to maintain our presence at the summit of Mount Hermon [Jabal al-Shaykh], and everything must be done to ensure the (army's) readiness on-site to enable the troops to stay there despite the challenging weather conditions," he said. Israel started its push to grab more Syrian land on Sunday, after foreign-backed militants led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) announced the fall of President Assad's government following a rapid two-week onslaught. Israeli forces seized the so-called buffer zone, which separates the occupied Golan Heights from the rest of Syria, in violation of a 1974 disengagement agreement. The occupation forces have entered several towns in Quneitra, forcibly evacuating residents.—APP

Tanveer demands 500 basis points reduction in policy rate in one go

KARACHI: S.M. Tanveer, Patron-in-Chief of United Business Group and Businessmen Panel Pakistan (UBG-BMPP), has called on the government to support economic growth by announcing a one-time reduction of 500 basis points in the policy rate during Monday's monetary policy review. S.M. Tanveer stated that a significant cut in the interest rate would not only boost economic activities but also prove beneficial for the government. He emphasized that unnecessary delays harm the country's economy, particularly when the government is already seriously considering bringing the policy rate down to single digits. A timely move would demonstrate significant improvements in economic stability and underscore the effectiveness of recent policy measures. He further added that a notable reduction in the policy rate has become the need of the hour, as it would bring bank mark-up rates back to single digits, making credit more accessible for businesses and consumers. Lower interest rates will promote investment, increase economic activity, and contribute to the overall prosperity of the nation. S.M. Tanveer highlighted that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for November 2024 has already dropped year-on-year (YoY) to 4.9%, compared to 7.2% in the previous month. He stated that the actual inflation rate has surpassed all forecasts, showcasing the diligent efforts of economic planners and the resilience of the business community. At UBG-BMPP, S.M. Tanveer affirmed their commitment to supporting policies that foster economic growth, stability, and prosperity for all. He further resolved that the group will continue to collaborate with the government, industry stakeholders, and international partners to sustain and build upon these achievements.—APP

Chairman PRCS advocates resilient communities at int'l seminar

GUIYANG, CHINA: Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, proudly represented Pakistan at the International Seminar on Red Cross Resilient Communities, held on December 11-12, 2024, in Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China. The seminar brought together key officials and leaders from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies from Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, Tajikistan, and Mongolia. In his opening remarks, His Excellency Mr. He Wei, President of the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC), welcomed participants and commended their active involvement in fostering resilience. Highlighting Guizhou's vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change, he shared insights on the province's Climate Resilience Model Village initiative and health and livelihood programs aimed at mitigating the suffering of vulnerable communities. During his address, Chairman Laghari delivered a detailed presentation on PRCS's pivotal role in climate action, from its contributions at COP27 to its ongoing participation in COP29. He emphasized PRCS's extensive humanitarian efforts during Pakistan's 2022 monsoon floods and its recovery programs.—DNA

Taiwan says Chinese ships have left, signaling drills over

TAIPEI: Chinese navy and coast guard ships have returned to China, signaling the end of a massive maritime exercise, Taiwanese authorities said Friday. Taiwan's coast guard released images it said showed Chinese vessels sailing north in rough seas past the island on Thursday, on their way to China. "All the Chinese coast guard went back to China yesterday, thus, although they haven't officially made any announcement, we consider it over," Hsieh Ching-chin, deputy director general of Taiwan's coast guard, said. Beijing has not confirmed the drills and its defense ministry did not say whether.—Agencies

Former Nepalese diplomat welcomes Pakistani legislator in Kathmandu

KATHMANDU: Former Pakistan, Tapas Adhikari, warmly received Ispahanyar Bhandara, Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan and Chief Executive Officer of Murree Brewery, in Kathmandu. The meeting between the two friends was marked by a nostalgic walk through the streets of Kathmandu, during which they reminisced about their shared experiences in Islamabad. Bhandara, known for his strong connections with Nepal, was greeted by Adhikari in a cordial reunion that highlights the friendly relations between Nepal and Pakistan. The visit underscores the ongoing people-to-people connections and diplomatic goodwill between the two nations.—DNA

Punjab CM secures fresh economic partnerships on Shanghai visit

SHANGHAI: A high-profile Pakistani delegation led by Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Chief Minister of Punjab, reached a key milestone in Shanghai this week, strengthening economic cooperation with China in information technology, e-commerce, and environmental management. The visit, running from December 8 to 15, aims to attract investment, boost trade, and draw lessons from China's development model. Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. In Shanghai, Sharif met with Zhu Zhongming, a high-rank official of the Shanghai Municipality. The two discussed enhancing cooperation between Shanghai and Pakistani local governments, focusing on practical, business-oriented exchanges. The delegation also toured the Hongqiao Import Commodity Exhibition and Trading Center, which hosts a Pakistan National Pavilion showcasing textiles, handicrafts, and other products. With live-streamed e-commerce promotions, the pavilion provides Pakistani

exporters a pathway into China's vast consumer market, potentially boosting exports. In addition, the delegation visited a major solar energy enterprise to explore renewable energy collaboration, reflecting Punjab's commitment to green development. Discussions centered on advancing clean, sustainable energy solutions in the province. The trip's highlight was

the Punjab Investment Conference, where the Bank of Punjab signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Gobi Partners, an Asia-based venture capital firm. The agreement aims to bolster investment in technology and innovation in Punjab, leveraging Gobi Partners' regional expertise. Meanwhile, a significant boost to Pakistan's startup ecosystem,

Gobi Partners, a leading venture capital firm in Asia, announced the launch of its \$50 million Techxila Fund II. The unveiling took place on the sidelines of the Pakistan Punjab Investment Conference in Shanghai, part of Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's ongoing visit to China from December 8 to 15. Gwadar Pro reported on Friday.

Techxila Fund II aims to catalyze entrepreneurship in Pakistan by focusing on high-potential sectors such as fintech, e-commerce, logistics, health technology, and SaaS. Gobi Partners, which manages \$1.6 billion in assets across Asia, seeks to empower under-resourced entrepreneurs, encourage innovation, and drive sustainable growth in emerging markets. The new fund builds on the success of Gobi's inaugural fund in Pakistan, which has invested in 22 startups. These companies have collectively served 3.2 million low-income households, generated \$245 million in 2023 revenues, and disbursed \$54 million in loans. Their portfolio includes PriceOye, now Pakistan's second-largest e-commerce platform, DealCart, a fast-growing social commerce venture, and Abhi, a financial platform offering advanced credit solutions to businesses and consumers.—APP



Ba'tie Girl: Pakistan-China film set to dazzle Chinese cinemas

BEIJING: Ba'tie Girl, a pioneering co-production between Pakistan and China, is set to enthrall audiences as it opens in cinemas across China. The film premiered Thursday in Beijing, marking a new chapter in cultural exchange between the two countries. Jamal Shah, former Pakistani Minister for National History and Cultural Heritage, hailed the collaboration as a "significant milestone," underscoring its role in strengthening ties and mutual understanding. "Ba'tie Girl brings together our rich cultural heritages while exploring universal themes of friendship, resilience, and the pursuit of dreams," said Shah. He noted a stark contrast in cinema infrastructure between the two countries—China's more than 14,000 cinemas and 80,000 screens compared with Pakistan's fewer than 150 cinemas serving a population of over 250 million. "Ninety percent of our cinemas are costly. We hope ventures like Ba'tie Girl encourage growth in our film industry," he added. Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi, described the film as a testament to the enduring partnership between the two nations. "Ba'tie Girl will not only entertain but foster deeper connections through the universal language of cinema," he said. Hashmi highlighted the term "Ba'tie"—a Chinese expression he encountered frequently while traveling in China—calling it an "affectionate testament" to the warmth and goodwill that define China-Pakistan relations. "It symbolizes the friendship that inspires both pride and gratitude," he said. Filmed in scenic locations across Pakistan and China, Ba'tie Girl aims to appeal to broad audiences, emphasizing how creative collaboration transcends borders.—APP

Briefs

President Zardari raises concerns over seminary bill

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has highlighted potential "international consequences" for not signing off on the madrasah registration bill passed by parliament, it emerged on Friday, as religious-political parties continue to criticise the government for deliberately delaying the process. Controversy persists in the country related to the Societies Registration (Amendment) Act, 2024 — a new law passed by parliament which relates to the regulatory affairs of madrasahs. President Zardari has yet to grant it presidential assent, prompting the Jamiat Ulema-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) to criticise ruling coalition parties for using 'delaying tactics' regarding the bill. The bill pertains to the registration of seminaries by the relevant deputy commissioner's office, as it was before 2019. President Zardari had returned the bill to the National Assembly on October 29, before flying to the United Arab Emirates. The bill was approved by the Senate on Oct 20, along with the 26th amendment. It passed through the National Assembly on Oct 21 and was forwarded to the president on Oct 22. A document from the president to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, dated November 13 said: "Lawmakers should keep in mind the international environment that when a madrasah is registered under a society, which has conflicting interests, [it] would invite international criticism/sanctions for Pakistan."

Blinken sees 'encouraging signs' on Gaza ceasefire

ANKARA: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that he saw "encouraging signs" of progress toward a ceasefire in the war-torn Gaza Strip on a visit to Ankara. "We discussed Gaza, and we discussed I think the opportunity... to get a ceasefire in place. And what we've seen in the last couple of weeks are more encouraging signs that that is possible," Blinken said after meeting Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. Blinken called on Turkey to influence Hamas to achieve the exchange deal and ceasefire in Gaza and said US wants to see Syria in a completely different direction than it was. "In my discussions with President Erdogan and with Minister Fidan we talked about the imperative of Hamas saying yes to the (Gaza) agreement that's possible to finally help bring this to an end," Blinken said. "We appreciate very much the role that Turkey can play in using its voice with Hamas, to try to bring this to conclusion." — Agencies

Experts call for empowering the mountain communities

Serena Hotels, Swiss, Canadian mission jointly host Raabta panel discussion on preserving mountain ecosystems

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, in collaboration with the Embassy of Switzerland and the Canadian High Commission in Pakistan, hosted a Raabta panel discussion to commemorate International Mountain Day. The event, titled "Preserving Mountain Ecosystems Amidst Climate Change — Strategies for Adaptation and Empowering Mountain Communities," brought together experts at Islamabad Serena Hotel to address the pressing challenges faced by mountain ecosystems and communities. Canada, as a global leader in climate action, reiterated its commitment to combating climate change and supporting vulnerable communities, with a particular focus on empowering women and youth through initiatives like Eco-Leaders and partnerships with Booni Environmental Academy Chitral. Similarly, the Swiss Embassy highlighted its sustainability initiatives to reduce carbon footprints in various industries, aligning with global climate goals. Moderated by renowned journalist Sidra Iqbal, the panel featured notable speakers, including Billi Bierling, a Swiss climber and author, who shared insights on balancing human activity with environmental preservation. Nazir Sabir, the first Pakistani to summit Mount Everest, reflected on the visible impact of climate change on mountain environments. Nusrat Nasab, CEO of the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat



(AKAH), discussed community-driven solutions to enhance climate resilience for mountain populations. Daniel Arsenault, Canada's Political, Economic, Public Affairs, and Commercial Counselor, emphasized Canada's partnerships in Pakistan, promoting grassroots climate solutions and gender-inclusive strategies. The event also spotlighted Sirbaz Khan, the first Pakistani to summit all 14 peaks over 8,000 meters, whose expeditions Serena Hotels proudly supports. Serena's sustainability efforts

were further highlighted through initiatives like the Green Impact Cleanup Drive at Rakaposhi Base Camp, where 130 kilograms of litter were removed in collaboration with local communities and mountaineers. Speaking on the occasion, Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, reaffirmed the organization's dedication to promoting sustainable tourism and empowering mountain communities. "Through initiatives like this panel discussion and our support for mountaineers such as Sirbaz Khan and

Samina Baig, we remain committed to safeguarding our mountains and the livelihoods they sustain," he said. The Raabta panel concluded with a call to action, urging collaboration among governments, NGOs, international organizations, and local communities to implement sustainable practices and strengthen resilience in mountain regions. Serena Hotels continues to lead efforts to foster meaningful dialogue and inspire collective action to protect these vital ecosystems for generations to come.

Macron names Bayrou as French PM

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron has named centrist leader François Bayrou as France's next prime minister, in a bid to end months of political turmoil. Bayrou, a 73-year-old mayor from the south-west who leads the MoDem party, said everyone realised the difficulty of the task ahead: "I think reconciliation is necessary." He is seen by Macron's entourage as a potential consensus candidate and his task will be to avoid the fate of his predecessor. Ex-Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier lasted just three months and was ousted by MPs nine days ago. Macron is half-way through his second term as president and Bayrou will be his fourth prime minister this year.

French politics has been deadlocked ever since Macron called snap parliamentary elections during the summer and an opinion poll for BFMTV on Thursday suggested 61% of French voters were worried by the political situation. Although a succession of allies lined up to praise Bayrou's appointment, Socialist regional leader Carole Dega said the whole process had become a "bad movie". Far-left France Unbowed leader Manuel Bompard complained of a "pathetic spectacle". The centre-left Socialists said they were ready to talk to Bayrou but would not take part in his government. Leader Olivier Faure said because Macron had chosen someone "from his own camp", the Socialists would remain in opposition. President Macron has vowed to remain in office until his second term ends in 2027, despite Barnier's downfall last week. He cut short a trip to Poland on Thursday and had been expected to name his new prime minister on Thursday night, but postponed his announcement until Friday. He then met Bayrou at the Elysée Palace and a final decision was made hours later. But in an indication of the fraught nature of the talks, Le Monde newspaper suggested that Macron had preferred another ally, Roland Lescure, but changed his mind when Bayrou threatened to withdraw his party's support. — Agencies

SJC dismisses 30 complaints against judges

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on Friday dismissed 30 complaints against judges. The council issued a statement following its meeting in Islamabad, announcing the dismissal of 30 out of 36 pending complaints against judges. The council has sought responses from judges regarding five other complaints. Additionally, the spokesperson revealed that amendments to the Judges' Code of Conduct and the council's rules were reviewed. A committee, headed by Justice Munib Akhtar, has been formed to oversee these amendments.

Pakistan, EU agree to continue coop on food, climate change

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the European Union (EU) have agreed to continue cooperation on emerging challenges of food, energy security, and climate change, underlining sustained engagement, particularly in areas such as trade, migration, human rights, political, economic and development cooperation with a focus on the Global Gateway strategy. The bilateral relations and cooperation were discussed in the 14th Pakistan-European Union (EU) Joint Commission meeting which took stock of recent political developments besides the ongoing formation of the new College of Commissioners, according to a joint press issued Friday on the Joint Commission meeting held the other day. The Joint Commission was preceded by the Sub-Group on Democracy, Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights in which two sides agreed on the need for continued efforts to strengthen the electoral process. The EU reiterated the importance of political pluralism, democratic values, independent media, vibrant civil society, judicial independence, and international human rights standards, which are key for democratic elections. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the protection of all human rights, including women's and children's rights, labour and migrant rights, as well as fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression and opinion including the growing problem of disinformation. Pakistan presented its reform agenda, including in the framework of the National Action Plan on Human Rights, National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, as well as actions towards the full implementation of 27 international conventions related to GSP+. Pakistan and the EU also exchanged views on freedom of religion or belief and the rights of persons belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups and concerns about anti-Muslim hatred. The meeting of the Pakistan-EU Sub-group on Trade also preceded the Joint Commission in which both sides acknowledged the importance of a robust multilateral trading system and exchanged views on recent developments at the multilateral (WTO), plurilateral, and bilateral levels. Both sides acknowledged that since the grant of GSP status in 2014, the bilateral trade relations have made significant strides. In the meeting of the Sub-Group on Development, both Pakistan and the EU agreed on the continued relevance of key priority areas under the ongoing Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) including Green Inclusive Growth, Human Capital/TVET, and Governance including Rule of Law and Human Rights.

Attaullah Tarar proposes global framework to counter disinfo

Pakistan attaches great respect to ties with Türkiye: Info Minister

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has proposed a regulatory framework at the international level to counter misinformation and to uphold ethical standards for the common good of humanity. Speaking at the STARTCOM summit in Istanbul on Friday, he stressed the need to use the Artificial Intelligence in a positive manner in the health, education, social, agriculture and financial sectors to benefit people. The Minister said the whole world is now grappling with the challenge of misinformation as it eventually leads to instability, which can cause destruction beyond imagination. He highlighted that AI is being used negatively on the social media in the name of freedom of expression when it comes to the issues of Gaza, Kashmir, Lebanon and the plight of their people. He said one cannot mention the name of Kashmiri freedom fighter Burhan Wani or upload his picture on the social media. Attaullah Tarar resolved that Pakistan is fully committed to implementing AI policy with the best ethical standards in the world. He said the government has launched the Pakistan Digital Dialogue comprising AI and Large Language Model. It helps harmonizing public opinion and assessing the needs of the citizens. The Minister said we are also heavily investing in the skill development of our youth. He said one million youth will be imparted training in the IT



sector next year. Meanwhile, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar visited the Headquarters of Turkish state TV channel, TRT World. During the visit, he held meeting with the Director General International Broadcast of the channel, Omer Faruk Tanrıverdi and discussed with him the cooperation in media between the two countries, shooting of joint documentary films, promotion of tourism and other matters of mutual interest. Speaking on the occasion, Attaullah Tarar said Pakistan attaches great respect to its fraternal ties with Türkiye. He said the relations between the two countries are based on historical and common religious and cultural values. The Minister said agreements for co-production of dramas, documentaries with Turkish government are part of our strategic framework. He said there is immense talent in both the countries. Attaullah Tarar particularly mentioned Pakistani player Arshad Nadeem, who set a record in Javelin Throw contest with 92.97 meters distance in the Summer Olympics. He said the story of Arshad Nadeem is quite inspiring and we can produce documentary on this youth. During the meeting, the two sides also discussed the Shandur Polo Festival in Pakistan. The Information Minister said Shandur Polo Festival not only promotes tourism and culture, but also help promote all kinds of sports. He said Shandur Polo Festival is the tournament, which is played at the highest sea level in the world.

Chinese embassy honors Pakistani staff in CPEC projects

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Embassy in Pakistan held the Awarding Ceremony for Outstanding Pakistani Staff of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects on 13th December, to recognize 43 Pakistani outstanding staff from different projects who have contributed to the CPEC construction. Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Mr. Jiang Zaidong, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Chen Shuai, Deputy Director General of the Department of International Cooperation of NDRC of China, Mr. Zhou Bo, Executive Vice Chairman of China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan attended the event. Jiang Zaidong emphasized that We should look at reality, trends and prospects, and strengthen our confidence

in practical cooperation between the two countries, especially the CPEC construction. First, we have favorable opportunities for the development of our two countries. The continued recovery of the economies of the two countries has created new opportunities and injected new impetus into our promotion of practical cooperation, especially the CPEC construction. Second, we have high-level strategic guidance from the two countries. The important instructions and consensus of the leaders of the two countries have provided us with fundamental guidance and enhanced confidence in promoting high-quality joint construction of the CPEC. Third, we have a solid foundation for cooperation between the two countries. The fruitful results achieved in cooperation between the two countries, especially in the CPEC, have laid a solid foundation and provided important support for building an "upgraded version" of the CPEC.

Palestinians decry 'barbaric' Israel strike on Nuseirat camp

At least 36 people, many members of same family, were killed in the Israeli strike on a Palestinian shelter

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: Palestinian authorities have said that at least 36 people were killed in an Israeli strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, as Israel continues to conduct devastating attacks across the strip. The Government Media Office in Gaza called the Thursday attack a "barbaric and heinous massacre", noting that most of those killed hailed from the al-Sheikh Ali family. "The [Israeli] occupation army knew that this is a residential block with many apartment buildings housing dozens of civilians, children, women and displaced people," the office said. Medics told the news agency Reuters that Israeli fire struck a postal office in Nuseirat sheltering displaced Palestinian families, as well as nearby houses. Photographs from the scene show young children coated with dust and blood in the rubble of a collapsed building. In Gaza, it is not uncommon for aerial attacks to kill numerous members of the same family, as Israel's war continues into a second year. As of October 2024, the one-year anniversary of the war, Israeli strikes had completely wiped out at least 902 entire families in the Strip, according

to the Government Media Office in Gaza. Throughout the war, facilities and buildings sheltering displaced families have been attacked by Israeli forces, who often claim, with little evidence, that they are being used as operation centres for the Palestinian armed group Hamas. Israeli authorities have yet to comment on Thursday's strike in Nuseirat. Health facilities, journalists, and humanitarian workers have also reported being persistently targeted by Israeli forces since the fighting began in October 2023, when Hamas launched a deadly attack on southern Israel that killed about 1,100 people, most of them civilians. In the time since, Israeli attacks have killed more than 44,800 Palestinians in Gaza, more than half of them women and children. On Thursday, the watchdog group Airwars, which assesses civilian harm from air strikes, released a report stating that Israel's campaign in Gaza was "by far the most intense, destructive, and fatal conflict for civilians" that it had ever recorded. The report found that, during the first month of the war, the number of civilians killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza was nearly four times greater than the death toll of "any conflict Airwars has documented since it was established in 2014", over a comparable time period.

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