



# Islamabad POST

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**Kyrgyz president removes PM in leadership shift**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Dialogue vital to build positive image of country**

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**Jason Gillespie criticizes PCB after resignation**

Detailed News On Page-06

## As nationwide drive begins

# Polio worker, policeman killed in KP attacks

Govt has launched polio vaccination campaign aiming to inoculate around 44 million children

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The first day of the nationwide anti-polio campaign was marred by violence after unknown gunmen opened fire at polio workers killing two in separate attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday. A policeman, providing security to a polio vaccination team, was martyred in the Shakar Khel area of Banda Daud Shah tehsil in Karak after being shot by the armed assailants. Whereas one polio worker was also injured in the attack, the police said. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, a polio worker was gunned down in Bannu's Kala Khel Masti Khan area while he was on his way to work. Noting that the suspects fled after the incident, the police said that the victim was involved in an old enmity and that further investigation was underway. Condemning the Karak incident, President Asif Ali Zardari expressed sorrow over the policeman's martyrdom. Terming the terrorists as enemies of the country and its future, President Zardari said that they didn't wish to see the people of Pakistan healthy and prosperous. Furthermore, the president also requested the masses to take part in the polio vaccination campaign. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, while issuing directions for immediate provision of medical assistance to the injured, expressed concern about the attack on polio workers who were working for the eradication of the crippling disease. Noting that such incidents cannot demoralise them, the premier said the government would use all its resources to curb poliovirus and protect health workers. Reacting to the development, KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi termed the attack on the polio team in Karak "extremely regrettable" and expressed grief on the martyrdom of the policeman. Seeking a report on the attack, the governor further issued

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## President, PM vow to end terrorism

Country observes 10th anniversary of tragic militant attack on Peshawar's Army Public School on Dec 16, 2014

DNA

ISLAMABAD/ LAHORE: With a resolve to eradicate the menace of terrorism, President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the militant attack on the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar, as the nation observed the 10th anniversary of the tragic event. On 16 December 2014, six terrorists stormed APS and martyred nearly 150 innocent students and teachers. President Zardari stated that this day serves as a solemn reminder for the nation to unite against terrorism and intensify efforts to eliminate this scourge. In a message marking the 10th anniversary of the incident, he said the terrorists had attacked the future of the nation and its children on that fateful day. "The terrorists mercilessly killed our citizens, including our children, displaying their enmity towards the public by targeting teachers and students. The attack on children was cruel and inhumane," he remarked. "The APS tragedy revealed that the terrorists' agenda was to create chaos and

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## Briefs

**4 Pakistanis confirmed dead in Greek tragedy**

The Ministry extends its heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan is deeply saddened to confirm that four Pakistani nationals have been identified among the casualties of the tragic boat incident that occurred on Saturday in the southern waters of Crete, Greece. Our diplomatic mission in Athens is currently actively engaged with Greek authorities to: The Ministry extends its heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased and remains committed to providing all possible diplomatic and humanitarian support during this difficult time. Further updates will be shared as more information becomes available.

**Anglican Church hit by new abuse row**

AGENCIES

LONDON: A senior UK bishop, who will soon take over temporarily as leader of the world's Anglicans after a sex abuse scandal, faced calls to quit on Monday over his own handling of another case. Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell, Anglican Church's second most senior cleric, will take charge for a few months in the New Year following resignation of Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby last month. Welby stepped down after an independent probe found he "could and should" have formally reported decades of abuse by a Church-linked lawyer to authorities in 2013. The report found the Church of England - mother church of Anglicanism - covered up the "traumatic physical, sexual, psychological and spiritual attacks".

## Parties need more time

# Kurram peace jirga not yet over: KP govt

Barrister Saif underscores need for disarmament, elimination of bunkers for sustainable peace

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister on Information and Public Affairs Barrister Mohammad Ali Saif has refuted reports claiming that the Kurram peace jirga has ended, clarifying that relevant parties have sought one more day for further consultations. "The Kurram [peace] jirga is not over [...] The reports regarding the dissolution of jirga are baseless," the KP government's spokesperson said on Monday while clarifying that another 24 hours had been sought by the parties for deliberation regarding the elimination of bunkers and collection of weapons. The provincial government's rebuttal comes after it was reported, on Sunday, that the nine-day-long jirga had failed to reach any result due to differences with the government with jirga member Syed Raza Hussain saying that certain points could not be agreed upon. The district has been plagued by violence in recent times killing more than 130 people losing their lives and injuring over 180 others.

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## Death sentences for 5 Navy personnel restored by IHC

Court's ruling clears the way for the execution of the five court-martialed Navy personnel

COURT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Monday lifted the stay on the execution of five former Pakistan Navy officers convicted in the high-profile dockyard attack case. The court's ruling paves the way for the execution of the five men, who had been sentenced to death by a Field General Court Martial (FGCM) for their involvement in the 2014 dockyard attack. The stay on their executions had been in place for some time, but the court's

Continued on Page 06

# SBP cuts key policy rate by 200bps to 13pc

This deceleration was mainly driven by continued decline in food inflation as well as the phasing out of the impact of the hike in gas tariffs in November 2023," noted the MPC, adding that the core inflation, at 9.7%, is proving to be sticky, whereas inflation expectations of consumers and businesses remain volatile

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday slashed the key policy rate by 200 basis points (bps) to 13%, marking its fifth consecutive cut as inflation continues to drop. Last month, the central bank cut its key interest rate by 250bps to 15%, at least 0.5% more than the market expectations amid declining inflation. The consumer price index (CPI) for November clocked in at 4.9% in line with the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) expectations - well below the general market consensus. "This deceleration was mainly driven by continued decline in food inflation as well as the phasing out of the impact of the hike in gas tariffs in November 2023," noted the MPC, adding that the core inflation, at 9.7%, is proving to be sticky,

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## Bloomberg reports 34% rise in Pakistan's foreign remittances

Curb on unofficial forex trade boosts Pakistan's remittances and reserves

DNA

LAHORE: Pragmatic steps by the Pakistan government, including curb on illegal foreign-exchange trade, has boosted country's foreign exchange reserves to a record high this fiscal. The news website Bloomberg quoted the State

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## CHRISTMAS CONCERT



ISLAMABAD: EU Ambassador to Pakistan Riina Kionka in a group photo with diplomatic music band, which performed on the occasion of Christmas festivities. - DNA

## PM to visit Egypt for D8 summit

"The theme of the 11th D-8 Summit is 'Investing in Youth and Supporting SMEs: Shaping Tomorrow's Economy'"

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit Cairo from December 18-20 to participate in the Developing Eight (D8) Summit, the Foreign Office (FO) announced on Monday. The D8, comprising Pakistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran and Türkiye, is "an organisation for economic cooperation" among those countries, according to the organisation's website. In an earlier summit in June, the alliance demanded full Palestinian membership of the United Nations

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## Khaqan Abbasi challenges 26th amend in SHC

Former PM requested court to bare the judicial commission to work

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Monday challenged the 26th amendment in the Sindh High Court (SHC). The veteran politician prayed before the court to give direction to halt the appointment of new judges in the high courts. Abbasi also requested the court to bare the judicial commission to work till the decision of his petition.

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## 'Shared commitment to progress' UK has no issue with CPEC, says Jane Marriott

When asked about the frequent objections raised by the United States over CPEC, Marriott clarified, "Washington has its own policy, and the UK follows an independent foreign policy"

ALI FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: The British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, has stated that the United Kingdom has no objection to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) but emphasized the importance of transparency and ensuring the benefits of these multi-billion-dollar projects reach Pakistani youth. Speaking to reporters after a think tank discussion in Islamabad, Marriott said, "The UK wants to see Pakistan prosper, and if Pakistan believes CPEC projects are beneficial, we have no issue with that." This marks the first time the UK has indirectly supported China's investment projects in Pakistan.

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## Blome stresses strong US-Pak economic ties

Ambassador Blome reaffirmed the U.S. Mission's commitment to supporting American businesses in Pakistan and advocating for policy reforms

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blome, addressed the American Business Forum in Lahore this evening, commending the role of U.S. businesses in driving economic growth and fostering prosperity across Pakistan. In his remarks, Ambassador Blome acknowledged the significant

Continued on Page 06

## UN to Jolani: Syria must have a 'credible' transition

Special envoy underlined 'the intention of the United Nations to render all assistance to the Syrian people'

NEWS DESK

DAMASCUS: The United Nations told the leader of the Islamist Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham group which toppled Bashar Assad that Syria must have a "credible and inclusive" transition. The UN special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen who arrived in Damascus on Sunday, has met Abu Mohammed Al-G-

lani - who now goes under his real name Ahmed Al-Sharaa - Pedersen's office said Monday in a statement on Telegram. He also met interim prime minister Mohammed Al-Bashir, it said. Pedersen met them after Saturday's international meeting on Syria in Jordan, and stressed "the need for a credible and inclusive Syrian-owned

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### Chairman WAPDA reviews construction work on Diamer Basha Dam

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) reviewed construction activities being carried out on project sites of Diamer Basha Dam during his day-long visit. The Chairman WAPDA urged upon the Project Team to gear up the on going construction activities in accordance with time scheduled for completion of the project. He was accompanied by the Advisor Projects, GM/PP Diamer Basha Dam project, Consultants Group and representatives of the Contractors i.e Power China and FWO, said a press release. The Chairman WAPDA inspected the progress on construction activities at different sites of the project in details that include Crushing Plant, Upstream and Downstream Cofferdam, Diversion Canal, Dam Pit, Guide Wall and Left Abutment. In a progress review meeting, GM/PP Diamer Basha Dam Project and the Project Managers of the Consultants and Contractors briefed the Chairman about the development made on each site. He was briefed that the construction activities on the project are moving ahead with a good pace and at present, construction work is simultaneously in progress on 14 key sites. The project is scheduled for completion in 2028. During his visit to Diamer Basha, the Chairman also attended a JIRGA with civil administration, notables of district Diamer and Upper Kohistan and the matters related to land acquisition, resettlement and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) were brought under discussion.—APP

### IIUI marks World Day of Arabic Language

ISLAMABAD: The International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) observed the World Arabic Language Day on Monday at its Faisal Masjid campus, focusing on the importance of Arabic and its role in promoting Islamic teachings and strengthening Muslim unity. Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Acting Rector of IIUI, addressed the gathering and spoke about the significance of Islam and its contributions to humanity. He acknowledged the support of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait in the progress of IIUI and its role as a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) Islamic Universities League. Dr. Mukhtar emphasized the priority of Arabic as the official medium of the university and its importance as a source of guidance to Islam. He stressed the need for a strategy to teach Arabic to non-native speakers and underlined the role of the language in fostering unity among Muslims. The event was attended by H.E. Mr. Mohammed Motahar Alashabi, Ambassador of Yemen to Pakistan; Nasir Alotaibi, Head of Saudi Schools in Islamabad; scholars of Arabic, faculty members, and students. Dr. Fazal Ullah, Dean of the Faculty of Arabic, described Arabic as the language of the Holy Quran and Sunnah and its role in connecting Muslims to their legacy.—APP

## IICR organizes webinar on community and social work initiatives

The speakers emphasized the need for regional collaboration, urging the establishment of a dedicated platform for South Asian and Middle Eastern think tanks, NGOs, and civil society organizations to share resources, replicate successful models, and amplify their impact

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution (IICR) convened a distinguished and highly impactful webinar, raising dialogue on a critical issue titled "Community and Social Work Initiatives: Empowering Local Change-Makers," bringing together esteemed academics, policymakers, and grassroots activists from South Asia and the Middle East. The event, moderated by Prof. Dr. Amna Mehmood of the Islamic International University Islamabad, provided a collaborative platform to address persistent challenges

in grassroots social work and to explore innovative approaches to community empowerment. The panel included distinguished speakers such as Prof. Dr. Song Zhihui, Vice Dean at the School of International Studies at Sichuan University, China; Dr. George Cooke, Executive Director of the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka; Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan, Senior Research Fellow at Hunan University, China; and UNDP National Expert; and Ms. Anwar Ghais, a Lebanese Youth Activist and Researcher in International Law. Each panelist brought

unique insights from their regions, focusing on strategies to overcome barriers such as limited resources, lack of visibility, and difficulties in scaling community initiatives. The discussions highlight the exceptional role of local stakeholders in pursuing sustainable development. The panelists stressed that empowering local communities to take ownership of projects ensures their long-term viability and relevance. Real-world examples from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Middle East showcased how grassroots innovations in healthcare, education, and legal advocacy are transform-

ing lives. For instance, integrating technology in health care in Pakistan is bridging healthcare gaps in rural areas, while literacy programs in Sri Lanka are empowering marginalized groups, particularly women. Similarly, legal advocacy movements in Lebanon have achieved significant progress in promoting human rights and social justice. The speakers emphasized the need for regional collaboration, urging the establishment of a dedicated platform for South Asian and Middle Eastern think tanks, NGOs, and civil society organizations to share resources, rep-

licate successful models, and amplify their impact. Prof. Dr. Song shared China's experience in poverty alleviation through state-supported infrastructure development, offering valuable lessons for countries in the region. The importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was also discussed, with a call for businesses to actively contribute to community welfare through well-implemented CSR policies. Governments were urged to prioritize infrastructure development, financial assistance, and operational support to address gaps in community development effectively.

## ICCI hosts Pakistan-Tajikistan business forum

# Tajikistan-Pakistan direct flights to commence soon

ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, in his vote of thanks, lauded the forum as a transformative platform for strengthening bilateral trade and people-to-people connections

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), a leading global business institution, marked a significant milestone by organizing the Pakistan-Tajikistan Business Forum in Islamabad. This high-profile event was graced by Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Tajikistan's Minister for Energy and Water Resources Jum'a Daler Shofaqr, CEO of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Mohammad Zubair Motiwala, Tajikistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Sharifzoda Yusuf, Additional Secretary Ministry of Commerce, Nasir Hamid, Director general Muhammad Naseer ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, senior officials from the Commerce Ministry, TDAP, and key business leaders from both nations. In their addresses, Ministers Jam Kamal Khan and Jum'a Daler Shofaqr presented an in-depth analysis of investment opportunities in Pakistan and Tajikistan. They highlighted proactive measures taken by the respective governments to attract foreign investments, including lucrative



incentives tailored for global enterprises. The ministers expressed optimism that business leaders would capitalize on these opportunities, fostering economic growth and mutual prosperity. The forum's hallmark was the dynamic B2B meetings hosted at the ICCI, where two hundred business leaders from Pakistan and Tajikistan exchanged insights on their investment landscapes and explored pathways

for collaboration. These engagements paved the way for promising agreements aimed at shared economic advancement. ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, in his vote of thanks, lauded the forum as a transformative platform for strengthening bilateral trade and people-to-people connections. He reiterated ICCI's unwavering commitment to promoting business partnerships through exchange programs and

expos designed to showcase the diverse opportunities available in both countries. Calling for actionable outcomes, he remarked, "Let us translate these meaningful discussions into tangible partnerships that drive mutual growth and prosperity." During the souvenir exchange ceremony, Qureshi emphasized the historical and cultural bonds uniting Pakistan and Tajikistan. On his suggestion that a direct flight be-

tween the two countries will go a long way in strengthening the existing relations, the Tajik Minister said that soon this air flight will commence to do the needful. He recalled Pakistan's recognition of Tajikistan's independence in 1991 and underscored the strategic significance of the Wakhan Corridor as a critical link between the two countries. Offering Islamabad's full support for its development, he urged both nations to explore new areas of cooperation in trade, energy, agriculture, education, and industry. Qureshi highlighted Pakistan's strategic location as a gateway to Central and West Asia, underscoring its potential as a hub for Tajik investments and regional trade under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) framework. Qureshi reaffirmed ICCI's resolve to deepen collaboration with Tajik business chambers to achieve the forum's objectives. He stressed the importance of frequent business delegations, tourism promotion, and hosting joint expos and pavilions to strengthen bilateral ties. Reflecting on the forum's success, he commended the dedication of both business communities, expressing confidence in a future marked by fruitful partnerships and shared prosperity.

### DC inspects education institutions

MUZAFFARGARH: Upholding the Punjab Chief Minister's vision of "Parha Likha Punjab", Deputy Commissioner Qurat-ul-Ain Memon visited various educational institutions and public facilities to ensure quality education and efficient public service delivery in the district. During her visit, the DC inspected the Government Degree College for Women and Comprehensive School to review arrangements for essay writing competitions. She closely monitored the set-up at examination centers, ensuring a conducive and disciplined environment for students participating in the competition. "It is our responsibility to ensure transparent and fair examinations," emphasized DC Qurat-ul-Ain Memon. She directed the staff to maintain strict discipline and provide all necessary facilities to the students during the competitions. The DC also visited the Government Secondary School for Special Education, where she reviewed cleanliness and other administrative arrangements.—APP

### Workshop on accidental deaths at LGH

LAHORE: The ratio of accidental deaths and physical disabilities can be minimized by implementing traffic rules and adopting safety measures during construction work. Similarly, if motorcycle riders ensure 100% use of helmets then tragic incidents of head injuries will also be reduced overwhelmingly. These views were expressed by Ameer Uddin Medical College Principal Prof. Dr. Muhammad Al-Freed Zafar while addressing participants in the Advanced Trauma Life Support Workshop which was organized by the HoD General Surgery Prof. Dr. Farooq Afzal here on Monday. In the training workshop, medical experts gave awareness lectures to young doctors in the light of their experience. On this occasion, Prof. Arshad Cheema, Prof. Moeed Iqbal Qureshi, Prof. M. Shoaib Nabi, Prof. Farid Ahmed Khan, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Hanif, Prof. Dr. Haroon Javed, Dr. Farooq Rana also spoke while young doctors, nurses and others were also present. Prof. Al-Fareed Zafar said that saving human life is the mission of the medical profession and the high number of cases of head injuries and fractures of body parts are due to carelessness in traffic and negligence of parents.—APP

## CM Murad launches 7-day polio eradication campaign

CM Shah highlighted the urgency of the situation, noting that 63 children in Pakistan have contracted polio this year, including 17 from Sindh

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah inaugurated a new polio eradication campaign across the province, running from December 16 to December 22, 2024, by immunising children in a classroom at NJV School and encouraged the polio vaccination teams to treat their work as a classroom activity. The event was attended by Secretary of Health Rehan Baloch, Commissioner of Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Additional IG Karachi Javed Alam Odho, Coordinator of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Irshad Sodhar, and school administrators. This vaccination campaign aims

to protect 10.6 million children under the age of five from the poliovirus and is the final campaign of 2024. CM Shah reported that over 80,000 frontline workers are participating, going door-to-door to ensure that no child is overlooked. "I have deployed 15,000 security personnel across Sindh to create a safe environment for this effort," he stated. CM Shah highlighted the urgency of the situation, noting that 63 children in Pakistan have contracted polio this year, including 17 from Sindh. "The situation remains critical, with most environmental samples testing positive

for the virus, indicating ongoing transmission," he explained. He pointed out that Pakistan and Afghanistan are the last two countries in the world where the poliovirus is still endemic. "This campaign is essential for halting the virus's spread and protecting children from its devastating effects," he said, emphasizing that since this was the last campaign of the year, every child must be vaccinated to prevent the virus's transmission and avoid long-term disability. Irshad Sodhar, the Provincial Coordinator of the EOC, added that for those who miss vaccination during the campaign,

help and information can be obtained through the Emergency Operations Centre's Sehat Tahafuz Helpline at 1166 or WhatsApp Helpline 0346-7776546. The Department of Health urged media, community leaders, and religious scholars to raise awareness about the importance of vaccination and support this vital campaign to ensure a polio-free future for Sindh, Pakistan, and beyond. During the event, Secretary of Health Rehan Baloch, Commissioner Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Additional IG Karachi Javed Alam Odho, and others administered polio drops to children.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: President CPSP Muhammad Shoaib Shafi and Senior Vice President Professor Khalid Masood Gondal giving honorary shield to Ambassador of Ireland to Pakistan Mary O'Neill.

## Chinese businessmen to be facilitated to invest in Punjab: CM

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has said that Pakistan and China have strong and brotherly relations that are decades old. Maryam Nawaz said in her statement that China's growing economy is worthy of imitation for us, the political vision and progress of the Chinese government are a beacon of light for all. She said that fruitful discussions were held with the Chinese leadership and various companies, and discussions were held on investment in various sectors including IT, agriculture, artificial intelligence. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said that they will provide facilities to Chinese businessmen to invest in Punjab, while the Punjab Business Council will play an important role between the two countries. She said that Chinese investors and businessmen should invest in Punjab and it will be made

a center of trade and investment for the whole world. Moreover, under the "Dhee Rani Program," led by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the first phase of the program would be held on December 19 at Expo Centre here. The main arrangements of the group marriage would be organized by the Department of Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal. For the details, needy people can contact the helpline 1312. Senior official sources in Punjab Social Welfare department told media that according to Dhee Rani initiative, poor families grappling with resource constraints in way of their daughters' weddings, need not worry more as Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has given the go-ahead to this unique plan which can get the problem resolved by a click on their computers or smartphones on a portal that is now functional.—APP

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### DECEMBER

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

### Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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

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Edhi Ambulance.....115  
PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Wild West year end dinner at the Malaysian High Commission



# APS tragedy turning point in nation fight against terrorism

ISLAMABAD: Ten years ago, this dark day brought immense pain and sorrow for the families of innocent martyrs of Army Public School (APS), Peshawar where their loved ones were brutally massacred in a deadly terrorist attack that wounded the hearts of every Pakistani. Known as a black day in the country's history, 16th December 2014 was a dreadful day for the Sharif Gul's family whose elder son Hassnain Sharif, who was a 10th-grade student at APS Peshawar was martyred in a horrific gun attack along with 131 others students, which put the entire nation in deep shock. "Ten years ago on this fateful day, my elder son Hussain Sharif whose had a great desire to join Pakistan Army as SSG Commando, woke early in the morning, offered Fajr prayer, recited the

Holy Quran as per his routine daily practice and left for school after a motherly kiss on his forehead by his mother, on the main gate of our house," Sharif Gul said. "Hassnain was a very obedient, intelligent and disciplined son. To fulfil his dream wish, I shifted along with family to Peshawar and admitted him at APS where he showed outstanding results in academics, sports and co-curricular activities," he recalled. "I was busy in routine office work in Peshawar when my colleagues informed me about terrorists attack at APS. I rushed towards Warsak Road where the school was located amid gunshots, firings, smell of explosives and blasts. Later at night, I was informed that Hassnain had been martyred and his body was laying in the hospital from where it was collected

for burial," Sharif Gul with tears rolling down his face told media. He said that although Hassnain was not among with us today but his mission would be completed. Sharif Gul said that Pakistan is our country and if it needs my blood or more sons we are ready to sacrifice for our beloved homeland. Sharif Gul said that the APS tragedy has proved a turning point in the nation's resolved against terrorism. The APS attack remains one of the most painful incidents in Pakistan's history when about six terrorists dressed in military uniforms entered the school premises and opened indiscriminate fire at students, teachers and staff. Resultantly, 147 people including 132 students and their Principal Tahara Qazi were martyred and many injured. Principal Army Public School Sha-

heed Tahira Qazi and other teachers stood in front of terrorists as a rock wall to protect their students and sacrificed their lives. The security forces of Pakistan, immediately after the attack, surrounded the school and killed all the terrorists after a successful operation and saved many precious lives of students and their teachers. "The terrorists attack at APS had proved a defining moment in the country's history. It united the entire nation against the menace of terrorism and militancy in Pakistan," said Ikhair Wali Khan, former member Provincial Assembly while talking to media. He said the cowardly terrorists wanted to eliminate education, knowledge and learning by attacking the students in the school, who were the future of Pakistan. However,

the enemy of education could not dampen the morale of the nation in Pakistan where people of every school of thought strongly rejected terrorism in all forms and manifestations. He said a strong message was given to supporters of terrorism by the school administration after the reopening of APS a couple of days after the attack and studies restarted there. He said Pakistan was a victim of terrorism and the national APS tragedy was testimony of it. Ikhair Wali said the APS tragedy has led to the formulation of a clear policy and consensus plan in the form of the "National Action Plan" to combat terrorism. "Hats off to the survivor students of APS who despite the horrific attack had continued their

studies and inspired many due to their indomitable courage, willpower and professional commitment by earning great name for the country's within and abroad." Ahmad Nawaz, a brave son of Peshawar, who survived the APS massacre on December 16, 2014, inspired thousands of people last year after becoming the youngest President of the prestigious Oxford University's Union at Lobdon with a history going back to 1825. Born at the residence of Muhammad Nawaz at Peshawar, Ahmad Nawaz, who received multiple bullets wounds during APS horrific terrorist attack had comfortably won the Oxford University's Union election after defeating his two opponents.—Agencies

## Tarar attends funeral of PML-N leader Siddiqui Farooq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Monday attended the funeral prayer of senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) Siddiqui Farooq. The funeral prayer of Siddiqui-Farooq was offered at Islamabad H-11 graveyard. The senior leadership of PML(N) and social personalities and families were also present in the funeral prayer. The minister of information paid tributes to Siddiqui Farooq for his honesty, principles and political services. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude. It is pertinent to mention that Siddiqui Farooq, senior leader of ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), passed away on Sunday after battling with an illness. The family sources revealed that the seasoned politician was suffering from a heart disease. During his political career, Farooq served as press secretary to three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and PML-N's information secretary. Farooq also served as the chairman of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) and chairman of the House Building Finance Corporation. — DNA

## Police conducts grand search operation in Saddar zone

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police conducted a grand search and combing operation on Monday in various areas of Saddar Zone to curb criminal activities and ensure public safety. A public relations officer told media that the operation was carried out under the supervision of SP Saddar Zone with a heavy contingent of police, including lady police officers, actively participating. He said before the operation, the personnel were briefed about the objectives and procedures. He said 110 suspicious individuals were checked during the operation, along with inspections of 80 houses, shops, inns, hotels, and motels. Moreover, 35 motorcycles and 25 vehicles were thoroughly examined. He said that 12 individuals were shifted to the police station for verification, and five motorcycles were taken into custody. Additionally, two pistols along with ammunition were recovered during the operation. He added that the Inspector General of Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi had directed grand search operations across the district to eliminate crimes.—APP

## 4th death anniversary of veteran actress Firdous Begum being observed

ISLAMABAD: The 4th death anniversary of veteran actress Firdous Begum is being observed on Monday. She was born as Parveen in Lahore, British India on 4 August 1947. She started her career as a supporting actress with film Fanoos in 1963, and later she played lead role in Malangi. She gained fame for her part in the Heer Ranjha movie from 1970.—APP

## Hajj 2025 expenses installment plan launched

The government is vigilant to provide the best possible facilities to pilgrims during Hajj 2025, he added

ISLAMABAD: The spokesperson of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Muhammad Umer Butt, on Monday said that the government had introduced an installment mechanism for Hajj 2025 to help pilgrims manage their expenses more conveniently. Talking to a private news channel, he stated that the estimated cost for Hajj this year would range between Rs. 10.75 lakh (1,075,000) and Rs. 11.75 lakh (1,175,000). According to the Hajj Policy 2025, a total of 179,210 Pakistani pilgrims will perform Hajj, he added. He said that the Hajj quota has been equally divided, with 50 percent allocated to the government and 50 percent to private Hajj schemes. Additionally, he mentioned that individuals with chronic diseases and children under 12 years of age have been barred from performing Hajj under the new policy. The government is vigilant to provide the best possible facilities to pilgrims during Hajj 2025, he added.—APP

## In this Difficult Time, THE NATION STANDS WITH YOU

In response to the tragic boat capsize in Greece, an emergency cell has been promptly established at the Pakistani Embassy in Greece under the direct instructions of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

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The Government of Pakistan is committed to ensuring that all individuals responsible for this heinous crime of human trafficking are held accountable and brought to justice.

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Ministry of Information & Broadcasting  
Government of Pakistan

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## Briefs

## APS tragedy strengthened nation's resolve against terrorism: Danyal

ISLAMABAD: Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, said on Monday that the Army Public School (APS) tragedy on December 16, 2014, united the nation against terrorism and the sacrifices of the innocent children and staff will be remembered forever. In his message on the 10th anniversary of the tragic APS Peshawar incident, Danyal Chaudhry paid tribute to the martyrs, calling December 16 a dark chapter in Pakistan's history when terrorists targeted innocent lives, disgracing humanity. He added that the day serves as a reminder to reinforce our commitment to eliminating terrorism and building a peaceful Pakistan. The parliamentary secretary emphasized that the terrorists' conspiracies were foiled by the nation's unity and resolve, setting an example of national solidarity. Barrister Danyal Chaudhry reiterated the nation's commitment to remembering the sacrifices of the martyrs and working towards making Pakistan a cradle of peace and development.—APP

## Int'l Training Workshop on DSSAT held PMAS Arid Agriculture University

RAWALPIND: Governor Punjab, Sardar Salim Haider Khan on Monday has paid rich tribute to the victim families of Army Public School (APS), Peshawar attack in 2014, in which a number of innocent students were killed. "I pay tribute to the armed forces of Pakistan whose personnel are laying down their lives in the line of the country's protection", he said. The governor remarked this during his address at the inaugural of an 'International Training Workshop on DSSAT' organized by Pir Mehar Ali Shah (PMAS) Arid Agriculture University. Sardar Salim highlighted that Pakistan is a least contributing country in the global climate change but remained among the major affected countries. "Irregular rains affecting arid areas which result in poor crop yields, and wastage of time money and energy of farmers", he said. He further said that Pakistan is an agricultural country with sufficient resources, but it is importing food items, wheat, sugar etc. The governor said that the government should own the Research and Development sector in the agriculture sector which needs funding in particular. "PMAS university is rendering and contributing well in this regard. We need to modify our techniques to counter prevailing climate challenges which are impacting the agri sector", he said urging the relevant quarters from the government to contribute their due positive role at all levels.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Burned shops due to short circuit at Shalimar Plaza blue area, in the Federal Capital.

## Broadband connectivity essential for economic growth

The Chairman Senate said that Pakistan has made remarkable progress in expanding broadband penetration but there are still millions who lack access to affordable and reliable broadband

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Monday said broadband connectivity is a cornerstone of global transformation, driving economic and business growth, financial empowerment, social development, and innovation. "This connectivity is important to health, safety, and welfare of the public" he said, while addressing the National Broadband Network (NBN) Forum 2024 Gigabit for all arranged by Huawei and Pakistan Telecom-

munication Authority (PTA). He further remarked that broadband is the foundation upon which digital economy is built. The Chairman Senate said that Pakistan has made remarkable progress in expanding broadband penetration but there are still millions who lack access to affordable and reliable broadband. "This digital divide is not just a technology issue; it is a societal challenge that demands urgent attention and action" he added. He said that Pakistan's population has exceeded 240 million and the demand for connectivity and digital services is on the rise. Gilani said,

"It is our responsibility to bridge the digital divide and ensure that all Pakistanis have access to high-quality broadband services." Yousuf Raza Gilani said that parliament has crucial role to play as an enabler in this transformative journey. "We are committed to providing comprehensive legislative support for the implementation of progressive policies to enhance efficiencies, remove barriers and encourage investment and innovation in the telecom sector" he said. The Chairman said, by fostering a favorable environment for public-private partnerships, the country can drive

the digital agenda and ensure the effective deployment of advanced technologies. He underlined the need to address challenges like cybersecurity, data privacy and equitable access as the country make stride to adopt emerging technologies like 5G and 6G, Fiber Optic Advancement, Artificial Intelligence, Renewable Energy Innovations, and Space Technology. He acknowledged the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, PTA and Huawei for jointly arranging this important event. He said that the initiative brought together leaders, policymakers, and regulators

to discuss key issues, challenges and opportunities concerning telecom sector. "I take great pride in acknowledging the telecom industry as a mainstay of Pakistan's economic development by driving digital transformation and fostering innovation", he observed. He called upon all the stakeholders to join hands for a connected future where every school has high-speed internet, where businesses can thrive in rural areas, and where every individual can participate in the digital economy. He thanked the organizers for creating a platform that can drive meaningful change.

## Tribute paid to shuhda of APS tragedy

December 16 marks a dark chapter in our history," said Alam, emphasizing that the APS tragedy unified the nation against terrorism

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, on the somber occasion of the 10th anniversary of Army Public School (APS) Peshawar attack, issued a heartfelt message on Monday remembering the sacrifices of innocent lives lost on December 16, 2014. "December 16 marks a dark chapter in our history," said Alam, emphasizing that the APS tragedy unified the nation against terrorism. She expressed profound grief over the horrific attack, stating that the sacrifices of the children and teachers who fell victim to the brutality will forever remain etched in the nation's memory. "By targeting innocent children, the terrorists brought

shame upon humanity," she remarked. Alam reiterated the nation's resolve to eliminate terrorism and build a peaceful Pakistan, underscoring that the day strengthens the collective determination to root out violence and safeguard the future of coming generations. The advisor paid homage to the martyrs and expressed solidarity with the bereaved families, ensuring that their sacrifices will never be forgotten. Moevoer, Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, on Monday, commemorated the martyrs of the Army Public School (APS) Peshawar attack on the anniversary of the tragedy that shook the nation on December 16, 2014. Reflecting on the

devastating incident, Naqvi said, "On December 16, the worst enemy unjustly martyred innocent children and teachers. This day has become a symbol of our resolve to continue fighting against terrorism." He praised the courage and sacrifices of the students and teachers who lost their lives, stating, "The children and teachers laid the foundation of a peaceful Pakistan with their precious blood. The martyrs of APS remain alive in the hearts of the nation." The minister condemned the brutality of the attackers, calling it a "cowardly and cruel act," while emphasizing that the resolve to combat terrorism has only strengthened since then. Naqvi also highlighted how

the sacrifices of the APS martyrs united the nation against the scourge of terrorism, saying, "Their sacrifices will forever remain alive in the hearts of every individual in Pakistan. These martyred children and teachers are heroes of the entire nation." On this solemn occasion, he expressed solidarity with the families of the martyrs, honoring their sacrifices," he said. The nation observed the day with prayers, ceremonies, and moments of silence, remembering the 149 lives lost in one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Pakistan's history.—Agencies

## SCBAP calls for national reconciliation

ISLAMABAD: Mian Muhammad Rauf Atta, President Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan (SCBAP) on Monday has called for political reconciliation and said that we can reap the fruit of economic stability through sowing the seed of political unity. In a written statement issued in connection with tragedies of December 16 in Pakistan's national history, the President SCBAP said "today marks the anniversary of two agonizing and heart-wrenching tragedies in our nation's history. On this day in 1971, we suffered the wound of East Pakistan (Fall of Dhaka), and yet again on this very date in 2014, we endured the trauma of the APS massacre, where hundreds of our innocent children and staff members of Army Public School were martyred by terrorists in Peshawar". He said on behalf of the entire legal fraternity and the 27th Cabinet of SCBAP, I would like to pay tribute to the fallen heroes of 1971 for their valor and bravery, and to the innocent martyrs of 2014 for their resilience and priceless sacrifice against the menace of terrorism. Both 1971 and 2014 remain painful events in our national tale. The former reminds us of the need for political introspection, and the latter reminds us of the extreme sacrifices we made in the war against terrorism. Albeit we, as a nation, take pride in overcoming the ordeals of 1971 and 2014, it goes without saying that the price we paid on both occasions was hefty and irreplaceable. If we wish to contemplate, both of the aforesaid tragedies teach us the same lesson: "A house divided against itself cannot stand." We need to foresee that our enemies want us to be politically, socially, and economically unstable and polarized. They do not want us to prosper, progress, or live in peace and harmony. We must not give them such an opportunity by creating political havoc, as is happening nowadays. In this regard, we want to assert that had the findings of the Hamoodur Rehman Commission Report been implemented in true spirit, we as a nation would have been in an even better position today. However, it is never too late, and we reiterate the need to implement the recommendations of the said report. The SCBAP asserts that the need of the hour demands a National Political Reconciliation Plan as much as it demands the implementation of the National Action Plan in its true letter and spirit. We are of the view that by sowing the seeds of political unity, we shall reap the fruits of economic stability and security. Let no one be mistaken: those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. The forum of the SCBAP is open for all stakeholders so as to move towards much needed national political consensus.—APP

## Prolonged dry weather sparks health, farming concerns nationwide

ISLAMABAD: As the country endures a prolonged dry spell this winter, December is also passing without any significant rainfall, leaving many regions grappling with the far-reaching effects of drought. This ongoing dryness is escalating concerns over water scarcity, reducing agricultural productivity, and worsening health conditions, including respiratory issues, skin problems, and viral infections aggravated by the increased dust and lack of humidity. In the rainfed region, farmers communities faced water scarcity and grim realities due to changes in weather patterns. In the Potohar region especially, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and historic significance encompassing cities like Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Rawalpindi and Islamabad, agriculture relies solely on rainfall. However, farmers in this area face a formidable adversary. This foe poses a significant threat to their way of life, silently impacting their livelihoods. Experts have warned that without timely actions and local preparedness, the challenges posed by this dry season could become more severe, threatening both public health and economic stability. Talking to APP, Muhammad Saleem Shaikh, Climate Change and Environmental Policy Specialist and Media Spokesperson for the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, shared that the ministry has launched several initiatives to mitigate climate change's impact on agriculture, especially in rain-fed areas. These regions are vulnerable to erratic weather, droughts, and floods caused by climate change. A key initiative is the Recharge Pakistan Programme, launched with national and international partners to enhance climate resilience in rain-fed areas. The program focuses on water management, rainwater harvesting, and ecosystem restoration, aiming to address challenges like erratic rainfall, droughts, and floods that affect agriculture, livelihoods, and ecosystems. Shaikh outlined several measures under the Recharge Pakistan Programme: utilizing floodwaters to recharge groundwater, reducing flood risks, developing water storage systems and wetlands, and promoting sustainable water extraction practices. These efforts aim to improve the resilience of rain-fed communities, ensure water availability, support sustainable agriculture, and encourage climate-smart farming. The Ministry is also tackling environmental damage from agricultural residue burning, which worsens air pollution during the dry season. This practice contributes to smog, particularly in urban areas. The Punjab government has been urged to control residue burning, and is providing subsidized machinery like Happy Seeders, which sow seeds without burning stubble, as well as mulchers and balers for recycling crop waste.—DNA

## Chairman PRCS briefed about humanitarian efforts in Kurram, Parachinar

Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, applauded the dedicated efforts and swift response of the PRCS Merged Areas Branch. He reaffirmed the National Headquarters' commitment to strengthening provincial branches, enhancing their capacity, and broadening their outreach to better serve communities in need

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS)

Merged Areas Branch, Imran Wazir, held a significant meeting with the National Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, at the National Head-

quarters on Monday. During the meeting, Imran Wazir provided a detailed briefing on the humanitarian situation in Kurram and Parachinar, highlighting the efforts and response activities carried out by the PRCS Merged Areas Branch. He outlined the humanitarian assistance provided during the law and order crisis in these affected regions, emphasizing the critical role of PRCS in delivering timely relief. He expressed gratitude for the community's appreciation of PRCS's swift and effective response. "The community acknowledged PRCS as the first organization to reach them in their time of need, providing comprehensive support," said Imran Wazir. He also acknowledged the vital role of the PRCS National Headquarters

in supporting the Merged Areas Branch through provision of essential support to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable populations. National Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, applauded the dedicated efforts and swift response of the PRCS Merged Areas Branch. He reaffirmed the National Headquarters' commitment to strengthening provincial branches, enhancing their capacity, and broadening their outreach to better serve communities in need. The meeting concluded with Imran Wazir extending a formal invitation to the National Chairman to visit the Merged Areas Branch, aiming to further strengthen collaboration and coordination between the National Headquarter and the Merged Areas Branch.



## E&amp;T extends token tax submission hours for vehicle owners

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to facilitate vehicle owners in the capital, the Excise & Taxation (E&T) Department on Monday announced to extend operating hours for token tax submissions. Director Excise & Taxation Department, Islamabad, Bilal Azam talking to APP, said that counters at the Excise office will remain open until 8:00 pm to accommodate residents needing to submit their vehicle token taxes. This move aims to ensure more people have access to the facility and can fulfill their tax obligations conveniently, he added. Vehicle owners with overdue taxes are strongly advised to take advantage of the extended hours and settle their dues promptly to avoid legal consequences. Bilal Azam, urged citizens to pay their token tax without delay to prevent any legal action and penalties.—APP

## IRSA releases 77,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 77,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1475.70 feet and was 77.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. The water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,700 cusecs and 36,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1140.45 feet, which was 90.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,600 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 41,200, 33,600, 34,000 and 3,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 1,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

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## Inauguration invitation to Xi

**N**O Chinese head of state has ever attended a presidential inauguration in the United States. Chinese President Xi Jinping is unlikely to change that when Donald Trump is sworn in as the US' 47th president on January 20. However, Trump has made what some experts have hailed as a "brilliant tactical move" by extending an invitation to Xi to attend the event. If the meeting takes place, it would give Trump a chance to discuss key bilateral issues and set the stage for a potential deal between the world's two largest economies which are standing on the brink of a widening trade war. Even if Xi sends a representative in his place, it would still open new and crucial channels of communication. Trump's diplomatic overture marks a departure from decades of US policy, which has long refrained from inviting foreign leaders to presidential inaugurations. The gesture signals that the incoming administration, and Trump in particular, views China as a top priority. It reflects Trump's desire to build on his personal relationship with Xi. His recent actions and somewhat cryptic messaging on China indicate he is interested in working out an agreeable deal with Beijing and wants to leave a door open for bargains as any seasoned businessman would. Over the weekend, I reached out to Denis Simon, a distinguished China scholar and non-resident fellow at the Quincy Institute in Washington, to help me understand why Trump invited Xi. Simon said it has "more or less been determined that Xi is not coming, and the only question will be, who would come", adding that it could be a high-level delegation. Trump is back: what's next for China, Asia and the world? | Talking Post with Yonden Lhatoo Describing Trump as a "deal maker", Simon reckoned that by inviting Xi, the US president-elect wants to be "seen as some kind of grand statesman" with a knack for personal diplomacy. "He wants to show that with these relationships, with these global leaders like Xi, he can cut through all the bureaucracy and make deals and make arrangements," Simon added, noting that "at the end of the day, Trump really doesn't want to be as confrontational as he suggests". The unexpected invitation, which has reportedly unsettled some of Trump's inner circle, came just days after the US president-elect suggested that "China can help" resolve the Ukraine crisis. Meanwhile, Trump has recently kept his position on key bilateral issues like Taiwan and tariffs largely ambiguous, signalling his intent to use these matters as leverage in future deal-making. "I never say, because I have to negotiate things, right?" Trump rhetorically asked in an NBC News interview last week in response to a question on his commitment to defending Taiwan. The president-elect added that he had a "very good relationship with Xi" and the two leaders "have been communicating with each other". It's unlikely that the two men could have spoken since Trump announced an additional 10 per cent in tariffs on Chinese imports, linking the economic issue with America's fantasy crisis. He made clear that the duties will stay until Beijing takes stronger actions against the flow of illicit drugs into the US from Mexico.



## Google's quantum computing leap

**G**OOGLE'S latest achievement in quantum computing has not only sent ripples through the scientific community, it has also drawn attention to the growing technological disparities among nations. The US tech giant recently said that its quantum computer, based on a chip called Willow, needed less than five minutes to perform a mathematical calculation that one of the world's most powerful supercomputers could not complete in 10 septillion years, a length of time that exceeds the age of the known universe. In July 2023, Google announced that another quantum processor performed a computation in 200 seconds that would have taken the world's fastest classical supercomputer an estimated 47 years. While the calculations themselves may have limited practical utility at present, their broader implications are limitless, conjuring up a future where quantum systems can tackle previously unsolvable problems — from improving supply chains to enabling drug discoveries. Google's breakthroughs highlight yet again the accelerating pace of innovation in advanced technologies. In addition to quantum computing, the world is witnessing rapid progress in fields such as artificial intelligence, nuclear fusion, robotics and gene editing. OpenAI's ChatGPT, for instance, has demonstrated the transformative potential of generative AI for industries ranging from education to healthcare. Similarly, advances in nuclear fusion promise an inexhaustible clean energy source, although commercialization remains decades away. These breakthroughs signal the dawn of a new technological era, in which progress in science and engineering are reshaping the very fabric of society. At the same time, they highlight a worrying global divide. Regions like the Middle East and North Africa, which lag in science and technology investment, face mounting risks of marginalization and even pauperization. In today's knowledge-driven economy, technological strength is not just an indicator of progress but a prerequisite for economic and geopolitical relevance. Unless they can make significant investments in research, education and talent retention, such regions risk being left behind in this transformative age. Economic competitiveness is one of the most pressing challenges. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is powered by industries such as AI, quantum computing and biotechnology. Countries that cannot embrace and integrate these technologies will certainly fall behind in productivity and global trade. For instance, while AI systems are optimizing everything from agriculture to manufacturing in advanced economies, nations lacking the requisite infrastructure cannot enjoy these benefits. This glaring disparity creates a vicious cycle: lower productivity leads to weaker economic growth, which in turn limits the resources available for innovation. Another consequence is the deepening digital divide. Access to leading-edge technology is increasingly seen as a determinant of social and economic opportunities. In water-scarce regions like MENA, innovations in quantum-driven optimization or AI-enhanced irrigation could transform agriculture.

## Will Trump's promises ever be fulfilled?

Qamar Bashir



If President Trump adopts the legislative path, most of his promises might not see the daylight during his four years tenure due to their complexity and predefined lengthy path. The process would begin with introducing the bill in the congress, followed by committee reviews, debates, and possible amendments, which can take weeks to months

**D**URING the election campaigns made many lofty promises such as implementing his immigration rhetoric, imposing 100% tariffs on BRICS member countries, ending the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Palestine conflict, cutting bureaucracy by 70%, mass deportations of undocumented immigrants, imposing universal tariffs of 10% to 20% on imports and suggested imposing higher tariffs on specific countries like China. Additionally, he pledged to reduce military aid to Ukraine, reassess NATO contributions. On abortion, Trump supported state-level decision-making and hinted at pursuing legal actions against political opponents. When asked how he intended to implement these promises, Trump's standard reply in most cases was through the issuance of executive orders. However, deep down, he likely understood that issuing executive orders on every issue, conflict, or situation is not that straightforward. While executive orders are and will remain an extremely powerful tool for the President, they come with significant limitations. For instance, the President cannot issue an executive order that contravenes the U.S. Constitution or violates the principle of separation of powers among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches; curbing the freedom of speech, media or religion. In short, executive orders must be grounded in the Constitution or statutory authority, and they cannot create new laws or override congressional powers. The authority for the U.S. President to issue executive orders is derived from the Constitution, primarily Article II. The Executive Power Clause (Article II, Section 1) vests executive authority in the President, while the Take Care Clause (Article II, Section 3) mandates the President to ensure federal laws are faithfully executed, allowing orders to manage their implementation. Additionally, the Commander-in-Chief Clause (Article II, Section 2) provides authority for orders related to military and national security. In plain language, the scope of the U.S. President's executive orders manage and direct the operations of the federal government, however, they cannot create new laws, go against existing laws passed by Congress, or directly affect private individuals unless tied to federal programs or contracts. Congress and the Supreme Court each have the powers to overturn or invalidate a presidential executive order. Congress can counter an executive order by passing new legislation that nullifies or overrides it, requiring a

simple majority in both chambers. If the President vetoes this legislation, Congress must secure a two-thirds majority in both the House and Senate to override the veto. Alternatively, Congress can use its power of the purse to block the implementation of an executive order by withholding or restricting the necessary funding, effectively limiting its impact without direct legislative action. The Supreme Court can invalidate an executive order through judicial review, typically in response to a legal challenge. The Court examines whether the order exceeds the President's constitutional authority, conflicts with federal statutes, or violates fundamental constitutional rights. These checks ensure that executive orders remain within constitutional and statutory limits. Though a few of President-elect Trump's promises such as immigration enforcement, prioritizing deportations and using the military for civilian law enforcement is limited by the Posse Comitatus Act. Similarly, targeted tariffs under national security grounds, and foreign policy decisions like adjusting NATO contributions or reducing military aid to Ukraine, can also be implemented through executive orders. However, the President's power for investigations against political opponents could face legal and ethical challenges. There are other promises which are beyond the scope of executive orders such as state-level abortion laws, broad tariff policies affecting all imports would require congressional approval and significant changes to immigration laws, such as altering legal criteria for status or deportation, require legislative action. If President Trump adopts the legislative path, most of his promises might not see the daylight during his four years tenure due to their complexity and predefined lengthy path. The process would begin with introducing the bill in the congress, followed by committee reviews, debates, and possible amendments, which can take weeks to months. Once approved by the committee, the bill would move to floor debates and votes in the House and Senate. If both chambers pass different versions, a conference committee would reconcile them before final votes and the President's signature. In a fast-tracked scenario with strong party support, the process could take 1-3 months, but contentious legislation, especially if subject to a Senate filibuster requiring 60 votes to overcome, could take 6-12 months or stall indefinitely. Like abortion bill, Trump's other promises would as well require a lengthy path. Mass deportations

and securing the U.S.-Mexico border, could take 1-3 years. Trade policies, including universal tariffs of 10%-20% or 100% tariffs on BRICS countries, could take 1-5 years, as broader measures would need congressional approval and face global resistance. Reducing bureaucracy by 70% would require significant legislative and administrative reforms, likely taking 4-8 years. The Foreign policy goals such as ending the Russia-Ukraine war and resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, could take years to decades or remain unresolved. Overall, implementation would span 4-8 years for most promises, with some outcomes taking longer or remaining uncertain. The true measure of any promise lies in its fulfillment. Donald Trump, a master showman, made numerous lofty promises during his campaign, many of which he likely knew could never be fully realized within a four-year term. Yet, with the flair of a seasoned actor, he delivered these pledges with unshakable confidence, captivating his supporters and igniting their hopes. He painted a vision so grand that it seemed, to his followers, that upon taking the reins of the most powerful nation in recorded history, he would transform his words into action with the wave of a magic wand. Deep down, Trump must have known the complexities and limitations that awaited him, but his ability to connect emotionally with his audience and sell a dream—no matter how unattainable—was enough. It wasn't just the promises; it was the way he made his supporters believe in them that carried him to victory, proving once again that in the realm of politics, perception often trumps reality. Donald Trump made grand promises to be implemented by executive order, during his campaign. Many of which he likely knew could not be fully realized within a four-year term. Yet, with the charisma of a seasoned showman, he delivered them with unshakable confidence, captivating his supporters and igniting their hopes. He made it seem as though, upon taking the reins of the most powerful nation in history, he could transform his vision into reality with a magic wand. While the complexities of governance may have tempered these ambitions, his ability to make people believe in his promises was enough to carry him to victory.

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

## 'NATO or nothing', Ukraine's leaders affirm as military prospects dim

Dmitri Kovalevich

In order to please NATO, Commander-in-Chief of the Ukraine Armed Forces Oleksandr Syrskyi announced at the end of November a new, forthcoming military 'counter-offensive' to take place sometime soon. But this 'announcement' is entirely belied by the fact that the AFU does not even have the strength to hold its current positions. Many military analysts in Ukraine are left pondering why a military operation ('counter-offensive') would be announced in advance and how this squares with Western media reports citing a lack of secrecy by the AFU as one of the reasons for the total failure of its previous 'counteroffensive' (in early summer 2023)

**A**T the beginning of December, almost all Ukrainian politicians were endlessly promoting NATO membership for Ukraine. Ukrainians were told by all television broadcasters (all of which work under heavy state censorship) that NATO membership is the only salvation for the country. Membership is even being presented as the meaning and goal of Ukraine's existence in its current form; otherwise, it is said by Ukraine's unelected rulers, Ukraine may come to resemble neighboring Belarus, which they consider to be a terrible place. The obsession with NATO membership is a consequence of Ukraine's steady stream of military setbacks as well as its apprehensions over the change in the US presidential administration to take place in January 2025. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (whose electoral mandate expired in April 2024) and the pro-government media in Ukraine have deepened their alarming tones in recent days, shifting to tones of extreme urgency in their appeals to be permitted into NATO membership. Foreign Minister Andriy Sybha sent a letter in late November to the foreign ministries of NATO countries asking them to quickly extend Ukraine an invitation to join the alliance, specifically naming the dates of December 3 and 4 to formally begin a process. Those were the dates of a then forthcoming meeting of NATO foreign ministers. Reuters news agency reported on November 29, "Ukraine says it accepts that it cannot join the alliance until the war [with Russia] is over, but extending an invitation now would show Russian President Vladimir Putin that he cannot achieve one of his main goals - preventing Kyiv from becoming a NATO member." Britain's Sky News reported on November 29 that Zelenskyy supports Ukraine's accession to NATO with only a part of its territories, writing, "He appeared to accept occupied [sic] eastern parts of the country would fall outside of such a deal for the time being." But Zelenskyy then emphasized on December 1 that "there can be no invitation to NATO for a part of Ukraine's territories." Statements by NATO representatives make it clear that Ukraine will not receive any invitation from the organization in the near future. The alliance's new secretary-general, Mark Rutte (prime minister of Netherlands from 2010 to 2024), said on December 3 that the issue of Kiev's membership in NATO was of secondary importance to the provision of military assistance. "We [NATO] have to make sure that Ukraine gets into a position of strength, and then it should be for the Ukrainian government to decide on the next steps in opening peace talks and how to conduct them." The above November 29 report by Reuters wrote, "Although NATO has stated that Ukraine's path to membership is 'irreversible', the alliance has not set a date or issued an invitation. Diplomats said there was currently no consensus among its 32 members to do so. Some countries are waiting to decide their stance until they learn the posi-

tion of the incoming U.S. administration of President-elect Donald Trump..." According to the author of the Ukrainian Telegram channel Rubicon, a hypothetical realization of the 'NATO membership in exchange for territory' formula would allow Zelenskyy to retain power in a post-war Ukraine. In such a scenario, Rubicon writes, Zelenskyy could claim that he "achieved the realization of the eternal dream of the Ukrainian people and brought the country into the Western world, under the protection of American arms, albeit at the cost of great sacrifices and territorial losses." Rubicon continues, "Given that preserving power is an unambiguous priority for the current Ukrainian elites, it is not surprising that such a scenario seems attractive to them. However, it should be taken into account that 'NATO membership in exchange for territory' is a formula that originated in the ranks of the U.S. Democratic Party. Its main goal is to achieve 'ironclad assurance' that a large part of Ukraine would become an American sphere of influence." There is an additional aspect of Kiev's intensified aspiration for NATO membership, and that is to prevent a negotiated end to its conflict with Russia. For Russia, a non-aligned and neutral Ukraine is one of the main goals of its military operation, whereas for the Zelenskyy-run Kiev, a continuation of military operations means it can indefinitely cancel the holding of elections. In this respect, the statement by Ukraine 'we want to join NATO' amounts to stating 'we want to continue the war'.

In order to please NATO, Commander-in-Chief of the Ukraine Armed Forces Oleksandr Syrskyi announced at the end of November a new, forthcoming military 'counter-offensive' to take place sometime soon. But this 'announcement' is entirely belied by the fact that the AFU does not even have the strength to hold its current positions. Many military analysts in Ukraine are left pondering why a military operation ('counter-offensive') would be announced in advance and how this squares with Western media reports citing a lack of secrecy by the AFU as one of the reasons for the total failure of its previous 'counteroffensive' (in early summer 2023). Other experts do not understand what kind of 'counter-offensive' could be mounted in conditions where the AFU has been steadily retreating. "In the last seven days alone, the Russian army has captured almost 235 square kilometers of territory, a record advance so far for one week in 2024," notes a perplexed, former legislator and former speaker of the fascist Right Sector grouping Boryslav Bereza on Telegram. "What kind of 'counter-offensive' are we talking about?," he asks.

Yevhen Ievlev, an AFU serviceman, told the Kyiv 24 television channel in late November that, in his view, the Ukrainian Armed Forces urgently needs to mobilize almost two million new recruits before any consideration of a 'counter-offensive' could be made. Many of these recruits

will die, he notes, leading him to ask who, exactly, would control the newly 'liberated' territories? At the beginning of December, the tensions over 'soldiers or weapons for Ukraine' only intensified, with the US and NATO countries demanding that Kiev step up military conscription, while Zelenskyy says the priority should be the provision of more weapons. This conflict is coming to a head over demands by the Western powers that Ukraine lower the age of its obligatory military service for men from the age of 25 to 18 years. The age limit was already lowered in the spring of 2023, from 27 to 25. Associated Press wrote at the time, "Zelenskyy took almost a year to sign the law lowering the conscription age, perhaps reflecting how unpopular such a move might be." BBC Russia wrote on December 10, 2024, "This decision was not easy. For society this issue is painful and the president delayed the signing of the new law by nine months." The outgoing Biden administration is increasingly voicing disappointment with the failure of Ukrainian authorities to take more decisive steps to replenish the heavy losses being suffered by their armed forces. Additionally, the Washington Post voiced concerns in a December 2 report that the US simply does not have enough weapons to supply Ukraine in the quantities being asked for. The outgoing Biden administration in Washington is now urging Kiev to lower its military conscription age to 18. But because of the plummeting birth rates in Ukraine during the economically harsh decades following the demise of Soviet Ukraine and the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the numbers of 18- to 25-year-olds in Ukraine is not high, and their conscription will consequently provide very little replenishment for the army.

Adding to the misery for Ukraine's military leaders are the large numbers of men who have fled the country or who are taking advantage of exemptions from service. For example, Reuters reported in August 2024, "In the first six months of 2024, Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science reported an astounding 246,000 individuals applying for postgraduate or masters-level courses, compared to only 7,000-9,000 doing such courses before the war." On December 4, Ukrainian media reported US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken urging Ukraine to step up its military conscription. Similar calls are also being issued by some in the Republican Party camp in Washington. Republican Congresswoman Victoria Spartz has gone so far as to tell a recent interview with CNN that in order to win its war, Kiev needs to mobilize the entire country similar to what the USSR achieved during World War II. She believes that lowering the mobilization age to 18 is now insufficient. "When the Soviet Union fought World War Two, everyone was contributing to the war, from the smallest child to the oldest person. You cannot just have some young, brave people fighting on behalf of everyone else..."

## Briefs

Polio worker,  
policeman  
killed in KP...

FROM PAGE 01  
directions for the provision of all possible treatment facilities to the wounded polio worker. Taking to social media platform X, formerly Twitter, First Lady and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari condemned the attacks targeting polio workers. "Strongly condemn the attacks on polio teams in Karak and Bannu. These cowardly acts against healthcare workers and security personnel are trying to undermine efforts to protect our children," she said while calling for authorities to take due action. "Violence won't deter the fight against polio," she added. Aseefa further urged the people to accept the vaccine, and raise awareness amongst their friends, family and neighbours.

Kurram  
peace jirga  
not yet...

FROM PAGE 01  
The recent episode of clashes triggered by an ambush on two separate convoys under police escort that resulted in 52 deaths on November 21. Subsequently, clashes between the warring clans escalated with the warring tribes agreeing to an "indefinite ceasefire" on December 6 after days of fighting. The deteriorating security situation has severely disrupted daily life in Kurram. Food, petrol, and medical supplies are critically low, with residents struggling to access essential services due to road closures. Gas shortages have forced the closure of tandoors and restaurants, exacerbating the community's hardships.

Death  
sentences  
for 5 Navy...

FROM PAGE 01  
decision now removes the legal obstruction. The five officers—Arslan Nazir Sati, Mohammad Hamad, Mohammad Tahir Rashid, Hamad Ahmed, and Irfanullah—were convicted in connection with the attack on Pakistan's naval dockyard, which targeted vital naval assets. The attackers boarded a Pakistan Navy frigate in September 2014, where they were spotted triggering a gun battle with commandos of the Special Services Group (SSG). At least two terrorists were killed and four others were captured during a six-hour long fire-fight with the intruders.

Bloomberg  
reports  
34% rise...

FROM PAGE 01  
Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data in its report on Pakistan that remittances from the overseas Pakistanis to their families rose 34% to \$14.8 billion in the first five months of the current financial year 2024-25 from a year ago. The increase in remittance was the result of government's crackdown on unofficial buying or selling of dollars as people started using the official banking channels for the purpose. The government's action helped raise foreign exchange reserves to above \$12 billion by November-end, the highest since March 2022.

UK has no  
issue with...

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When asked about the frequent objections raised by the United States over CPEC, Marriott clarified, "Washington has its own policy, and the UK follows an independent foreign policy." On the possibility of British investment in CPEC, Marriott said that while senior UK delegations, including the Foreign Secretary, will visit Pakistan next year to promote trade and investment, there are no current plans for British investment in CPEC. In her address, Jane Marriott emphasised the enduring importance of Pakistan-UK relations, underscoring the deep-rooted ties both nations share despite.

Jason Gillespie opens up after  
stepping down as Pak coach

*'The purpose of my coaching stint in Pakistan was fading away,' says Jason Gillespie*

SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: Former Australian all-rounder Jason Gillespie revealed reasons behind his resignation as the red-ball head coach of Pakistan's cricket team. In a recent interview with the Australian media, Gillespie revealed that being left in the dark regarding High-Performance Coach Tim Nielsen's situation was the tipping point for his departure. "I was completely unaware of the decision not to retain Tim Nielsen," Gillespie stated. "This situation, along with past incidents, made me question whether I was truly needed. Not informing the head coach about such a major decision compelled me to think this way." He expressed concerns about the diminishing purpose of his role in Pakistan's cricket setup. "The purpose of my coaching stint in Pakistan was fading away," he explained. "My role was reduced to giving catching practice to players on match mornings," he added. The former coach emphasized the importance of communication in his role. "It is essential for a head coach to maintain full communication with selectors and everyone else," he said. "For planning purposes,



I need to be informed about the squad at least a day in advance. Without these basic requirements, working becomes very difficult." The 49-year-old also highlighted how the decision-making process became even more challenging after the Nielsen situation. "I found out about the new selection committee via a text message in the group

chat after the first match against England," he revealed. "No one discussed the selection committee issue with me." One of the contentious decisions by the new selection committee was the dropping of star batter Babar Azam during the England Test series, a move that Gillespie felt symbolized the lack of coordination.

"The decision to drop Babar Azam was made by the new selection committee," he concluded. It is pertinent to mention that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) declined to renew the contract of former red-ball assistant coach Tim Nielsen. Nielsen who was appointed as the "high-performance red-ball coach" in August 2024, saw his contract expire following Pakistan's recent tour of Australia. Despite expressing his commitment to the upcoming longer-format series against South Africa and the West Indies, Nielsen revealed that the PCB had informed him that his services were no longer required. Jason Gillespie was appointed as the red-ball head coach of the Pakistan team on April 28, 2024. His first assignment was a two-match home Test series against Bangladesh, in which the Pakistan team suffered a 2-0 white-wash defeat. His second assignment was a three-match home Test series against England, which Pakistan won 2-1. After his resignation, Aqib Javed was named interim head coach ahead of the two-match Test series against South Africa, scheduled from December 20, 2024, to January 7, 2025, in Centurion and Cape Town.

Mahmud's final over denies  
WI comeback in first T20I

Bangladesh lead the three-match T20I series 1-0

KINGSTOWN: Bangladesh secured a hard-fought seven-run victory over the West Indies in the first T20I of their three-match series at the Arnos Vale Stadium on Sunday. The visitors defended a modest total of 146/7, with Hasan Mahmud delivering a brilliant final over to seal the win. With the West Indies chasing a challenging target, the match seemed to be slipping away from Bangladesh as Rowman Powell ignited the home crowd with a stunning innings. Powell smashed 60 off 35 balls, including five fours and four sixes, bringing the West Indies back into contention from a precarious position of 61 for seven in the 12th over.

A pivotal eighth-wicket partnership of 68 runs off 38 balls between Powell and fellow all-rounder Romario Shepherd (22) turned the tide in the West Indies' favor. Despite Shepherd's dismissal in the 19th over, Powell remained at the crease, and with just nine runs needed for victory, the game hung in the balance as Mahmud took to the bowling crease for the final over. The Bangladeshi seamer responded to the pressure with remarkable composure, dismissing Powell off the third ball with a catch behind the stumps by captain Litton Das. Mahmud then sent Alzarri Joseph packing for a duck two balls later, clean bowling him to leave the West

Indies needing 9 runs with just one wicket remaining. McCoy, who had claimed his 50th T20I wicket earlier, was left stranded at the non-striker's end, unable to prevent the loss. Earlier in the match, the West Indies' left-arm spinner AkealHosein put in an outstanding effort with the ball, conceding just 13 runs from four overs and taking two wickets. McCoy finished with two wickets for 30 runs, but it was Bangladesh's late surge that tilted the game in their favor after a slow start. Bangladesh, having been restricted to 96 for five by the 15th over, saw late contributions from Jaker Ali, Shamim Hossain, and Mahedi Hasan to boost their total. - Agencies

National Women  
Basketball C'ship to  
start from Dec 26

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The National Basketball Championship for Women 2024 is set to take center stage from December 26 at the WAPDA Sports Complex, Lahore. Hosted by WAPDA under the supervision of the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF), the event will bring together the top female basketball teams from across Pakistan to compete for national glory. Defending champions WAPDA, who clinched the title last year in a thrilling finale, will once again aim to retain their crown. Last year's runners-up, Islamabad, will be looking to go one step further this year. Other teams participating in this mega event include Lahore, Army, Karachi, Hazara, Faisalabad and Bahawalpur. This prestigious championship highlights the immense talent and potential in women's basketball across Pakistan. The event is a step forward in promoting and empowering women athletes, encouraging their active participation in competitive sports. Speaking about the championship, a spokesperson for the Pakistan Basketball Federation said: "The National Basketball Championship for Women has become a cornerstone in developing basketball in Pakistan. This year's competition promises to showcase the passion, dedication, and skills of our female athletes.

PFF Normalisation Committee  
given eighth extension by FIFA

This marks the eighth extension since the committee was first appointed in June 2019

LAHORE: International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) extended the mandate of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalisation Committee (NC) until February 15, 2025. This marks the eighth extension since the committee was first appointed in June 2019. The decision, made by the Bureau of the FIFA Council, allows the NC to finalize key tasks, including revising the PFF Constitution and conducting elections for a new executive committee. In a letter addressed to Haroon Malik, Chairman of the NC, FIFA expressed its rationale for the extension, stating, "In order for the normalisation committee to complete its mandate ... the Bureau decided ... to extend the mandate of the normalisation committee for the PFF until 15 February 2025 at the latest." The NC has made significant progress in recent months. District-level elections were successfully completed by August 2024, followed by provincial elections in Lahore in September. The NC also worked closely with FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) to draft a

new electoral code and propose amendments to the PFF Constitution. However, a November 19 extraordinary congress, intended to approve the revised constitution, was disrupted when six departmental associations, excluded for failing to meet statutory requirements, demanded participation. FIFA noted that to avoid procedural issues, the NC referred their appeals to internal PFF bodies, leading to the postponement of the congress. The process was further delayed when political rallies in Islamabad between November 24 and 27 halted government operations and disrupted transportation in Punjab. FIFA acknowledged these challenges in its letter, stating, "Massive political rallies ... made it impossible for the PFF administration to deal with the appeal process relating to the departmental associations." Consequently, the NC has proposed a revised timeline, with the extraordinary congress now scheduled for January 2025. The revised constitution is a crucial prerequisite for conducting elections for a new executive committee, which FIFA emphasized must be "truly fair and democratic." Once approved, the NC will hold an elective congress to finalize the transition. The Normalisation Committee was initially appointed in 2019 to address governance issues, including club registration and organizing elections. - DNA

## Bowlers lead Panthers to thrash winless Dolphins

The victory lifts Panthers to the third position in the standings

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A combined bowling effort, followed by an anchoring half-century by opener Abdul Wahid Bangalzai steered Panthers to a resounding six-wicket victory over Dolphins in the 13th match of the Champions T20 Cup here at the Rawalpindi Stadium on Monday. Put into bat first, the bottom-placed side's batting unit struggled against Panthers' disciplined bowling attack could amass 106/9 in 20 overs. The Sarfaraz Ahmed-mentored side had a disastrous start to their innings as they were 3/5 in two overs. Opening batter Mirza Tahir Baig attempted to launch a counterattack with his 13-ball 19 but Mohammad Ihsanul Jr sent him packing in the sixth over to intensify Dolphins' woes. Dolphins kept losing at regular intervals despite some notable contributions in the middle by QasimAkram (14), Muhammad Akhlaq (19) and Faheem Ashraf, who top-scored for his side with a 34-ball 25.



Wasim Jr led the bowling charge for the Panthers with three wickets, followed by Amad Butt and Arafat Minhas with two each, while Ali Raza chipped in with a wicket. Chasing a modest 107, Panthers soared to a six-wicket victory with 30 balls to spare. The Shadab Khan-led side, however, had a contrasting start as they had lost three wickets for just 14 runs inside three overs until Abdul Wahid Bangalzai and Danish Aziz made recovery. The duo added 82 runs for the fourth wicket to put Panthers in touching distance of their third victory in the tournament. Bangalzai remained the top-scorer for the Panthers with a 38-ball 51, comprised of six fours and two sixes, while Danish made an unbeaten 38 off 34 balls. For Dolphins, Ihsanullah and Sameen Gul claimed two wickets each. The six-wicket victory lifted Panthers to third in Champions T20 Cup standings with six points in six matches, while Dolphins remained at the bottom as they remained winless after playing five matches.

President, PM  
vow to end  
terrorism

FROM PAGE 01  
anarchy in the country. "The events of 16 December left an indelible mark on the collective memory of the nation," he maintained. President Zardari expressed his heartfelt sympathies to the families of the innocent children, adding that the day stands as a testament to the sacrifices made by the nation in the war against terrorism.

SBP cuts  
key policy  
rate by...

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whereas inflation expectations of consumers and businesses remain volatile. Pakistan's latest move makes this year's cuts the most aggressive among emerging market central banks in the current easing cycle, barring outliers such as Argentina. The committee, which met today, also noted that the current account remained in surplus for the third consecutive month in October 2024 which helped increased the forex reserves to around \$12 billion. "Second, global commodity prices remained generally favourable, with positive spillovers on domestic inflation and the import bill. Third, credit to the private sector recorded a noticeable increase, broadly reflecting the impact of ease in financial conditions and banks' efforts to meet ADR thresholds. Lastly, the shortfall in tax revenues from the target has widened," it added.

Blome  
stresses  
strong...

FROM PAGE 01  
contribution of American companies, with more than 80 U.S. firms employing 120,000 Pakistanis directly and supporting over a million more through indirect employment. He emphasized that U.S. businesses are not only investing in the economy but also in the people of Pakistan, offering valuable training in senior management and technical positions. Blome also highlighted the positive economic developments in Pakistan, citing a sharp decline in inflation and expressing optimism about the country's ongoing reforms under the IMF program. He urged Pakistan to maintain its commitment to economic reforms to sustain this momentum.

UN to  
Jolani: Syria  
must have...

FROM PAGE 01  
and led political transition based on the principles of United Nations Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). The UN envoy also underlined "the intention of the United Nations to render all assistance to the Syrian people," and was briefed on their "challenges and priorities," the statement added. It said Pedersen had several engagements planned in the days ahead, but did not elaborate.

PM to visit  
Egypt for...

FROM PAGE 01  
and greater international pressure on Israel for a ceasefire in Gaza. While addressing the meeting in June, Dar strongly condemned the use of hunger and starvation by Israeli forces and urged the international community to take action to stop this "collective punishment unleashed on the Palestinians". According to a press release, the PM "will undertake an official visit to Egypt" for the summit, while Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar "will attend the 21st Session of the D-8 Council of Ministers on 18 December 2024".

Khaqan  
Abbasi...

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The former prime minister requested the court to declare the amendment as null and void. The federal government, Sindh government, Senate chairman and National Assembly speaker were made respondents in the petition. Earlier, the 26th amendment was also challenged by PTI and the Jamat-e-Islami (JI) in the Supreme Court.

## Briefs

## PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 1,867 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 1,867.61 points, a positive change of 1.63 percent, closing at 116,169.41 points as compared to 114,301.80 points on the last trading day. A total of 1,470,661,659 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,118,570,230 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 66.628 billion against Rs.59.511 billion on the last trading day. As many as 477 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 246 of them recorded gains and 194 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 37 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom 403,228,918 shares at Rs 1.92 per share, Cnergyco PK with 59,584,754 shares at Rs 7.12 per share and Pak Refinery with 54,776,226 shares at Rs.36.52 per share.—APP

## Gold price decreaseS by Rs800 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.800 and was sold at Rs 277,000 on Monday against its sale at Rs 277,800 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.687 to Rs.237,482 from Rs.238,169 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went down to Rs.217,693 from Rs 218,321. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,400 and Rs 2,914.95 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$8 to \$2,658 from \$2,666, the Association reported.—APP

## Rupee sheds 06 piasa against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Monday depreciated by 06 piasa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.17 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.11. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.70 and Rs 279.20 respectively. The price of Euro increased by Rs1.22 to close at Rs 292.28 against the last day's closing of Rs 291.06, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.81, whereas an increase of 20 piasa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs351.44 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs351.24.—APP

## Bangladesh to hold elections in late 2025 or early 2026: Yunus

DHAKA: Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus, who heads the caretaker government installed after an August revolution, said Monday that general elections would be held late next year or in early 2026. Pressure has been growing on Nobel Peace Prize winner Yunus — appointed the country's "chief adviser" after the student-led uprising that toppled ex-premier Sheikh Hasina in August — to set a date. The 84-year-old microfinance pioneer is leading a temporary administration to tackle what he has called the "extremely tough" challenge of restoring democratic institutions in the South Asian nation of some 170 million people. "Election dates could be fixed by the end of 2025 or the first half of 2026," he said in a broadcast on state television.—APP



RAWALPINDI: President RCCI Usman Shaukat Umar Farooq presenting bouquet to CEO Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) Asim Rauf at his arrival at RCCI to participate in meeting of Pharmaceuticals.

## Russia, Islamic world talk vital for economic progress

Seher Kamran said, "The global political structure is undergoing seismic changes, posing complex challenges for nations, states and civilizations"

KUALA LUMPUR :Member of National Assembly and Patron in Chief of Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies (CPGS) Senator Sehar Kamran said there was growing diplomatic, political, economic, trade and military cooperation between Pakistan and Russia and that the latter was also making constructive efforts to bring stability in Afghanistan. She was speaking during a meeting of the Group of Strategic Vision "Russia - Islamic World" (GSV), on the topic of "Interaction between Russia and the Islamic World in the Era of Emerging Multipolarity" here this week. The meeting was attended by about 200 people including the Group members who were leaders of Muslim communities of the BRICS countries, the Asia-Pacific region (APR) and various industry experts. The meeting agenda included summing up the results of the BRICS

summit (held in Kazan in October), developing cooperation in the economy, Islamic banking and security, as well as prospects for joint work in the political, trade and economics; cultural and humanitarian; and spiritual and moral spheres. Seher Kamran said, "The global political structure is undergoing seismic changes, posing complex challenges for nations, states and civilizations. In this fluid geopolitical environment, anxieties arise in both political and economic arenas, with significant potential for these underlying tensions to be exacerbated if we do not find viable solutions. It would not be incorrect to say that the era of the current international unipolar structure is over and we must make every effort to frame a new political structure based on mutual respect for sovereignty, justice, equality and, above all, humanity." "The fractures in global political structures

are putting greater strain on global economic and trade landscapes. International trade is experiencing a deep transformation as emerging economic powers like China, Russia, and Brazil reshape trade patterns, challenging traditional Western dominance," she added. The senator said this shift from a unipolar to a multipolar framework signals a crucial evolution in trade relations, with new alliances such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) fostering cooperation among emerging nations and increasing their influence on global trade rules. However, she said this major transition is not without risks. She said geopolitical pressures, growing protectionism, and the challenges of economic fragmentation raise concerns about the stability of global commerce, posing a substantial risk to unified

multilateral trade policies. She said the global political and economic structures are under tremendous stress due to geopolitical and strategic competition between pro-status quo powers and anti-status quo powers. "I believe this provides a unique opportunity for both the Russian Federation and the Islamic world to enhance their dialogue and cooperation, which must encompass the entire spectrum of relations", she said. She said the new paradigm of cooperation should be built upon mutual respect, equality, and an understanding of the cultural sensitivities of each civilization. "It is very encouraging to note that, in recent times, we have witnessed warmth between the leadership of the Russian Federation and the leadership of the Islamic world. The recent sixteenth annual BRICS summit (October 22-24, 2024) signifies this momentum, as three Muslim countries—namely, Egypt,

Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) joined BRICS as member countries. Furthermore, the latest Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) head of state summit (October 15-16, 2024), hosted by Pakistan, signifies a positive trajectory for this special relationship. Moreover, in 2023, trade between the Russian Federation and OIC countries increased by 30 percent, showcasing the growing economic ties and mutual benefits of collaboration", he highlighted. "Apart from deepening political and economic interactions between Russia and the Islamic world, we must strive to build robust people-to-people contacts, as well as interreligious and interethnic bonds between the two civilizations," she said adding the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has a combined population of about two billion and a collective GDP of approximately US\$27.949 trillion.—DNA

## Kyrgyz president relieves premier from position in cabinet reshuffle

ISTANBUL: Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov on Monday relieved Prime Minister Akybek Japarov from his position in a Cabinet reshuffle. A statement by the presidency said Japarov signed a decree removing the premier, who has held his post since 2021, "in connection with his transfer to another job." No further details were given regarding what position the former prime minister will be taking. A subsequent presidential statement said Japarov signed another decree nominating Akybek Kasymaliev as the acting chairman of the Kyrgyz Cabinet of Ministers. The candidacy of Kasymaliev as prime minister was submitted for approval to the Kyrgyz parliament, the statement added. Kasymaliev was the first deputy chairman of the Cabinet since 2022.—APP

## Philippines eyes Gulf investors in bid to diversify investment partners

MANILA: The Philippines is prioritizing efforts to attract investors from the Gulf region, the Philippine Economic Zone Authority said on Monday, as Manila seeks to diversify its investment partners. PEZA, an agency under the Department of Trade and Industry, has been working to attract Gulf investors as part of a broader economic growth strategy, and to increase cooperation with more partner nations beyond the US and Japan. The Philippines is seeking Gulf investments in various fields, including food processing, pharmaceuticals and renewable energy, PEZA's Director-General Tereso Panga said on Monday. "For investments coming from the Middle East, especially UAE and even Saudi (Arabia), we are looking at food processing, agro-based industries, renewable energy development. "And there's also a potential to bring some pharmaceutical companies into the Philippines from those countries," Panga said. "We will continue our investment promotions in the Middle East ... It's a priority." The DIT's Secretary Cristina Roque previously said that UAE investors were looking to invest PHP25 billion (\$425 million) in the Philippines, including on ports development, following her visit to the Gulf nation in October.—APP

## Turkish rescuers search infamous Syria jail

ANKARA: A team of Turkish rescuers began an in-depth search of Syria's infamous Saydnaya prison on Monday, a spokesman for Turkey's AFAD disaster management agency told AFP. Located just north of Damascus, the prison has become a symbol of the rights abuses of the Assad clan, especially since the Syrian civil war erupted in 2011. Prisoners held inside the complex, which was the site of extrajudicial executions, torture and forced disappearances, were freed early last week by the opposition forces who ousted Syrian strongman Bashar Assad on December 8. AFAD said it had sent a team of nearly 80 people to conduct a search-and-rescue operation to "find people thought to be trapped in Sadnaya military prison," with its director due to give a press conference outside the prison about its mission, spokesman Kubilay Ozyurt told AFP. The complex is thought to descend several levels underground, fueling suspicion more prisoners could be being held in as yet undiscovered hidden cells. But the Association of Detainees and Missing Persons of Saydnaya Prison (ADMSP), believes the rumors are unfounded. AFAD said the team, which is specialized in "heavy" urban search and rescue operations, would work with "advanced search and rescue devices," the Anadolu state news agency reported.—APP

## EU should use its good office to stop HR violations in IIOJK

BRUSSELS: Chairman Kashmir Council Europe (KCEU) Ali Raza Syed has urged European Union's authorities to use their influence to stop human rights violations in Illegally Indian Occupied Kashmir. He dispatched a letter in the context separately to Presidents of European Council Antonio Costa, European Commission Ursula V.D Leyen and EU's parliament Roberta Metsola and High Representative of European Union Kaja Kallas, Chairs of Foreign Affairs' committee Davis McAllister and Human Rights Sub-Committee of EU's parliament Mounir Satouri. According to the letter, Chair of KCEU urgently appealed to the European Authorities to use their good office to pressurize India to stop the human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir and unconditionally release all of the Kashmiris imprisoned in the Indian jails. The letter said, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a common standard of achievement basic rights for all peoples and all nations in the world but India, the so-called "biggest democracy in the world" doesn't accept these rights in the occupied Kashmir as Indian troops are carrying out extrajudicial killings, fake encounters, and withholding burials of victims, and keeping in arbitrary detention Kashmiri politicians, human rights activists and journalists. Journalists in Kashmir have been forcibly silenced and many of them are in prison or rearrested under the draconian laws. Aasif Sultan, Sajad Gul, Fahad Shah and Mehraj are examples of the Kashmiri journalists who became victims of the Indian injustice under the brutal acts.—DNA

## Naqvi visits Saudi Anti-Narcotics HQ, discusses bilateral cooperation

During the visit, both sides held detailed discussions on enhancing collaboration to combat drug trafficking

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control, Mohsin Naqvi, visited the Saudi Anti-Narcotics Headquarters, where he was warmly received by Major General Muhammad Al-Qarni, Director General of Saudi Anti-Narcotics, on Monday. During the visit, both sides held detailed discussions on enhancing collaboration to combat drug trafficking. They agreed to take more effective measures under bilateral cooperation and discussed strategies to tackle the growing global challenge of narcotics. Saudi Arabia offered to assist Pakistan with advanced drug detection equipment, reflecting its commitment to shared goals. Minister Naqvi toured the headquarters, observing the control room and other depart-



ments, and received a comprehensive briefing on Saudi Arabia's anti-narcotics initiatives. He extended an invitation to Major General Al-Qarni to visit Pakistan for further dialogue and cooperation. Speaking on the occasion, Mohsin

Naqvi emphasized the need for joint efforts, stating, "No country can tackle the menace of drugs alone; it has become a shared global challenge. Pakistan will continue its cooperation with Saudi Arabia to create a drug-free environment for fu-

ture generations." The briefing also highlighted ongoing coordination between Saudi Arabia's Anti-Narcotics Department and Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), including the recent arrest of two drug suspects in Pakistan based on Saudi intelligence.

## UN Women Representative for Pakistan Jamshed pays courtesy call on the Thai envoy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Jamshed M. Kazi, the UN Women Representative for Pakistan, paid a courtesy call on H.E. Mr. Rongyudhi Virabutr, Ambassador-designate of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, to introduce himself. Upon this occasion, the two sides discussed cooperation in promoting the role of women and women empowerment in Pakistan. The Ambassador emphasized the importance of empowering women within the context of Pakistani society, religion and culture, focusing on women employment and equipping them with the necessary skills to pursue careers and generate income for their families. This initiative, he noted, is crucial for strengthening and driv-

ing Pakistan's economic growth and social development as well as contributing towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to women's roles as key

drivers of social development. Furthermore, both parties exchanged views on potential areas of future collaboration between the Thai Embassy and UN Women Pakistan including (1) "Women

Empowerment as Beauty Professionals Project" as a way to equip Pakistani women with skills and knowledge, enabling them to establish and run beauty salons in their communities and (2) "Wom-

en Empowerment in Agricultural sector" in the rural areas in order to create work opportunities, which the Ambassador highlighted, based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, inspired by the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great of Thailand. This philosophy focuses on creating sustainable career opportunities for women using Thailand's successful model as a blueprint. In addition, the Thai Embassy stands ready to collaborate on projects which are UN Women's priorities namely (3) Women Empowerment on Political Participation project and (4) Women Empowerment through digital platform and E-commerce with both sides reaffirming on the concrete and tangible projects that would have a significant impact on advancing sustainable development goals in Pakistan and beyond.



## Briefs

### Death toll in Gaza tops 45,000

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip: Health officials in the Gaza Strip say the death toll from the 14-month war between Israel and Hamas militants has topped 45,000 people. The Gaza Health Ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count, but it has said that more than half of the fatalities are women and children. The Israeli military says it has killed more than 17,000 militants, without providing evidence. The Health Ministry said 45,028 people have been killed and 106,962 have been wounded since the start of the war in October 2023. It has said the real toll is higher because thousands of bodies are still buried under rubble or in areas that medics cannot access. The latest war has been by far the deadliest round of fighting between Israel and Hamas, with the death toll now amounting to roughly 2 percent of Gaza's entire prewar population of about 2.3 million. Israel claims Hamas is responsible for the civilian death toll because it operates from within civilian areas in the densely populated Gaza Strip. Rights groups and Palestinians say Israel has failed to take sufficient precautions to avoid civilian deaths. The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. — Agencies

### LHC fines NAB Lahore Rs200,000

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has imposed Rs200,000 fine on the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore for a filing a petition against former Punjab chief minister and PTI leader Chaudhry Parvez Elahi. A two member bench, led by Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh, released a 19-page decision highlighting that Article 10-A of the Constitution ensures a fair trial of the accused and NAB laws entitled the accused to receive copies of inquiry records. The court emphasized that under Section 18 (C) of the NAB Ordinance, witness statement recorded during the inquiry phase must be provided upon transitioning to the investigation stage. Rejecting NAB's stance, the LHC ruled that denying these copies contravenes legal provisions. The court upheld the accountability court's decision to provide documents to Elahi and dismissed NAB's appeal, penalising it for filing a baseless petition.

### Climate financing is fundamental right of everyone

#### BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Senior justice judge Mansoor Ali Shah said that we didn't do much work to deal with the climate change during last seven years. He was addressing a seminar on climate change in Lahore on Monday. "The climate financing is the fundamental right of every individual. There is a need to work on this issue to address the environmental pollution," said the senior judge. He added that Pakistan is facing severe challenges of climate change and therefore we should devise a strategy to deal with the situation. "We should work on food security, disaster management, water security and urban planning," said Justice Mansoor Ali Shah. He said that the courts always gave much importance to the cases related to climate change and environment. Justice Mansoor Ali Shah said that there is a need to establish child courts in the country.

# Dialogue imperative to end misconceptions about Pak

*He said Pakistan was totally a different country, in contrast with what the western media had been portraying. "We are a peaceful people, we are a peace-loving people," he added*

**KHAYAM ABBASI**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that dialogue was the sole option for moving forward in order to project and promote a positive perception, and dispel specific misconceptions about the country. There was no problem in the world that could not be solved without dialogue, he said while delivering a speech at the Institute of Regional Studies "Dialogue on diversity: Leveraging Pakistan's Cultural Diversity to Foster Peace Within and Across Borders." "Dialogue is the key to every problem. Dialogue has solution in everything", he added. He said those who propagated violence and intolerance were not friends adding there was definitely a need to discern between friend and foe. He said that the government was making all-out efforts to promote cultural diversity and harmony in the country. "When we talk about our diversity here in Pakistan and the diverse people that coexist in Pakistan, I think we need to bring in an air of positivity. And as the government, we are totally committed towards this cause", he added. Pakistani nation was most misunderstood nation and there were specific misconceptions about the country, he remarked. He said Pakistan was totally a different country, in contrast with what the western media had been portraying. "We are a peaceful people, we are a peace-loving people," he added. He said that efforts were being made to revive



the soft and positive image of Pakistan in the world by dispelling the wrong perceptions. He said Pakistanis were friendly people and their hospitality was known the world over. He said "when people leave Pakistan, they yearn the hospitality, extended by Pakistanis during their stay in the country. "That's what we have learned over the generations and over the period of time that hospitality is our hallmark." The minister said that as far as peaceful coexistence was concerned, even in international relations, Pakistan had been very consistent in this regard. He said Pakistan had been a good ally and it had never parted away with anyone until and unless done by other side. He said as a nation, Pakistanis needed to put across the message of tolerance, peace, and harmony through their culture. He said there

was a need to open up to the world and inform the world about indigenous people in real perspective. He said one of the oldest UNESCO World Heritage Sites known as the Mount of the Dead or Mohenjo-Daro in Sindh dates back to 2500 BC. "In Pakistan, we not only are home to all these historical sites including the Gandhara civilization, we are also home to one of the world's oldest Buddhist sites that you can come across and you can find them in the surroundings of Islamabad." "If you start exploring Islamabad and go towards the Shah Allah Ditta Caves or you go towards Margalla Hills, you can find Buddhist stupa there which actually highlight the richness of our culture and tradition", he remarked. "Starting from the indigenous people of Gilgit-Baltistan, high up in the north, going to the Thar deserts down south. We have

been blessed with a landscape which has all seasons, which has all terrains. The only problem with us is, as I mentioned, the misconception about us", he added. He said that steps were being taken towards building a positive image of Pakistan by inviting the world to come to Pakistan. "We have seen an increase in the number of tourists that come to Pakistan, especially up north." The minister said that the people who come to Pakistan, they leave with cherish memories, they leave with fond memories and their perception about Pakistan takes a 180 degree turn from what they believed and what they believe afterward." Attaullah Tarar said that he represented 70,000 Christian voters and every Sunday he attended a mass with them and discussed their issues as dialogue was key to resolution of the problems. He said he often told not only government officials but people from the private sector to be ambassadors of Pakistan, to carry a good message of the country. "We have so many diverse cultures, so many diverse languages, so many diverse backgrounds and so many indigenous people that still exist in Pakistan". The minister said that government was trying its best to revive the dying arts the indigenous people of Pakistan practice. The minister expressed his gratitude to all the partners, especially the Aga Khan Development Network, which has done wonderful work for the indigenous people in all these areas. He said wherever he had gone the world over, he had seen immense respect for Pakistan. He said the emphasis needed to be on portraying and amplifying this message in the polarized environment.

### Nine more including Mazari indicted in GHQ attack case

All suspects pleaded not guilty to the charges; Shah Mahmood Qureshi files plea to halt indictment

#### COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in the garrison city on Monday indicted nine suspects, including Shireen Mazari and others including PTI leaders in GHQ attack case. The development comes days after PTI founder Imran Khan was formally charged for his involvement in the arson and vandalism at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi during the May 9 mayhem. The nine more suspects, who have been arraigned in the case besides former federal minister Mazari are PTI leaders Rashid Hafiz, Khadim Hussain Khokhar, Zakirullah, Azeemullah, Tahir Sadiq, MeharJaved, Chaudhry Asif and Munir. All defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges during the hearing, presided over by ATC Judge Amjad Ali Shah at a make-shift court set up in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. The court had summoned the suspects for today's hearing session. Khan was also produced before the judge, while former PTI vice-chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi was brought to the facility from Lahore's KotLakhpat jail, where he has been incarcerated. Prosecution lawyers requested the court to cancel the bails of the suspects who skipped the hearing "They are deliberately delaying the trial," the prosecution contended. Meanwhile, a plea to halt the indictment process was filed on Qureshi's behalf under Section 265-D of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), on the basis of insufficient evidence. The court accepted the plea, fixing it for hearing on December 19, and adjourned the proceedings. The proceedings have been adjourned until 19 December. At least 70 PTI leaders, including Khan, face allegations of planning the May 9 events and inciting the workers and supporters to attack military and government installations following the arrest of the ousted prime minister by NAB in 2023.

## PTA can but won't block VPNs, says PTA chairman

"We don't have answer when asked about internet shutdown owing to national security," says PTA chief

**MEHTAB PIRZADA**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Hafeez Ur Rehman on Monday clarified that the telecommunications regulator would not block the virtual private networks (VPNs) despite having the capability to do so. Addressing a launching ceremony of the PTA annual report 2024, the authority chief said: "We had said earlier that we can block VPNs but we won't do it." Earlier, the regularity authority decided against blocking VPNs as the government extended the deadline for registering proxies beyond November 30. However, a new date has not been announced

for the VPN suspension. Sources privy to the matter, however, said that lack of legal grounds was the reason behind the move. The PTA chairman confirmed that they did not block any VPN till today. Nothing could be hidden from the people in this era, he added. Moving on to the internet related issues in the country, the PTA chairman said: "We don't have answer when we are asked about internet shutdown owing to with national security." "Questions related to national security should be asked from policymakers," he said. Last month, the Ministry of Interior had announced to begin the process of shutting down all unregistered VPNs by the middle of November, but later announced a two-week "grace period" allowing the unregistered VPNs to comply with mandatory registration requirements. As the deadline ended night, the PTA chose not to issue an official statement on the VPN matter.

## ATC discharges 78 PTI workers

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad has discharged 78 more suspects who were arrested during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) "do-or-die" protest at D-Chowk last month. Officials of four police stations of the federal capital produced a total of 283 suspects before ATC Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra on Monday, whereas, advocate Ansar Kiana represented detainees in the court. After the completion of a two-day physical remand, Sihala police produced 31 suspected protesters and sought an extension. However, the ATC rejected the plea and sent the suspects to jail on judicial remand. Aab para police produced 94 suspects before the physical remand. The ATC judge handed custody to police on a two-day physical remand and discharged 4 others in officials of Tarnol police station also produced 63 suspects of which the court approved two-day physical remand and discharged 57 others. Subsequently, 95 suspects were produced in two separate cases. The court discharged 9 suspects and approved a two-day physical remand of 3 accused in a case related to the PTI's November 24 protest in Islamabad. In the second case, the ATC discharged 8 suspects while 75 accused were handed over to the police on a three-day physical remand. Sipra also sought details from the relevant police officers regarding underage children among the detainees. At the outset of the hearing, the lawyer representing detainees apprised the ATC that some suspects had been discharged by the court two days ago but police rearrested them. — DNA

## Pakistan-Norway to boost coop in climate and health



### 13th Round of Pakistan-Norway Bilateral Political Consultations in Oslo

#### FOREIGN DESK

OSLO: Pakistan and Norway held the 13th Round of Bilateral Political Consultations (BPCs) in Oslo. Additional Foreign Secretary (Europe) Ambassador Shafiq Ali Khan led the Pakistan side while the Norwegian side was led by Director General, Department for Regional Affairs at Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Signe Brudeiset. The two sides comprehensively reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral political and economic relations; and discussed opportunities for further cooperation in renewable energy, information technology, fisheries and maritime sector, climate, education, health, and parliamentary exchanges. They also appreciated the contributive role of multi-generational Pakistani diaspora in Norway in underpinning the ties between the two countries.

## South Korea court begins Yoon's impeachment trial

There had been questions on whether the trial could proceed in Yoon's case, as the court currently only has six justices out of nine. Three retired recently and have yet to be replaced

#### NEWS DESK

SEOUL: South Korea's constitutional court has begun trial proceedings for the impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was suspended for declaring martial law and plunging his country into political turmoil. MPs voted to impeach Yoon last Saturday, after his actions sparked widespread protests calling for him to step down. The court now has six months to decide whether to remove Yoon or reinstate him. Yoon's ruling People Power Party (PPP) has been grappling with the fallout ever since, with its leader announcing his resignation on Monday. While public hearings for Yoon's impeachment trial could take months, the court is under pressure to decide quickly and bring an end to political uncertainty. Protesters have vowed to keep up their calls for

Yoon's removal during court proceedings. In the previous two instances a South Korean president faced impeachment, the court reversed one decision and upheld the other. There had been questions on whether the trial could proceed in Yoon's case, as the court currently only has six justices out of nine. Three retired recently and have yet to be replaced. But the court said on Monday it could run Yoon's trial with just six judges, and set a preliminary hearing date for 27 December. If the court upholds impeachment in Yoon's case, the country must hold fresh presidential elections within 60 days. In the meantime, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo is serving as acting president. It is unclear if Yoon will take the stand himself during the court hearings. He ignored a summons to meet prosecutors in Seoul on Sunday, and is set to be ordered in again for questioning. If he fails to come forward this week, police may move to arrest him.



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