

PPP to continue struggle for masses' welfare: Kundi

The governor also criticized the provincial government of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), stating that the province had been left at the mercy of terrorists

DNA

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi has reiterated that PPP would continue its struggle to serve the people and resolve their issues. He was speaking at a dinner ceremony hosted in his honour by former Provincial Assembly candidate from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Nawabzada Azizullah Khan Ali Zai here.

He said the government had failed to address the public problems. Other prominent PPP leaders present at the event included Divisional President Qaizer Khan Miankhal, former District Nazim Nawabzada Azizullah Khan Alizai, PPP District General Secretary Malik Aabid Awan Advocate, District President Malik Farhan Afzal Dhup, former MPA Nawabzada Tahir Bin Yameen Khan, and member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council Sardar Hashmat Nawaz Sadozai.

ficer Barkatullah Kundi besides PPP District President Malik Farhan Afzal Dhap and renowned political and social figure Mubashir Khan Kundi. The SNGPL officials briefed the governor about installation of five new TBS, gas expansion work and other matters. The governor instructed the officials to address all gas related issues on priority including low pressure and loadshedding. He said that timely completion of the new TBS installation should be ensured as it would reduce the load on the existing TBS and improve gas distribution.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq with Chairman of Shura Council of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, Former Speakers of National Assembly, Asad Qaiser and Raja Pervez Ashraf also present on the occasion. —DNA

Industries faces challenges due to gas shortage

SARGODHA: President Sargodha Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Khawaja Yasir Qayyum on Wednesday said that industries faced challenges due to the shortage of gas supply. He emphasized that providing necessary facilities to industrialists would not only boost industrial growth in the region but also create employment opportunities and improve the national treasury.

KP CM for developing energy sector to boost provincial economy

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Wednesday emphasized the importance of further developing the province's energy sector to boost the economy and enhance national energy security. He presided over a meeting of the KP Oil and Gas Company Limited (KPOGCL) to discuss progress in the province's oil and gas sector.

other officials attended the meeting. During the meeting, officials briefed the CM on the company's corporate business strategy, the province's oil and gas potential, recent discoveries, and investment prospects. They reported a major achievement in the exploration and production phase at the Miran Block, adding that the bidding process for the block had been completed, with 49 percent of its shares sold to investors while KPOGCL retained 51 percent of the shares without any financial risk.

attract direct investment of Rs 22 billion into the province, and the respective consortium would bear all expenses for the exploration phase. Regarding the leading role in oil and gas production, the CM was informed that KP continued to play a significant role in the country's energy sector. The province produced 30,000 barrels of oil daily, accounting for 42 percent of the national output. Additionally, it produced 410 million cubic feet of gas per day which was 13 percent of the national production and a significant share of LPG.—APP

113 couples approved for 'Dhee Rani' program

SARGODHA: The Deputy Director (DD) Social Welfare, Zaiba Andaleeb said on Wednesday that the Tehsil verification committees approved the documents of 113 couples for Chief Minister 'Dhee Rani' program in all four districts. According to a spokesperson, she said total 40 couples from Sargodha, 23 from Khushab and 25 each from Mianwali and Bhakkar districts approved for 'Dhee Rani Program'. The DD Social Welfare further stated that the data for Sargodha division were forwarded to the provincial committee.

No stone to be left unturned in serving farmers

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said on Wednesday that she would leave no stone unturned in serving the farmers. In her message on National Farmers' Day, Maryam Nawaz said that she pays tribute to the farmers who grow grains from the bosom of the earth day and night to fulfill

nutritional needs of people. The Punjab government was taking steps for the development of agriculture sector and ease of the farmers, she said and added that Kissan Cards had been issued and productive loans were being given to farmers for their prosperity. The Chief Minister said that farmers had purchased

fertilizers, seeds and other agricultural inputs worth billions of rupees with Kissan Cards. She said that farmers were being led on the path of development and prosperity through agricultural mechanization, farmers were being provided with green tractors on interest-free easy installments.—APP

33% decline in cotton produce, reforms suggested

MULTAN: Pakistan's cotton produce witnessed a sharp decline, with figures from the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) revealing a 33.11% drop in output as of December 15, 2024. A total product stands at 5,367,334 bales compared to 8,023,707 bales in 2023. Punjab, the primary cotton-produce region, experienced a 34.44% decrease, with production falling from 3,956,880 bales in 2023 to 2,593,949 bales in 2024.

Taxpayers' rights protected under federal tax laws: FTO

LAHORE: Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah said on Wednesday that taxpayers' rights were fully protected under the federal tax laws of income tax, customs and sales tax for redressal of their genuine grievances. Speaking to members of Advisory Committee here on Wednesday, he emphasized the importance of understanding these rights to ensure the prompt addressing their tax related issues.

ties work together to build trust and promote compliance. By understanding their rights and responsibilities, taxpayers can not only protect themselves but also contribute positively to the country's taxation system. President Lahore Chamber Mian Abuzar Shah also joined as guest of honour. Dr Asif Jah further highlighted the role of the FTO in resolving taxpayers' complaints efficiently and impartially. He reassured that his office remained committed to addressing issues such as maladministration, undue delays, and misapplication of tax laws.

He said the professional understanding of complete tax laws was challenging for general public especially tax payers. He said understanding their rights by the tax payers was crucial so that they may not be deprived by the tax collectors due to ignorance. Dr Waqar Ch Arain Advisor on the occasion suggested that all federal tax laws also be translated into Urdu for better understanding by the tax payers and be uploaded on websites of FBR, FTO, FPCCI and regional chambers across the country. FTO Coordinator for south Punjab Saifur-Rehman offered to host awareness workshop with business community at Multan while another FTO Coordinator from Faisalabad Muhammad Farhan Munir said he will host a seminar on the rights of tax payers under the chairmanship of FTO next month.—APP

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Call for multisectoral interventions to tackle nutrition challenges

LAHORE: Health experts emphasized the urgent need for multisectoral interventions to address maternal, child, and adolescent nutrition challenges in Punjab, highlighting the importance of improved health outcomes across the province. These discussions took place during a workshop organized by 'Save the Children' with support from UNICEF at a local hotel on Wednesday.

Freeline MOVERS advertisement featuring logos for IATA, IAM, FIDI, and FCIM, along with a globe graphic and text describing services like packing, shipping, and freight forwarding.

COMSATS industrial connect-career expo held

ISLAMABAD: The event was inaugurated by Member IT Higher Education Commission Mr. Jameel Ahmed and was attended by 60 prominent Companies of Pakistan including State Bank of Pakistan, Habib Bank Limited, Askari Bank Limited, S&P Global, IbeX, Haideri Beverages, Gourmet cola, Cheezious, Tapal Tea, Roots Education Consultancy, Times Consultancy, SI-UK, Jin Technologies, Plus W, Devscin, Speridian, W, Splenify, Alachisoft, Cybernet, Nayatel, China Gezhouba Mechanical and Electrical Construction



Co Pakistan Branch, Kakushin, Hero Boss, Hikvision, D4 Interactive, Teach for Pakistan, Professional Career and Recruitment Training and many more companies. The event also displayed final year projects of students of different Programs of Computer Science (including Software Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security and Data Science) as well as final year projects of Departments of Management Sciences, Physics, Chemistry and Bio-Sciences. The event was a huge success as Industry leaders visited the Expo for hiring of students and took great interest in their Final Year Projects.

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Briefs

Islamabad sets new record with underpass construction

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking achievement, an underpass at the Jinnah Avenue F-8 Exchange Chowk Interchange is set to be completed in a record 42 days, as per directives from Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has confirmed that 75% of the work has been finalized, and the project is on track to open for traffic on December 25. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa conducted an early morning surprise visit to the project site to assess the ongoing construction. He expressed satisfaction with the pace and quality of the work, emphasizing the need to maintain the momentum for timely completion. "We are committed to delivering this project within the record timeframe. Work on both the flyover and underpass is progressing simultaneously to ensure on-time completion," said Chairman Randhawa. The CDA chairman also directed consultants and resident engineers to uphold high standards of construction while adhering to the set deadlines. During the visit, he was briefed by project officials, who highlighted key milestones that 70 out of 74 piles for the interchange have been completed. Work on the underpass girders is in its final stages whereas concrete work for the underpass bed is expected to finish shortly. With construction progressing rapidly on all fronts, the Jinnah Avenue Interchange is poised to become a symbol of efficiency and innovation in urban infrastructure development.—APP

ANF recovers 122 kg drugs in 7 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 7 operations across the country managed to recover over 122 kg drugs worth Rs 10 million and arrested 5 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 190 intoxicating tablets were recovered from a parcel sent from Peshawar at a courier office in Hyderabad. 100 kg hashish was recovered from a deserted area of Turbat in Balochistan. 16.8 kg hashish was recovered concealed in a rickshaw near a park on Ring Road Peshawar and a suspect was arrested during the operation. 1.2 kg hashish and 2.2 kg ice were recovered from the possession of a woman arrested near a petrol pump on Okara Road Kasur. In 5th operation, 980 grams ice was recovered from a suspect held on Sakhi Sarwar Road in Dera Ghazi Khan. In 6th operation, 610 grams ice was recovered from the possession of a suspect netted near Shah Pul Multan. 150 grams opium was recovered from the possession of a drug peddler nabbed near Burhan Toll Plaza Attock. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—APP

Al-Shifa Trust launches operations in Gilgit to help underserved people

The inauguration of this hospital marks a new chapter for Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital's legacy of excellence and service. The hospital continues to expand its footprint across Pakistan to provide accessible and quality eye care to all

FAISAL SHEIK

RAWALPINDI: Responding to the increasing demand for quality eye care services, the Al-Shifa Trust started providing free services to the people of remote areas before the completion of the cutting-edge hospital in Gilgit. The move, which results from a joint venture between the Al-Shifa Trust and the Rupani Foundation, will benefit millions of underserved people, many of whom cannot afford quality services. Doctors have already begun helping many patients in this still-under-construction portion of the hospital, a significant advancement. In this regard, a ceremony was held in which the Minister of Health Gilgit-Baltistan, Raja Azam Khan, participated as the chief guest. He lauded the trust's efforts in bringing advanced eye care services to faraway areas. The minister said that previously, residents of Gilgit-Baltistan had to travel to other provinces for eye treatments, incurring significant financial and emotional costs. We are grateful for the considerable reduction in these challenges. The groundbreaking of the state-of-the-art hospital took place just five months ago, in July 2024. Al-Shifa Trust has prioritized the commencement of its operations, recognizing the urgent need for quality eye care in the area despite its scheduled completion in 2026. The newly inaugurated facility has already started offering Outpatient Department services and eye surgeries, with fully trained and highly skilled doctors and support teams now on the



ground. All services will be free to the community, reinforcing the trust's commitment to eradicating preventable blindness and improving access to specialized eye care in underserved regions like Gilgit-Baltistan. Abdul Rehman Mithani, advisor to Rupani Development Initiatives, illuminated the Rupani Foundation's evolution, goals, and ongoing projects at the ceremony. He stated

that the foundation focuses on improving people's lives through quality education, community development, and superior healthcare facilities. Mithani emphasized that the Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital is a remarkable gift for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, offering free treatments, medicines, and surgeries. Ministers, senior government officials, and other dignitaries also attended the in-

augural event and commended Al-Shifa Trust for its visionary approach and timely action in addressing healthcare gaps. After completion, the facility will be the region's first. It will offer advanced medical care and ensure that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan receive world-class eye treatment close to home. Participants said that enhancing healthcare access in remote areas is a noble cause.

This initiative aims to revolutionize healthcare delivery by offering cutting-edge medical services to underprivileged communities. The inauguration of this hospital marks a new chapter for Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital's legacy of excellence and service. The hospital continues to expand its footprint across Pakistan to provide accessible and quality eye care to all.

A drop in interest rates is good for economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, on Wednesday welcomed a cut in the interest rates.

He said that the policy rate reduction proves that the government focuses on the economy and that the country is coming out of problems, not due to statements but practical steps. Mian Zahid Hussain said

that the economic situation is improving rapidly, so there was scope for a reduction in interest rates of up to five hundred basis points instead of two hundred basis points. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the interest rate should be in the single digits so that businesses grow, people get jobs, and the government gets taxes. The business leader said that the confidence of the local and foreign business community is continuously increasing, so the government should continue the series of reforms and not allow anyone to derail it. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the economic deterioration caused by incompetent rulers' policies had shaken the

country's foundations. The value of the rupee had been lost, and the highest inflation in the country's history had taken away the desire to live for millions of people. At that time, everything was becoming expensive daily. The prices of many items had increased manifold, but people's incomes had not increased, which made it difficult for millions of people to manage food. He noted that when Pakistan was rapidly going towards bankruptcy, the change of government and the determination of the military and political leadership changed the situation. With their hard work, the rupee's decline was stopped, smuggling decreased significantly, and tax revenue increased, which increased the

confidence of domestic and foreign investors and important institutions. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the reform process should be continued so that things can improve and the people can get some relief. He noted that the central bank shows unnecessary caution in reducing interest rates, disappointing some business segments. Some sections of the business community are calling the 2% reduction in interest rates disappointing. He said that if the interest rate is brought to 13%, keeping in mind the continuous decline in inflation, it will not positively impact the economy. However, if interest rates are brought to single digits, not only will economic activities accelerate.

RDA seals 15 flats, restaurant in Mid City Apartments for illegal commercial use

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General (DG), Kinza Murtaza here on Wednesday sealed 15 flats and a restaurant in the Mid-City Apartments on Old Airport Road. According to RDA spokesman, the RDA Enforcement squad conducted an operation and sealed the residential flats and a restaurant in the Mid-City Apartments in Moza Gangal located on Old Airport Road. The action was taken as part of the crackdown on the illegal conversion of residential flats into commercial properties, the RDA spokesperson informed. The flats were being used for commercial purposes in violation of RDA regulations, which prohibit such activities in residential zones. The operation was conducted under the supervision of the Director Land RDA, Ghazanfar Ali Awan, Building Superintendent Fahad Bhatti and Building Surveyor Malik Aamir Mahmood. This operation is part of RDA's ongoing efforts to enforce zoning laws and maintain the integrity of residential areas within Rawalpindi, he said adding, the RDA is committed to ensuring that the properties within the city adhere to the approved land use and building regulations. He informed that the DG had directed the authorities concerned to continue operation and take strict action against the rules violators.—DNA

POL import bill up by 1.04% to \$6.520b in 5 months

ISLAMABAD: The imports of the overall petroleum group increased by 1.04 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding months of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-November (2024-25) stood at \$ 6,520.898 million against the imports of \$ 6,453.910

million during the same months of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 10.34 percent, from \$ 2,661.231 million last year to \$ 2,386.131 million during the period under review whereas the import of petroleum crude surged by 5.44 percent from \$ 2,052.542 million to \$ 2,164.143 million. Similarly, the imports of Liquefied Natural Gas

(LNG) increased by 5.22 percent from \$ 1,466.417 million last year to \$ 1,542.914 million while the import of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) went up by 56.25 percent in the first five months and stood at \$427.556 million as compared to \$273.641 in the corresponding period in 2023-24. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the petroleum group imports witnessed a decrease of 1.24 percent during the month of November 2024 as compared to the same month of last year, from \$ 1,424.902 million to \$1,407.281 million. On a month-on-month basis, the petroleum imports into the country increased by 32.69 percent during November 2024, as compared to the imports of \$ 1,060.601 million in October 2024, said the data.—APP

NUML celebrates UNESCO Turkic Languages Day

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages organized an event to commemorate UNESCO Turkic Languages Day and the Shab-e-Arooz of Maulana Rumi. This unique celebration highlighted the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of Turkic civilizations alongside the spiritual wisdom of Mevlana Rumi, fostering a deeper appreciation of shared traditions and values. The program was honoured by the presence of the Education Attache, Dr Mehmet Toyron, who praised the event as more than just a celebration, describing it as a workshop that transported participants through the history of the ancient Turks and back to the present. He commended the event's meticulous organization, its focus on Türkiye's linguistic and cultural diversity, and its meaningful acknowledgement of UNESCO's Turkic Language Day. The program was lauded as a shining

example of cultural engagement and thoughtful execution. The celebration featured inspiring video messages from Turkic countries, documentaries on ancient Turkic leaders and heroes, reflections on Maulana Rumi's timeless teach-

ings, and an exploration of the Turkish language family and its dialects. A unique highlight of the event was a beautifully decorated wish tree, symbolizing an ancient Turkic tradition predating modern customs, with participants

tying their wishes on white paper with colourful ribbons. Guests also experienced the flavours of Turkic cuisine, enjoying homemade Özbek Pilav, Revani dessert, Turkish tea, and Ayran, a traditional Turkish drink lovingly prepared by faculty members. The event also underscored the deep-rooted brotherhood between Pakistan and Türkiye, a bond strengthened by mutual respect, shared history, and cultural affinity. This enduring relationship serves as an example of international solidarity, with both nations cherishing and promoting their common heritage. The event left participants inspired by the richness of Turkic heritage and the universal teachings of Maulana Rumi, reinforcing the university's role as a hub of academic and cultural excellence.



East African community summit in Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Commerce & High Commission of Rwanda has jointly proposed to hold the Pakistan East African Community Summit and Exhibition in Pakistan. The event aims to facilitate interaction and exhibition opportunities between the business communities of Pakistan and the East African countries. Both communities will be given the platform to exhibit and engage with each other, facilitating valuable business connections and collaborations. It was proposed to hold the event in Expo Center, Karachi, with an expected participation of 300-400 buyers/delegates from the East African countries. In this regard, TDAP requests business community to suggest potential areas, products, or sectors that should be displayed at the event, to effectively showcase Pakistan's strengths and elevate its global trade presence.

Iftikhar Ali Malik's services for the SAARC region are unparalleled

DNA

ISLAMABAD 18th December 2024: A delegation led by the President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce, Muhammad Jashim Uddin, met with former President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and FPCCI, Iftikhar Ali Malik. The delegation included SAARC Chamber Vice Presidents Chandi Raj Dhakal (Nepal), Shaquaq Haider (Bangladesh), and Anjum Nisar (Pakistan); SCWEC Chairperson Hina Mansab Khan; SCWEC Executive Committee members Ms. Sathi Yasmeen and Ms. Tania Wahab; SCCI Executive Committee member Umesh Lal Shrestha; SCCI Secretary General Zulfiqar Butt; SCCI Director Badar Munir; and SCWEC Executive Committee members Ms. Robina and Ms. Tahir (Pakistan). The purpose of this meeting was to acknowledge Iftikhar Ali Malik's services and contributions to the business community of South Asia. On this occasion, SAARC Chamber President Muhammad Jashim Uddin stated that Iftikhar Ali Malik served for a long time as both President and Vice President of the SAARC Chamber and made extensive and successful efforts to unify the business community of SAARC member countries. He described Malik's contributions as unparalleled.

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Briefs

Russia detains Uzbek man over general's killing

MOSCOW: Russia's security service says a 29-year-old man from Uzbekistan has been detained over the killing of senior general Igor Kirillov and his assistant in Moscow. Lt Gen Igor Kirillov, head of the Radiation, Chemical and Biological Protection Forces, was outside a residential block early on Tuesday when an explosive device hidden in a scooter was detonated remotely. The Russian security service said the unnamed suspect was recruited by Ukrainian intelligence, according to state media agencies. Ukraine's security service had already claimed it was behind the killing, a source told the BBC on Tuesday. The Ukrainian source said Kirillov - who was Russia's chemical weapons chief - was "a legitimate target" and alleged he had carried out war crimes. On Monday, the day before the killing, Ukraine charged Kirillov, 54, in absentia, saying he was "responsible for the mass use of banned chemical weapons". Russia denies the allegations. A Kremlin spokesman said Russian President Vladimir Putin "expresses deep condolences" over Kirillov's death. Russian news agency Tass reported. The Russian Federal Security Service's (FSB) public relations centre said on Wednesday the detained 29-year-old was "suspected of committing a terrorist act". A statement said that during "interrogation he explained that he was recruited by the Ukrainian special services". - Agencies

Cases against Asad Qaiser rise to 17

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The number of cases registered against the National Assembly's former speaker and PTI leader Asad Qaiser reached 17 in the capital territory. On the court orders, DSP Legal Sajid Cheema presented details of the cases. According to the police report, before PTI's "Final Call" protest, nine cases had been registered against Asad Qaiser in Islamabad. However, following the protest on Nov 24, eight additional cases were lodged against him. Asad Qaiser, through his counsel Ayesha Khalid, had filed an application seeking details of all cases registered against him. Meanwhile, a hearing on Qaiser's petition for the provision of case details could not take place. Justice Saman Razaftiaz was scheduled to hear the case but deferred it. In compliance with court orders, the police submitted the details of all 17 cases registered against the PTI leader in court.

Pakistan and Iran agree to enhance trade cooperation



DPM Dar and Minister Aragchi also exchange views on the situation in Middle East

NEWS DESK
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran on Wednesday agreed to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation and increase people-to-people contacts. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Foreign Minister of Iran Seyyed Abbas Aragchi on the sidelines of the 21st D-8 Council of Foreign Ministers being held in Cairo, Egypt. The two dignitaries expressed satisfaction at the trajectory of bilateral relations marked by increased high-level exchanges in political and economic fields, a press release issued by the Foreign Office said. Deputy Prime Minister Dar and Minister Aragchi also exchange views on the situation in the Middle East. The deputy prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's principled position on Palestine and expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people.

IHC orders SZABMU to re-conduct MDCAT within two-week

ISLAMABAD: A division bench of Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday instructed the Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University (SZABMU) to conduct medical and dental colleges admission test (MDCAT) again within two weeks. A two-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Saman Razaftiaz heard the intra court appeal (ICA) against the verdict of the single member bench. The petitioners' lawyer said that the single-member bench had declared that 31 questions out of 200 were out of syllabus and course. He said that the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) declared firstly 25 but later 18 questions out of the syllabus. He said that there were a total of 150 seats allocated for Islamabad of which 50 were for admissions in medical colleges while 100 for dental colleges. Addressing the lawyer, the court said that if you are admitting the opinion of PMDC then you have to accept it in letter and spirit. On the query of the bench, the registrar of the university said that passing marks in the test are 50 percent to which the court said that if the 18 questions are excluded then the passing marks would be 90. Justice Saman Razaftiaz said that the university has to satisfy the students on their reservations instead of court. - APP

Workshop mulls over climate commitments

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) held a stakeholder national workshop on Wednesday focused on developing an inclusive approach to Pakistan's climate commitments under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) framework. The event, titled "Developing Inclusive Climate Commitments: NDCs 3.0 for Pakistan," convened policymakers, experts, media and key stakeholders to discuss Pakistan's climate goals and the way forward to meet these commitments in light of growing environmental challenges, said a press release. The workshop featured a series of insightful speeches from leading experts, beginning with Dr Shafiqat Munir, Deputy Executive Director of SDPI, who emphasized the importance of strengthening Pakistan's climate policies to create a more resilient and sustainable future. Muhammad Arif Goheer, Executive Director of the Global Climate Change Impact Studies Center (GCISC), underscored the nation's responsibility to safeguard its future and society. "We must develop resilience plans and innovative solutions to meet our commitments. Our country is vulnerable to climate impacts, and it is essential that the NDCs reflect practical, effective actions," said Mr Goheer.

Saudi Arabia to help Pak tackle passport forgery

The minister discussed advanced tech and anti-forgery measures during visit to Saudi Directorate of Passport

FOREIGN DESK
RIYADH: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has stated that, with Saudi Arabia's cooperation, individuals involved in passport forgery and document tampering can now be apprehended within Pakistan. During his visit to the Saudi Directorate of Passport in Riyadh, Mohsin Naqvi met with the acting Director General, Major General Dr. Saleh Al-Marabba. The discussion focused on streamlining the passport issuance process and implementing effective measures to prevent forgery. The minister reviewed the advanced technology utilised by the Directorate and praised its modern passport system. Mohsin Naqvi highlighted that Saudi support could significantly enhance and secure Pakistan's passport system. This collaboration will benefit the public and eliminate fraudulent practices. He also announced plans to establish a call centre in Pakistan similar to the one run by the Saudi Directorate of Passport. Saudi authorities previously apprehended 3,700 Pakistanis at airports for travelling with forged documents and tampered passports.

ZAB case 'a dark chapter' in judicial history: CJP

CJ agrees with Justice Shah's remarks, acknowledging flaws in Bhutto trial and urging judicial integrity reforms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Yahya Afridi has raised concerns about significant lapses in the trial of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, terming the case a "dark chapter" in Pakistan's judicial history. In an additional note, Justice Afridi partially agreed with Justice Mansoor Ali Shah's observations regarding the infamous trial, Express News reported. Justice Afridi noted that while he reviewed the opinions of former Chief Justice QaziFaez Isa and other judges, he largely agreed with Justice Shah's remarks. However, he emphasised that the Supreme Court's advisory jurisdiction under Article 186 limits its scope in such matters. Referring to the trial's flaws, the chief justice observed that both the trial court and appellate court had failed to uphold fair trial standards. He highlighted procedural breaches, stating that under Pakistan's criminal procedure laws, a murder trial could not have been directly conducted in the high court. Afridi further pointed out that former Chief Justice Nasim Hasan Shah, now deceased, had admitted to external pressures influencing the verdict in the Bhutto case. He called this revelation a "regrettable chapter"

in Pakistan's judicial history, undermining public trust in the judiciary. The chief justice praised dissenting judges of the time, including Justices Dorab Patel, Mohammad Haleem, and Saffar Shah, for their courageous stand against the prevailing pressures. Although their dissenting notes did not alter the outcome, Afridi said they upheld the judiciary's impartiality and underscored its critical role in maintaining the rule of law. Justice Afridi concluded that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto trial lacked due process, cautioning that failure to address such miscarriages of justice could continue to erode public confidence in the legal system. In July, then Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) QaziFaez Isa had declared Zulfikar Ali Bhutto innocent, stating that he was sentenced to death by unconstitutional courts with insufficient evidence. In detailed remarks on the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto reference issued, it was stated that an innocent person was executed without a fair trial. At the time of Bhutto's trial, the courts lacked constitutional legitimacy, the country was under martial law, and fundamental rights were suspended, it maintained, adding that the judiciary was also subservient to martial law. The order emphasised that courts under judges who swore allegiance to a dictator do not remain courts of the people. The execution of Bhutto directly benefited General Zia-ul-Haq. If Bhutto had been released, he could have pursued serious treason charges against the dictator. CJP remarked that the reference took 11 years to be scheduled for a hearing. All judges who initially heard the reference retired, and the evidence for the death sentence was insufficient. There was no direct evidence under Section 302 against Bhutto, it added.

Blome reaffirms commitment to strengthen US-Pakistan ties



NAZIR SIYAL
KARACHI: U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome visited Karachi from December 17-18, reaffirming the United States' commitment to strengthening bilateral ties in business, trade, jobs and education. His engagements emphasized shared goals of economic growth, opportunity, and respect for human dignity. At a dinner with business leaders, Ambassador Blome highlighted the importance of expanding trade and investment, including by inviting Pakistani businesspeople to participate in the SelectUSA 2025 Investment Summit. "The United States is committed to supporting Pakistan's economic development," he said. "Our mutual prosperity depends on free, open, competitive markets where trade and investment can thrive." Meeting with human rights advocates at the Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC), he reiterated U.S. support for advancing religious freedoms and the civil rights of those living in Pakistan. "The United States stands with Pakistan in its pursuit to safeguard the rights of all citizens," he said, commending the SHRC's efforts.

Swiss-EU talks to 'stabilise' ties nearing a deal

GENEVA: After years of negotiations, Switzerland's government appeared poised to approve a package of agreements with the European Union, though Swiss lawmakers and a likely referendum could still sink the deal. Non-EU member Switzerland and its largest trading partner are seeking to stabilise and develop their relations, which are currently governed by more than 120 agreements. For nearly two decades, the two sides have been discussing the need to simplify and harmonise ties, but relations soured in 2021, when, without warning, Bern slammed the door on the negotiations. The talks tentatively resumed in March, with both sides saying they hoped to conclude a deal by the end of the year. Unlike previous attempts to seal an overarching framework agreement, the current negotiations have sought to update the existing bilateral agreements and conclude new ones on issues like electricity, health and food safety. Swiss media have in recent days cited diplomatic sources saying that all issues had been agreed upon, with the exception of the amount Switzerland should pay into the EU's Cohesion Fund, which is aimed at reducing economic and social disparities in the bloc. A fresh round of discussions on Tuesday "took place in a very positive atmosphere", a European diplomatic source said.

US hopes for Gaza truce within weeks

CIA Director Burns is expected to meet with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani

FOREIGN DESK
CAIRO: The US expressed optimism Tuesday that a Gaza cease-fire and hostage exchange deal could be finalized within weeks, citing ongoing efforts to resolve remaining disputes, according to the State Department. Addressing reporters at the Foreign Press Center, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller underscored the urgency of reaching an agreement, expressing frustration at the repeated setbacks in negotiations. "We believe that we are at the point where we ought to be able to get to an agreement. The differences between the two parties really have been narrowed such that all remaining differences ought to be bridgeable," Miller said. However, he acknowledged the challenges, cautioning that previous negotiations had stalled despite appearing to be close to a resolution. "That said, we have been here before and have not seen the parties come to an agreement," he said. Earlier in the day, Miller expressed "cautious optimism"

about negotiations in Qatar's capital Doha to secure a deal. Israel, which according to prisoners' groups has more than 10,000 Palestinians in its prisons, estimates that there are around 100 Israeli captives in Gaza. The Palestinian resistance group Hamas has said that 33 captives have been killed in indiscriminate Israeli airstrikes in Gaza. Meanwhile, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Bill Burns is set to travel to the Qatari capital Doha on Wednesday to discuss the latest developments in cease-fire and prisoner exchange negotiations between the Palestinian group Hamas and Israel. Burns is expected to meet with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, the U.S.-based news site Axios reported, citing a source familiar with the trip. The discussions will focus on indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas facilitated by Qatar. U.S. President Joe Biden's Middle East adviser Brett McGurk is already in Doha, engaging in talks with Qatari, Egyptian and Israeli officials, according to a U.S. official speaking to the media outlet.

DECEMBER 2024
Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

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