



# Islamabad POST

Tuesday, December 24, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**UNRWA chief says Israel has broken all rules of war in Gaza**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Govt wants to reduce NFC award**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Arsenal's Saka ruled out for 'many weeks'**

Detailed News On Page-06

## Breaking the ice

# Govt, PTI finally engage in talks

Sources say NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq-led meeting at Parliament House conducted in conducive environment

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will present its demands in writing to the government's negotiation committee on the next meeting after the first round of parleys ended in a conducive environment. The federal government and the Imran Khan founded-PTI on Monday conducted their much-hyped meeting in a conducive environment and resolved to continue dialogue process. National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, who presided over today's meeting held at the Parliament House, said that the next session will be held on January 2 and PTI's team would present a charter of their demands in the next meeting. While addressing a press conference after the meeting, Sadiq thanked the government's leadership and senior leaders of the opposition for holding the talks in a positive environment. "We discussed things about past and present and I hope that if we work together for the country's betterment, it will strengthen the political stability, strengthen democracy and help in dealing with challenges faced by Pakistan," he added. He also requested media to see today's development positively as the meeting's environment was conducive. "We want to bring betterment in Pakistan and end the political polarisation in and outside the parliament," he concluded. Senator Irfan Siddiqui read out the communiqué regarding the government-opposition parleys, mentioning that both sides described the talks as a positive development and emphasised the importance of keeping the negotiations ongoing. Both committees expressed goodwill, saying that Parliament is the appropriate forum for resolving issues, the handout said. In the next meeting on January 2, the opposition will present its written demands. Both parties expressed their gratitude to Speaker Sadiq for his role in facilitating the talks. PTI's Qaiser informed the members that several members of his committee could not attend due to court proceedings. It was agreed that both sides stand united in the fight against terrorism. A tribute was also paid to the martyrs for their sacrifice.

Continued on Page 06

## Rana Sana stresses for practical steps

He added that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) would present its stance, after which the government would respond to find a middle ground

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Member of the government's negotiation committee, Rana Sanaullah, expressed confidence in the ongoing dialogue process, stating that successful negotiations require open-minded participation from all parties. He emphasized that the discussions so far have been positive, but practical implementation of agreed points is essential. "There are no guarantees in negotiations, but I am 100% confident in their success," said Rana Sanaullah, highlighting the importance of sincerity and mutual understanding in the dialogue. During his remarks, Rana Sanaullah stated that no preconditions were set during the talks. He added that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) would present its stance, after which the government would respond to find a middle ground. "Political dialogue involves sitting down, listening to each other, and finding compromises—it is not about accepting every demand outright," he explained. Rana Sanaullah acknowledged the history of tensions between the parties but emphasized the need for reconciliation. "The issues being discussed are not new. Both sides have called each other names in

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hold meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

## Pakistan calls US ban inappropriate

Pakistan-US relations are not such that restrictions should be imposed, Foreign Office

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Speaking to a private news channel, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan's missile program is of a small-scale defensive nature in the context of South Asia. She said that the sanctions imposed by the US on the Pakistani missile program and Pakistani companies are unnecessary and unjust, this decision was taken inappropriately by the US. The spokesperson of the Foreign Office further said that Pakistan's missile program does not pose any threat to America, there is no truth in the reasons

Continued on Page 06

## In a meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr President, PM agree to further reforms with consultations

Leaders of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Qamar Zaman Kaira and PML-N leaders Ayaz Sadiq, Ishaq Dar, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar and Information Minister Atta Tarar were present at the meeting

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday held a crucial meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Monday wherein they agreed to move forward with legal reforms and decisions through consultations with all political stakeholders. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, former prime minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, and National Assembly member Syed Naveed Qamar, a President House press release said. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his best wishes for President Zardari's health during the course of the meeting. The discussion centered around the country's overall political, economic, and security situation. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to working together for the nation's development and prosperity.

Continued on Page 06

## PTI condemns trial of civilians in military courts

Info Secretary Waqas Akram termed it violation of international laws, announced to challenge them

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram Monday condemned the trial of civilians in the military courts, terming it a violation of international laws. Talking to the media, Akram stated that all legal options would be pursued to challenge the military trials. He also vowed to thwart the government's alleged conspiracy to ruin the economy. Referring to the Al-Qadir Trust case, Akram questioned the delay in its judgment. "We want to know why

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### £190m case verdict on January 6

Imran, Bushra face NAB allegations of causing loss to national exchequer via settlement with property tycoon

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court on Monday said that the verdict on the £190 million case against PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi would be announced on January 6, 2025. The announcement of the verdict, reserved last week, was originally scheduled for today (December 23). However, the court announced the deferral this morning. Also known as the Al-Qadir Trust case, the former prime minister along with his wife, Bushra and others have been accused by NAB of causing a loss of £190 million to national exchequer via a settlement between the PTI govt and a property tycoon.

### Chaudhry Shujaat calls with JUI chief's Lauds Fazl's role in Madrasa Bill resolution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League (Q) president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain Monday appreciated Maulana FazlurRehman's efforts in addressing concerns related to the Madrasa Bill. In a telephonic conversation with JUI chief Maulana FazlurRehman, the PML-Q chief inquired about his well-being and discussed key national issues. During the conversation, Chaudhry Shujaat lauded Maulana FazlurRehman's pivotal role in amicably resolving the bill's issue.

## Amid road closure

# KP government declares emergency in Kurram

CM Gandapur slams "elements" for worsening Kurram situation by spreading "sectarian hatred"

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: As the situation in Kurram continues to remain dire amid an acute shortage of necessary items and prevailing road closures, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) cabinet on Monday approved a relief emergency in now declared the "disaster-hit" district following months-long tribal clashes. "The provincial government has directed authorities concerned to expedite relief operations in the [violence-marred district]," says KP government spokesperson Barrister Saif in a statement after the cabinet's meeting, which was chaired by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. He added that authorities were ensuring the provision of medicines and food items during the relief emergency. "The relief operation includes provision of medicines, food, and transportation via airborne service." The prolonged roadblock has led to severe shortages of essential supplies in Parachinar, including food items, medicines, fuel, firewood, and LPG, while daily life and economic activities remain heavily

Continued on Page 06

## Kurram crisis deepens with road closures

Kurram deputy commissioner says roads have been closed due to existing security concerns

DNA

PARACHINAR, PESHAWAR: The situation in Kurram continues to remain dire amid an acute shortage of food, medicine, fuel and other necessary items amid the prevailing road closures that have added to the people's woes in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's violence-marred district. The main Kurram-Peshawar road has been closed for 76 days leading to residents staging a four-day sit-in — also attended by children — at the Parachinar Press Club.

Continued on Page 06

## Kabul hails resumption of Saudi diplomatic operations

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the level of Saudi representation in Kabul

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: The Afghan foreign ministry on Monday welcomed Saudi Arabia's decision to resume its diplomatic operations in Kabul, more than three years after Riyadh withdrew its staff during the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. "We are optimistic about the possibility of strengthening relations and cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan through the resumption of these activities,"

Continued on Page 06

# Chairman Bilawal Bhutto assails VPN and internet restrictions

He continued. "This is proof that you are strong and that they fear you because they do not want you to exercise your rights through the internet"

NAZIR SIYAL

JAMSHORO: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday slammed internet slowdowns and restrictions in the country, calling them "another effort to control and censor citizens" amid his party's tensions with the government. In recent months, users have experienced sluggish speeds, difficulty downloading media on WhatsApp, and intermittent connectivity issues. Digital analysts say the government has been testing a "firewall" that monitors some platforms and gives the power to block content, like photos or videos of rallies shared on WhatsApp. The government has said a 'web management system' was being updated for increased cyber security. Meanwhile, the relationship between the PPP and the federal government has grown rocky, as senior party officials expressed a "lack of confidence" in the federal government in December. In parliament on December 18, PPP MNA Abdul Qadir Patel expressed strong reservations about the ongoing internet situation in the country, including the ban on X and the firewall. The next day, senior PPP leader Naveed Qamar among other PPP lawmakers walked out of a parliament session in protest of the continued "insulting" absence of federal

Continued on Page 06

## PPP, PML-N likely to reach consensus

Coordination committees from both parties are set to convene today at the Governor's House

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: A breakthrough in power-sharing talks between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Punjab appears close, with a key meeting scheduled Monday between President Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz. According to sources, coordination committees from both parties are set to convene Tuesday at the Governor's House. The PPP will be represented by Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Makhdoom Syed Ahmed Mehmood, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Syed Hassan Murtaza, and parliamentary

Continued on Page 06

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## IESCO catches 4,245 power pilferers

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has caught 4,245 power pilferers from its various circles of the company since launching of anti-power theft drive in September 2023. Sharing details, IESCO Chief Muhammad Naem told that the detection teams have checked 2.653 million of different tariff so far during the ongoing anti-power theft campaign in all six circles off the company. Out of total apprehended power pilferers, 3811 were using direct power supply while 434 meters were found tampered during the checking. The CEO said that a fine of Rs 362.92 million has been charged to the power pilferers. Some 3,296 FIRs have also been registered against the power pilferers and 2,292 culprits have also been arrested by the police, he added. He said that anti-power theft campaign would continue with full dedication till the complete eradication of power theft menace from the IESCO region. He also requested valuable IESCO customer to report power theft to relevant SDO Office, Help Line number 118 or CCMC number 051-9252933-34. — APP

## Kundi for encouraging youth towards entrepreneurship

STAFF REPORT

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Monday emphasized the importance of guiding and encouraging youth towards entrepreneurship for the development of the province and the country. He expressed these views during his virtual address as the Chief Guest at the Investor Summit of the year-long Build Entrepreneurship Skills Training (BEST) program, organized by Research Education Development (RED) International. The event, which saw representatives from Accelerate Prosperity, the U.S. Consulate Peshawar, Arfa Karim Technology Incubator, and Beaconhouse School System (BSS) Peshawar, also featured youth participants from seven districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Swat, Abbottabad, Peshawar, and Mardan. Four of the best entrepreneurial ideas from these areas were awarded seed grants. Governor Kundi highlighted the need for the business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to support and mentor the province's talented youth.

# IICR hosts high-level seminar on global media influence

Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed highlighted the EU Disinfo lab role in exposing India's global propaganda campaigns, citing examples like the activities of ANI and the Srivastava Group

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution (IICR) convened an insightful seminar titled "Decoding Media Influence: Global Perspectives on Information Perception and Society". The event Seminar together prominent experts from academia, media, and public policy to discuss the profound impact of media on shaping societal and political landscapes in an increasingly interconnected world. Moderated by Dr. Shabana Fayyaz, Associate Professor at Quaid-e-Azam University, the seminar featured a distinguished panel, including Ex. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Dr. Nazir Hussain, Air Marshal (Ret.) Farhat Hussain, Ex. Information minister Murtaza Solangi, media expert Dr. Furqan Rao, and investigative journalist Fakhar Kakakhel. In her opening remarks, Ms. Sabah Aslam, Executive Director and Founder of IICR, emphasized the critical relationship between media, public perception, and societal outcomes. She underscored the importance of fostering media literacy, promoting critical think-



ing, and encouraging responsible media consumption, particularly among youth. The seminar sought to examine media's role in shaping narratives, countering misinformation, and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed highlighted the EU Disinfo lab role in exposing India's global propaganda campaigns, citing examples like the activities of ANI and the Srivastava Group. He noted the transformative power of Western media in shaping historical and contemporary events, from the 1953 Iranian coup to the Iraq War. Reflecting on the shifting dynamics of media during the 2024 U.S.

elections, Senator Hussain called for a coordinated media strategy in Pakistan to address emerging challenges. Murtaza Solangi, a seasoned journalist and ex federal minister, delved into the essence of journalism, advocating for the public's right to know. He identified corporate influence, market forces, and non-state actors as significant challenges to media independence. He emphasized the global epidemic of misinformation, stressing the importance of digital literacy to combat fake news and prevent the suppression of voices through censorship. Fakhar Kakakhel, an investigative journalist, pointed

to the proliferation of "keyboard warriors" and the Western-backed spread of misinformation, linking these issues to efforts to undermine Pakistan's progress, particularly regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He called for better mechanisms to address the digital chaos resulting from censorship and misinformation. Dr. Furqan Rao, a media expert, warned against the dangers of political hate speech, which he said exacerbates social and cultural divisions. He advocated for a multidisciplinary approach to address media-related challenges and highlighted the need for widespread media information literacy to create an

informed populace. In his keynote address, Air Marshal (Ret.) Farhat Hussain underscored the necessity of exploiting Indian vulnerabilities that are often masked as strengths through media manipulation. He called for equipping individuals with critical thinking skills to discern truth from propaganda and recommended rationalized media regulations to manage the cross-border influence of media narratives. Dr. Nazir Hussain, in his closing remarks, addressed the growing dominance of social media as a counterbalance to the restrictive practices of mainstream media. He attributed this trend to the corporate ownership of traditional media houses, which often limits the diversity of perspectives available to the public. The seminar shed light on pressing global and national challenges posed by media influence, including the rise of misinformation, the weaponization of narratives, and the role of social media as an alternative to mainstream platforms. Panelists collectively stressed the urgent need for digital literacy, media regulation reforms, and the cultivation of critical thinking to navigate the evolving media landscape.

## Mehboob says he will serve lawyers with dedication



DNA

KHARIAN: "I will serve the lawyers of the Kharian Bar with greater dedication than before." These views were expressed by Choudhry Mehboob Ahmed Advocate, who was elected unopposed as President. He further stated, "I am grateful to the lawyers of the Kharian Bar Association for the trust they have placed in me. All lawyers are respectable to me, and it is an honor for me that the entire Bar has shown complete confidence in me. I will repay their trust by serving them diligently."

## ID card to ensure legal age of marriage in Pakistan



DNA

RAWALPINDI: The participants at the "SRHR and Child Marriages: Challenges and Way Forward" workshop have unanimously endorsed a resolution calling for the minimum age of marriage for girls to be linked to their national identity card across Pakistan. The resolution to leverage technology and national identity cards to prevent child marriages was supported by a diverse group of stakeholders, including health professionals, religious scholars, lawyers, academicians, media persons, and government

officials from various departments including education, health, population welfare, women development and local government. The resolution's push for NADRA to register all marriages online is a significant step towards enforcing the minimum age of marriage for girls in Pakistan. By leveraging technology and national identity cards, the resolution aims to prevent underage marriages and ensure that girls are socially, mentally, and physically equipped to bear the responsibilities of marriage. This collective effort emerged from a workshop jointly organized by PODA and the District Population

Welfare Office, Rawalpindi, which brought together stakeholders to discuss the challenges and future directions in addressing child marriages. The workshop was held at Family Health Clinic and Training Hall at Benazir Bhutto Hospital. PODA is implementing a 3-year project "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality" in 41 districts of Punjab, supported by the Norwegian Embassy, Islamabad. The workshop was held at Family Health Clinic and Training Hall at Benazir Bhutto Hospital. Advocate Khawaja Zahid Nasim, Legal Advisor to PODA and Chairperson of the Nahe-

da Mehboob Elahi Foundation, emphasized the need to uniformly define a minor as someone under 18 years of age across all laws. He pointed out a discrepancy in the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2015-Punjab, which sets the minimum marriage age for girls at 16, yet defines a "minor" as any child under 18 years old. A unified definition for all children, regardless of gender, is essential for protecting their rights, he added. Nabeela Aslam, Project Manager at PODA, quoted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defines a child as any person under 18 years old.

## HEC reviews curriculum in discipline of Pharmacy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has convened a curriculum review meeting in the discipline of Pharmacy at University of Sargodha. According to the official sources from HEC, the meeting aimed at reviewing and updating the academic program for Doctor of Pharmacy. The meeting brought together 28 experts from academia along with representatives from industry and Pharmacy Council of Pakistan, showcasing a shared commitment to enhance the academic and professional standards of Pharmacy program. Discussions centered on modernizing the curriculum to reflect emerging trends, aligning it with global standards, and to address the evolving needs within the Pharmacy sector in Pakistan. Notably, this update is critical as the

curriculum for Doctor of Pharmacy was last revised in 2011. Prof. Dr. Javeid Iqbal, Advisor BOG & Dean, Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, Minhaj University, Lahore was unanimously elected by NCRC as the Convener and Prof. Dr. Fazli Nasir, HOD, Department of Pharmacy, University of Peshawar was elected as Co-Convener. Their extensive knowledge and leadership played a key role in refining and updating the curriculum framework for Doctor of Pharmacy program. HEC expresses its gratitude for the valuable contributions of all participants and institutions and Pharmacy Council of Pakistan that contributed to the success of the meeting. The newly updated curriculum is poised to significantly enhance the preparedness of graduates, enabling them to make meaningful contributions to the field of Pharmacy.

## Light snowfall in Galiyat, Rescue 1122 on high alert

DNA

NATHIAGALI: Light snowfall has begun in the scenic tourist destinations of Nathiagali, Ayubia, Changleh, and surrounding areas, drawing visitors to the region on Monday. According to District Emergency Officer Muhammad Arif Khattak, the snowfall has prompted an influx of tourists eager to experience the winter charm of Galyat. In response, Rescue 1122 has been placed on high alert to ensure the safety and convenience of visitors. Multiple rescue points have been established throughout Galyat to address any emergencies that may arise. District Emergency Officer Khattak assured that Rescue 1122 personnel are stationed at these points and will remain available round-the-clock to assist tourists. The proactive measures aim to facilitate safe travel and enhance the experience of those visiting the snow-covered region.

## Realme launches waterproof smartphone

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The world's fastest growing smartphone brand realme has officially launched the realme C75, a revolutionary device with unparalleled water and dust resistance protection. It features the coveted IP69 rating, a rare inclusion across its price segment in Pakistan. The device is available for PKR 49,999/-. With the realme C75, the brand takes innovation to an entirely new level. Packed with features rarely seen in its price range, this device is designed to meet the demands of modern users: IP69 Rating: Unprecedented water and dust resistance, capable of withstanding high-pressure and high-temperature water jets. 6000mAh Battery with 45W Fast Charging: Offering all-day power with quick recharge times, ensuring seamless connectivity. ArmorShell Glass Protect on: Enhanced shock resistance for durability in everyday and rugged conditions. Helio G92 Max Chipset with 90Hz Display: A powerful 4G chip with an octa-core design and clock speeds up to 2GHz delivering smooth gaming and multitasking experiences with crystal-clear visuals. Up to 8GB + 16GB dynamic RAM provides enough memory for games and apps to run smoothly. The realme C75 isn't just about performance; it's a revolutionary device designed for real-world durability. With its industry-leading IP69 rating, this phone redefines resilience by offering unparalleled protection against water and dust. Whether it's accidental spills, rain, or even intentional cleaning, the realme C75 can handle it all. From rinsing it under running water to submerging it entirely, this device stands firm, giving users peace of mind in any environment. This level of physical safeguards are not even seen in most high-end smartphones. Combined with its stylish Lightning Gold and Storm Black color options, the C75 seamlessly blends practicality and elegance, making it the perfect companion for your active lifestyle. The launch of the realme C75 marks a significant milestone for the brand, offering flagship-grade features in an entry-level smartphone. By bridging the gap between affordability and premium functionality, realme continues to redefine what's possible in the tech space. This strategic launch caps a year of extraordinary growth and innovation, signaling an exciting future for both the brand and its consumers.

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## COMPLETION OF F-8 UNDERPASS IN JUST 42 DAYS RECORD TIME

Inauguration: December 24, 2024 by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

As per the vision of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and under the supervision of Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Federal Minister for Interior Capital Development Authority has completed, Jinnah Avenue F-8 Chowk Underpass in just 42 days and has achieved a new milestone.

**CDA** Capital Development Authority  
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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### DECEMBER

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

### Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



### Enquiry

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

# Naseer, Nasir unveil TDAP facilitation desk to boost trade

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) has inaugurated a new Facilitation Centre at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), aiming to assist the local business community in expanding its operations globally. This initiative is part of TDAP's ongoing efforts to support businesses in accessing international markets and fostering growth. The Centre was officially opened by TDAP Director General Mohammad Naseer, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, and other distinguished former presidents, including Zafar Bakhtawari, Mian Akram Farid, and Mian Shaukat Masood, along with TDAP Director Ishaq Shinwari. The event gathered key figures to mark the start of this important venture. In his speech, Mohammad Naseer emphasized the Federal Government's commitment, under the leadership of Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan, to making Pakistan an attractive destination for foreign investors. He outlined TDAP's central goal of addressing the challenges faced



by the business community, particularly in securing access for Pakistani goods to global markets. He further noted that TDAP plans to conduct and participate in multiple international exhibitions during the fiscal year to achieve this goal. Additionally, he announced the organization of the Pakistan-ASEAN Trade Development Conference (PATDC) and a Single Country Exhibition in Ja-

karta, Indonesia, in August 2025, to boost exports and investment in the ASEAN region. Naseer encouraged the business community to actively participate in these initiatives to maximize their benefits. Naseer also highlighted that Pakistan's economic challenges can be mitigated through enhanced trade. He stated that the Facilitation Centre will play a key role in connecting entrepreneurs,

facilitating product showcases, and promoting awareness and mutual benefits among business partners. ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi expressed his appreciation for TDAP's pivotal role in enhancing Pakistan's trade relations. He regarded the establishment of the TDAP Facilitation Desk at ICCI as a significant step forward and anticipated that it would help drive

business growth, foster innovative approaches, and strengthen connections with regional and international partners. He expressed his optimism that with the shared commitment to increasing bilateral trade and exploring new opportunities for long-term economic collaboration across various sectors will definitely be fruitful. Former ICCI President Zafar Bakhtawari underscored the urgent need to prioritize export growth, proposing the declaration of an "export emergency" to address the country's trade deficit. Other former presidents, Mian Akram Farid, Mian Shaukat Masood, Zahid Maqbool raised the initiative and called for an increased role for Commercial Counselors and a focus on organizing more exhibitions to strengthen Pakistan's trade presence abroad. Key attendees included ICCI Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Executive Members Rohail Anwar Butt, Waseem Chaudhry, Irfan Chaudhry, Naveed Satti, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Ishaq Sial, ICCI members Naem Siddiqui, Waqas Swati, Director TDAP Ishaq Shinwari, Shakeel Abbasi and other

## ANF recovers 308 kg drugs in 12 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 12 operations across the country managed to recover over 308 kg drugs worth Rs 250 million and arrested 11 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that in an operation, ANF recovered 200 grams hashish from the possession of two suspects rounded up near a university in Islamabad. Arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions, he added. In second operation, 1.2 kg ice was recovered from a Riyadh-bound passenger netted at Multan Airport. In two separate operations in Karachi, total 30.2 kg ice was recovered from two parcels at a courier office. The parcels were booked for Australia. 159 kg morphine and 53 kg heroin were recovered from different areas of Mastung in Quetta. 40.8 kg hashish hidden in a drum was recovered from two motorcyclists arrested near Musharrarf Colony area in Karachi. In two other operations on M-1 Motorway in Islamabad, ANF recovered 9 kg heroin, 1 kg opium, 1.6 kg ice and 1.2 kg hashish from the possession of three suspects. 4.2 kg hashish and 500 grams heroin were recovered from the possession of a woman arrested near Kakpul, Islamabad. In 11th operation, 4 kg ice was recovered from a drug smuggler nabbed near Sibi Road, Quetta.—APP

## ISSI, Lightstone Publishers host Adab Festival Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The 9th "Adab Festival Pakistan", hosted by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with Lightstone Publishers, had an engaging daylong sessions highlighting the role played by literature in building a harmonious society. In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood emphasized Pakistan's literary richness and ISSI's commitment to fostering creativity through literature. He highlighted the Adab Festival's role in promoting book reading, especially among youth, as a vital balancing factor in the digital age. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood lauded the festival as a platform to celebrate cultural pluralism, inspire dialogue, and explore creative ideas. He commended the festival's diverse program, featuring book talks and discussions on topics such as Quaid-e-Azam's vision, women empowerment, and education, showcasing its potential to inspire new perspectives. The event, he noted, serves as a bridge

between emerging and established writers, fostering connections and nurturing literary aspirations. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood expressed gratitude to the participants and encouraged attendees to engage with the sessions, underscoring the festival's power to connect, educate, and celebrate the enduring impact of words. He also affirmed ISSI's resolve to systematically project Pakistan's soft power inherent in its rich culture and arts and literature in active collaboration with literary institutions and civil society. In her introductory remarks, Ms. Ameena Saiyid highlighted the transformative power of literature festivals in honoring writers, researchers, and poets, while addressing societal challenges and reinforcing cultural identity. Dr. Najeeba Arif, Chairperson Pakistan Academy of Letters, emphasized literature's role in fostering humanity, hope, and soft power, stressing its influence in shaping a nation's cultural and intellectual landscape. The session laid the foundation for a

festival that celebrates creativity, intellectual exchange, and meaningful dialogue, underscoring the significant role of literature in societal progress. The first session of the Adab Festival, titled "Jinnah's Vision for Pakistan - A Call for Action," featured insightful remarks by Barrister Yasser Latif Hamdani, author of the book, and was moderated by Professor Dr. Ilhan Niaz. Barrister Hamdani emphasized Jinnah's role as a key legislator in Pakistan's formation, contrasting his inclusive vision with Gandhi's focus on religion in politics. He clarified that Jinnah envisioned a state, promoting harmony among diverse communities while fostering a modern Muslim society grounded in its religious roots. Hamdani dispelled misconceptions, stressing that Jinnah's vision was not for a theocracy, but for a progressive Pakistan based on equality, justice, and tolerance. The session highlighted the need to realign contemporary discourse with Jinnah's ideals, advocating for a more inclusive and harmonious society. The second

session of the Adab Festival, titled "Leadership and Legacy," featured an engaging discussion with Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, Mr. Zahid Hussain, and Ms. Arifa Noor, moderated by Dr. Salma Malik. Mr. Zahid Hussain stressed the importance of history for the younger generation, reflecting on Pakistan's challenges and sharing insights from interviews with figures like Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan and Rajiv Gandhi. Dr. Maleeha Lodhi highlighted unlearned lessons from history; missed opportunities in land reforms, education etc.; and the role of individuals in shaping history. Ms. Arifa Noor explored the evolution of political leaders and the need for balanced journalism to capture complex realities. The session offered a thought-provoking exploration of Pakistan's leadership, historical trajectory, and the lasting legacy of key figures and institutions. Following an inspiring Sufi performance by Arieab Azhar, the third session of the Adab Festival, titled "Reimagining Educa-

## Hurriyat leaders expose India's peace mantra in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: Hurriyat leaders and organizations in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir have strongly condemned the Indian government's efforts to portray a false image of peace in the territory, calling it a "propaganda campaign" aimed at misleading the international community. According to Kashmir Media Service, in a joint statement, these leaders reaffirmed their stance that India's narrative of peace and development in occupied Jammu and Kashmir is a fabrication, especially after the revocation of Article 370 in 2019. The statement emphasized that the Modi regime cannot conceal the reality of the Kashmir situation through its propaganda machinery. "India is misleading the world with false claims of peace and progress in IIOJK," the leaders declared, adding that the truth of the region's condition remains unchanged, despite India's attempts to manufacture a narrative of development. Since the revocation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, the leaders pointed out that India has escalated efforts to colonize Kashmir, intensifying its militaristic actions and furthering its agenda of suppressing Kashmiri aspirations for freedom. "The Modi regime's actions on August 5, 2019, were not only illegal but have worsened an already volatile situation in South Asia. Kashmiris' resistance will thwart India's nefarious agenda," they said. The statement also condemned India's transformation of the territory into a militarized zone. "IIOJK has been turned into a military garrison, creating an atmosphere of fear and oppression. India's militaristic approach cannot suppress Kashmiris' unwavering passion for freedom," the leaders said. In response to India's continued attempts to project a false narrative of peace, the leaders stressed that a lasting peace in South Asia is impossible without addressing the Kashmir dispute as per the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.—DNA

## Spike barriers installed on Murree Road

RAWALPINDI: The City Traffic Police Rawalpindi on Monday started installing spike barriers on the Murree Road to prevent one-way violations. According to a CTP spokesman, the work to install spike barriers was carried out in front of Survey of Pakistan and at the IJF Turn on the Murree Road. He said due to the barriers installation work, one lane of the Murree Road remained closed, causing heavy traffic pressure on the Faizabad side of the Double Road. He said on the instruction of City Traffic Officer, additional personnel were deployed on Murree Road to maintain the traffic flow.—APP

## Javed appointed VP as Part of UBG's restructuring

ISLAMABAD: Chaudhry Javed Iqbal has been appointed Vice President as part of UBG's restructuring, and the notification has been issued. A prestigious ceremony was held yesterday at FPCCI's Capital Office in Islamabad, where Chaudhry Javed Iqbal, nominated as Vice President for UBG representing Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir, was presented with his appointment notification. The ceremony was attended by FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh, UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari ubg islamabad region Abdul Rauf Alam, former Chairman Founders Group Khalid iqbal malik, former ICCI Vice President Faad Waheed, UBG Islamabad, ICCI President Nasir Qureshi, Vice President Nasir Chaudhry, UBG Islamabad Senior Vice President Johar Ali Raiki, Capital Office Incharge Karim Aziz Malik, former President Ijaz Abbasi, Khalid Chaudhry, Waseem Chaudhry, and other prominent figures. Speaking on the occasion, FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh said, "The appointment of Chaudhry Javed Iqbal is an important step in UBG's restructuring. His inclusion will further strengthen and activate UBG in the Azad Kashmir and Islamabad regions." UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari said, "The Patron-in-Chief of UBG, S.M. Tanveer, has taken remarkable steps to make the organization more dynamic and active. Chaudhry Javed Iqbal's appointment is another significant milestone in this process. We are confident that under his leadership, UBG will achieve even greater success." UBG Islamabad Region President Abdul Rauf Alam added, "Chaudhry Javed Iqbal has already proven his capabilities. He has rendered outstanding services in FPCCI and Mirpur Chamber. We are certain that he will bring the same dedication to UBG, further strengthening the organization." The appointment of Johar Ali Raiki as UBG Islamabad's Senior Vice President was also highlighted during the event, recognizing him as a recent addition to the leadership team.—APP

## CM Punjab launches Honahar Scholarship Program at NUST

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Monday inaugurated Phase-II of Pakistan's largest educational initiative, the "Honahar Scholarship Program", covering expenses of 30,000 students annually and 120,000 students over the next four years, marking a historic step in the country's educational landscape. Speaking at a ceremony held here at FAST National University of Computer and Engineering Sciences, the Chief Minister stated, "Under this program, talented students can pursue higher education at top Pakistani institutions without finan-

cial worries. The Punjab government will cover 100% of the educational expenses for qualified students." The program benefits students from "65 universities, 12 medical and dental colleges, and 359 colleges in Punjab", covering 68 disciplines. Students under 22 years of age with a Punjab domicile and a parental income below Rs. 300,000 per month are eligible to apply. To ensure transparency, all applications were processed through an online portal. A multi-tiered scrutiny process involving institutional, provincial, and steering committees—led by Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurang-

zeb—oversees the program. Highlighting the initiative's scope, Maryam Nawaz noted, "Scholarships have already been awarded to 2,473 students at the University of Punjab. Today, 2,570 students from Rawalpindi Division are being awarded scholarships at this ceremony." She further shared that "1,886 students from UET Lahore" have benefited, she added, "1660 scholarships" are allocated for students from public sector universities, while 637 scholarships are for federal universities which will be distributed among the students of private sector universities, a first in the country's history.—APP

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## Briefs

## National working women day commemorated

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Human Rights on Monday commemorated National Working Women's Day 2024 with female officers and officials and attached departments, commissions and various ministries. Federal Secretary for Human Rights, Allah Dino Khawaja, acknowledged the significant contributions of women in public service and emphasized the importance of fostering inclusive, equitable, and safe workplaces. He highlighted the Ministry's commitment to advancing policies that ensure equal opportunities, gender equity, and protection against workplace discrimination. He stated, "Today, we not only celebrate the professional achievements of women but also recognize their ongoing efforts to break societal stereotypes, dismantle workplace barriers, and ensure equal opportunities for all. Women in Pakistan have shown exceptional courage and resilience in overcoming gender biases and contributing significantly to public administration, education, healthcare, technology, and entrepreneurship."—APP

## Christmas Tree timeless of symbol of celebration

ISLAMABAD: As the countdown to Christmas begins, the Christian community in the federal capital, like elsewhere in the country, is joyfully embracing the tradition of decorating evergreen coniferous trees to celebrate the festive season. With just a day left until the occasion, the sight of colorful, adorned Christmas trees is adding vibrancy and warmth to the holiday spirit in the federal capital. Prominent malls, hotels, and public spaces across the capital have joined the festivities, proudly displaying dazzling Christmas trees that not only symbolize the season but also serve as focal points of attraction for visitors of all faiths. These displays reflect the inclusive spirit of the season, fostering unity and joy among communities. The Christmas tree, an iconic element of the festival, represents the hope, renewal, and togetherness that Christmas embodies. Traditionally, these trees—whether real or artificial—are embellished with ornaments such as shimmering baubles, gold and silver bells, radiant stars, pine cones, candies, tinsel, and balloons crafted from various materials, including glass and ceramic.—APP

## Christmas cake cutting ceremony at Finance Division

The ceremony began with prayers for the peace, security, and solidarity of the country. Minister Aurangzeb extended heartfelt Christmas greetings to the Christian staff, recognizing their contributions and reaffirming the government's commitment to promoting inclusivity and equality for all citizens

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, hosted a special cake cutting ceremony in connection with celebration of the occasion of Christmas by the Christian staff of the Finance Division. The event was attended by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, along with senior officers of the Ministry. The ceremony began with prayers for the peace, security, and solidarity of the country. Minister Aurangzeb extended heartfelt Christmas greetings to the Christian staff, recognizing their contributions and reaffirming the government's commitment to promoting inclusivity and equality for all citizens.



## Prioritising gender-inclusive climate resilience need of hour

"When combined with innovative technologies, gender-inclusive climate strategies can transform communities and secure a more sustainable future for all," PM's climate aide remarked

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam said that while Pakistan grapples with the escalating adverse impacts of climate change, from devastating floods and droughts to extreme heat waves, there is a pressing need to prioritise gender-inclusive climate resilience to overcome these climate risks. "Women, especially in rural and marginalised communities, are among the most vulnerable to climate-related disasters. Yet, they also hold the key to sustainable, community-driven solutions," She said during her meeting with two-member delegation, led by Technical Lead for Green Tech Hub at NUST Dr Salman Atif. The delegation which also comprised a senior official from UN-Women Dr Waqar Ul Shams on Monday called on the PM's Coordinator

for Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam here in the M/o Climate Change & Environmental Coordination in Islamabad. Various matters related to the future plan of action for Green Tech Hub as a national focal point for research and green technology driven startups from the country and possible search for international partners for enhancing co-operation and collaboration in climate research and startups ecosystem came under discussion between two sides during the meeting. PM's climate aide assured the delegation of her all-out support to explore and reach out to available funding avenues and opportunities for strengthening the Green Tech Hub, set at the NUST University in Islamabad in collaboration with the climate change and environmental coordination ministry. The Green-Tech Hub was launched this year in October as a dedicated platform with overarching aim to serve

as a dedicated space for students, researchers, and innovators to collaborate on cutting-edge solutions in areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste management, climate adaptation technologies, and sustainable agriculture. The initiative is a direct response to the urgent need for innovation in addressing Pakistan's environmental challenges, including energy shortages, water scarcity, pollution, and the growing impacts of climate change. During the meeting PM's climate aide Romina Khurshid Alam highlighted that "By empowering women with the tools, knowledge, and resources to adapt to a changing climate, Pakistan can build stronger, more resilient communities for the future. However, there is urgent need for inclusive, holistic risk management strategies focusing on building climate resilience of the women and children." She noted with concern that one of the most critical,

yet often overlooked, aspects of climate change adaptation and resilience in Pakistan and in many developing countries is gender inclusivity. Women's experiences and vulnerabilities in the face of climate-related disasters are unique, and addressing these disparities is essential for building sustainable and equitable climate solutions she remarked. Romina Khurshid Alam highlighted that women in rural and marginalised areas of the country often bear the brunt of climate impacts; nevertheless, they also hold valuable knowledge and the potential to lead resilience-building efforts. However, empowering women with technical know-how, skills and financial resources is key to their climate resilience. "When combined with innovative technologies, gender-inclusive climate strategies can transform communities and secure a more sustainable future for all," PM's climate aide remarked.

## Envoy Hashmi praises China's new vocational education

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi praised China's introduction of new vocational majors in high-tech fields like artificial intelligence, robotics, and clean energy as a model for Pakistan's technical education reforms. He was addressing China-Pakistan Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Forum 2024 that was held here at Pakistan's Embassy, according to a report carried by China Economic Net.

He called for greater collaboration between academia and industry to align educational programs with market demands, ensuring a future-ready workforce capable of thriving in evolving industries. The Forum 2024 was aimed at bringing together policymakers, educators, and industry leaders from both nations to discuss strategies for strengthening cooperation in skill development. The event, a significant milestone in bilateral relations, focused on advancing technical and vocational training under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework. Ambassador Hashmi highlighted that only 25% of Pakistan's workforce currently has access to formal technical training, despite over 64% of the population being under 30. He stressed that bridging this gap is essential to empowering the nation's youth and driving socio-economic development, particularly as Pakistan advances into the industrialization phase of CPEC. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister Planning & Department & Special Initiatives proposed to establish a consortium of technical and vocational institutions to foster collaboration, exchange knowledge, and create a unified framework for skills development. He also seeks to set up specialized TVET institutes in the fourth priority special department to provide tailored, high-quality training for industries operating in the Special Economic Zones, act as catalysts for industrial growth, and enhance local workforce employability. Jia Peng, Deputy Director General Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, Ministry of Education China said the Chinese government attaches great importance to vocational education, actively promotes the construction and reform of vocational education system, strengthens international cooperation in vocational education.—DNA

## HEC reviews curriculum in discipline of pharmacy

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has convened a curriculum review meeting in the discipline of Pharmacy at University of Sargodha. According to the official sources from HEC, the meeting aimed at reviewing and updating the academic program for Doctor of Pharmacy. The meeting brought together 28 experts from academia along with representatives from industry and Pharmacy Council of Pakistan, showcasing a shared commitment to enhance the academic and professional standards of Pharmacy program. Discussions centered on modernizing the curriculum to reflect emerging trends, aligning it with global standards, and to address the evolving needs within the Pharmacy sector in Pakistan. Notably, this update is critical as the curriculum for Doctor of Pharmacy was last revised in 2011. Prof. Dr. Javeed Iqbal, Advisor BOG & Dean, Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, Minhaj University, Lahore was unanimously elected by NCRC as the Convener and Prof. Dr. Fazli Nasir, HOD, Department of Pharmacy, University of Peshawar was elected as Co-Convener. Their extensive knowledge and leadership played a key role in refining and updating the curriculum framework for Doctor of Pharmacy program.—APP

## ICT sets up two Christmas Bazaars

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, in collaboration with the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI), has organized two Christmas bazaars at G-6 Appara Sunday Bazaar and Women's Bazaar in G-11. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, special bazaars are being set up in Islamabad to mark the Christmas celebrations, offering a range of items for the Christian community to prepare for the festive season. These markets aim to provide essential items and decorations at affordable prices, ensuring convenience for the Christian community during their Eid celebrations. The Christian community is encouraged to visit these markets and participate in the festive spirit. Meanwhile, stalls offering Christmas decorations, food items, and other essentials are being arranged to meet their needs. These bazaars aim to foster inclusivity and provide a space for celebrations during this significant time of the year.—APP

## Middle Eastern War

## Realigning power at the expense of the people

AFTAB ALAM

ISLAMABAD: The Middle East is once again in the throes of a conflict with wide-reaching implications, one that threatens to pull in local, regional, and global powers. The ongoing war between Israel and Palestinian factions, notably Hamas, has already caused immense loss of life and destruction. But beyond the immediate humanitarian crisis, the broader goal seems to be a reshuffling of regional power dynamics, with various players—both inside and outside the Middle East—jockeying for position. The scale of the war and its potential to draw in external powers like the United States, Iran, and others have created a situation that could redefine geopolitical boundaries in the region for decades to come. What we are seeing is not merely a localized conflict between Israel and Palestinian groups. It is, in fact, a collision between local, regional, and global powers—each seeking to realign the geopolitical landscape to fit their interests. The United States, Israel, pro-Western Arab nations, and Iran are all pursuing objectives in this chaotic

environment. Israel, in particular, is waging an all-out war not just against Hamas but also against Iranian-backed groups like Hezbollah, with the ultimate aim of weakening Iran's influence in the region. This has unfolded with the tacit approval of major global powers, especially the U.S. and pro-Western Arab states, which are looking to secure their interests in the future political configuration of the Middle East. This current geopolitical situation draws parallels to the 19th-century Scramble for Africa, where great powers divided the continent into spheres of influence for their own strategic and economic gains. Today, the Middle East appears to be a settled sphere of influence for the United States, while other global powers like China and Russia are focused on different regions. China, for example, seems more interested in expanding its influence in South and Southeast Asia, Africa, and parts of Latin America, while Russia is absorbed in maintaining influence over the Baltics, Central Asia, and Orthodox Eastern Europe. Both China and Russia have limited involvement in the current Middle

Eastern conflict because they are preoccupied with their own pressing issues. China's primary focus is on sustaining economic growth, while Russia is heavily invested in its military campaign in Ukraine. At this point, both powers have their hands full and would find it challenging to pursue more aggressive policies toward the Middle East, where the U.S. remains the dominant external actor. The Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 has raised significant questions about whether Israel may have seen this as an opportunity to escalate the conflict. Some observers speculate that Israel might have taken a "looking the other way" approach on that day, allowing the assault to unfold to create a pretext for launching a broader military campaign. This would give Israel the justification it needed to not only target Hamas but also strike Iranian proxies and potentially Iran itself. This theory holds that Israel's response was not merely reactive but a calculated step in its long-term strategy to reshape the region's power dynamics, and to do so with international support. Israel's current military campaign seems to follow the principles

of Otto von Bismarck, the 19th-century Prussian chancellor who achieved his objectives through calculated wars. By launching intense military operations, Israel is attempting to achieve its strategic interests by force rather than through diplomatic negotiations. For decades, the status quo in the Middle East has been characterized by a delicate balance of power, with repeated cycles of conflict and ceasefires between Israel, Palestinian groups, and neighboring Arab nations. However, Israel's recent actions suggest it is seeking to disrupt this balance by weakening its adversaries, particularly Hamas and Hezbollah, and forcing a new regional order where it holds a position of strength. Pro-Western Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE have been noticeably restrained in their public statements. While they offer lip service in support of the Palestinian cause, they seem to have given Israel a tacit green light to pursue its military objectives. These nations stand to gain from a realignment in the Middle East that weakens Iran's influence and provides them with greater leverage in future regional

negotiations. When the time comes to sit at the negotiating table, these countries will likely be key players, working to shape the new regional order—even if it comes at the expense of the Palestinians and other Arabs. Israel's military actions are clearly aimed at securing a position of strength in any future negotiations. By inflicting severe damage on Gaza and Palestinian resistance forces, Israel is hoping to force Hamas and other groups into negotiations from a position of weakness. The humanitarian toll, while tragic, is seen by Israel as necessary collateral damage in the pursuit of long-term security and dominance. This strategy also extends to Hezbollah, which Israel has directly involved in the conflict. By striking Hezbollah's positions and weakening its capabilities, Israel is hoping to limit Iran's influence in Lebanon and reduce the threat on its northern border. Ironically, Hamas, which has become one of Israel's most formidable enemies, was originally seen by some Israeli officials as a useful counterbalance to the secular Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In its early years, Hamas was indirectly sup-

ported by Israeli authorities in the hope that it would divide Palestinian political unity and weaken the PLO. However, this strategy has backfired, as Hamas has evolved into a powerful force that now plays a central role in the current conflict. Iran has long backed groups like Hezbollah and Hamas as part of its broader strategy to project influence in the region. However, with the current conflict targeting its proxies, Iran may find itself at a disadvantage. Should Israel succeed in significantly weakening these groups, Iran may be forced to compromise. At the negotiating table, Iran may end up sacrificing its influence over Hezbollah and Hamas in exchange for ending sanctions and gaining broader acceptance in the international community, especially among Western nations. The outcome could be a diminished role for Iran in the region, even if it manages to secure some concessions from the West. At this moment in history, both China and Russia have limited strategic interests in the Middle East. China, as mentioned earlier, is focused on expanding its economic influence

in other regions, particularly in Asia and Africa. Russia, on the other hand, is heavily preoccupied with its military campaign in Ukraine and maintaining influence over its traditional spheres in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Their lack of direct involvement in the current Middle Eastern conflict allows Israel and its Western allies to pursue their objectives with minimal interference. Without the looming presence of China or Russia, the U.S. remains the dominant power shaping the future of the Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's domestic political troubles also play a significant role in the current crisis. Facing corruption charges and political instability at home, Netanyahu has seized upon the conflict as a way to solidify his leadership and distract from internal issues. By projecting military strength and rallying nationalist sentiment, Netanyahu aims to shore up his political base and present himself as the protector of Israel in a time of crisis. The ongoing Middle East crisis is a complex power struggle involving multiple regional and global actors. Israel, with the backing of the

U.S. and the tacit approval of pro-Western Arab states, is seeking to reshape the region's geopolitical landscape, particularly by weakening Iranian influence. However, the cost of this realignment will be borne primarily by the Palestinian people, who continue to suffer immense casualties and displacement. Meanwhile, China and Russia, preoccupied with their own priorities, are unlikely to become directly involved in the conflict. This absence leaves the U.S. and its regional allies in a dominant position to influence the future of the Middle East. As the conflict drags on, the risk of a broader regional war looms large, and the question remains whether any of the involved parties can achieve their strategic goals without further plunging the region into chaos. For now, the people of the Middle East—especially Palestinians—remain at the mercy of larger geopolitical forces that are reshaping their world.

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## Life under fire

**I**N the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, a symbol of resilience and resistance, Safaa Al-Ghandour lived before daily shelling and occupation forced her to flee. She now endures a life of fear, hunger, and displacement. Safaa, a 31-year-old pregnant mother in her seventh month, lived with her two children, Zohair (11) and Wafa (10). Bearing the burdens of war and siege, she represents the suffering of thousands of Palestinian families amid the ruins of their everyday lives destroyed by the conflict. The sound of explosions on October 7, 2023 marked the start of a new chapter in her life. Recalling that day, Safaa said, "I heard the explosions as I was preparing my children for school. I got scared and decided not to send them. Later, the news confirmed my fears—a war had begun, and the days ahead would be difficult." "It was an ordinary morning," she continued, "until the sound of blasts shook the place. That's when I realized things could escalate into a war." Within days, the Israeli military ordered residents of northern Gaza to evacuate south. "We had nowhere to go," Safaa said. "We decided to stay, believing our home might still be safer than other places that seemed just as dangerous." Hope quickly turned to terror. "The bombing was relentless, day and night. One missile destroyed our neighbor's house. Debris and body parts were everywhere," she recounted. "The children screamed, and I tried to calm them, but I was as terrified as they were." As the shelling continued, the Israeli military imposed a harsh siege. "We ran out of food and water. We ground animal feed into flour to make bread. My children developed intestinal infections and stomach pain because we had no clean water or proper food," Safaa said. With no electricity, they paid neighbors to charge their phones and lamps. Water had to be fetched from distant stations, requiring an hour-long walk. "Sometimes the children helped, and other times, we were forced to drink unsafe water. There were no vegetables, meat, or even flour," she added. In December 2023, Safaa's brother, Maysara Al-Ajouri, a 30-year-old barber in Jabalia, went missing. "He visited us one day, bringing laundry to be cleaned. He said he'd return the next day, but he never showed up." Under the siege, the family couldn't search for him. After the Israeli military withdrew, they visited his barbershop and rented apartment, only to find both destroyed. "We searched hospitals and informed the Red Cross, but there was no trace of him. We don't know if he's detained or dead," Safaa said. Safaa and her family were displaced multiple times during the war, moving to schools and shelters under dire conditions. "Once, we slept near a bathroom entrance. The shelters were unbearably overcrowded, but the intense bombing left us with no other choice." One night, they sought refuge at her aunt's home in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of western Gaza. "We left amid artillery fire and gunfire. Those were harsh days, and the food we brought quickly ran out. My husband and children stood in long lines at charity kitchens to get meals," she explained. When they returned to Jabalia, they found it utterly destroyed. "The streets were filled with craters and corpses. People used donkey carts to transport bodies. It was a nightmare." Now, Safaa lives under harsh humanitarian conditions, struggling to secure food and water for her family while grappling with her nutritional needs as a pregnant woman. "Sometimes I buy vitamins instead of food.

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## Afghanistan a hotbed of terrorism

**T**HE Taliban is under pressure, facing an increasing number of attacks from terror groups seeking to undermine its rule and destabilise Afghanistan. However, this is a problem of the Taliban's own making. The Taliban's acting refugee minister Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani was killed in a suicide bombing earlier this month. Taliban government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid called the bombing, which reportedly killed and wounded several other ministry employees, a "cowardly attack". Haqqani is the highest-ranking leader in the Taliban-led administration to be killed since the group re-took power in August 2021. He is the brother of Jalaluddin Haqqani, founder of the Haqqani Network, and uncle of acting interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani. The family are key power brokers in Afghanistan, viewed as a more pragmatic faction vying for influence against the more extreme elements of Taliban leadership, who adhere to a strict interpretation of Islam. Islamic State Khorasan (or Isis-K) quickly claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing this month, reportedly saying that its agent Abu Usman Khorasani evaded security to kill Haqqani. The group is an offshoot of Islamic State and seeks to create a caliphate across South and Central Asia. Since 2021, the Taliban has claimed to have improved the security situation in Afghanistan by reining in Isis-K but the facts on the ground tell a different story. The killing of Haqqani follows other attacks on the Taliban. Isis-K has claimed responsibility for the killing of the Taliban's governor of Balkh province, Mohammad Dawood Muzammil, in March 2023 as well as the killings of the acting governor of Badakhshan, Nisar Ahmad Ahmadi, in June 2023. It is reportedly behind the killing of former Taliban police commander Safi Sameem and senior Taliban commander Hamidullah Noorzi. The country has also witnessed a surge in Isis-K attacks targeting civilians, particularly minority Shia and Hazara communities. This includes the killing of 14 Hazara Afghans in Daikundi province and a suicide bombing in Kabul that killed six people in September. In March, 21 people were killed in a bombing in Kandahar and two died in an attack in Kabul in January. Worryingly, Isis-K's reach has spilled across Afghanistan's borders. In March, the group claimed responsibility for an attack on Crocus City Hall in Moscow, Russia, which killed at least 140 people and wounded more than 500. This was after Isis-K carried out a suicide bombing in the Iranian city of Kerman in January, killing 84 people, and a church shooting in Istanbul, Turkey, that killed one person. The situation is clearly spiralling out of control, and the Taliban can only blame itself for the rise of terrorism in Afghanistan. During its 20-year insurgency, the Taliban trained hundreds of suicide bombers to carry out attacks on Western and Afghan government forces and terrorise the civilian population throughout the country. The Haqqani Network is responsible for several attacks that killed hundreds of Afghan civilians. The network was subsequently designated a security threat by the UN. Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani himself was formally labelled a terrorist in 2011 by the US government.

## 9 May verdict: Connect or disconnect?

Qamar Bashir



The prevailing negative perception of the armed forces is troubling for all reasonable individuals, including politicians, members of parliament, thinkers, analysts, and citizens from all segments of society—mothers, sisters, brothers, elders, and youth alike. They understand that strong, committed, and focused armed forces are essential for the security and safety of the country and its people. These stakeholders genuinely wish for the image of the armed forces to be restored as quickly as possible. However, frequent derogatory press conferences by the ISPR—labeling its own citizens as terrorists, perpetrator of violence, digital terrorists, or Khawarij, and urging Balochs to fight with the army instead of targeting innocents—are counterproductive

**T**HE 9th May saga has finally come to an end—whether lawfully, unlawfully, or through the application of brute force. In its press release, the ISPR (Inter-Services Public Relations) made comprehensive claims, stating that the punishments, which ranged from seven to ten years to the perpetrators of 9th May, were based on concrete and irrefutable evidence painstakingly gathered by investigating agencies. The ISPR attempted to substantiate its claims by releasing a heavily edited video, accompanied by dramatic music and special effects, as purported "irrefutable" evidence. However, the press release failed to acknowledge that the verdicts against civilians were issued under the Army Act, bypassing civilian legal processes. It also omitted critical details about the court proceedings, such as the collection of evidence, cross-examination of witnesses, evaluation of the prosecutor's case, and forensic analysis of the video to verify its authenticity and eliminate suspicions of tampering. The lack of transparency and adherence to due process raises serious concerns about the legitimacy and fairness of these judgments. The ISPR further claimed that the entire nation was deeply agonized by the alleged attacks on military installations. However, this assertion remains unsubstantiated. If such a sweeping claim is to be made, it should be backed by credible evidence, such as the results of a free and fair survey or the outcomes of the May 2024 elections, particularly the decimation of PTI during the electoral process. Without such supporting evidence, the ISPR's claim to speak on behalf of the entire nation lacks credibility and oversteps its institutional boundaries.

The fact remains that the armed forces and their installations are funded by the hard-earned tax money of the people of Pakistan. It is reasonable to believe that no nation or political party, under any stretch of imagination, harbors ill will or animosity towards the armed forces, which are sustained by the nation's taxpayers. Instead of resorting to introspection, if the ISPR believed that punishing the political street operators—many of whom likely did not fully understand the gravity of their actions or the potential consequences—would rekindle the people's love, affection, and respect for the armed forces, then it may need to reconsider its approach. It is important to recognize that many of these individuals may not have had the resources or the means to defend themselves adequately before the Field General

Court Martial. Moreover, the ISPR's assumptions are contradicted by the public's reaction to its own communications. After the ISPR posted the fabricated video on its official Twitter handle, I personally reviewed thousands of comments, hoping to find even a few supportive voices for the punishments. To my disappointment, less than 1% of the comments were favorable. This overwhelming public disapproval underscores the urgent need for introspection and a thoughtful re-evaluation of the current strategy.

The prevailing negative perception of the armed forces is troubling for all reasonable individuals, including politicians, members of parliament, thinkers, analysts, and citizens from all segments of society—mothers, sisters, brothers, elders, and youth alike. They understand that strong, committed, and focused armed forces are essential for the security and safety of the country and its people. These stakeholders genuinely wish for the image of the armed forces to be restored as quickly as possible. However, frequent derogatory press conferences by the ISPR—labeling its own citizens as terrorists, perpetrator of violence, digital terrorists, or Khawarij, and urging Balochs to fight with the army instead of targeting innocents—are counterproductive. Statements insinuating that politicians and activists are rebels or traitors, coupled with the arrests of political figures, political or right activists do not serve to create respect for the armed forces, but instead exacerbate the existing distrust and hatred.

It is deeply painful for Pakistanis to witness an institution once cherished and respected by people across the country now seemingly at odds with various groups—Balochs, Pashtoons, politicians, businessmen, lawyers, judiciary, public representatives, social media influencers, overseas Pakistanis, and media professionals. Unfortunately, the army attempts to address every perceived threat—whether intellectual, philosophical, or arising from media or social media—through the use of force reflects a flawed strategy. This force-driven approach, which fails to address the root causes, has proven ineffective in the past and will continue to fail in the future. Interestingly, the armed forces have installed a controversial figure as Prime Minister, who frequently attributes anti-people actions by the government to the Chief of Army Staff. He has publicly admitted that the Army Chief orchestrated the installation of a minority government in Pakistan following the alleged manipulation of

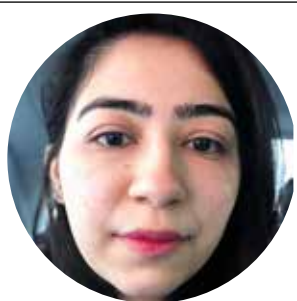
the 2024 elections. He also thanked the Army Chief for dispersing the PTI public meeting at D-Chowk on November 26th, during which a brutal operation by the Rangers reportedly resulted in the deaths of numerous PTI activists, allegedly due to direct fire. The government conveniently shifts responsibility for all anti-people actions by the Interior Ministry to the army-appointed Interior Minister. This deflection of blame by none other than the Prime Minister, coupled with the army's direct confrontations with citizens across the country, has fundamentally transformed public perception of the armed forces. Once revered and respected, the armed forces are now increasingly viewed as adversaries and usurpers of people's rights. This shift is deeply disturbing for Pakistanis who want to see their armed forces loved and respected. However, as the saying goes, love and respect must be mutual; one-sided admiration does not last long.

This is a critical point for the army leadership and the ISPR to consider. If they believe that propaganda videos, allegedly produced by unlawfully hired civilians, can restore the image of the armed forces, they are mistaken. The ISPR must recognize that genuine public relations require more than superficial attempts at image management. Building trust and goodwill demands meaningful actions that address the root causes of public dissatisfaction, rather than relying on ineffective and counterproductive propaganda. Given this context, it is imperative for all relevant agencies and platforms—such as the National Assembly, Senate, think tanks, and the armed forces' own research and analysis wings—to undertake comprehensive research studies, hold debates, and engage in consultations to address a fundamental question: why have the armed forces seemingly lost their place in the hearts of the people of Pakistan? The answer to this question should have been used to understand the root causes of people-army disconnect which is crucial for rebuilding trust and strengthening the bond between the armed forces and the citizens they serve. Such a strategy, if effectively implemented, could have swiftly bridged the trust deficit between the armed forces and the people, reignited the lost love, and restored the honor and dignity of the institution.

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

## The crooked path of sanctions: Pressure, power and diplomacy

Omiamah Khan



These sanctions are not new for Islamabad and the policy maker are equipped with the necessary understanding to effectively administer it. Conversely, the Washington is headed in a very different and old fashioned direction

**U**NITED States is currently facing a challenge to maintain its foreign policy balance in South Asia. The idea of squeezing Pakistan from India's lens is not a good strategic approach. The United States have imposed multiple sanctions in recent years under Iran, North Korea, Syria non-proliferation act (INKSNA) and recently under executive order 13382, blocking property of weapons of mass destruction, proliferators and their supporters. Pakistan is used to these tactics and dubs it as biased and unfair. However, the impositions of these sanctions are a clear sign that United States once a strong ally of Pakistan is eroding its influence over long standing developed bilateral ties. However, in the longer term US-Pakistan the feeble ties will be unfavourable for the Washington in the region. The carrot

and the stick policy will not work this time in the international relations. Pakistan will view these sanction as a threat to its sovereignty and unlevel playing field. However, the only craft that will work is the policy of engagement and trade off. In the name of curbing the proliferation the United States is leveraging Pakistan in to its Asia-Pacific strategy to contain China. This strategy will not be leaned into as an effective blue-print and at some point the other United States partners in the South Asian region may opt for an unaligned approach from Washington to curb its regional isolation and economic growth. It is significant to understand that in response of Pakistan's nuclear test the Glenn amendment sanctions imposed by United States in 1998 were adjusted in lieu of Counter terrorism cooperation post

9/11. The policy makers at Washington D.C. from the outset are aware about the Pakistan's strategic conundrum and the strategic capabilities it possess.

These sanctions are not new for Islamabad and the policy maker are equipped with the necessary understanding to effectively administer it. Conversely, the Washington is headed in a very different and old fashioned direction. It is imperative to recognise that the mediation process and engagement that Pakistan can establish in the region none other country can bring that for the State department. Hence, it's high time that incoming administration must reassess on past adversarial dynamics and acknowledge Pakistan's long-standing contributions, including its role in the recent years.

— The writer is the Head of South Asia Peace and Development Program Institute of Regional Studies



## Briefs

## Govt, PTI finally engage in talks

FROM PAGE 01

There was also a declaration of support for standing alongside the forces in the war against terrorism. The PTI and government finally kicked started the much-awaited negotiation process at the Parliament House, Islamabad, today with "hopes of a positive outcome" in a bid to ease the country's political tensions. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, PM's Adviser Rana Sanaullah, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, PPP leaders Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Naveed Qamar, and MuttahidaQumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) leader Farooq Sattar. PTI, meanwhile, was represented by former NA Speaker AsadQaiser, Sunni Itehad Council (SIC) Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza, and MajlisWahdat-e-MuslimeenAllama Raja Nasir Abbas, in today's session.

## Chairman Bilawal Bhutto...

FROM PAGE 01

ministers from proceedings. Despite the party leaders' reservations, Bilawal has urged them to continue engaging with the PML-N government. However, addressing the convocation ceremony at Sindh University in Jamshoro, Bilawal said the issue related to internet restrictions needed to be addressed urgently. "Our infrastructure used to be roads, highways motorways," he said. "In today's age, I believe it's our bandwidth, our fibre optic cable, our wireless internet services. In the past, there were attempts to control and censor people as there are now," he continued. "This is proof that you are strong and that they fear you because they do not want you to exercise your rights through the internet."

## KP government declares...

FROM PAGE 01

impacted as a result. Tribal clashes have killed more than 200 people since July, with various truces announced since the latest round of fighting began, as elders from the two sides negotiate a lasting agreement. In the meantime, the government has shut down key roads in and out of the district in an attempt to quell the violence, after a security convoy escorting residents was attacked in November, leaving more than 40 dead. At least 133 people have since been killed and 177 wounded in sporadic clashes since the incident.

## Pakistan calls US...

FROM PAGE 01

given by the US. She said that Pakistan never said that it wants to have such relations with the US that a war situation arises and the need for missiles arises. Pakistan has strongly protested against this decision of the US. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch also said that whether Pakistan's defense program is nuclear or missile program is only for Pakistan's security, major powers should adopt a responsible attitude.

## Kabul hails resumption..

FROM PAGE 01

said Afghan foreign ministry spokesman Zia Ahmad in a statement. "We will also be able to respond to the problems of Afghans residing in Saudi Arabia." Riyadh had posted its decision to resume diplomatic operations in Kabul on social media platform X. "Based on the desire of the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to provide all services to the brotherly Afghan people, it has been decided to resume the activities of the mission of the Kingdom in Kabul starting on December 22," it said. The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the level of Saudi representation in Kabul.

## Pick order for PSL 10 player draft revealed

The Pakistan Super League 10 player draft takes place on January 11, 2025 in Gwadar, Balochistan

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday, announced the pick order for the player draft of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10. As per the recently-announced pick order, two-time champions Lahore Qalandars will make the first pick in the platinum category, followed by arch-rivals Karachi Kings. 2019 champions Quetta Gladiators will make the third pick, while Peshawar Zalmi will have the fourth. Last season's runners-up Multan Sultans and reigning champions Islamabad United will make the fifth and sixth picks, respectively. The second round of the Platinum category will follow the reverse sequence, with United making the first pick, followed by Sultans, Zalmi, Gladiators, Kings and Qalandars. Notably, all six franchises will have a total of three picks each in platinum, diamond and gold categories. In the diamond category, the Kings will have the first pick in the first round, the Sultans will kick start the second round, while the opening pick in the third round will be made by the defending champions United. Meanwhile, Zalmi, Gladiators and Sultans will make the first picks of the three rounds of the gold category, respectively. The teams will make five picks in the silver category, two in emerging and four in supplementary category.

CATEGORIES	1st PICK	2nd PICK	3rd PICK	4th PICK	5th PICK	6th PICK
PLATINUM 1	LAHORE QALANDARS	KARACHI KINGS	QUETTA GLADIATORS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	MULTAN SULTANS	ISLAMABAD UNITED
PLATINUM 2	ISLAMABAD UNITED	MULTAN SULTANS	LAHORE QALANDARS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	KARACHI KINGS	QUETTA GLADIATORS
PLATINUM 3	QUETTA GLADIATORS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS	KARACHI KINGS	MULTAN SULTANS	PESHAWAR ZALMI
DIAMOND 1	KARACHI KINGS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	QUETTA GLADIATORS	MULTAN SULTANS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS
DIAMOND 2	MULTAN SULTANS	QUETTA GLADIATORS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	KARACHI KINGS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS
DIAMOND 3	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	MULTAN SULTANS	KARACHI KINGS	QUETTA GLADIATORS
GOLD 1	PESHAWAR ZALMI	MULTAN SULTANS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS	QUETTA GLADIATORS	KARACHI KINGS
GOLD 2	QUETTA GLADIATORS	LAHORE QALANDARS	KARACHI KINGS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	MULTAN SULTANS	PESHAWAR ZALMI
GOLD 3	MULTAN SULTANS	KARACHI KINGS	LAHORE QALANDARS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	ISLAMABAD UNITED	QUETTA GLADIATORS
SILVER 1	MULTAN SULTANS	KARACHI KINGS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS	QUETTA GLADIATORS	PESHAWAR ZALMI
SILVER 2	PESHAWAR ZALMI	QUETTA GLADIATORS	KARACHI KINGS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS	MULTAN SULTANS
SILVER 3	LAHORE QALANDARS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	MULTAN SULTANS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	QUETTA GLADIATORS	KARACHI KINGS
SILVER 4	MULTAN SULTANS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	QUETTA GLADIATORS	KARACHI KINGS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS
SILVER 5	ISLAMABAD UNITED	QUETTA GLADIATORS	KARACHI KINGS	LAHORE QALANDARS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	MULTAN SULTANS
EMERGING 1	QUETTA GLADIATORS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	MULTAN SULTANS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	LAHORE QALANDARS	KARACHI KINGS
EMERGING 2	KARACHI KINGS	LAHORE QALANDARS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	MULTAN SULTANS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	QUETTA GLADIATORS
SUPPLEMENTARY 1	ISLAMABAD UNITED	MULTAN SULTANS	LAHORE QALANDARS	QUETTA GLADIATORS	PESHAWAR ZALMI	KARACHI KINGS
SUPPLEMENTARY 2	PESHAWAR ZALMI	ISLAMABAD UNITED	MULTAN SULTANS	QUETTA GLADIATORS	KARACHI KINGS	LAHORE QALANDARS
SUPPLEMENTARY 3	KARACHI KINGS	LAHORE QALANDARS	MULTAN SULTANS	ISLAMABAD UNITED	QUETTA GLADIATORS	PESHAWAR ZALMI
SUPPLEMENTARY 4	ISLAMABAD UNITED	PESHAWAR ZALMI	MULTAN SULTANS	LAHORE QALANDARS	KARACHI KINGS	QUETTA GLADIATORS

## Malir Malangs crush Karachi Knights to stay perfect

Malangs maintain their stay at the top of KTPL Season 4 standings with fifth consecutive victory

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Abdul Rehman's quickfire cameo in the run chase steered Malir Malangs to a commanding seven-wicket victory over Karachi Knights in the 16th match of the Karachi Tape Ball Premier League (KTPL) Season 4 here at the Moin Khan Academy on Sunday. Put into bat first, the Knights racked up a massive total of 100/1 in the first innings, thanks to a swashbuckling half-century by Jahangir Shah. The opener smashed two fours and seven sixes on his way to top score with a 17-ball 51. He was supported by skipper Shafiqullah and Kamran Arif, who made unbeaten 24 and 12, respectively. Skipper Majid Ali picked up the solitary



wicket for the Malangs. In response, a recovering fifth-wicket partnership between Abdul Rehman and Miran Khan lifted Malangs to a fighting total of 92/6. Miran remained the top-scorer for the Malangs with an 18-ball 45, laced with two fours and five sixes, while Rehman made an eight-ball 31. Shafiq Ur Rehman was the standout bowler for the Knights, picking up three wickets for 25 runs in his two overs, while Jahangir Khan, Zuhair and Wakeel Shah, chipped in with a scalp apiece. Despite leading by eight

## Konstas poised for possible Test debut

'Just another day at it, back myself and be fearless,' says Konstas

SYDNEY: Australia's Sam Konstas remains uncertain about making his debut in the high-pressure environment of the fourth Test against India on Thursday. However, he believes some sage advice from former Australian opener Shane Watson will serve him well if he gets the nod. Konstas' parents, along with former all-rounder Shane Watson and his wife Lee, who manages the teenager, will be at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground on December 26 to support him should he receive his baggy green cap. Selected as a replacement for the dropped makeshift opener Nathan McSweeney, Konstas has already benefited from Watson's counsel on tackling India's formidable bowling attack, including the likes of Jasprit Bumrah. "Just another day at it, back myself and be fearless," Konstas recalled when he spoke to reporters on Monday. "I admire Shane Watson a lot. I like to take the game on and put pressure on the bowlers. He's a legend of the game and hopefully I can do that this week on my debut. It's pretty simple - just back myself and just 'see ball, hit ball' really." The 19-year-old has been in scintillating form in first-class cricket this season, with standout performances including a century against an Indian selection in a tour match in Canberra and a gritty 73 against India "A" during his last visit to the MCG. Amid Australia's top-order struggles in the first three Tests, which left the series balanced at 1-1, there has been growing momentum for Konstas to join the team. His attacking approach and calm demeanor have only strengthened his case for selection. "It's a huge honor, as a kid I've always dreamed of it," he added. "I'm trying to keep it as simple as possible, get my prep right and see what happens. - Agencies

## Hasaranga returns as SL announce squad for NZ series

The selectors also made four changes to the side

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's ace spinner Wanindu Hasaranga has been recalled to the ODI squad for the upcoming tour of New Zealand. The team, which will compete in three ODIs and three T20Is, will also see the return of several players who previously missed out. Hasaranga missed Sri Lanka's last ODI assignment, the home series against New Zealand in November, due to a hamstring injury. However, he has now regained full fitness and is set to play a crucial role in the 50-over format. Dunith Wellalage, who lost his spot in the T20I squad for the tour, has been retained in the ODI squad, providing much-needed depth to Sri Lanka's all-rounder options. The selectors made four changes to the side that played in the previous series against New Zealand. Dushan Hemantha, Kusal Perera, Sadeera Samarawickrama and Dishan Madushanka have all been omitted. Kusal Perera, who made a comeback to the ODI squad for the first time since the 2023 World Cup during the last series against New Zealand, did not feature in any of the games. Dushan Hemantha had replaced Hasaranga in the previous squad but has now been left out in favor of the leg-spinner's return. - Agencies

## Mbappe hit 'rock bottom' with missed penalty at Bilbao

Mbappe has scored four goals in all competitions

WEB DESK

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe hit "rock bottom" with a penalty miss at Athletic Bilbao earlier this month as he struggled to adapt to his new surroundings at Real Madrid but the French forward said he used that disappointment to fuel his recent return to form. Mbappe left Paris St Germain in the close season as the French club's all-time top scorer but his move to Real has been plagued by teething problems, while a hamstring injury and a thigh issue have also hampered his settling-in time. However, since missing his second penalty in a week in a 2-1 loss at Bilbao Mbappe has scored four goals in all competitions, including the opener in Sunday's 4-2 LaLiga win over Sevilla. "I took a lot of positives from the Bilbao game. I hit rock bottom," he told Real Madrid TV. "I missed a penalty and I realised at that moment I have to give my all for this shirt and play with personality." Mbappe now has 10 goals in 16 league appearances, helping Real end the calendar year second in the table, just a point be-

hind leaders Atletico Madrid. "I can score a lot more, I know I have a lot more to give. The last few games I've played better," he said. "I think we now know each other better. I've joined the team and that changed a lot of things. The settling-in period is over, as the coach says. I feel very comfortable in the team and I play better with the others on the pitch." Real next travel to face Valencia in LaLiga on Jan. 3.



## Arsenal winger Saka ruled out for 'many weeks'

It is not the first hamstring injury Saka has suffered this season, he limped off while on England duty during the October international break and was sidelined for a few weeks, missing Arsenal's 2-0 loss to Bournemouth

WEB DESK

LONDON: Arsenal winger Bukayo Saka has been ruled out for "many weeks" with a hamstring injury, says manager Mikel Arteta. Saka limped off in the 24th minute of Arsenal's game against Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park on Saturday and while the Gunners went on to win 5-1, the victory was marred by the blow to the England winger, who left the stadium on crutches. "It's not looking good, he's going to be out for many weeks," Arteta said in a press conference on Monday. "I cannot be too specific because I do not know but it's going to be many weeks." Asked about the blow of losing Saka, Arteta replied: "It's a huge one, he's a massive player for us. You have to see the impact he has on this team but it will be a good exercise for all of us to overcome another challenge, because we've had a lot in the season." It is not the first hamstring injury Saka has suffered this season, he limped off while on England duty during the October international break and was sidelined for a few weeks, missing Arsenal's 2-0 loss to Bournemouth. The loss of Saka has been compounded by an injury sustained by Raheem Sterling in training last Friday. Arteta confirmed the

on-loan Chelsea winger will also be absent for a while. "He's going to be out for weeks, I believe," added Arteta. "He needs some further testing. It's his knee, we will have to see in 24 hours but unfortunately he is going to be out for a while." With both of his two first-choice options at right wing out injured, Arteta was then asked if Arsenal will move in the January transfer window regarding that position. "We'll have to look internally at what we have and be creative," he said. "Do a very good exercise again, how can we mould the squad and adapt to the circumstances?" "And be different. We cannot pretend to be the same, we have to be different and find the best way to do it, be competitive and win a lot of games. My intention right now is within the team and what we have, get the best out of that. What is outside is not in my control. Nobody is right. You might be right; somebody could come in and score 40 goals. What we have is what we have and I am happy with what we have, they fully try to do everything that we demand. We have enough quality in the squad. How we use it? That's something else. Preparation is done, we're ready if something happens. We didn't predict the situation with Bukayo and Raheem [being out] at the same time. At the same time,

we predicted for something more to happen in the defensive line, but the job is done. Then ok, if something has to happen, we will be open to it. But the main focus is now how do we have the structure still with the potential in this squad?" Saka's injury is massive news for Arsenal. The England winger's injury history has been impeccable and Arteta speaks regularly about how consistency and availability are his biggest attributes. Since making his Premier League debut in 2019, Saka has never missed back-to-back Premier League games due to injury. In the past two-and-a-half seasons, Saka has only missed four top-flight games. Whenever he has picked up a knock, he bounces straight back - so for Arteta's Arsenal to lose him until February is brand new territory. It is a major blow given how reliant Arsenal are on Saka's work down the right-hand side. The Gunners attack down the right 46 per cent of the time - it is the highest percentage for one flank in the Premier League this season - partly due to Saka and Martin Odegaard venturing to that side. So how do Arsenal respond, especially with Sterling - the player brought in as cover for Saka over the summer - also set for a period on the sidelines? The next player in line is Gabriel Martinelli, who

stood in for Saka at Crystal Palace on the right wing and got on the scoresheet. The Brazilian also started on the right for Arsenal's win over Everton on the final day of last season, the only game Saka missed for the whole of last term. Gabriel Jesus is another option for the right wing, with Arteta using the forward on the flank before, but Arsenal's No 9 has just found some form through the middle again. Now is not the time to move Jesus around again. So what Arsenal need to work with now is a weakened right-hand side and a left-hand side which has failed to impress this season. It is time for the likes of Martinelli and Leandro Trossard to step up.

**Arsenal's upcoming fixtures**  
Ipswich (H) - Premier League - Friday December 27  
Brentford (A) - Premier League - Wednesday January 1  
Brighton (A) - Premier League - Saturday January 4, live on Sky Sports  
Newcastle (H) - Carabao Cup semi-final first-leg - Tuesday January 7, live on Sky Sports  
Man Utd (H) - FA Cup third-round - Sunday January 12  
Tottenham (H) - Premier League - Wednesday January 15

## Rana Sana stresses for practical...

FROM PAGE 01  
the past However, if the parliamentary democratic system is to move forward, it cannot happen without political dialogue," he stated. Referencing past agreements like the Charter of Democracy with the Pakistan Peoples Party, he stressed the need for a similar initiative focused on the economy. "We talked about a Charter of Economy before and are reiterating it today. Just as the Charter of Democracy helped in the past, a Charter of Economy is the need of the hour," he said.

## Kurram crisis deepens...

FROM PAGE 01

Decrying that people were starving due to severe food shortage, the protesters have maintained that their sit-in would continue till roads were reopened. Speaking on road closures, Kurram Deputy Commissioner Javidullah Mehsud has reiterated the government's stance saying that the routes have been blocked due to security concerns. Last week, the provincial Apex Committee decided to dismantle all private bunkers in the Kurram district as part of efforts to restore peace in the region which has seen more than 200 fatalities since July due to tribal clashes. With government and tribal elders engaged in strenuous efforts to restore peace, the warring sides agreed to an indefinite ceasefire on December 6.

## PPP, PML-N likely to reach...

FROM PAGE 01

leader Syed Ali Haider Gilani. On the other side, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Rana Sanaulah, Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan, and Maryam Aurangzeb are expected to attend the negotiations. The agenda includes consultations on issues faced by the PPP at the grassroots level in Punjab and discussions to address the party's concerns regarding its relationship with the PML-N in the province. Also, President Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz are scheduled to meet this evening to deliberate on the prevailing political situation. Earlier this month, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar had agreed to initiate meetings between their respective committees to resolve unsettled issues.

## PTI condemns trial of...

FROM PAGE 01

the decision has been postponed. We fail to understand where this judgment is being written. This is a case of acquittal, and there is nothing in it," he declared, describing the £190 million case as a blatant example of political rivalry. The PTI information secretary accused the government of being willing to override international laws in its pursuit of muting political opponents. "The government has gone to extreme lengths of revenge, aiming to eliminate its rivals," he alleged. Akram further noted that the £190 million case, which he claimed was designed to punish former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, was now being debated internationally as an example of political persecution.

## President, PM agree...

FROM PAGE 01

They also discussed in details the legislative matters in Parliament. President Zardari assured Prime Minister Shehbaz of his continued support and cooperation for the progress and stability of the country. Earlier on December 21, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss concerns related to the Seminary Registration Bill. Maulana Fazlur Rehman led a JUI-F delegation comprising Molana Abdul Ghafoor Haidri and Senator Kamran Murtaza.



## Briefs

## Gold price remains unchanged at Rs.273,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold remained unchanged at Rs 273,400 on Monday, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold and 10 gram 22 karat gold also witnessed no change and were traded at Rs 234,396 and Rs 214,863 respectively. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 3,350 and Rs. Rs 2,872.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$2,622, the Association reported.—APP

## PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 4,411.27 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 4,411.27 more points, a positive change of 4.03 percent, closing at 113,924.42 points as compared to 109,513.15 points on the last trading day. A total of 857,834,976 shares were traded during the day as compared to 754,917,969 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 50.549 billion against Rs.39.424 billion on the last trading day. As many as 463 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 361 of them recorded gains and 62 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 40 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 71,053,052 shares at Rs 1.72 per share, Cnergico PK with 66,471,663 shares at Rs 6.79 per share and Pak Elektron with 38,651,653 shares at Rs.40.73 per share.—APP

## Rupee sheds 15 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Monday depreciated by 15 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.56 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.41. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.10 and Rs 279.60 respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 93 paise to close at Rs 290.18 against the last day's closing of Rs 289.05, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).—APP

## Canada's Trudeau losing support within his party: MPs

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's support within his own party appeared to falter further on Sunday, as former loyalists said growing numbers of Liberal caucus members wanted the premier to resign. Trudeau has suffered a series of blows in recent days, spurred by the surprise resignation of Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, who clashed with her boss over incoming US president Donald Trump's threats to impose 25 percent tariffs on Canadian imports. Freeland's exit, after nearly a decade at Trudeau's side, marked the first open dissent against the prime minister from within his cabinet and has emboldened critics. Ottawa area MP Chandra Arya told the public broadcaster CBC on Sunday that dozens of Liberal MPs wanted Trudeau to go. Arya was interviewed a day after Liberal MPs from the province of Ontario held a meeting that addressed Trudeau's future. Multiple outlets, including the CBC and Toronto Star, reported that more than 50 of the 75 Ontario Liberals in parliament declared in Saturday's meeting that they no longer supported Trudeau. Asked about those reports, Arya said a "majority of the caucus thinks it is time for the prime minister to step aside."—APP

## Incumbent Romanian PM to lead new pro-European govt

The president's nomination will need to be approved by the parliament

DNA

BUCHAREST: Romanian president nominates incumbent premier to lead a new pro-European coalition government Romania's president on Monday nominated incumbent Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu to lead a new pro-European coalition government following a top court's annulment of a presidential election. After deliberations with Romania's political parties, President Klaus Iohannis nominated Ciolacu of the leftist Social Democratic Party (PSD) to try to form a government, in hopes of ending a protracted political crisis in the European Union country. Ciolacu, whose party topped the polls in a 1 December parliamentary election, has served as prime minister since June last year. It is widely seen as a tactical push to shut out far-right nationalists who made significant gains in parliament, revealing widespread anti-establishment sentiment. "It will not be an easy mandate for the future government," Ciolacu said in a statement Monday. "We are aware that we are in the midst of a deep political crisis. It is also a crisis of trust, and this coalition aims to regain the trust of citi-



zens, the trust of the people." The president's nomination will need to be approved by the parliament. The parliamentary election followed a presidential vote in which the far-right ultranationalist outsider Calin Georgescu won the first round, and Ciolacu came third. Georgescu's surprise success plunged Roma-

nia into turmoil as allegations of electoral violations and Russian interference emerged, fuelled by allegations of an engineered campaign on TikTok. Days before the 8 December presidential runoff, the Constitutional Court made the unprecedented move to annul the presidential race. The new coalition is expected to comprise the PSD, the centre-right National Liberal Party (PNL), the ethnic Hungarian party UDMR, and national minorities. The three parties have also agreed on a common pro-European candidate to enter the rerun of the presidential election, the date of which is yet to be announced. "Each of

the signatories of this political agreement has understood the signal sent by Romanians during the general elections," Ciolacu said. In 2021, the PSD and the PNL also formed an unlikely but increasingly strained coalition together with UDMR, which exited the government last year after a power-sharing dispute.

## BRI collaboration highlighted as key for Pakistan's vet sector

BEIJING: "Collaboration with China within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is crucial for advancing Pakistan's veterinary technology sharing, knowledge exchange, and best practices in various fields, including vaccine development, production, and quality control." This was stated by Ms. Afifa Shajia, Education Attaché at the Embassy of Pakistan in China, during the opening ceremony of an advanced workshop on veterinary drug and vaccine technology transfer for BRI countries, held from December 20th to 31st in Beijing, according to Gwadar Pro. The workshop, chaired by Prof. He Cheng from the College of Veterinary Medicine at China Agricultural University, aims to build a coordinated response among BRI countries to secure livestock health and industry stability. The workshop seeks to explore the needs of the livestock industry in BRI countries, discuss the potential for Chinese veterinary drugs, vaccines, and production technologies, and analyze veterinary drug and vaccine regulations across China and BRI countries to enhance regulatory alignment," said Prof. He. Key topics covered during the workshop include establishing a sustainable veterinary medicine and vaccine network among BRI countries, exchanging and promoting technology transfer in veterinary medicine, vaccines, and diagnostics. Participants also discussed understanding animal epidemic diseases, market trends, improving control measures, contributing to the animal surveillance network, and collaborating to detect the prevalence of major animal diseases and reduce cross-border infections through training programs and key-lab alliances. Additionally, participants will visit biotechnology enterprises in Beijing and Inner Mongolia for exchanges and interactions. Ms. Shajia further emphasized that joint research and development is another crucial area requiring immediate attention. "Pakistan is diligently working on infrastructure development, and we seek support for upgrading our laboratories and establishing modern production facilities within the country. By tapping into Chinese expertise and resources, Pakistan stands to significantly enhance its livestock sector," she said, adding that the workshop represents a positive step forward. The workshop, sponsored by the Ministry of Science and Technology of China and organized by China Agricultural University and the China Veterinary Medicine Association, attracts around 80 government representatives, experts, scholars, and entrepreneurs from China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Iran, and Russia. During the training session, Dr. Muhammad Mohsin Kiani, Sector Specialist for Livestock and Security at Pakistan's Planning Commission, shared investment opportunities in the animal industry and vaccines under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework in Pakistan.—DNA

## Tianjin Uni signs MoU with Pakistan to boost partnership in Edu

BEIJING: Universities in Tianjin, China, have signed three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the University of Sargodha in Pakistan to enhance cooperation in education, healthcare, and agriculture. The University of Sargodha and Nankai University will establish academic exchange programs and joint initiatives based on mutual respect, cooperation, and friendship. Additionally, the University of Sargodha, Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TUTCM), and Tianjin Sansheng Supply Chain Management Co., Ltd. signed a Letter of Intent to create a Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) at the University of Sargodha. Plans include building a 200-bed teaching hospital specializing in TCM and integrated Chinese-Western medical approaches. Prof. Dr. Qaisar Abbas, Vice Chancellor of the University of Sargodha, highlighted the importance of the agreements: "We have committed to three key projects: a TCM hospital set to begin construction in 2025, an international-standard boarding school, and a citrus processing unit critical for the Sargodha region and Pakistan's economy." Dr. Abbas further outlined the scope of collaboration, which includes student education, research, faculty training, exchange programs, and joint efforts in creating research laboratories and institutes. Philip Jian Peng, Honorary Investment Counsellor at Pakistan's Board of Investment (BOI), stressed the partnership's significance.—DNA

## Pakistan-Kenya strengthen trade ties

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and the Kenyan High Commissioner met Monday to explore new horizons in trade and regional cooperation. The discussions centered on leveraging Pakistan's strategic location to serve as a gateway between Central Asia and the East African Community (EAC), with both sides expressing a strong commitment to deepening economic ties, said a press release issued here. The minister conveyed greetings for the Kenyan President and reiterated Pakistan's commitment to deepening ties with Kenya and the broader East African Community (EAC). Highlighting Pakistan's strategic location, he underscored its potential role as a bridge for trade between CARs and East Africa, paving the way for mutually beneficial trilateral relations. Discussions during the meeting covered key trade sectors, including agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and commodities. The minister emphasized that Pakistan, as one of the largest importers of Kenyan tea, sees tremendous scope to diversify trade into other unique African products such as coffee, pineapples, and more. Similarly, Kenya was invited to explore opportunities in Himalayan pink salt, marble, and cement exports from Pakistan. Pharmaceuticals also emerged as a growing sector for bilateral trade. With banking channels already well-established between the two countries, the minister highlighted the importance of expediting the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the East African bloc. The High Commissioner requested swift progress on the MoU, which is currently under review by Pakistan's law division. Minister Jam Kamal proposed hosting an East African-specific trade conference in Pakistan, highlighting the country's keen interest in the East African bloc.—APP

## CDA chairman greets Christian employees on Christmas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, along with CDA members, participated in a vibrant Christmas celebration on Monday. During the event, the Chairman CDA extended heartfelt Christmas greetings to all Christian employees of the authority and cut a ceremonial Christmas cake. During the occasion, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized that Christmas embodies the message of love, peace, and brotherhood. He paid tribute to the contributions of the Christian community, acknowledging their pivotal role in the development and progress of Islamabad. He noted that Christian employees are an integral pillar of the city's growth and prosperity. Chairman CDA further stated that the Christmas celebration is a symbol of



unity and harmony. He highlighted that Prophet Jesus Christ brought a universal message of love, compassion, and peace for humanity. He urged people from all religions to work together to strengthen the nation, reflecting the vision of Pakistan's founder, who emphasized

equality among all faiths. Reaffirming his commitment to the well-being of the Christian community, Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa assured that every possible step would be taken to support and uplift them. He also appreciated the dedication of Christian

employees in the authority, noting that Christmas allowances had been disbursed to all Christian staff ahead of the festive season as a gesture of gratitude. The event concluded with a spirit of togetherness, highlighting CDA's commitment to fostering inclusivity and celebrating diversity.

## Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed assumes charge of Commander Central Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed assumed command as Commander Central Punjab (COMCEP). COMCEP exercises authority over all Pakistan Navy units from Bahawalpur to Wazirabad and is also the Commandant of Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore. Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed was commissioned in Operations Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1992. He has a distinguished career, holding a wide range of command and staff appointments. These include Personal Staff Officer to Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Directing Staff at PN War College, Commanding Officer of PNS SAIF, Defence Attaché of Pakistan in Malaysia, Commander Surface Task Group 3, Comman-



dant of Pakistan Naval Academy, Commander West at Gwadar, Hydrographer of Pakistan, Chairman PNSC, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (T&P), and Director General C4I at Naval Headquarters. The Admiral is an alumnus of PN War College Lahore, Defence Services Command and Staff College Bangladesh, and the National Defence University Islamabad. In recognition of his meritorious services, he has been awarded the Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military). The Change of Command ceremony was held at Naval Complex Walton, Lahore, where Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood handed over command to the newly appointed Commander Central Punjab. Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed was presented with a Guard of Honour and introduced to the staff of officers of Headquarters COMCEP.

## First Cross-Border Tourist Group arrives at Khunjerab Pass

XINJIANG: The Khunjerab Pass, located in Kashgar region welcomed its first cross-border tourist group since the pass officially opened year-round. The 11-member group, traveling from Pakistan, is set to experience a two-and-a-half-day sightseeing and business tour in China's Xinjiang province. The Khunjerab Pass, situated in the Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County, is the only land border crossing between China and Pakistan. Historically, the pass was only open seasonally, from April to November, due to its high altitude and harsh winter conditions. However, as of December 2024, the pass was transitioned to year-round operations Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. Traffic flow through Khunjerab Pass has surged significantly this year. By December 9, the pass had handled over 59,100 border crossings and more than 12,800 vehicles. Passengers from 51 countries and regions, including individual travelers and tour groups, have passed through, with many coming for cross-border tourism. The December 9 tour group, organized by Xinjiang Batie International Trade Co., is visiting several local attractions in Taxkorgan, including the ancient Panlong Path, Bandier Blue Lake, the Stone City Ruins, and the tourist goods street. The group is exploring local tourism resources and routes. Moving forward, the company plans to organize tours to Pakistan through the Khunjerab Pass. Ghulam, a member of the tour group who works in the cultural tourism industry in Pakistan, said the trip aims to explore local tourism offerings and connect with China's tourism network.—APP

## Gaza official says Israel strikes on hospital 'terrifying'

GAZA STRIP: An official from one of only two functioning hospitals in northern Gaza told AFP on Monday that Israeli forces were continuing to target his facility and urged the international community to intervene before "it is too late." Hossam Abu Safiyeh, director of Kamal Adwan hospital in the city of Beit Lahia, described the situation at the medical facility as "extremely dangerous and terrifying" owing to shelling by Israeli forces. An Israeli military spokesman denied that the hospital was being targeted. "I am unaware of any strikes on Kamal Adwan hospital," he told AFP. Safiyeh reported that the hospital, which is currently treating 91 patients, had been targeted on Monday by Israeli drones. "This morning, drones dropped bombs in the hospital's courtyards and on its roof," said Safiyeh in a statement. "The shelling, which also destroyed nearby houses and buildings, did not stop throughout the night." The shelling and bombardment have caused extensive damage to the hospital, Safiyeh added. "Bullets hit the intensive care unit, the maternity ward, and the specialized surgery department causing fear among patients," he said, adding that a generator was also targeted. "The world must understand that our hospital is being targeted with the intent to kill and forcibly displace the people inside. "We face a constant threat every day. The shelling continues from all directions... The situation is extremely critical and requires urgent international intervention before it is too late," he said. On Sunday, Safiyeh said he received orders to evacuate the hospital, but the military denied issuing such directives. Located in Beit Lahia, the hospital is one of only two still operational in northern Gaza. The area has been the focus of an intense air and ground campaign by Israeli forces since October 6, aimed at preventing Hamas from regrouping. Most of the dead and injured from the offensive are brought to Kamal Adwan and Al-Awda hospitals. The United Nations and other organizations have repeatedly decried the worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza, particularly in the north, since the latest military offensive began.—APP



## Briefs

### ECP sets Dec 31 to submit assets details

#### STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has directed members of Parliament to submit their financial statements by Dec 31. The parliamentarians are required to disclose the financial details of their dependents and family members as well. Failure to comply will result in the suspension of their membership. ECP directs parliamentarians to submit annual financial statements. The ECP has warned that submitting false information will lead to action under Section 137 for corruption-related offenses.

### Terrorist killed in in Lakki Marwat operation

#### DNA

LAKKI MARWAT: A terrorist was killed in a joint operation launched by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and police in an area of Lakki Marwat. CTD officials said the intelligence-based operation was conducted in Shagai area in limits of Gambila police station. During an exchange of fire, one terrorist was killed while two others managed to escape. The security officials recovered weapons during the operation. The killed terrorist has been identified as Asif Ali, who was a local militant commander and a close associate of most-wanted terrorist Inamullah alias Lamba.

### Trump ally 'Gaetz paid for sex and drugs'

WASHINGTON: The House Ethics Committee found evidence that former Rep. Matt Gaetz paid tens of thousands of dollars to women for sex or drugs on at least 20 occasions, including paying a 17-year-old girl for sex in 2017, according to the panel's report on the Florida Republican released Monday. The committee concluded in its bombshell document that Gaetz violated Florida state laws, including the state's statutory rape law, as the GOP-led panel chose to take the rare step of releasing a report about a former member who resigned from Congress. "The Committee determined there is substantial evidence that Representative Gaetz violated House Rules and other standards of conduct prohibiting prostitution, statutory rape, illicit drug use, impermissible gifts, special favors or privileges, and obstruction of Congress," panel investigators wrote. The panel investigated transactions Gaetz personally made, often using PayPal or Venmo, to more than a dozen women during his time in Congress, according to the report. - Agencies

# Netherlands and UNFPA empowering women, youth

Country Representative of UNFPA Pakistan, Dr. Luay Shabaneh, has praised the initiative's profound impact, noting, "The Learning Network has strengthened the leadership and operational capacity of organizations

#### STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Netherlands and UNFPA Pakistan, in collaboration with the School of Leadership Foundation (SoLF), recently hosted the concluding event of the Learning Network, a transformative initiative designed to empower 165 women and youth-led organizations across Pakistan. The event marked the successful completion of a project that reached thousands of individuals, strengthening community-driven interventions and innovative capacity-building. The Learning Network focused on several crucial themes, including mental health, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), STI/HIV prevention, life skills-based education (LSBE), climate resilience, and gender-based violence (GBV), all with a special emphasis on safe programming. For the project, the initiative provided 11 digital training sessions that equipped participants with critical skills in social media strategies, financial management, project management, organizational governance, and advocacy. This training empowered 165 organizations, including 16 working with refugee communities, to enhance their reach and improve operational efficiency. Country Representative of UNFPA Pakistan, Dr. Luay Shabaneh, has praised the initiative's profound impact, noting, "The Learning Network has strengthened the leadership and operational capacity of organizations that are at the forefront of community development. By investing in their growth, we are not just supporting their efforts—we are amplifying their ability to create lasting change in the lives of the



people they serve. This initiative has set a new benchmark for collaborative development in Pakistan." A key highlight of the initiative was the intensive boot camp held in Islamabad, where 16 organizations from 12 districts gathered for in-depth training. The boot camp focused on vital issues such as reproductive health, mental well-being, and climate change, providing a platform for organizations to strategize and engage in discussions. With the support of grants, these organizations launched Community Action Projects (CAPs) that have positively impacted over 165,000 people, including 2,208 refugees. The CAPs addressed local challenges with tailored solutions, demonstrating the power of grassroots interventions. In an effort to amplify the reach of their campaigns, 64 social media personnel

from participating organizations completed a course on Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) e-modules. The training enabled participants to design and execute impactful digital campaigns across platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. The campaigns, numbering 64 in total, have engaged thousands of individuals, raising awareness on key social issues and tackling stigma. The event brought together stakeholders from various sectors, including representatives from participating organizations, government officials, and development professionals. Attendees reflected on the success of the initiative, discussing strategies to sustain the momentum generated by the Learning Network. The event also showcased the remarkable projects initiated by these organizations, highlighting the positive change

they have brought to their communities. Managing Director of SoLF, Mariyam Irfan, expressed her pride in the outcome, stating, "The Learning Network has demonstrated that strengthening local organizations leads to real, measurable impact. These organizations are now better equipped to address critical community issues, from mental health to climate resilience. We are confident that their efforts will continue to bring positive change, creating more empowered and resilient communities across Pakistan." As the Learning Network concludes, its legacy will persist through the empowered organizations and the lasting impact they will continue to make. This initiative represents a significant advancement in enhancing collaboration, improving organizational capacity, and addressing pressing social challenges in Pakistan.

### CJP calls for giving respect to all religions

#### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Yahya Afridi called for giving respect to all the religions. He was addressing a ceremony on Monday held in Supreme Court in connecting with the Christmas. A cake was also cut on the occasion by CJP Afridi along with the Christian staff members. A large number of Christian staff members were also present on the occasion. The chief justice emphasized on unity and interfaith harmony. He also lauded the Christian staff members for playing their role in the justice system. The registrar of Supreme Court and office-bearers of Supreme Court Bar Association also attended the ceremony. A few days ago, CJP Yahya Afridi had decided to visit its far-flung areas of the country in order to ensure speedy justice. He had chaired an important meeting in Gwadar regarding the judicial reforms. It was decided during the meeting that the CJP would personally visit remote areas to improve the performance of district judiciary. He held meetings with district and session judges of Turbat, Chagai and Panjgur during his visit to Balochistan.

### Saudi delegation meets with Jolani

RIYADH: A Saudi delegation headed by an advisor from the Royal Court met with the head of the new Syrian administration, Ahmed Al-Sharaa, at the People's Palace in Syria on Sunday, according to an Al Arabiya report. Earlier this week, Al-Sharaa praised progress made by Saudi Arabia and neighboring Gulf countries in an interview with Asharq Al-Awsat. "We admire the development in Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia's bold plans and vision, and we aspire to achieve similar progress for Syria," he told the newspaper's Bissane El-Cheikh during an interview with the Presidential Palace in Damascus. "There are many opportunities for cooperation, especially in economic and developmental areas, where we can align our goals," he added. - Agencies

### Banks to remain closed on Wednesday

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan and all the banking and financial institutions will remain closed on Wednesday, December 25, 2024 on the occasion of Quaid-e-Azam Day and Christmas. The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Monday informed, "The State Bank of Pakistan will remain closed on December 25, 2024 (Wednesday) being public holiday on the occasions of Quaid-e-Azam Day and Christmas, as declared by the Government of Pakistan." - APP

### PTI wins stay order against election tribunal's decision

Islamabad High Court issues stay order against Election Tribunal proceedings in PTI's Mughal case



#### COURT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court has issued a stay order on the Election Tribunal's proceedings following a petition filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Amir Mughal. The court has halted the tribunal's actions regarding his election petition, effectively preventing further proceedings in the case related to Islamabad's electoral constituencies. The Islamabad Election Tribunal had scheduled a hearing for cases concerning the three Islamabad constituencies on December 24, 2024. However, the High Court's stay order temporarily suspended any further actions related to the petitions, including the case involving Amir Mughal's challenge against the results in constituency NA-46. Mughal, who contested the election from NA-46 and was defeated by MNA Anjum Aqeel Khan, had filed a petition challenging the victory. His legal counsel, Faisal Fareed Chaudhry, presented the case before Chief Justice Amir Farooq, who issued the order to suspend the tribunal's proceedings. The court also issued notices to both parties, asking them to provide responses to the petition. The High Court's ruling means the Election Tribunal will not be able to proceed with the case in NA-46 or the other constituencies under review, as the tribunal had also planned hearings related to them. Mughal's legal challenge also includes questioning the appointment of a new election tribunal, which he claims was improper.

### EU concerned at May 9th convictions by military courts

Says verdicts inconsistent with Pakistan's obligations under ICCPR

#### KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The European Union (EU) on Sunday expressed concerns over the conviction of 25 civilians after being found guilty of attacking army installations by the military court, insisting the verdict was inconsistent with Pakistan's commitments to ensure a 'fair and public' trial of every person. "The European Union notes with concern the sentencing of twenty-five civilians by a military court on 21 December in Pakistan," read a statement issued by the European External Action Service (EEAS) in Brussels. The EU reaction came after military courts sentenced 25 civilians to prison terms ranging from two to 10 years for attacking military installations during riots which erupted following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan in May last year. In a detailed statement, the military said that the nation on May 9 witnessed tragic incidents of "politically provoked violence and arson at multiple places, marking a dark chapter in the history of Pakistan" when,

building on a sustained narrative of hate and lies, politically orchestrated attacks were carried out on the army installations and monuments of martyrs. "These blatant acts of violence not only shocked the nation but also underscored the necessity of checking this unacceptable attempt of political terrorism to impose own perverted will through violence and coercion," it stated. According to the statement, a field general court martial sentenced 25 individuals in the first phase, following a thorough review of evidence and the completion of proper legal procedures. However, the EU voiced concerns over the military court verdicts. "These verdicts are seen as inconsistent with the obligations that Pakistan has undertaken under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)," the statement added. "In line with article 14 of ICCPR, every person is entitled to a fair and public trial in a court that is independent, impartial and competent, and has the right to adequate and effective legal representation. It also stipulates that any judgement rendered in a criminal case shall be made public," the statement further said.

### Some gaps have narrowed in Gaza ceasefire talks

But identity of some of Palestinian prisoners to be released by Israel in return for hostages yet to be agreed

#### NEWS DESK

CAIRO/JERUSALEM: Gaps between Israel and Hamas over a possible Gaza ceasefire have narrowed, according to Israeli and Palestinian officials' remarks on Monday, though crucial differences have yet to be resolved. A fresh bid by mediators Egypt, Qatar and the United States to end the fighting and release Israeli and foreign hostages has gained momentum this month, though no breakthrough has yet been reported. A Palestinian official familiar with

the talks said while some sticking points had been resolved, the identity of some of the Palestinian prisoners to be released by Israel in return for hostages had yet to be agreed, along with the precise deployment of Israeli troops in Gaza. His remarks corresponded with comments by the Israeli diaspora minister, Amichai Chikli, who said both issues were still being negotiated. Nonetheless, he said, the sides were far closer to reaching agreement than they have been for months. "This ceasefire can last six months or it can last 10 years, it depends on the dynamics that will form on the ground," Chikli told Israel's Kan radio. Much hinged on what powers would be running and rehabilitating Gaza once fighting stopped, he said. The duration of the ceasefire has been a fundamental sticking point throughout several rounds of failed negotiations. Hamas wants an end to the war, while Israel wants an end to Hamas' rule of Gaza first. "The issue of ending the war completely hasn't yet been resolved," said the Palestinian official. Israeli minister Zeev Elkin, a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet, told Israel's Army Radio that the aim was to find an agreed framework that would resolve that difference during a second stage of the ceasefire deal. Chikli said the first stage would be a humanitarian phase that will last 42 days and include a hostage release.

## Federal govt wants to reduce NFC: Rabbani

"It will be recalled, the finance minister, a week past, spoke about revisiting the NFC Award, amounting to a rollback of fiscal devolution given by the 18th Amendment," the statement read

#### MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Former Senate chairman Raza Rabbani on Monday condemned the formation of an eight-member committee for the revision of existing or grant of new allowances to government servants, calling it "double standards on the part of the finance minister". Despite a shortfall in revenue collection, the government has started working on offering lucrative allowances to its employees, in addition to a salary increase of up to 25 per cent, effective from July 1, 2024. A previous report stated that the PM Office and the Ministry of Finance had been receiving regular representations from various stakeholders and employee groups, seeking additional compensation, particularly following the recent significant increases in salaries and allowances for judges. As a result, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif constituted an eight-member 'special committee' for "revision of existing

or grant of new allowances to government servants" during the current financial year. Led by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the committee includes an overwhelming representation of the intended beneficiaries. It comprises the secretaries for finance, cabinet, establishment division, defence, and interior, as well as the minister for economic affairs, who was a batch mate to many grade 21 officers, and the minister of state for finance and revenue. In a statement released today, Rabbani said that the committee comprised members who were "direct beneficiaries, violating the principle of not being a judge in one's own cause". "It will be recalled, the finance minister, a week past, spoke about revisiting the NFC Award, amounting to a rollback of fiscal devolution given by the 18th Amendment," the statement read, adding that this amounted to "double standards on the part of the finance minister". Under the 7th NFC award, the share of Provinces in vertical distribution had increased from 49pc to 56pc during 2010-11 and 57.5pc during the remaining years of the Award. It has been a source of contention between the Centre and the provinces. The traditional population-based criteria for the horizontal distribution of resources amongst the provinces had been changed to a multiple-criteria formula.

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