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China-Japan ties at crucial stage of improvement: Li

Detailed News On Page-07

PTI fueling controversy on military courts

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Oscar Junior returns to Sao Paulo

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Taliban govt says

Over 46 dead in Pak airstrikes

Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the attack, leaving six injured, calling it "clear aggression" and vowing a response

NEWS DESK

KABUL: Pakistan airstrikes in Afghanistan's eastern Pakhtika province killed at least 46 people, including women and children, according to the Taliban's spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, on Wednesday. The strikes, which took place late Tuesday night in the Barmal district, also left six others injured. Mujahid condemned the attack, describing it as "clear aggression," and reaffirmed that the Taliban government would not leave such actions unaddressed. The Afghan defence ministry issued a statement condemning the airstrikes, stating that the Islamic Emirate would defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. This follows a series of deadly cross-border exchanges between Pakistan and Afghanistan since the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021. Tensions have escalated, particularly in the border regions, where Pakistan has been battling a surge in militant violence. According to a resident of Barmal, Maleel, the airstrikes devastated several homes, with one bombing killing 18 members of a single family. Another strike reportedly killed three people and left several others wounded, who were subsequently hospitalized. The Pakistani military has not officially commented on the attack, but the strike follows heightened tensions after the Pakistani Taliban, or Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which shares a similar ideology with the Afghan Taliban, claimed responsibility for an attack on a Pakistani army outpost last week as Pakistani intelligence officials reported that 16 soldiers were martyred in the assault. Despite the ongoing border conflicts, both Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed earlier this week to ease tensions and strengthen bilateral relations, with Pakistan's Special Representative, Ambassador Muhammad Sadiq, visiting Kabul for meetings with Afghan officials and traders. Last week, a Pakistani soldier was martyred during an infiltration attempt by terrorists along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, further highlighting the fragile security situation in the region.

Parachinar sit-in over road blockade enters sixth day

Health services halted; protests and negotiations for peace underway in Kurram

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: More than 100 children have tragically died in Parachinar due to the unavailability of medical facilities caused by road blockades that have persisted for two and a half months. The ongoing crisis has sparked protests as citizens demand urgent action to reopen access routes. They are protesting against the road blockade for the sixth day. According to a private news channel report, the blockade, which has been going on for more than two months, has deprived residents of essential food and medical supplies. Agha Muzamil, Chairman of Upper Kurram Tehsil, said: "Residents are unable to access basic needs like healthcare and food due to road closures. Over 100 children have succumbed to the lack of medical care." In response, Kurram's Deputy Commissioner announced that a Grand Jirga arrived in the district to initiate peace talks aimed at resolving the longstanding tribal conflict. The government hopes these negotiations will lead to stability and the reopening of roads. Solidarity demonstrations have also taken place outside Karachi's Numaish Chowrang and Lahore Press Club, organised by Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen to highlight the plight of Parachinar residents. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's Adviser on Information Barrister Saif said that a special police force has been approved to secure Parachinar Road.

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RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, joined the Christian community in celebrating Christmas at St. Joseph's Catholic Cathedral Church. - DNA

PM expressed grief Azerbaijan plane crashes in Kazakhstan

32 survive, several others feared dead

DNA

BAKU: An Embraer passenger plane flying from Azerbaijan to Russia crashed near the city of Aktau in Kazakhstan on Wednesday with 62 passengers and five crew on board, Kazakh authorities announced, saying that 32 people had survived. Unverified video of the crash showed the plane, which was operated by Azerbaijan Airlines, bursting into flames as it hit the ground and thick black smoke then rising. Bloodied and bruised passengers could be seen stumbling

Continued on Page 06

PTI welcomes statement

Trump's incoming envoy calls for Imran's release

PTI clarifies it doesn't want interference; PML-N says Imran's imprisonment is Pakistan's internal matter

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has welcomed the statement of Richard Grenell, US President-elect Donald Trump's nominee as envoy for special missions - who advocated for the release of incarcerated party founder Imran Khan, with the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) urging the United States to respect the country's sovereignty. Grenell, who is also a close confidant of Trump, garnered attention in Pakistan when he demanded the release of Imran, who was ousted in April 2022 through a parliamentary no-confidence vote. "Release Imran Khan," Trump's ally tweeted on November 26 - the day when authorities launched a late-night crackdown against PTI protesters marching on Islamabad's D-Chowk.

Continued on Page 06

Govt committed to finding amicable solution: Siddiqui

Senator Irfan also emphasized the need for maturity

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Senator Irfan Siddiqui revealed on Wednesday that negotiations between the government and opposition PTI have begun, paving the way for a potential resolution to the country's ongoing political tensions and expressed optimism that the issues would be resolved amicably.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Gen Sahir calls on Kuwait Crown Prince

DNA

RAWALPINDI: General Sahir Shamsah Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, who is on an official visit to State of Kuwait, called on HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaleed Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait, HH Sheikh Fahed Yousef Al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, Lieutenant General (Staff) Engineer Hashim Al Rafee, Under Secretary Kuwait National Guard, Sheikh Abdullah Mishal Al Sabah, Under Secretary Ministry of Defence, and Major General Subah Jaber Al-Sabah, Acting Chief of Staff of Kuwait Armed Forces.

Erdogan threatens to 'bury' Kurds

The Turkish president has called for the disarmament of militants in Syria

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to "bury" Kurdish militants in Syria if they refuse to lay down their arms, in a stark warning to the People's Protection Units (YPG) operating on the border between the two states. Speaking on Wednesday to lawmakers in Ankara, Erdogan promised to "eradicate the terrorist organization that is trying to weave a wall of blood between us and our Kurdish siblings." "The separatist murderers will either bid farewell to their weapons, or they will be buried in Syrian lands along with their weapons," he declared, as quoted by Reuters. Erdogan has repeatedly stated that the YPG poses a significant threat to Turkish security. - Agencies

Also refused to sign files

Justice Mansoor refuses to become administrative judge

Former CJP Qazi Faez Isa had appointed Shah as administrative judge of the Supreme Court (SC)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Senior puisne judge Justice Mansoor Ali Shah on Wednesday recused himself from continuing to perform his duties as an administrative judge. According to sources, former CJP Qazi Faez Isa had appointed Shah to the position of administrative judge of the Supreme Court (SC). Furthermore, the senior puisne judge also refused to sign the files sent to him, saying he had not been working as an administrative judge anymore. Earlier, Justice Shah had written a nine-page letter to the Judicial Commission secretary demanding mechanism and criteria for the nomination and determination of the number of judges for the constitutional benches of the Supreme Court and the high courts. "The commission has already nominated and determined a number of judges of the Supreme Court and

Continued on Page 06

IHC seeks intel report in missing person's case

Justice Kiyani remarked such a commission should be shut down

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani of the Islamabad High Court expressed displeasure over the Missing Persons Commission during a hearing on the recovery of Mudassar Khan, a citizen reportedly missing from Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The court directed the director general of Military Intelligence to submit a sealed report on the matter and adjourned the case to Dec 27. The assistant attorney general said that the matter pertains to AJK, since Mr Khan went missing from that territory and an FIR has also been registered there.

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Forces kill 13 terrorists in S W IBO

Khawarij were involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The security forces killed 13 terrorists during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Wednesday. In a statement, the military's media wing said that the operation took place last night in the district's Sararogha area on the reported presence of militants. "During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged khawarij location, as a result of which, thirteen khawarij were sent to hell," the ISPR said.

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Prime Minister, President echo inclusivity, religious freedom

Special programmes were arranged during the day to pay tribute to the Father of the Nation

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: As the country celebrated the 148th birthday of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah on Wednesday, President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowed to build a Pakistan that reflects Jinnah's vision of inclusivity and rights for religious minorities. The day dawned with gun salutes in the federal and provincial capitals followed by a change of the guard's ceremony at Quaid-e-Azam's mausoleum in Karachi, where a contin-

PICTURE ON BACK PAGE

gent of Pakistan Military Academy Kakul assumed guard duties. Special programmes were arranged during the day to pay tribute to the Father of the Nation. In a statement, President Zardari reiterated his commitment to religious harmony, mutual respect, and protection of minority rights in the country. He said, "[The] Constitution guarantees the fundamental rights of all citizens, irrespective of their faith and our founding father Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah also envisioned a Pakistan where people of all religions could thrive as equal citizens."

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COAS Asim lauds minorities' contribution to progress of Pakistan

General Asim Munir also paid a solemn tribute to Quaid-e-Azam

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Underscoring the spirit of inclusivity and harmony, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) joined the Christian community in celebrating Christmas here Wednesday at St. Joseph's Catholic Cathedral Church. The congregation extended a warm welcome to the COAS, expressing gratitude for his presence and solidarity during this cherished occasion, said a news release issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). On this festive day, the COAS conveyed his heartfelt Christmas greetings to the Christian community across the nation.

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CGPA stresses to break down the nexus, NCD

Poverty leads to bad food choices, and unhealthy food via NCDs, increases healthcare costs, and makes people and their economies worse off thereby perpetuating poverty, it means that if we get our public policies and governance right, better health and socio-economic outcomes are possible

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Center of governance and public accountability (CGPA) on Wednesday, stressed the need to break down the nexus that correlated among unhealthy food, noncommunicable disease (NCDs) and poverty for healthy life. There is a strong correlation between unhealthy food, non-communicable disease (NCDs), and poverty which is mediated through our systems of governance and public policies. Poverty leads to bad food choices, and unhealthy food via NCDs, increases healthcare costs, and makes people and their economies worse off thereby perpetuating poverty, it means that if we get our public policies and governance right, better health and socio-economic outcomes are possible. It is also possible that we change nothing, and keep ourselves trapped in a vicious circle of all-bad outcomes. This was concluded in a policy dialogue on "Unhealthy Food, NCDs, and Poverty Nexus" at the Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Lahore jointly organised by the Centre for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA), and the Beaconhouse University Lahore. Various stakehold-

ers such as Punjab Food Authority, Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority, Punjab Social Protection Authority, and Pakistan Nutrition and Dietetic Society (PNDS) participated in the event. Dr. Anjum Jalal, ex-Chief Executive Officer delivered the key note address. According to the NCDs STEPS Survey 2014-2015, more than four out of ten adults (41.3%) were obese or overweight, while 37% had hypertension. The cardiovascular diseases stand among the top killers of Pakistanis with 29% contribution in the total NCDs related deaths in the country (WHO 2016). According to the 10th edition of International Diabetes Federation (IDF) 2021 Diabetes Atlas, Pakistan has the 3rd highest burden of type 2 diabetes worldwide with more than 33 million cases with additional 10 million termed as pre-diabetic. According to the recent figures, Pakistan has more than 36 million of diagnosed diabetics while 11 million are pre-diabetic. These unhealthy conditions of the Pakistani population are being manifested in causes of mostly premature deaths. It is estimated that around 6/10 deaths are contributed by NCDs (WHO, 2016), and 3/10 deaths are contributed by CVDs (WHO 2016). Mr Muhammad Anwar, Executive Director, CGPA while wel-

coming the participants and panellists said that his organization is ready to help government agencies specially the food authorities and Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority in establishing surveillance mechanisms for control over industrially produced trans fatty acids which are the root cause of many NCDs. Dr Jalal mentioned that the leading causes of deaths and disability are not wars, traffic accidents, or infections, but high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, and high cholesterol levels. "While these diseases are taking away 60% of precious lives, we can still prevent them with modifications in dietary practices, life styles, and choosing the standard medical treatments." "Preventive cardiology is the answer to increasing burden of cardio-vascular and metabolic ailments in the country", he added. Mr Zubair Faisal Abbasi, advisor CGPA said that food governance is a newer area for Pakistan. New forms of institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms are needed to improve governance of new foods such as packaged and ultra-processed foods. "Without improving governance, it not possible to discourage unhealthy foods such as iTFAs getting onto our tables and the sending us to hospitals", he added.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan & SAFFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam cutting cake at the occasion of Quaid-e-Azam Day at PML-N provincial secretariat.

Pakistan believes in religious tolerance: Governor

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said on Wednesday that Hazrat Isa (AS) gave message of love, peace and tolerance. In his message issued here on occasion of Christmas he said, "Pakistan believes in religious tolerance, brotherhood besides protecting rights of minorities." He said that Christian community living in the country had played great role in development of Pakistan adding that the community had proved their mettle in different fields of life as well. Meanwhile, Punjab Governor in his message regarding Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's birth anniversary said that father of the nation due to his vision and leadership qualities materialized the dream of making separate homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent. He said, "Quaid's golden principles of faith, unity and discipline are beacon of light for us." Sardar Saleem Haider said that there was a need to make a pledge that justice and equality had to be ensured in the country as per the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He emphasized on forging unity to ensure development and prosperity of the country besides setting aside all kind of differences.

NDMA steps in to tackle Parachinar's critical medicine shortage

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has initiated an emergency relief operation to tackle the severe medicine shortage in Parachinar caused by road blockages. Acting on the prime minister's special directives, NDMA, in collaboration with the Ministry of

Health, swiftly organized the transportation of 1,000 kilograms of essential medicines to ensure timely aid to the affected areas. Two helicopter flights, each carrying 500 kilograms of medicines, departed from Islamabad to Parachinar. The first flight also evacuated four critical patients: Zamin Hussain, a heart patient; Shamim Begum, suffering from Glaucoma Stage-4; Bibi Khanum,

with heart and lung issues; and Masidah Agustina, an Indonesian national, along with her 2-year-old son. The second flight evacuated an 8-year-old girl, Subah Hussain, who had a brain tumour. This swift and coordinated response underscores the Government of Pakistan's commitment to safeguarding public health and ensuring the well-being of citizens in times of crisis.

Christmas Tree: a timeless symbol of joy & celebration

ISLAMABAD: As the grand festival of Christmas has unfolded in the federal capital, like elsewhere in the country, the decked Christmas tree placed at the prominent places has become the center of attraction for many especially children. The sight of colourful, adorned Christmas trees has added vibrancy and warmth to the holiday spirit in the federal capital through attracting many visitors who wanted to have glimpse of the beautifully decorated trees. 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. 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. Crowning the tree is often a star or angel, symbolizing the message of goodwill and the herald of peace. "This is my favorite part of Christmas," shared Asiya Joseph, a young Christian girl.—APP

COMSTECH, UoS collaborate to launch Science in Exile Fellowship Program

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development, Coordinator General of COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary and Vice Chancellor of the University of Sargodha, which is a member institution of the COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence, Prof. Dr. Qasir Abbas Wednesday announced the launch of the "COMSTECH Science in Exile Fellowship Program." Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary emphasized the pressing need for this initiative, stating, "Conflicts around the world have displaced millions of individuals,

significantly disrupting research and higher education. This fellowship program aims to provide displaced and refugee scholars who have not yet secured a safe, long-term host country the opportunity to continue their research at institutions within the COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence." Through this collaborative program, applications are being invited from scholars, researchers, and scientists from conflict-affected regions, including Afghanistan, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. It aims to foster academic resilience and support displaced researchers in continuing their valuable work. The selected research-

ers and scholars will be provided round trip air ticket, tuition fee waiver, and on-campus accommodation. Prof. Dr. Qasir Abbas expressed his gratitude to the Coordinator General of COMSTECH for spearheading this important initiative. He assured his full cooperation in ensuring its success, highlighting that the University of Sargodha already offers state-of-the-art hostel facilities for international students and researchers on its campus. This partnership represents a vital step toward addressing the challenges faced by displaced scholars and advancing research and education in conflict-affected regions.

Jinnah Cap remains timeless fashion icon

ISLAMABAD: 'The Jinnah cap', an iconic accessory synonymous with Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, continues to be a popular fashion choice across Pakistan. Specifically, this cap is popular in cities like Multan leading the way where every year, citizens pay tribute to the Father of the Nation by ordering and donning the Jinnah cap, keeping his legacy alive through this enduring fashion statement. A recent report by a private news channel shed light on the efforts of Nisar Ali, a skilled craftsman dedicated to keeping the tradition of Jinnah caps alive. Nisar Ali a resident of Multan has been attached to this profession for years, meticulously crafting each cap to perfection. "I'm proud to be a part of this legacy," Nisar Ali said in an interview. "The Jinnah cap is not just a fashion statement, it is a symbol of our nation's history and identity. I feel honored to be able to contribute to keeping this tradition alive," he added. Despite a noticeable decline in demand over the years, the iconic Jinnah cap continues to hold a special place in the hearts of Pakistani citizens. Nisar Ali, a skilled craftsman dedicated to preserving the tradition of Jinnah caps, observed that while the demand may be less than previous years, the caps still remain popular among citizens. The enduring popularity of the Jinnah cap is a reflection of the nation's deep-rooted respect for its founding father and its rich cultural heritage. As Pakistan continues to evolve and grow, the Jinnah cap remains an iconic symbol of its history, identity and values. Citizens of Multan, who have been donning the Jinnah cap for years, praised Nisar Ali's dedication to the craft. "Nisar Ali is doing a great service to our nation by keeping this tradition alive," said Muhammad Ahmed, a local resident of Multan city. The Jinnah cap is a reminder of our Quaid's vision and leadership, and we are grateful to Nisar Ali for his hard work. "It is heartening to see that despite the changing times, the Jinnah cap continues to evoke a sense of patriotism and nostalgia among our citizens," said another citizen. "I feel proud when I wear this Jinnah cap," said a local resident, adding, it is a symbol of our Quaid's vision and leadership and it reminds me of the sacrifices made by our forefathers to create this great nation."—DNA

RCCI celebrates Quaid's 148th birth anniversary

RCCI President Usman Shaukat emphasized the importance of adhering to Quaid's motto of Unity, Faith, and Discipline

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A cake-cutting ceremony to commemorate the 148th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Christmas was held at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). The event celebrated the vision and leadership of the Father of the Nation while fostering unity and inclusivity. Mushaal Hussein Malik, wife of veteran Kashmiri jailed leader Yasin Malik, graced the occasion as the chief guest. In her speech, Mushaal Malik expressed her gratitude to RCCI for the invitation and highlighted the significance of the day. She stated, "Today is a very important

day for us. It marks the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam. The breath in a free country is a result of Quaid-e-Azam's tireless efforts. RCCI President Usman Shaukat emphasized the

importance of adhering to Quaid's motto of Unity, Faith, and Discipline. He stated, "The objective of inheriting a prosperous Pakistan for future generations can only be

achieved by following Quaid's principles. The business community, youth, and RCCI members must adopt attributes such as honesty, hard work, perseverance, and dedication

to ensure progress and prosperity." Group Leader Sohail Altaf underscored the importance of inclusivity and harmony, saying, "As Muslims, it is our duty to take care of all people. This country belongs to everyone equally, and the Christian community is playing a significant role in its development." The ceremony was attended by Senior Vice President RCCI Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, former presidents, Executive Committee members, representatives from trade associations, and distinguished RCCI members. The event concluded with a renewed commitment to uphold the values and vision of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and work towards a united and prosperous Pakistan.




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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

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Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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



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Edhi Ambulance.....115
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Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
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TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

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ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador-designate of Romania to Pakistan, Mr Dan Stoenescu, presenting his diplomatic credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —DNA

Naqvi emphasizes importance of interfaith harmony; peace

The district administration had implemented strict security measures for Christmas, said the spokesman of the ICT administration

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has extended warm greetings to the Christian community on the joyous occasion of Christmas. He said that this day is a symbol of love, peace and brotherhood. He said that Prophet Isa (AS) was sent into this world as a symbol of peace, brotherhood and respect for all humanity. He has said that Prophet Isa (AS) preached the

high values of tolerance, love and compassion. The Interior Minister said that along with happiness, this day also gives a message of respect for humanity. He said that the focus of the teachings of Prophet Isa (AS) was not one class but the whole of humanity. He emphasized that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah added the white colour to the national flag for minorities. He stated that it is our duty to protect the rights of minorities and that all minority communities in Pakistan enjoy

complete freedom in every way. He highlighted that the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protection of the rights of minority communities. He further said that the role of the Christian community in the construction and development of Pakistan is beyond doubt. He prayed that Christmas may bring more success and happiness for the Christian community. Meanwhile, Christmas celebrations were held across the Federal Capital with the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration

ensuring safety and smooth arrangements for the Christian community. The district administration has implemented strict security measures for Christmas, said the spokesman of the ICT administration here on Wednesday. Over 1,500 police officers have been deployed at 244 churches across the city to maintain order and ensure safety. Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioners (ACs) visited multiple churches to review arrangements, focusing on

security and other necessary preparations. On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon directed the district administration teams directed to remain in the field throughout the day, staying in close coordination with church administrations. Furthermore, he emphasized that the district administration stands alongside the Christian community during the festivities, ensuring a safe and peaceful environment for celebrations.

Chinese Consulate donates health material

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese Consulate in Karachi donated health materials and medical consumables to the Pak-China Friendship Hospital (PCFH) Gwadar. The donated items include Dettol, Povidone-Iodine, Alcohol Swabs, KN95 Masks, Disposable Face Masks, Safety Gloves, and Latex Gloves. An official from the Chinese Consulate in Karachi told Gwadar Pro that this consignment of medical supplies not only provides material aid to the people of Gwadar but also offers spiritual encouragement and support. It enhances their confidence to actively engage in regional development and work together toward a brighter future for Gwadar. Nadir Ali Baloch, Deputy Manager of Administration at PCFH, stated that such donations are always needed to continue providing free health services to the local people of Gwadar. He mentioned that the 100-bed hospital, which was inaugurated in May this year, includes emergency, outpatient, inpatient, medical technology, administration, and logistics facilities. The hospital is already making a significant impact, receiving approximately 3,000 patients daily from Gwadar and the surrounding areas. As a livelihood project under the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the hospital's state-of-the-art building, which consists of both single- and multi-story structures, as well as its advanced medical equipment—such as a modern laboratory, CT scanners, and ultrasound machines—have been generously donated by the Chinese government. Some of the hospital's facilities are integrated with an existing 50-bed hospital in the city, creating a combined capacity of 150 beds. The new hospital complex includes outpatient services, medical technology departments, and ward buildings.

Punjab signs MoU with China's clean air alliance to tackle pollution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to combat air pollution and promote sustainable growth in Punjab, the Punjab Government and Punjab Bank signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Bluetech Clean Air Alliance, a non-profit professional organization from China focused on the development of clean air technologies and industries. The agreement outlines a series of initiatives aimed at advancing green technologies, fostering local innovation, and building capacity within Punjab. Under the framework cooperation, the two sides will work together to introduce green technologies to Punjab and tailor cost-effective solutions for this smog-stricken province. Policy advisory ser-

VICES, technology transfer, demonstration programs, and introduction of enterprises will be prioritised to this end, according to Mr. Xie Hongxing, Chairman and Director of the Alliance, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. For weeks, Punjab's capital city Lahore has been engulfed in record-breaking toxic smog, with the air quality index repeatedly surpassing the 1,000 mark. This hazardous pollution has halted work and studies, posing a serious threat to the health of the city's 13 million residents. "Air pollution involves complex atmospheric and photochemical reactions, and identifying its sources, mechanisms, and diffusion patterns requires science-based research," Mr. Xie noted. He further pointed out that China's experience in mitigating

pollution over the past decade, along with the country's vast expanse, offers diversified and proven models that could be adapted for Pakistan. Since the implementation of the Action Plan for Air Pollution Prevention and Control in 2013, China has made significant strides in improving air quality. A study examining the air quality changes in 74 major Chinese cities from 2013 to 2022 revealed that the concentration of PM2.5 decreased by 57.4%, reaching 29 µg/m3, and the number of heavily polluted days in a year dropped by 90%, with only 0.6% of days classified as heavily polluted. Mr. Xie said that the Bluetech Clean Air Alliance has evaluated more than 600 innovative technologies from over 20 countries through its annual clean air technology solicitation.

Ahsan Iqbal honors Quaid-e-Azam's legacy, urges national unity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal made a passionate appeal to the nation, especially the youth to unite and work tirelessly for the country's welfare, drawing inspiration from the visionary leadership of founder Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his 148th birth anniversary.

In his message with the PTV news channel, Iqbal paid rich tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's relentless struggle and unwavering dedication to the creation of Pakistan.

He emphasized the importance of Jinnah's vision for a unified and prosperous Pakistan, highlighting his unwavering commitment to the nation's development. He encouraged the youth to follow in Jinnah's footsteps and play an active role in shaping the country's future. He underscored the imperative of political stability and policy continuity for Pakistan's economic resurgence, stressing the need for national unity and brotherhood to overcome the country's economic challenges. Minister emphasized that it is the sacred responsibility of every Pakistani citizen to adhere to the guiding principles of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, paving the way for a prosperous and thriving Pakistan. He reiterated that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's enduring message to the nation is one of unity, faith and discipline, serving as a guiding beacon for Pakistan's progress and prosperity. He emphasized the need for collective efforts to eradicate corruption, promote national harmony and foster brotherhood to ensure a brighter future for Pakistan.

ANF recovers 115 kg drugs; arrests six drug dealers

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country arrested six drug dealers and recovered over 115 kg drugs worth over Rs 10 million, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that two different operations were conducted near Red Sun Capital Square B-17 in Islamabad and ANF recovered 14.4 kg opium, 70.8 kg hashish and 12 kg ice hidden in two vehicles while two suspects were arrested. 12 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Kala Shah Kaku Interchange Lahore and a suspect was arrested during the operation. In fourth operation, 10 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a parcel sent from Peshawar at a courier office in Karachi. 6 kg of hashish was recovered from the possession of the suspect rounded up near a bus stop in Islamabad.—APP

PAKISTAN NAVY

SHORT TENDER NOTICE FOR OPERATION, REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

1. Pakistan Navy invites sealed quotations for Award of Contract for Operation, Repair and Maintenance of 02 x 259 Ton HVAC Plants (SANVO/ CARRIER) Double-Effect Direct Fired Absorption Chillers/ Heaters installed at Islamabad w.e.f 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2028 (03 Years). Technical & Financial capable Firms fulfilling the following requirements may participate:

- Having adequate managerial capabilities, sufficient spares supportability & trained/experienced technical staff for operation, repair, and service supportability maintenance having experience for the said HVAC Plants.
- Having complete infrastructure in Rawalpindi/ Islamabad. Highly qualified indirect fired Sanyo Japan are invited to participate.
- The firms must be in possession of valid C-5 ME-01 and CE-10 (Specialist in this code) Registration Certificate of Pakistan Engineering Council in particular category.
- Qualification/ experience in direct fixed absorption systems (at least 05 years' experience).
- Firm has never been blacklisted.
- Active Tax Payer.

2. Interested firms may submit their Technical and Commercial offers separately with Rs. 5,000/- non-refundable. Tender will be closed on 13 January 2025 at 1100 hrs. Technical and Commercial offers will be opened on 13 January 2025 at 1130 hrs in the presence of Firm Representatives.

Detail of IT and relevant documents may be collected from the undersigned office before the closing of tender from 0800 hrs to 1400 hrs daily and 0800 hrs to 1230 hrs on Friday only, except Saturday & Sunday.

ZAHID MAHMOOD
Lieutenant Pakistan Navy
Manager SIM at
PNS ZAFAR Islamabad
Ph Office: 051-20063341

Briefs

Uzbekistan envoy highlights ties with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Uzbekistan Ambassador to Pakistan Alisher Tukhtayev, on Quaid-e-Azam Day, underscored Muhammad Ali Jinnah's enduring legacy which remains a source of inspiration for all who strive for justice, unity and progress. The ambassador of Uzbekistan to commemorate Quaid-e-Azam Day, marking the birth anniversary of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. In his message, he emphasized Jinnah's pivotal role in shaping an independent Pakistan, describing him as a symbol of determination and unity. He called on people to draw inspiration from Jinnah's principles of justice, unity, and mutual respect, urging them to work collectively for national progress. Reflecting on Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations, the ambassador noted the deep historical and cultural ties between the two countries. He highlighted the ongoing efforts to strengthen cooperation and foster friendships. "Together, we aim to open new horizons for development and prosperity for our peoples," he stated. He also reiterated the shared commitment of both nations to peace and regional progress. "Our collaboration serves as a model for mutual understanding and development in the region," he said. Concluding his message, the ambassador extended his best wishes to the people of Pakistan, expressing hope for their continued prosperity and harmony. "May every day bring peace, joy, and a brighter future for Pakistan," he said.

ICT Police holds farewell ceremony to honor sub-inspector

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police held a farewell ceremony on Wednesday to honor Sub-Inspector Farhat Shah in recognition of his dedicated services. A public relation officer told APP that Director General (DG) Safe City Shakir Hussain Dawar graced the ceremony as chief guest, while other police officers were also present on the occasion. He said the ceremony was held in recognition of the services of the retiring police officer. Speaking at the occasion, the DG Shakir Hussain Dawar said that retirement is part of the service as the one who joins the service has to retire one day. DG asked the serving police officers to do their best to earn respect for the department. He was of the view that public service only could earn a good name for the officer and the department. He recognized the services rendered by the Sub-Inspector Farhat Shah and added that the department in return gave him respect and honour. He presented police shields and gifts to the retired police officer and also expressed best wishes for his future endeavors.—APP

Tarar lauds Christian community's sacrifices, services for Pakistan

The minister said that the white colour in the national flag represented minorities and the Christian community has always kept the flag high

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said Wednesday that the Christian community has rendered immense sacrifices and services for Pakistan. Delivering his speech at a special event organized on the occasion of Christmas here, he said the Christian community also played a prominent role in the Pakistan Movement. The Christian community, he said was advancing the Prime Minister's vision of development and progress. Wishing Merry Christmas to Christian brothers and sisters, he said he was glad to represent 70 thousand Christians in his constituency. "During the election campaign, I received immense love and affection from the Christian community in my constituency," he remarked. The minister said that the white colour in the national flag represented minorities and the Christian community has always kept the flag high. He said the body of



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif with a choir group that performed at a ceremony in the Prime Minister's House to celebrate Christmas.

a brave soldier Haroon William was draped in a national flag, who sacrificed his life in line of duty. He maintained that the

Christian community has created eternal stories of sacrifices. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also gave laptops

and scholarships to Christian students on merit, Attaullah Tarar said. Stressing the need for the promotion of interfaith harmony

and peaceful coexistence in the country, he said the government was trying hard to protect the rights of minorities.

Rehman urges FBR to involve business community in tax laws amendment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, the Acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has urged the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to involve all stakeholders, particularly the business community, in discussions regarding the proposed Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill 2024. He expressed concerns that the proposed amendments could discourage businesses and deepen the existing trust deficit between taxpayers and the FBR. In

a statement, Siddiqui highlighted his apprehension that the amendments were



excessively stringent, creating more obstacles for businesses and potentially eroding the fragile trust between the business sec-

tor and tax authorities. He stressed that instead of placing additional burdens on existing taxpayers, FBR should focus on bringing those who are still outside the tax net into compliance. Siddiqui called on the government to reconsider the proposed amendments and engage in meaningful consultations with stakeholders to create a tax environment that is more conducive to business operations. He emphasized the importance of transparency, dialogue, and addressing stakeholder concerns before finalizing any legislative changes. He also reaffirmed the ICCT's

commitment to advocating for reforms that promote economic growth while safeguarding the interests of the business community. In his statement Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry emphasized that any tax reforms should prioritize creating a fair and transparent system that supports the growth of businesses rather than stifling them. He pointed out that the lack of consultation with key stakeholders could lead to policies that are disconnected from the realities of the business environment, making it more difficult for businesses to thrive.

Atif calls to follow Quaid's motto

ISLAMABAD: President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Sheikh while addressing the function organized on Quaid-e-Azam Day said that Quaid-e-Azam's motto of 'Unity, Faith and Discipline' is a way forward for the nation. For freedom the dedication and unwavering determination of the founder of Pakistan will always be remembered. The entire nation today pays tribute to Quaid-e-Azam for his tireless struggle for the rights of the Muslims of the subcontinent. Federation President Atif Ikram said that today the nation should put political and group differences aside and pledge to play its role for the promotion of national stability and national unity. We will make every sacrifice for integrity and development. We have to fight unitedly against extremism, intolerance, sectarianism and all kinds of prejudice. Atif Ikram said that the Quaid-e-Azam realized the importance of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent where all citizens have the right to freedom of belief, profession and equal opportunities. His determination was made possible only by his steadfastness.—DNA

Lok Virsa commemorates Quaid's birth anniversary with cultural festivities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) Wednesday celebrated the 148th birth anniversary of Pakistan's founder, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on Wednesday with vibrant and engaging activities at the Heritage Museum, Shakarparian. The festivities began with a special inauguration ceremony attended by government officials, the general public and students. The event opened with a recitation of the Quran, followed by a welcome address by Executive Director, Lok Virsa, Muzaffar Ali Barki. Speaking on the occasion, the Executive Director highlighted Quaid-e-Azam's contributions to Pakistan's independence and his vision for unity and progress. He advised the youth to follow the principles advocat-

ed by Quaid-e-Azam in his speeches which are unity, faith and discipline. A major highlight of the event was the artisans-at-work exhibition, where craftsmen and women from across the country demonstrated traditional art forms such as pottery, embroidery, and truck art. Naeem Ahmed, a father of three, remarked, "The artisans-at-work exhibit was my favorite part. It's amazing to see how our cultural traditions are being preserved and shared with the younger generation. It makes me proud to be Pakistani." A cake-cutting ceremony followed, creating a patriotic atmosphere as attendees sang the national anthem. The Mili Naghmas Show featuring patriotic songs by renowned singers and school choirs was particularly moving. Throughout the day, documentaries on Quaid-e-Azam's life were screened,

offering insights into his vision and struggles. Sadia Malik, a university student, commented, "The documentaries on Quaid-e-Azam were truly inspiring. Watching his journey reminds us of how far we've come and how much we need to do to honor his vision." aid-e-Azam's struggle and determination for acquiring a separate homeland for us is truly inspiring for the students like me", she said. For children, a storytelling session narrated inspirational anecdotes from Quaid-e-Azam's life, emphasizing his values of determination and honesty. Ayesha Khan, a teacher attending with her students, remarked, "The storytelling session was such a brilliant way to teach our children about Quaid-e-Azam's values. My students loved learning about his life in such an interactive way."

Motorists urged to exercise extreme caution in foggy conditions

ISLAMABAD: Winter's arrival has shrouded parts of the country in dense fog, severely impairing visibility on roads and highways, particularly during morning hours where motorists are advised to exercise utmost caution while driving in these conditions to ensure their safety. According to a spokesperson for the Motorway Police, "we urge all motorists to drive carefully and follow safety guidelines during the foggy season which is essential to reduce speed, use low-beam headlights and maintain a safe distance from other vehicles to avoid accidents", PTV news channel reported.—APP

ITP, ICCI sign MOU for "Green & Clean" Islamabad project

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed on Wednesday between the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) and the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to launch the "Green and Clean Islamabad" project. The initiative aims to tackle environmental pollution in the federal capital and promote awareness through various activities. A police spokesperson told APP that Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Muhammad Sarfraz Virk and ICCI representative Ahsan Bakhtawari signed the memorandum. He said under the agreement, the Islamabad Traffic Police, as part of the "Green and



Clean Islamabad" project, will take vigorous actions against vehicles causing environmental pollution in the federal capital. Additionally, the ITP will organize vari-

ous awareness activities, including tree-planting campaigns across the city, with the support of the Islamabad business community. On this occasion, CTO Virk said that ITP special

squads patrol various areas and key boulevards of the city. These squads are directed to conduct regular checks and issue fines for vehicles involved in environmental pollution in the city.

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Hot spots of 2025

WE have a maximum of global uncertainty. We have an incoming US administration. And I want to make four quick points about 2025 - what I hope will happen and what could happen potentially in 2025. The first point is about the three major global hot spots. We need to end the war in Ukraine. This war will end when the US finally says clearly that it will stop attempting to expand NATO to Russia's border. The war in Ukraine is caused by the US' intention to enlarge NATO - a provocative action. Stopping this action can help end the war by addressing both Russia's security needs and Ukraine's security needs, thereby ending an unnecessary provocation. The second hot spot is the Middle East. This violence will stop when there is a State of Palestine admitted to the United Nations as the 194th UN member state, living alongside Israel in peace. So many of the crises in the Middle East have occurred because of Israel's attempt to continue to hold on to the occupied territories it captured decades ago and to rule unjustly over the Palestinian people. The two-state solution will be the basis for peace. This can happen, indeed, as early as 2005. The third hot spot is East Asia. Here, there is a straightforward solution, that is for the US to abide by the one-China policy and stop arming the Taiwan region. It is not the business of the US to violate the one-China policy and continue arming Taiwan. Such actions are provocative and dangerous, putting the Taiwan region at risk and significantly increasing the likelihood of war. My first point is that the three hot spots - Ukraine, the Middle East and East Asia - can all be resolved through straightforward policies. The US needs to shift from provocation to cooperation. The second point is the reform of the global financial architecture. US President-elect Donald Trump said that the BRICS countries should not dare to try to introduce a non-dollar payment system. The US has militarized the dollar. It has weaponized the dollar and imposed sanctions using the SWIFT banking system all over the world. The US has to stop weaponizing the dollar. Other countries don't need the dollar to be the dominant or the sole payment mechanism for international trade, especially between BRICS countries, who are not transacting with the US but are transacting with each other. So, I favor many kinds of non-dollar payments anyway. I also want to say, with regard to the global financial architecture, to China: please expand the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). That's purely a win-win for China and the partner countries. Make the loans under BRI long-term - 30-year loans - and give the other countries time to grow and repay the loans. It's a win-win proposition to have an even larger Belt and Road program. The third area is climate action. We need the world to decarbonize by mid-century. We need China, with its capacity in renewable energy, fourth-generation nuclear power, electric vehicles and the hydrogen economy, to accelerate decarbonization. And we need the US to do the same: to stop putting emphasis on new fracking and hydrocarbons, to phase out fossil fuels and collaborate with China on decarbonization, and to form a partnership with China to help other regions of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, in making their energy transitions. This is an area where China and the US could very helpfully cooperate.

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Future of the West Bank

ON the cusp of West Bank annexation and a settler-militia war on Palestinian civilians, the future of the territory will ultimately be determined by the course of grassroots resistance to Israeli conspiracies. While the Zionist Entity will likely soon see a territorial gain, its project could tremendously backfire. As the Genocide in Gaza, the war on Lebanon, and regime change in Syria have stolen the headlines over the course of the past 14 months, the West Bank has also experienced a period of hardship that may soon land it top news story status. Since October 7, 2023, the Israeli occupation army and its allied settler militants have murdered over 720 Palestinians across the West Bank, making it the deadliest period there since the Second Intifada (2000-2005). In addition, hundreds of thousands of jobs have disappeared in the territory, as the local economy has continued to decline. Making things even worse is the fact that Israeli settlers have established over 60 new settlement outposts on Palestinian lands, while they also worked alongside the occupation army to ethnically cleanse at least 26 villages and communities. Settler violence is at a historic high, as the Israeli regime continues to arm their extremist militias, has set up the Desert Frontier settler extremist military unit as part of their army, and allowed for continual assaults against Palestinian property, farmlands, and lives. Meanwhile, the Israeli military has installed hundreds of new roadblocks, walls, and gates, while maintaining a more imposing presence throughout the territory and adopting a very aggressive posture towards West Bank civilians. This has meant that traversing even small pockets of the territory has become more dangerous and challenging for Palestinians. Palestinians now must act with great caution at checkpoints and makeshift roadblocks that are set up for them, where they could be randomly robbed of various items, deprived of the ability to travel to work, or worse, face arbitrary detention, humiliation, beatings, and execution. Civilians have grown increasingly cautious about traveling at night due to the high likelihood of random settler attacks, against which they receive no protection. Palestinians living in the West Bank endure financial, physical, and psychological torment, compounded by a heightened sense of horror over the events unfolding nearby in the Gaza Strip. Many West Bank residents have remained relatively quiet during the Genocide in Gaza, driven by a sense of hopelessness and fear - a situation influenced by various factors that are poised to change dramatically. So far, the refugee camps in the northern West Bank have proven to be the real centers of resistance and revolutionary action. The Jenin Camp, Nour al-Shams Camp in Tulkarim, and refugee camps like Balata and al-Ain in Nablus, have been isolated islands of armed resistance. However, without popular action, their capabilities remain confined to defensive maneuvers within their camps. With US support, the Palestinian Authority (PA) is intensifying its crackdown on the Jenin Brigades resistance groups, signaling a concerted effort to eliminate resistance strongholds in the West Bank. This crackdown coincides with a critical moment for the PA, as it faces an existential threat from "Israel's" looming pledge to annex the territory. The Zionist regime seeks to conquer areas C and parts of area B, inside the West Bank, aiming to establish de jure governing control over these regions, placing around 70% of the territory under their civil control.

PTI-government parley: Success or failure?

Qamar Bashir



Rather than seeking short-term concessions, PTI should demand the reversal of recent constitutional amendments and legislative changes enacted by the incumbent government. These amendments have drastically altered the balance of power, weakening the judiciary, reducing parliamentary authority, and enhancing military influence. For instance, the 26th Constitutional Amendment has increased parliamentary involvement in judicial appointments and altered the process of selecting the Chief Justice, replacing the seniority...

THE recent initiation of dialogue between PTI and the broader political spectrum marks a pivotal and positive step toward resolving political conflicts through democratic means. This development reflects a notable shift in PTI's earlier stance of isolating itself from political actors it had dismissed as powerless, illegitimate, and lacking public mandate. Previously, PTI sought engagement exclusively with the establishment, which it deemed the true power holder, undermining the democratic principle that governance should be conducted through civilian institutions and elected representatives. This shift suggests that PTI may have received assurances from the establishment to support its demands if it engages with civilian political forces, signaling a strategic recalibration. PTI's demands in these negotiations can be divided into short-term and long-term goals. In the immediate term, PTI is likely to prioritize the release of its leader, Imran Khan, and detained political activists, as well as the restoration of the February 8 election mandate, which it views as critical to reclaiming governance in the center and Punjab. However, PTI's far-sighted demands focus on systemic reforms to strengthen democratic governance, reduce military interference in civilian affairs, and establish a stable governance framework. Key reforms include an independent Election Commission with biometric voter verification, judicial independence through transparent appointments, and institutional accountability. PTI also seeks to redefine civil-military relations by confining the military to defense roles, removing military officers from civilian positions, and introducing parliamentary oversight of defense budgets. Additionally, fostering national unity through inclusivity, empowering marginalized communities, and addressing socio-economic issues like poverty, healthcare, and education forms a cornerstone of PTI's vision. Rather than seeking short-term concessions, PTI should demand the reversal of recent constitutional amendments and legislative changes enacted by the incumbent government. These amendments have drastically altered the balance of power, weakening the judiciary, reducing parliamentary authority, and enhancing military

influence. For instance, the 26th Constitutional Amendment has increased parliamentary involvement in judicial appointments and altered the process of selecting the Chief Justice, replacing the seniority-based system with parliamentary discretion—a move widely criticized for undermining judicial independence. Similarly, amendments to the Pakistan Army Act extended the tenures of military chiefs, consolidating their authority, while legislative measures granted the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) unprecedented powers of communication interception, raising concerns about privacy and civil liberties. Additionally, the government's perceived non-compliance with Supreme Court orders, including those opposing the trial of civilians in military courts, has further eroded democratic principles and institutional balance. These recommendations align with a concept paper I presented to PTI leadership in May 2024, emphasizing the importance of resolving political issues on political platforms rather than relying on the establishment. The paper highlighted that PTI's refusal to engage with other political parties weakened its ability to build consensus on national issues and reinforced a narrative that the military remains the ultimate arbiter of power. It urged PTI to shift from isolationist rhetoric to meaningful dialogue, recognizing that democratic governance rests on the strength of civilian institutions and collaboration among elected representatives. However, the feasibility of these negotiations remains uncertain. If frivolous cases against PTI leadership and workers are withdrawn under due process, PTI would quickly regain its footing and mobilize its supporters, potentially crippling the government through street agitation. If the establishment remains neutral, the government might not last more than a few months. Similarly, conceding to PTI's demand to restore the "stolen mandate" of the February 8 elections would immediately delegitimize the government, leading to its collapse. Furthermore, undoing constitutional and legislative amendments would strip the military and ISI of their enhanced powers, restore election tribunals, eliminate military courts, and reinstate the judiciary's full authori-

ty. These changes would likely result in the government's swift disintegration, as PTI's restored position would render it ungovernable. Under the current circumstances, the government is likely to offer limited and calculated concessions to PTI, aimed at placating the opposition without jeopardizing its own hold on power or antagonizing the establishment. These concessions may include the partial withdrawal of minor or frivolous cases against PTI leaders, the selective release of detained workers, and symbolic gestures reaffirming democratic principles without enacting meaningful reforms. Discussions on electoral reforms, such as biometric voter verification or improved oversight, might be entertained, but any implementation would likely be delayed. The government is unlikely to address demands that threaten its legitimacy, such as restoring the February 8 election mandate or reversing constitutional amendments that enhance establishment powers. These constraints highlight the delicate balance the government must maintain—appearing conciliatory enough to prevent unrest while avoiding concessions that could undermine its authority or provoke institutional backlash. As a result, any offered concessions are expected to be superficial, prolonging political instability without addressing PTI's core grievances. Interestingly, any or all concessions would not significantly dent the deeply entrenched establishment, which has consolidated unprecedented power since February 8. For the establishment, shifting support between political parties is routine. Regardless of the ruling party, the establishment's authority remains unassailable. If it chooses to remove the incumbent government, it will do so decisively, installing a new party of choice and supporting it until it falls out of favor. This cyclical process underscores the disposable nature of civilian governments and the enduring dominance of the establishment in Pakistan's power dynamics. Without addressing this imbalance, any progress toward genuine democratic governance will remain illusory. — Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC

The evolution of global power dynamics

Christopher Phillips

Israel's wars have also damaged the reputation of Western states in the Global South, as they have continued to arm and support Israel and done too little to rein in Netanyahu. Though Israel ignored the International Court of Justice's ruling in July that its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is unlawful, the case, brought by South Africa, pointed to a shift in the global order. Non-Western states are increasingly willing to use Western-established institutions like the Int'l Court of Justice to highlight what they perceive as Western hypocrisy

SUPERFICIALLY, 2024 has not differed greatly from 2023 when it comes to global power dynamics. Many of the key features were already with us, whether the growth of populism in the West, the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine or the rise of middle powers. Yet, even if these trends are not new, the past year has seen them continue to build a momentum that points to a gradual shift toward a multipolar world order and a weakening of the West. The year's most dramatic development, the election of Donald Trump, looks likely to accelerate this. For, while the new White House could make the US a fiercer international player, it could also weaken the West as a whole. The wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and Lebanon have been damaging for Western states over 2024. In Ukraine, Russia has made slow but steady progress. Despite Kyiv's audacious Kursk offensive in August and an increased willingness to launch attacks inside Russian territory, the war has gone badly. While the year began with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky still insisting all occupied territory could be recovered, it has ended with a seeming acceptance by his Western allies that a negotiated peace is inevitable. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's call with Vladimir Putin in November was symptomatic of this gradual softening. Israel's wars in Gaza and Lebanon have presented different challenges. Unlike in Ukraine, where the West's ally is struggling, Benjamin Netanyahu's government has had a successful year militarily. Hamas has been crushed, with Oct. 7 mastermind Yahya Sinwar killed, while Hezbollah has been decimated, with most of its leadership, including Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, assassinated. Some commentators even argue Israel might be able to use these military successes to reorder the Middle East. However, the scale of the destruction in Gaza and Lebanon, with more than 45,000 Palestinians and almost 4,000 Lebanese killed, has battered Israel's international reputation. Unlike with Ukraine, initial Western unity behind Israel has fractured. In May, Norway, Ireland, and Spain officially recognized the state of Palestine in protest at the Gaza war, while France and the UK have sanctioned settlers, with London even symbolically suspending a handful of arms licenses. The UK, France, Ireland, and Italy have also all indicated they would arrest Netanyahu should he visit following the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court. This is in sharp contrast to the US which, despite some criticism, rejects the court and has steadfastly backed Israel. Trump looks set to expand on

this, potentially opening up further rifts with Europe. Israel's wars have also damaged the reputation of Western states in the Global South, as they have continued to arm and support Israel and done too little to rein in Netanyahu. Though Israel ignored the International Court of Justice's ruling in July that its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is unlawful, the case, brought by South Africa, pointed to a shift in the global order. Non-Western states are increasingly willing to use Western-established institutions like the International Court of Justice to highlight what they perceive as Western hypocrisy. Geopolitically, both China and Russia have made much of this in the past year, arguing that they are more reliable partners to the Global South than the hypocritical West. While a ceasefire in Lebanon appears to be holding, the longer the Gaza war continues, the more damage it could do to the integrity of the Western alliance and its global reputation. The Western alliance risks further weakness from the continued popularity of right-wing populism at home. The year 2024 has seen populists triumph in the Austrian elections, enter government in the Netherlands, and come close to power in France. The growth of popular nationalism undermines the principle of collective security and points to a more transactional approach to intra-Western relations. The Ukraine war is a case in point. Initially, Western states were united behind Kyiv, but increased criticism has been led by populists. Hungary's Viktor Orban is the most vocal, but the Netherlands' populist Party for Freedom has also questioned aid to Ukraine. Meanwhile, Alternative for Germany, which won a state-level election for the first time in 2024 and looks set to do well in the upcoming national elections, has also historically been pro-Russia and critical of Kyiv. Until now, European unity against Russia has largely held despite the election of populists, either because they have proven less isolationist in power, as with Italy's Giorgia Meloni, or because they govern smaller states like Hungary. But should Alternative for Germany enter power in 2025, this could seriously impact Europe's Russia policy. Already, Europe faces a tricky 2025 due to the incoming Trump administration. If Trump presses ahead with tariffs on allies, it will both damage European economies and further strain US-EU relations, both of which will weaken the Western alliance. Moreover, if Trump insists, as expected, on reducing America's NATO commitments and on Europeans paying higher defense costs, this will further

challenge EU economies. It could also make them more insular, focused on defending Europe rather than projecting power further afield. The net result would be a weaker Western alliance globally. Beyond Europe, 2024 has been a mixed year for America's geopolitical rivals. Russia has recovered from some of the isolation it experienced in 2022-23 by embracing non-Western powers, ensuring its isolation is limited to the West rather than being global. Hosting the expanded BRICS conference in October underlined this, with the leaders of China, Turkey and Egypt, among others, traveling to Kazan to meet Putin. The expansion of BRICS, which formally welcomed the UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia and Iran in 2024, also boosts China, which is keen for the bloc to rival Western-dominated international institutions. But Beijing is somewhat less confident as the year ends, as it faces the twin problems of sluggish growth in its economy and the return of Trump, who has appointed several China hawks to his Cabinet and appears to be gearing up for a trade war. Herein could lie the paradox of Trump's return for geopolitics. His combative approach, particularly his willingness to use trade as a weapon, understandably concerns both his European allies and his Chinese rivals - even if another foe, Russia, may be hoping he will broker a favorable deal for Moscow in Ukraine. This might make the US ostensibly more powerful and, in contrast to the Biden years, a more central actor in world affairs. But Trump's transnationalism and a seeming lack of commitment to the Western alliance could leave the West as a whole weaker on the world stage, with it already suffering as a result of geopolitical shifts and the rise of isolationist populism at home. Moreover, the US today lacks the power to push global actors into an anti-Chinese trading position in the way it might have done during either the Cold War or the post-Cold War era of US dominance. Washington may damage China's economy, but this is unlikely to seriously limit Beijing's influence in the Global South and non-Western world. Likewise, other powerful economies like India, South Africa and Brazil, while conscious of not provoking Trump, will not likely bend excessively around him in a way they might have during the 1990s and 2000s. Trump's return will therefore likely represent a shift in style rather than a fundamental change in global geopolitics. This year continued the trend toward a weakening West within a multipolar world and 2025, with Trump in the White House, looks set for that to largely continue.

Briefs

Parachinar
sit-in over
road...

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He emphasised that the government's goal is to achieve a sustainable and permanent resolution to the century-old tribal dispute that has caused significant unrest in the region. The ongoing tribal conflict in Parachinar has claimed over 100 lives and paralysed the district by blocking all major and minor routes for the past two and a half months. The situation remains tense, with residents and authorities grappling with the fallout from the prolonged blockade.

Prime
Minister,
President...

FROM PAGE 01
He added that upholding the rights of all citizens is essential for fostering national unity and progress. President Zardari said that in order to achieve Quaid's vision, "we must invest in the education of our youth, ensuring that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead Pakistan into a brighter future. We also need to work for the uplift of downtrodden segments of society". "Jinnah's dream of a peaceful and moderate Pakistan obliges us to promote harmony within and beyond our borders," the president said. "On this day, we honour the contributions of the Father of the Nation, who changed the course of history through a political struggle. Quaid-e-Azam's vision, determination and unwavering resolve led to the creation of an independent homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent," President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying.

COAS
Asim lauds
minorities'..

FROM PAGE 01
He emphasized that Christmas serves as a profound reminder of the universal values of compassion, generosity, and goodwill—principles that bind our diverse society together. He further acknowledged the remarkable contributions of Minorities and the Christian community to Pakistan's cultural, social, economic and national progress, which remain a source of pride and strength for the nation. During the occasion, General Asim Munir also paid a solemn tribute to the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Justice
Mansoor...

FROM PAGE 01
the Sind High Court for Constitutional Benches in the absence of any mechanism or criteria in place. "Therefore, there has been no logic or reason backing the nomination and determination of the number of judges for the Constitutional Benches of the Supreme Court and Sind High Court," said the letter. "The extension of the existing Constitutional Benches of the Supreme Court of Pakistan is coming up tomorrow [today]. Hence it is imperative and obligatory on the Commission to formulate a mechanism and criteria for the nomination and determination of the judges for the Constitutional Benches in the general interest of the public," said the letter of Justice Shah.

IHC seeks
intel report..

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However, Justice Kayani overruled the objection saying that the petitioner was aggrieved by the commission, which is based in Islamabad. Justice Kiyani remarked that the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances "neither works nor allows others to work", questioning its purpose and effectiveness. He suggested that if the commission had been functioning properly, petitioners would not need to approach the IHC for relief. "Let alone continue, such a commission should be shut down," he said.

Huaneng Tournament: Team
ACO wins in thrilling finale

The tournament featured six matches with four teams: Team Central Control Operations (CCO), Team Administration, Team ACO, and Team Maintenance

SAHIWAL: The Huaneng Cricket Tournament 2024 held at the Sahiwal Coal-Fired Power Plant, concluded with an electrifying final match that saw Team Auxiliary Control Operations (ACO) clinch victory over Team Administration in a nail-biting 8-over contest. The tournament emphasized physical fitness and mental well-being while also celebrating the friendship between Pakistani and Chinese cultures. In a nail-biting final, Team Auxiliary Control Operations (ACO) triumphed over Team Administration by just 8 runs. The match, played in an exciting 8-over format, saw Team Administration win the toss and choose to bowl first. Team ACO set a challenging total of 96 runs for 4 wickets with Touseef Khan leading the charge, scoring an unbeaten 28 runs. Team Administration's Hafiz Shehzad took 3 wickets, putting up a strong fight. In response, Team Administration scored 87 runs for 3 wickets with Abdul Rauf Bhatti matching Touseef's effort with 28 runs. Despite their best efforts, they fell short of the target. Touseef Khan capped off a fantastic performance by taking 2 crucial wickets,



securing the victory for Team ACO. The tournament featured six matches with four teams: Team Central Control Operations (CCO), Team Administration, Team ACO, and Team Maintenance. It kicked off with Team CCO facing Team Administration, where Administration won by 6 wickets. Team ACO also impressed with a 19-run victory over Team Maintenance in the second match. The final rounds saw Team ACO and Team Administration battle for the championship. After a series of thrilling matches, the award ceremony concluded with Mr. Li Xin, CEO of Sahiwal Coal-Fired Power Plant presenting the trophy to the champions, Team ACO while Vice President Mr. Huang Xuewen awarded the runners-up trophy to Team Administration. The tournament not only promoted cardiovascular health and teamwork but also created lasting memories for all participants. With such enthusiasm and talent displayed, everyone is looking forward to the next Huaneng Cricket Tournament. Events like this play a crucial role in fostering a positive work environment and enhancing employee morale. — Agencies

Pakistan's sports governance
faces turmoil amid reforms

PSB officials defend these steps as essential for enhancing governance

SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

LAHORE: Pakistan's sports governance is on the brink of a major crisis as the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) implements reforms aimed at increasing its control over National Sports Federations (NSFs). The measures, introduced via three key notifications available on the PSB website, have sparked criticism from the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) and affiliated federations, who argue that these steps undermine their autonomy and contravene international norms. The reforms include new election regulations, a Code of Ethics and Governance, and a Model Constitution for federations. PSB officials defend these steps as essential for enhancing governance, ensuring transparency, and eliminating malpractice in Pakistan's sports sector. However, critics contend that the reforms violate international sports statutes and threaten the independence of federations. Under the new Sports Election Regulations, the PSB has centralized the electoral process for NSFs. An independent Election Commission, formed by the PSB, will oversee the scrutiny of club memberships, finalize voter lists, and manage the election process. According to the PSB, these elections must be completed within 120 days, with disputes resolved by

an Election Tribunal established under the same framework. "The entire election process, from club scrutiny to NSF elections, will be completed within 120 days," stated the notification. The Director General of the PSB also holds the author-



ity to mandate elections in any federation. Despite these assurances, the POA and 23 federations have opposed the regulations. In a collective letter, they argued that the measures violate international sports laws and interfere with their autonomy. "Every federation operates under the rules of its respective international governing body, and interference by the PSB vi-

olates these frameworks," the federations had said. The newly introduced Code of Ethics and Governance aims to tackle unethical practices such as match-fixing, corruption, age fraud, doping, harassment, and human trafficking. Violators face strict penalties, including verbal and written warnings, bans ranging from one to ten years, and lifetime bans for severe infractions. In extreme cases, the PSB reserves the right to suspend or disaffiliate federations, cutting them off from government funding and infrastructure. "The Code underscores our commitment to maintaining ethical standards in sports and ensuring accountability," said the notifications. Cases involving criminal misconduct will be referred to relevant investigative agencies, the notification added.

The PSB has also directed NSFs to adopt a Model Constitution aligned with international standards and Pakistan's National Sports Policy. While the PSB insists this will enhance transparency and accountability, many federations remain skeptical. "This approach jeopardizes the autonomy we need to function effectively," a senior federation official said. The POA has been particularly vocal in its opposition, warning that these measures could lead to international repercussions. "We were aware of what the PSB was planning. Although we have not yet received the official notification, all sports bodies have decided to seek advice from their respective international federations and will act accordingly," said an official from one sports federation, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Mustafizur
signs up for
PSL 2025 draft

Mustafizur Rahman is currently he fifth highest wicket-taker in T20I cricket

DNA

LAHORE: Bangladesh pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman, who previously represented Lahore Qalandars, has officially signed up for the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10 player draft. Rahman, a key pacer for the Bengal Tigers in the white-ball format, played one season in the PSL during 2018 when he represented the Qalandars. The team finished last that year and failed to qualify for the knockout stages of the tournament. The left-arm pacer featured in five matches, taking four wickets at an average of 25.75 and an economy rate of 6.43. In addition to his PSL stint, the 29-year-old boasts extensive experience in the shorter format of the game. To date, he has represented Bangladesh in 106 T20I matches, claiming 132 wickets. Rahman is currently the fifth-highest wicket-taker in T20I cricket. Besides Mustafizur Rahman, former England duo David Willey and Jason Roy, along with Australia's Usman Khawaja, have also signed up for the PSL 2025 draft. It is pertinent to mention that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) decided to hold the PSL draft in Balochistan for the first time. As per the announcement, the draft will take place in Gwadar, the port city of Pakistan's largest province, on January 11, 2025. The pick order for the highly-anticipated players draft has also been announced, with two-time champions Lahore Qalandars making the first pick in the opening round of 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, Sultans, and reigning champions United will make the fifth and sixth picks, respectively.

Brazilian
Oscar returns
to Sao Paulo

Oscar spent the last eight seasons with Shanghai Port

WEB DESK

LONDON: Former Chelsea midfielder Oscar will return to his former club Sao Paulo on a three-year contract, the Brazilian Serie A side said on Tuesday. Oscar, who made 48 appearances for Brazil's national team between 2011 and 2016, spent the last eight seasons with Shanghai Port, winning the Chinese Super League title three times. "I'm happy to be back in Brazil and to be able to play for Sao Paulo, which is the club where I started out, where I made my base and where I grew up," the 33-year-old said in a statement. Oscar scored 38 goals in 203 appearances for Chelsea and lifted the Premier League, League Cup and Europa League trophies during his four-and-a-half-year spell. He began his professional career at Sao Paulo in 2008 and joined Internacional in 2010, a move that led to a lengthy contract dispute between the two Brazilian clubs.

Australia get Head boost,
India ponder Rohit switch

Head has 409 runs from five innings in the series, including two hundreds and a fifty, and averages nearly 82

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: In-form Australian batter Travis Head will be fit for the fourth test and India are considering restoring captain Rohit Sharma to the opener's slot for the match starting in Melbourne on Thursday. Head is the leading run scorer in the five-test series but the left-hander suffered a quad strain in Brisbane. Home captain Pat Cummins confirmed Head would retain his place in the middle order as Australia chase a 2-1 lead after rain thwarted their victory charge in the last game. "He ticked off some final things today and yesterday, but no stress, no worries about injury for Trav," Cummins told reporters after training on Wednesday. "He'll go into the game fully fit. I don't think you'll see too much management of him throughout the game... maybe around fielding if he's a bit uncomfortable." Head has 409 runs from five innings in the series, including two hundreds and a fifty, and averages nearly 82. Teenage opener Sam Konstas will make his debut in



place of Nathan McSweeney in front of a sellout Boxing Day crowd at the MCG. Seamer Scott Boland comes in for the injured Josh Hazlewood with the temperature forecast to reach 40 degrees Celsius on day one. India, lucky to escape with a draw in the rain-blighted third test, are also considering changing their opening combination. Captain Rohit missed the opening test to be with his newborn son in Mumbai and KL Rahul, who replaced him as Yashvirjaiswal's partner, retained his place in Adelaide and Brisbane. An out-of-form Rohit batted in the middle order in the last two tests but his run drought continued as he managed only 19 runs in three innings.

Babar Azam, Abbas return for first South Africa Test
Abbas returns to the Test team since his last appearance for the Green Shirts in 2021

WEB DESK

CENTURION: Star batter Babar Azam and experienced pacer Mohammad Abbas returned as Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday, announced the playing XI for the first Test of the two-match series against South Africa, scheduled to play here at the SuperSport Park from December 26 to 30. The lineup marks the return of ace batter Babar, who was left out the side for the last two Tests of the three-match series against England, held in October. The right-handed batter, who has only managed to score managing 366 runs in 18 innings without amassing a half-century since his 161-run knock against New Zealand in December 2022, replaced right-handed opener Abdullah Shafique, who recently registered three consecutive ducks in the ODI series against South Africa. As a result, Pakistan's Test captain Shan



Masood will now open the innings alongside in-form Saim Ayub, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Rizwan, Saud Shakeel and Salman Ali Agha form the touring side's middle-order for the opening Test, with all-rounder Aamir Jamal to follow at number eight. The green shirts will go an all-pace attack, comprised of Naseem Shah, Khuram Shahzad, Aamir and Abbas, who last represented Pakistan in August 2021 against West Indies, made his way back to the national team on the back of a stellar domestic season. Pakistan's playing XI: Shan Masood (c), Saim Ayub, Babar Azam, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Rizwan, Saud Shakeel, Salman Ali Agha, Aamir Jamal, Naseem Shah, Khuram Shahzad and Mohammad Abbas. South Africa's playing XI: Tony de Zorzi, Aiden Markram, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs, Temba Bavuma (C), David Bedingham, Kyle Verreynne, Marco Jansen, Kagiso Rabada, Dane Paterson, and Corbin Bosch.

Trump's
incoming
envoy calls..

FROM PAGE 01
A day earlier, Grenell — while talking to a US media outlet — said that the US had a much better relationship with Pakistan during the Trump administration when Imran Khan was the leader of Pakistan because "he was an outsider". "He [Imran Khan] was a former cricket player, he wasn't a politician and he spoke in very common sense language, and he and Donald Trump had a very good relationship," he said. Reiterating his demand to release Imran, he said: "There are a lot of the same allegations just like President Trump, where the ruling party put him in prison and created some sort of corruption allegations and false allegations." Grenell has held several critical roles during Trump's first administration, including US ambassador to Germany, Special Envoy for Serbia and Kosovo Peace Negotiations, and Acting Director of National Intelligence.

Govt
committed
to finding...

FROM PAGE 01
In a recent interview with a private news channel, Senator Irfan Siddiqui reaffirmed the government's commitment to finding a peaceful resolution with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. According to Siddiqui, dialogue and reconciliation are the only ways to address Pakistan's problems. He emphasized that the government is willing to engage in open-hearted dialogue to move forward. Senator Irfan also emphasized the need for maturity and tolerance among committee members, urging them to engage in constructive dialogue and refrain from provocative statements to ensure a productive and peaceful resolution process. Irfan Siddiqui clarified that the committee's next meeting will focus on reviewing PTT's written demands. This move aims to ensure transparency and a clear understanding of the opposition's concerns, he added.

Azerbaijan
plane
crashes...

FROM PAGE 01
from a piece of the fuselage that had remained intact. Kazakhstan's emergency ministry said in a statement that fire services had put out the blaze and that the survivors, including two children, were being treated at a nearby hospital. The bodies of the dead were being recovered. Azerbaijan Airlines said the Embraer 190 jet, with flight number J2-8243, was flying from Baku to Grozny, capital of Russia's Chechnya region, but had been forced to make an emergency landing around three kilometres from Aktau in Kazakhstan. The city is on the opposite shore of the Caspian Sea from Azerbaijan and Russia. Authorities in Kazakhstan said a government commission had been set up to investigate what had happened and its members ordered to fly to the site and ensure that the families of the dead and injured were getting the help they needed.

Forces kill
13 terrorists
in S W IBO

FROM PAGE 01
It further said that the slain terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as killing of innocent civilians. Sanitisation operation is being carried out to eliminate any other Kharij found in the area, as security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country, the military's media wing added. Terrorist attacks have been rampant in the provinces of KP and Balochistan — which abut Afghanistan — targeting especially the law enforcement and security forces. On December 21, a group of terrorists attempted to attack security forces check post in general area Makeen in the tribal district of South Waziristan. The Pakistan Army successfully thwarted the attack. However, 16 soldiers were martyred in this battle. The attempt, as per the ISPR, was effectively thwarted by troops and in ensuing fire exchange, eight militants were killed.

Briefs

Only trickle of UN emergency food aid getting to desperate Gazans: UN

UNITED NATIONS: Only three per cent of food and water deliveries organized by the UN World Food Programme (WFP) have been permitted to enter areas in northern Gaza since October, when Israeli forces unleashed a ground offensive in the northern part of the besieged enclave, the United Nations reported Tuesday. At the end of December, a joint UN convoy of nine trucks successfully reached people in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza, who had been cut off from aid for over 75 days, it said. Images taken by UN staffers showed desperate residents rushing out from shelters to retrieve the bottled water, flour and canned food. WFP has put in 101 requests to deliver food to areas in Gaza's north governorate since the offensive began on 6 October: only three have been approved, including the 20 December convoy. In a statement released on Monday, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher warned that the "near-total siege" of the northern region is "raising the spectre of famine", whilst conditions in extremely overcrowded South Gaza are creating "horrific living conditions and even greater humanitarian needs" as winter sets in. Fletcher, who spent the last week visiting UN staff, partners and communities in several Middle Eastern countries, described Gaza as the most dangerous place in the world to deliver aid, in a year when more humanitarians have been killed than any on record. An added concern is the breakdown of law and order, and the looting of UN supplies by armed gangs. The military operation by Israeli forces in northern Gaza is ongoing. As well as severely limiting the delivery of food aid, the tightening siege has left up to 15,000 people without access to food, water, electricity or healthcare. According to media reports, at least 20 people were killed by Israeli airstrikes overnight, including in al-Mawasi, which is designated as a humanitarian zone, and the al-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.—APP

Pope calls for 'arms to be silenced' across world

VATICAN: Pope Francis called Wednesday for "arms to be silenced" around the world in his Christmas address, appealing for peace in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan as he denounced the "extremely grave" humanitarian situation in Gaza. He used his traditional "Urbi et Orbi" ("to the city and the world") message to the world's 1.4 billion Catholics to call for talks for a just peace in Ukraine as the country was pummeled by 170 Russian missiles and drones on Christmas morning. "May the sound of arms be silenced in war-torn Ukraine," the 88-year-old pontiff said, his voice strained and breathless. "May there be the boldness needed to open the door to negotiation and to gestures of dialogue and encounter, in order to achieve a just and lasting peace."

In front of thousands of the faithful gathered in front of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, also appealed for a ceasefire in Gaza and for the freeing of Israeli hostages held there by Hamas.

"I think of the Christian communities in Israel and Palestine, particularly in Gaza, where the humanitarian situation is extremely grave. May there be a ceasefire, may the hostages be released and aid be given to the people worn out by hunger and by war," he added. Francis extended his call for a silencing of arms to the whole Middle East and to Sudan, which has been ravaged by a ravaged by 20 months of brutal civil war where millions are under the threat of famine. "May the Son of the Most High sustain the efforts of the international community to facilitate access to humanitarian aid for the civilian population of Sudan and to initiate new negotiations for a ceasefire," he said.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Christians take part in Christmas Day mass at St. Thomas Church, in the Federal Capital.

Japan FM concerned over China military activity

China's foreign ministry said Beijing sought to "strengthen dialogue and communication" in order to "properly manage differences" with Japan. Beijing will "strive to build a constructive and stable China-Japan relationship that meets the requirements of the new era," spokeswoman Mao Ning said.

DNA

BEIJING: Japan's top diplomat Takeshi Iwaya expressed "serious concerns" to his Chinese counterpart over Beijing's increasing military activity and the situation in the East and South China Sea, Tokyo said Wednesday. Iwaya also told Wang Yi at talks in Beijing that "Japan is closely monitoring the Taiwan situation and recent military developments," a statement from Japan's foreign ministry said. Japanese foreign minister Takeshi Iwaya was due in Beijing on Wednesday for talks with counterpart Wang Yi and other top officials as Tokyo

acknowledged "challenges and concerns" in ties. The visit is Iwaya's first to China since becoming Japan's top diplomat earlier this year. China and Japan are key trading partners, but increased friction over disputed territories and military spending has frayed ties in recent years. Tensions also flared last year over Japan's decision to begin releasing into the Pacific Ocean some of the 540 Olympic swimming pools' worth of reactor cooling water amassed since the tsunami that led to the Fukushima nuclear disaster — an operation the UN atomic agency deemed safe. China branded the move "selfish" and banned all Japanese seafood imports, but in September said

it would "gradually resume" the trade. China imported more than \$500 million worth of seafood from Japan in 2022, according to customs data. Iwaya told reporters in Tokyo on Tuesday that "China represents one of the most important bilateral relationships for us." "Between Japan and China, there are various possibilities but also multiple challenges and concerns," he said. "Both countries possess the heavy responsibilities for the peace and stability of our region and the international community," he added. China's foreign ministry said Beijing sought to "strengthen dialogue and communication" in order to "properly manage differences" with Japan. Beijing will "strive

to build a constructive and stable China-Japan relationship that meets the requirements of the new era," spokeswoman Mao Ning said. Japan's brutal occupation of parts of China before and during World War II also remains a sore point, with Beijing accusing Tokyo of failing to atone for its past. Visits by Japanese officials to the Yasukuni shrine that honors war dead — including convicted war criminals — regularly prompt anger from Beijing. Beijing's more assertive presence around disputed territories in the region, meanwhile, has sparked Tokyo's ire, leading it to boost security ties with key ally the United States and other countries. In August,

a Chinese military aircraft staged the first confirmed incursion by China into Japanese airspace, followed weeks later by a Japanese warship sailing through the Taiwan Strait for the first time. Beijing's rare test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean in late September also drew strong protests from Tokyo, which said it had not been given advance notice. China also in August formally indicted a Japanese man held since last year on espionage charges. The man, an employee of the Japanese pharmaceutical company Astellas, was held in March last year and placed under formal arrest in October.

Catholics hold muted Christmas mass in Indonesia's Sharia stronghold

BANDA ACEH: With flickering candles and the sound of organs, hundreds of Catholics held a muted Christmas Eve mass in Indonesia's Aceh province, the only one under ultraconservative Islamic law in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation. Christmas decorations are not allowed on the streets of Aceh — the only Indonesian province to implement strict Sharia law that includes punishments like flogging — where 98 percent are Muslim and just 6,000 Catholics live. The Sacred Heart Catholic Church, built almost 100 years ago by Dutch colonial rulers and the only one in the provincial capital Banda Aceh, was allowed to hold a ceremony Tuesday evening for a crowd of 500 faithful. "I don't find any difficulty in terms of relationship with believers of other religions. So far, the religious tolerance here is excellent," the church's pastor, Father Agustinus Padang, told AFP. Aceh has been widely criticised by rights groups for punishments of moral offences under the strict law, such as public canings for alleged adultery. But province's special autonomy excludes non-Muslims from those, and Catholicism is one of the nominally secular country's six official religions. The church, located in the heart of the city and a stone's throw away from the grand mosque, is bare of any Christmas ornaments on its exterior. A tight security presence of more than a dozen police and soldiers was also visible because of several attacks against Christians in Indonesia in recent years. But inside the colonial-style church, worshippers celebrated with a tall Christmas tree, fairy lights, and a choir singing the Indonesian version of "Holy Night".—APP

Hasina to face charges of crimes against humanity

There are multiple charges against Hasina, including that she bears responsibility for forced disappearances, and for ordering the killings that took place during the protests, he added

DNA

DHAKA: Ousted Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will face multiple charges of crimes against humanity, the country's interim government said on Tuesday after sending an extradition request to India. Hasina travelled to New Delhi in August during the student-led demonstrations that ended her 15 years in power. The initially peaceful protests, which began in early July, were met with a violent crackdown by security forces, which left hundreds dead, sparked a nationwide uprising against Hasina, forcing her to flee the country. In October, a Bangladeshi

domestic criminal tribunal issued arrest warrants for Hasina and more than 40 other people linked to the protest killings. Bangladesh's foreign affairs adviser, Md. Touhid Hossain, said on Monday that his country had sent a diplomatic note to India's Foreign Ministry asking for Hasina's return in order to begin a "judicial process." "We expect (India) will respond as soon as possible," Azad Majumder, deputy press secretary of the head of Bangladesh's interim government Muhammad Yunus, told Arab News. There are multiple charges against Hasina, including that she bears responsibility for forced disappearances, and for ordering the killings that

took place during the protests, he added. "She will face multiple charges against her regarding crimes against humanity, and investigations are underway in this regard," Yunus said. India has confirmed reception of the request from Bangladesh. Bangladesh has an extradition treaty with India, which serves as a "commitment that both parties will comply with this instrument," said Jyotirmoy Barua, a lawyer at the Bangladesh Supreme Court and a human rights activist. In 2015, Bangladesh handed over Anup Chetia, a separatist rebel leader whose group had fought Indian rule in the northeastern state of Assam. He was arrested in 1997 for illegal entry into

Bangladesh and for possession of large amounts of foreign currency. Though Bangladesh expects that India will return Sheikh Hasina in respect of their bilateral treaty and the precedent that was set in Chetia's case, there are concerns that New Delhi may not comply. "India may (refer to) this clause of the treaty that Sheikh Hasina may face 'political vengeance' in the trial process and may not receive justice. On these grounds, India may not eventually comply with Bangladesh's request," Barua said. "So, there is a fear that India may not follow the diplomatic norms here in returning Sheikh Hasina. It depends on the good judgement of Indian leadership."

Kashmir's 'bee queen' sets out to empower women, inspire youth

Her beekeeping journey began as a 16-year-old, watching her father hard at work at the family farm in Balhama in Indian-controlled Kashmir. "I first saw my grandfather working with the bees, and then I saw my father doing the same business. When I saw my father working hard

NEW DELHI: For the past four years, beekeeping has become central to Sania Zehra's life. Every morning, she wakes at about 6 a.m. to tend to her colonies, before spending the rest of the day building the enterprise that turned her into the "bee queen" of Kashmir. Her beekeeping journey began as a 16-year-old, watching her father hard at work at the family farm in Balhama in Indian-controlled Kashmir. "I first saw my grandfather working with the bees, and then I saw my father doing the same business. When I saw my father working hard, I decided

to also contribute and support him," Zehra told Arab News. She overcame her initial fear of bee stings and got to work immediately, applying for a government scheme that allowed her to expand the business. It was not always smooth sailing — she struggled to make a profit in the first couple of years and had to juggle maintaining the hectic routine of beekeeping and selling her products. But as her hard work of managing hundreds of colonies garnered her the "bee queen" title, today her products are being sold across the country. "I am selling my

product across India (and) I am getting orders from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Dubai, South Africa, Qatar and all," Zehra said. Beekeeping is a multi-pronged passion for the 20-year-old, who sees it as a way to protect the environment and preserve her family legacy. She joins an increasing number of women in Kashmir who are running their own businesses, many of whom access government programs aimed at training and supporting women entrepreneurs. Despite the social barriers that persist to this day, Zehra found support

from her family, especially her mother. "My mother supports me wholeheartedly. She says 'I have sons but you have gone ahead of the boys and there is nothing that can stop a woman if she wants to,'" she said. "For me, it's a passion as well as a desire to carry the family legacy ... I have been fascinated by bees' social structure and the importance of bees in our ecosystem. I want to contribute to their conversation and produce natural honey and connect with nature. They are an inspiration for me." As time went by, she found that beekeeping was not only therapeutic for her men-

tal health but also a way to support the entrepreneurial landscape in Kashmir. To fuel that mission, Zehra created an empowerment group whose members comprise talented women who lack access to resources. My main focus is that I should act as a catalyst for many and help others to grow too," she said. With 40 members so far, Zehra is aiming to take it to 100 and help them gain access to the government initiatives that once helped her. "I want to give employment to all," Zehra said. "I have a future plan to address the unemployment issue in Kashmir and make Kashmir a wonderful place. I want to inspire young people.—APP

Snowstorm cuts power to tens of thousands in Bosnia

SARAJEVO: Parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina were cut off and more than 170,000 people were left without electricity on Tuesday due to a snowstorm gripping the region. "Despite efforts and continuous work to repair the faults, the electricity supply situation worsened. Currently, 127,000 metering points are without power," distributor Elektroprivreda BiH said. Elektrokrajina, which covers the municipalities of the Serb entity in Bosnia, Republika Srpska, also announced that around 50,000 of its users are without power. "All available field teams have been deployed and have been working since the early morning hours to repair the faults," the company stated.

At the same time, in the western part of Bosnia, a state of emergency was declared after severe weather blocked all entry and exit points to the municipality of Drvar, cutting off its 17,000 residents. "The situation is extremely difficult. The snow keeps falling. People are stranded in the snow," Jasna Pecanac, the president of the Drvar Municipal Council, told local media. Snowdrifts in some villages around Drvar are up to two meters high, and the heavy blizzard is making clearing efforts even more difficult. "We are requesting assistance for snow clearing. All available machinery is already in the field," said Pecanac. The snow is heaviest in the western parts of the country, where a red weather alert is in effect. In the hilly and mountainous areas of this region, the severe snowstorm has caused numerous faults in the electricity distribution network. The Serbian official Hydrometeorological Institute has issued a warning that heavy snowfall will continue.—APP

5 convicted over Amsterdam violence against Israelis

AMSTERDAM: A Dutch court on Tuesday convicted five men for their part in last month's violence against Israeli football fans in Amsterdam that shocked the world and sparked accusations of anti-Semitism. The Amsterdam district court found them guilty for a range of crimes from kicking fans of Maccabi Tel Aviv in the street to inciting violence in chat groups. The heaviest sentence imposed was six months in prison, for a man identified as Sefa O. for public violence against several people. The Maccabi Tel Aviv fans came under "hit-and-run" style attacks in the early hours of November 8 after their European League match against Amsterdam giants Ajax. Images of the violence, which left five fans briefly hospitalized, went around the world and sparked a furious reaction in Israel including accusations of a "pogrom." The most serious case under consideration Tuesday was O., who prosecutors said played a "leading role" in the violence. The court saw images of a man identified as O. kicking a person on the ground, chasing targets, and punching people in the head and the body. The prosecutor said the beatings had "little to do with football" but added that "in this case, there was no evidence of... a terrorist intent and the violence was not motivated by anti-Semitic sentiment." "The violence was influenced by the situation in Gaza, not by anti-Semitism," said the prosecutor. The attacks followed two days of skirmishes that also saw Maccabi fans chant anti-Arab songs, vandalize a taxi and burn a Palestinian flag. Police said they were investigating at least 45 people over the violence, including that carried out by fans of the Israeli club. Another man identified as Umutkan A., 24, received a sentence of one month for assaulting fans and violently ripping a Maccabi scarf from one of them. Prosecutors had called for heavier sentences against the men — of up to two years in the case of O. The judge said that people convicted of such crimes would normally have to serve community service.—APP

Briefs

2 killed, 4 injured in Turbat blast

DNA

QUETTA: At least two people were killed and four others were injured in a blast in Dasht area in Turbat, Balochistan, the police said on Wednesday. They said that the improvised explosive device (IED) blast also damaged a vehicle. The bodies and the wounded were shifted to a hospital, the police added. Providing details of the incident, the law enforcers said that the remote-controlled explosion occurred when the victims were travelling inside a vehicle.

Those killed in the blast have been identified as Zaman and Umer Zahoor, whereas the injured include Naeem, Javed, Ameen and Waheed. The incident comes amid a surge in terrorist incidents in the country, which has affected Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the most.

Earlier this month, persons were killed in a bomb explosion behind Levies station in Killa Abdullah. However, Assistant Commissioner Shehak Baloch said that the deceased were carrying a bomb to attack the station but before reaching their target the bomb exploded and both of them were killed. The month of November was also marred by violence in the province with two soldiers being martyred in an IED blast during an operation in Harnai. The martyred soldiers were identified as Major Muhammad Haseeb and Havildar Noor Ahmed.

Pope calls for 'arms to be silenced'

VATICAN: Pope Francis called Wednesday for "arms to be silenced" around the world in his Christmas address, appealing for peace in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan as he denounced the "extremely grave" humanitarian situation in Gaza. He used his traditional "Urbi et Orbi" ("to the city and the world") message to the world's 1.4 billion Catholics to call for talks for a just peace in Ukraine as the country was pummeled by 170 Russian missiles and drones on Christmas morning.

"May the sound of arms be silenced in war-torn Ukraine," the 88-year-old pontiff said, his voice strained and breathless. "May there be the boldness needed to open the door to negotiation and to gestures of dialogue and encounter, in order to achieve a just and lasting peace." In front of thousands of the faithful gathered in front of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, also appealed for a ceasefire in Gaza and for the freeing of Israeli hostages held there by Hamas. "I think of the Christian communities in Israel and Palestine, particularly in Gaza, where the humanitarian situation is extremely grave. May there be a ceasefire, may the hostages be released and aid be given to the people worn out by hunger and by war," he added. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif cuts a cake to celebrate Christmas 2024. - DNA

NLC & DP World Launch landmark Shipping Service from Karachi to Chittagong

DNA

RAWALPINDI: NLC and DP World have shipped more than 1,000 containers between Pakistan and Bangladesh since launching the first direct shipping route between the two countries in October, a strategic initiative that will significantly strengthen trade and regional connectivity in South Asia. Container service between Karachi and Jable Ali will start with the first NLC vessel having capacity of 1,100 TEUs on 13 January while the second vessel of similar capacity will be inducted by end of January. Additionally, an edible oil vessel is slated for February 2025, further diversifying the scope of this collaborative effort. This strategic venture signifies the beginning of a transformative phase in regional trade. The collaboration between NLC and regional partner is not merely a logistics operation but a cornerstone of a comprehensive roadmap aimed at strengthening economic growth, promoting shared prosperity, and accelerating progress across the region.

Militants blow up gas pipeline in Quetta

DNA

QUETTA: An 18-inch diameter gas pipeline was blown up by militants in Quetta on Wednesday. As a result, gas supply to Kuchlak, Ziarat, Boostan, Yaro, Karbala, Haramzai and Pishin areas of Balochistan was suspended. In Quetta City, gas supply was suspended to Airport Road, Nawakli, Jinnah Town, Khaizee, A-One City and Hazar Ganji. The SSGC has sent its team to fix the gas pipeline. The team is working to restore the gas supply to the affected areas at the earliest.

Yemen fires hypersonic missile at Israeli targets

SANA'A: The Yemeni Armed Forces claimed responsibility for a missile strike on a military target within the Israeli-occupied territories in support of Gaza, marking the second attack in just two days. Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesman for Yemen's Armed Forces, stated on Wednesday that the operation involved a Palestine-2 hypersonic ballistic missile, and struck an Israeli military target in Tel Aviv. The Yemeni spokesman underscored that the missile strike was part of the fifth phase of the battle against the Israeli enemy, and could successfully attain its desired objectives. - Agencies

Military installation attackers will be tried in military courts: Tarar

Information minister accuses PTI of politicising military courts, creating unnecessary controversy around their trials

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar has stated that attacks on military installations will be tried in military courts and urged the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to refrain from politicising or disputing the matter. During a press conference in Islamabad on Wednesday, he criticised PTI for using military courts as a political tool, aiming to create controversy around them. He clarified that military courts only handle cases involving attacks on defence establishments, citing incidents such as the attacks on the Corps Commander's House, Mardan, and Balahisar. "When an attack is carried out on a defence institution or its property is set ablaze, it becomes the responsibility of the relevant authorities to apprehend the culprits. Just as railway police handle crimes on railway premises, military courts address offenses targeting military assets. So, when attacks on military assets occur, the Military Act is enforced", he explained. While highlighting the PTI's shifting stance, he recalled that during Imran Khan's tenure, military court trials were praised. "Statements praising the military courts from PTI's leadership are still available on social media. Yet now, the same individuals are lobbying

ATC issues notices to two fugitives in GHQ attack case

ATC ordered the accused to appear in court by January 24

COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Rawalpindi has issued notices to two fugitives, Shaheer Sikandar and Muhammad Asim, in the GHQ attack case. ATC Judge Amjad Ali Shah ordered the accused to appear in court by January 24. Failure to comply would result in the accused being declared absconders. Prosecutor Syed Zaheer Shah stated that if the accused were declared absconders, the process of confiscating their properties would also commence.

internationally against these courts," Tarar remarked. The information minister assured that military trials adhere to fair trial principles. "The accused are granted the right to a lawyer, meetings with family, and the right of appeal. Trials are conducted in the physical presence of the accused. In addition, decisions can be appealed either within the military judicial framework or through the High Court," he stated. Tarar dismissed claims of injustice in military trials, asserting that no laws—domestic or international—were violated. He called on PTI to stop politicising the issue, utilise the available right of appeal mechanisms, and acknowledge the events of May 9 as a grave mistake. "Unfortunately, some PTI members still justify the actions of that day," he concluded. Last week, military courts sentenced 25 civilians to prison terms ranging from two to 10 years for their involvement in attacks on military installations during the nationwide riots in May 2023. The convicts were found guilty of attacking key sites such as Jinnah House, General Headquarters (GHQ), and Pakistan Air Force Base Mianwali. According to the military's media wing (ISPR), the sentences were handed down following a thorough review of evidence and legal procedures, with 14 individuals receiving 10-year terms.

Miftah finds many faults in style of governance

He visited the Quaid-e-Azam's mausoleum to offer Fateha

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Awam Pakistan Secretary General Miftah Ismail said on Wednesday the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan Peoples Party failed to make the lives of the people any better despite many stints in power. He visited the Quaid-e-Azam's mausoleum to offer Fateha and lay floral wreath. Talking to the media on the occasion, Ismail said, "today is the birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and today we have come to apologize to the founder of the nation as we have provided neither water nor clean air to the citizenry." The former federal minister added in a somber tone, "we could not provide enough employment to our people and also we could not adequately educate our children." Castigating the incumbent government, he said heavy taxes were being imposed on the working people while those with huge farmlands were not paying tax. He said the PML-N had made an electoral theft in 2024 election and therefore, it had lost the trust of the people.

Pakistan default risk declines 88%: report

Foreign exchange reserves rise to over \$12 billion in Dec 2024

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan's perceived risk of default has sharply declined, as reflected by the 88% fall in its five-year credit default swap (CDS) spreads to 1,493 basis point (bps) since their peak in November 2022, says brokerage firm Topline Securities. It adds that the improvement comes on the back of stabilising macroeconomic indicators and a healthier external account. Foreign exchange reserves have risen to over \$12 billion in December 2024, a significant recovery from the precarious low of \$2.9 billion in February 2023. But what does this mean for the country? Karim Punjani - ex equities and treasury fund manager - said that Pakistan's high CDS spreads are not an anomaly, adding that the COVID-19 pandemic affected all economies, and the CDS spreads of almost all countries shot up. What is unique for Pakistan is "polit-

ical concerns" that further exacerbated the issue. Former finance minister Miftah Ismail, whose second term in office was when Pakistan was battling with the risk of default, said that "it is great that the risk has come down so much. And I hope it stays down." He said that a cursory look at the overall trajectory of the CDS spreads will help analyse what sort of policies the market demands. Giving support to Punjani's claims of political concerns, Ismail said that the risk shot up in October 2022 at a time when he was made to leave his office. It was the same time, he said, when now-deputy minister Ishaq Dar openly expressed his disagreements with the IMF. "The risk decreased in June/July 2023 when Pakistan finally got an agreement with the IMF. Then the risk further declined in January/February 2024 and has stayed low since," he said, adding that the period reflected that Pakistan "will have understanding with the IMF". In his post on X, Khuram Schehzad, adviser to the finance minister, said: "The decline in country risk premiums provides a timely opportunity for Pakistan to plan and re-enter global capital markets, particularly with global interest rates on the decline.

'Israel's new conditions delayed ceasefire deal'

"Occupation has set new conditions concerning withdrawal (of troops), the ceasefire, prisoners, and the return of displaced people," Hamas said

NEWS DESK

JERUSALEM: Hamas accused Israel on Wednesday of imposing "new conditions" that it said were delaying a ceasefire agreement in the war in Gaza, though it acknowledged negotiations were still ongoing. Israel has made no public statement about any new conditions in its efforts to secure the release of hostages seized on October 7, 2023. Indirect talks between Israel and Hamas, mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States, have taken place in Doha in recent days, rekindling hope for a truce deal that has proven elusive. "The ceasefire and prisoner exchange negotiations are continuing in Doha under the mediation of Qatar and Egypt in a serious manner... but the occupation has set new conditions concerning withdrawal (of troops), the ceasefire, prisoners, and the return of displaced people, which has delayed reaching an agreement," the Palestinian militant group said in a statement. Hamas did not elaborate on the conditions imposed by Israel. On

Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told parliament that there was "some progress" in the talks, and on Tuesday his office said Israeli representatives had returned from Qatar after "significant negotiations." Last week, Hamas and two other Palestinian militant groups - Islamic Jihad and the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - said in a rare joint statement that a ceasefire agreement was "closer than ever," provided Israel did not impose new conditions. Efforts to strike a truce and hostage release deal have repeatedly failed over key stumbling blocks. Despite numerous rounds of indirect talks, Israel and Hamas have agreed just one truce, which lasted for a week at the end of 2023. Negotiations have faced multiple challenges since then, with the primary point of disagreement being the establishment of a lasting ceasefire in Gaza. Another unresolved issue is the governance of post-war Gaza. It remains a highly contentious issue, including within the Palestinian leadership. Israel has said repeatedly that it will not allow Hamas to run the territory ever again. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal last week, Netanyahu said: "I'm not going to agree to end the war before we remove Hamas." He added Israel is "not going to leave them in power in Gaza, 30 miles from Tel Aviv. It's not going to happen."

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