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Swiatek powers Poland to thrilling United Cup win against Norway

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Political stability vital to economic growth: Gilani

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Siddiqui hails govt-PTI talks for stability

Detailed News On Page-08



Strengthen Pak-China ties

New Gwadar airport to create jobs, says PM

Pakistan Airport Authority has already issued the Aerodrome Certificate to the New Gwadar Airport whereas the Pakistan Customs has also notified airport

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed the New Gwadar International Airport as a milestone for regional development, highlighting its potential to boost prosperity and job opportunities in the area. In a high-level meeting on Monday, the premier extended heartfelt gratitude to China for constructing the state-of-the-art airport, calling it a testament to the strong Pakistan-China friendship. He urged authorities to transform the airport into a bustling transit hub and ensure seamless road connectivity to enhance accessibility, particularly within the Balochistan province. He also directed to improve the road system linking the New Gwadar International Airport with other areas of the country especially the province. Additionally, the prime minister also ordered to ensure fool proof security arrangements for the new airport. During the meeting, the prime minister was informed that flights from Gwadar to Muscat would be started from January 10, 2025, whereas talks with regard to starting the domestic and international flight operations by the airlines of Pakistan, China, Oman and United Arab Emirates from Gwadar were underway. Similarly, the current duration of flight operation of the Pakistan Airlines (PIA) between Karachi and Gwadar will soon be increased to three times per week. It was informed in the meeting that the Gwadar Airport was the largest airport of the country in term of area which will be capable of handling A-380 airplanes whereas 400,000 people will travel through the airport annually. Pakistan Airport Authority has already issued the Aerodrome Certificate to the New Gwadar Airport

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Sadiq discusses Afghanistan trip with PM Shehbaz

The prime minister's office welcomed the envoy's report and reiterated the importance of strengthening ties between the neighboring nations

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Sadiq Khan, spoke with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday to brief him on the outcomes of his recent visit to Afghanistan and his meetings with Taliban officials. In a post on X, Khan stated that the call focused on sharing the results of his trip and assessing the current state of bilateral relations between the two countries. "The discussion revolved around the challenges and opportunities in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, with an emphasis on fostering greater collaboration," he wrote. The prime minister's office welcomed the envoy's report and reiterated the importance of strengthening ties between the neighboring nations.

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ISLAMABAD: Special Representative of Pakistan's Special Representative to Afghanistan Muhammad Sadiq Khan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

President, PM condole death of Jimmy Carter

Carter's official state funeral in Washington, DC, will be held on January 9

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have expressed deep sorrow over the passing of former US President Jimmy Carter, extending heartfelt condolences to his family and the American people. In their separate messages, President Zardari and PM Shehbaz praised Jimmy Carter's exceptional leadership and tireless advocacy for global peace, stating that his efforts would be remembered for generations.

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Trump loses appeal against defamation verdict

Court says evidence established "repeated pattern of conduct" consistent with Carroll's allegations

AGENCIES

NEW YORK: A federal appeals court on Monday upheld a \$5 million verdict that E Jean Carroll won against Donald Trump when a jury found the US president-elect liable for sexually abusing and later defaming the former magazine columnist. A unanimous three-judge panel of the 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan rejected Trump's argument that the trial judge made mistakes in letting jurors hear evidence about the Republican's alleged

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DG ISI meets Tajik President

Pakistan, Tajikistan vow to jointly fight terrorism, extremism

The Tajik President emphasizing the partnership of the two countries in the field of security, considered the constant contacts of representatives of the sectoral structures of the parties a mutually beneficial affair

CENTRELINE REPORT / DNA

DUSHANBE: The President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, received the Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence Service of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Muhammad Asim Malik. The meeting discussed the current state and prospects of political relations between Tajikistan and Pakistan, including in the direction of ensuring regional peace, stability and security, as well as ways to address other pressing issues of bilateral cooperation. The head of state, expressing satisfaction with the fruitful process of political relations between the parties, highly appreciated the level of mutual trust between the two states. The Tajik President emphasizing the partnership of the two countries in the field of security,

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Taliban govt ban windows to prevent women's 'exposure'

Directive affecting design of buildings issued after decree from Taliban's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: The Taliban rulers of Afghanistan have imposed a ban on the construction of windows that may allow the visibility of women in private spaces or could lead to the exposure of women in neighbouring houses. The new directive, which affects the

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Briefs

Petrol price could see decrease

Diesel price expected to climb by Rs3.62 per litre, say sources

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The petrol price is expected to drop by Rs2 per litre, while high-speed diesel (HSD) is likely to rise by Rs3.62 per litre, starting January 1, 2025, for the next fortnight. Industry sources indicate that there are no demand or supply issues in the international market. However, uncertainty driven by geopolitical tensions, particularly the situation in the Middle East and speculation about how the incoming US leadership will address global challenges, is currently influencing petroleum product prices. The premium on petroleum is at \$8.69 per barrel. The reduction in petrol price by over Rs2 per litre has been worked out with a hike in diesel price by Rs3.62 per litre.

CII hails seminary ordinance

Highlights the need for swift approval of the ordinance by the NA

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) has welcomed amendments to Societies Act and issuance of the Madrasa Registration Ordinance, granting legal status to seminaries registered with the Directorate General of Religious Education (DGRE). CII Chairman Dr Muhammad Raghob Hussain Naemi highlighted the need for swift approval of the ordinance by the National Assembly. He said the new ordinance resolved longstanding registration issues, allowing seminaries to register freely with any institution. The ordinance eliminates the need for re-registration of over 18,600 already-registered madrasas.

Imran Khan says

No need for deal, vows to fight cases

Khan has vowed to fight his cases and won't accept offer for house arrest in Bani Gala, says former PM's sister

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Aleema Khan, the sister of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, said that the former prime minister has refused to strike any deal, asking "why he would enter any deal when he has already spent one-and-a-half years" in prison. "The PTI founder said that his cases have been wrapped up and he was not making a deal [with the government] over this matter," said Aleema while speaking to media persons outside Adiala jail on Monday - where her brother is incarcerated. The 72-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been behind bars since August last year after he was sentenced in Toshakhana case-I - one of the dozens cases registered against the former premier since his ouster from power in April 2022. Aleema, who has recently been taking part in party's political matters, said that Khan has vowed to fight his cases and will not accept any offer to be placed under house arrest in Bani Gala. The PTI founder,

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NA speaker to chair govt-PTI meeting on Jan 2

"The cut-off date for negotiations is January 31," Raza said

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq will chair an in-camera meeting between negotiating teams representing the federal government and the PTI on January 2, a notification from the NA secretariat read on Monday. This will be the second meeting between the negotiating parties, discussing the PTI's demands to release jailed party workers and the formation of a judicial commission to probe the events of May 9, 2023 and November 26. According to the notification,

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CM Maryam Nawaz invites UAE investment in Punjab

Ambassador emphasized the UAE's commitment to supporting Pakistan's vision of sustainable progress and reiterated interest in working on additional projects in the country

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif met with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi, to discuss mutual interests and strengthen bilateral ties. During the meeting, it was decided to establish a Punjab-UAE working group to further enhance cooperation. Discussions focused on economic collaboration, development projects in Punjab, and promoting tourism. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz extended an invitation to UAE investors to explore investment opportunities in Punjab, assuring them of special incentives and a conducive environment for business. She acknowledged the UAE's contributions to Pakistan's socio-economic development and expressed appreciation for its support in infrastructure, health, education, and energy sectors. Ambassador Al-Zaabi congratulated Maryam Nawaz on her successful visit to China and praised Punjab's ongoing development initiatives and climate change measures. He emphasized the UAE's commitment to supporting Pakistan's vision of sustainable progress and reiterated interest in working on additional projects in the country. "We value the UAE's assistance in key sectors and are eager to enhance cooperation in agriculture, technology, and green energy," said Maryam Nawaz.



stan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi, to discuss mutual interests and strengthen bilateral ties. During the meeting, it was decided to establish a Punjab-UAE working group to further enhance cooperation. Discussions focused on economic collaboration, development projects in Punjab, and promoting tourism. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz extended an invitation to UAE investors to explore investment opportunities in Punjab, assuring them of special incentives and a conducive environment for business. She acknowledged the UAE's contributions to Pakistan's socio-economic development and expressed appreciation for its support in infrastructure, health, education, and energy sectors. Ambassador Al-Zaabi congratulated Maryam Nawaz on her successful visit to China and praised Punjab's ongoing development initiatives and climate change measures. He emphasized the UAE's commitment to supporting Pakistan's vision of sustainable progress and reiterated interest in working on additional projects in the country. "We value the UAE's assistance in key sectors and are eager to enhance cooperation in agriculture, technology, and green energy," said Maryam Nawaz.

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Political stability vital to economic growth: Gilani

Gilani stressed the importance of increasing agricultural productivity, addressing issues such as adulteration in seeds and pesticides and ensuring the availability of quality inputs

DNA

LAHORE: Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has agreed with the LCCI (Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry) leadership that political stability is the cornerstone of economic progress and prosperity. Talking to business community here at the LCCI on Monday, he urged the LCCI leadership to establish robust connections with the political parties. He promised to arrange direct meetings with the heads of Senate Standing Committees and federal ministers. He said that business growth, shining prospects for commerce and economic development are matters close to his heart. He mentioned that as Prime Minister, he had focused on industry, trade and economic advancement. He called for collaborative efforts to address challenges and seize opportunities. The Senate Chairman said that a public-private partnership is important in achieving economic development. He underscored the need for policies that promote manufacturing, value-addition, innovation and renewable energy. "Hydropower is the best option for affordable and environment-friendly energy," he said, adding that agriculture must also remain a top priority. Gilani stressed the importance of increasing agricultural productivity, addressing

issues such as adulteration in seeds and pesticides and ensuring the availability of quality inputs. "Everyone must pay taxes," he said and called for reforms to ensure fairness and transparency in the taxation system. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani supported LCCI's proposals to restructure or privatize loss-making state-owned enterprises, which have consistently drained the national exchequer. Chairman Gilani commended the chamber's hospitality and its significant role in the national economy. "I maintain strong connections with chambers across the country, and LCCI's contribution to the economy is remarkable," he remarked. In his welcome address, LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad said that like the Senate, the Lahore Chamber has also formed sector-specific committees to address industry-specific challenges effectively. He said that private sector should be given representation in the Senate Standing Committees for powerful economic results. While appreciating the efforts of Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, he said that the stabilization of the Pakistani rupee has been a significant achievement and the Army Chief deserves special credit for his role in this success. The LCCI President urged the government to offer incentives and facilities to overseas Pakistanis. If provided adequate privileges, remittances can increase by 50

percent, significantly boosting our foreign exchange reserves. Mian Abuzar Shad also called for policy continuity, reducing energy costs and ensuring transparency in governance. He further emphasized the importance of creating a business-friendly environment to attract foreign investment. LCCI Senior Vice President Engineer Khalid Usman and Vice President Shahid Nazir Chaudhry stressed the need for public-private collaboration to tackle economic challenges. They also called to reduce energy costs and invest in hydropower projects, which can provide businesses with affordable electricity. The LCCI office-bearers also called for reforms in taxation and production policies to ensure the competitiveness of local industries. They said that industries are the backbone of the economy and their revival is key to sustainable development. LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad urged the government to introduce export-friendly policies and highlighted the potential of non-traditional export sectors. He supported the privatization of loss-making state enterprises, saying that these organizations must either be restructured or handed over to the private sector to minimize fiscal burdens. Mian Abuzar Shad added that political stability directly impacts business activity, stating, "Even a single day of disrupted business results in losses amounting to Rs 10 billion."



ISLAMABAD: Dec 30 - An elderly man is busy in making traditional craft of basket at his roadside workplace at Gollra area in the Federal Capital.

Police nab 3 dacoits, weapons and stolen goods seized

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police Tarnol police station team on Monday arrested three wanted members of a criminal gang involved in numerous snatching activities and recovered snatched cash, mobile phones and weapons used in crime from their possession. A public relation officer told APP that the Tarnol police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending three wanted members of the snatcher gang. He said the gang was involved in numerous snatching activities in various areas of Tarnol. Police team also recovered mobile phones, cash and weapons with ammunition used in crime from their possession. The accused were identified as Naimat Ullah, Amjad Khan and Raza Khan. He added cases were registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. DIG Syed Ali Raza also directed officers for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and to take all possible measures to protect the life and property of the citizens. DIG further said that no criminal elements will be allowed to disturb the peace of the people.—APP

NA body concerned over non-fulfillment of positions in PIMS

The committee while taking briefing regarding the Rehabilitation centers in the federal capital instructed the Ministry to provide detail of sealed and de-sealed Rehabilitation centers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly's Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination has shown serious concerns regarding non-fulfillment of vacant positions in the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Hospital in order to enhance its proficiency. The meeting was chaired by its chairmanship of MNA Dr. Mahesh Kumar Malani here on Monday, said a press release. The committee recommended for fulfillment of the vacant positions at the earliest.

Executive Director, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) briefed the committee regarding working and performance of PIMS Hospital. The committee has shown serious concerns regarding non-fulfillment of vacant positions in the PIMS Hospital. The committee deferred the Starred Question No. 20, 23 and 49 and the Bills titled "Pakistan Nursing Council Amendment Bill, 2024", "Pakistan Medical and Dental Council Amendment Bill, 2024", "Islamabad Health Care Regulation Amendment Bill, 2024" and "the Pharmacy Amendment Bill, 2024" due to absence

of Movers. The committee while taking briefing regarding the Rehabilitation centers in the federal capital instructed the Ministry to provide detail of sealed and de-sealed Rehabilitation centers here. The committee also asked the Ministry to carry out audit of existing Rehabilitation centers to identify whether psychiatrists are available in the centers or not. A member of the committee pointed out that the cases of polio are increasing in the country and decided to invite all the stakeholders for making suitable plans to eradicate polio.

CTD wraps up 2024 with 52 operations, 565 extremist accounts blocked

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) conducted 52 intelligence-based operations, 141 search operations, and blocked 565 social media accounts promoting linguistic, sectarian, and religious extremist content in 2024, reflecting its enhanced efforts to maintain law and order. An official told APP that on Monday upon assuming command, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, implemented several new reforms in the Islamabad Police Counter Terrorism Department (CTD). Due to these reforms, the performance of CTD improved compared to previous periods. CTD conducted 52 intelligence-based operations and arrested 46 accused in order to maintain law and order and eradicate crime in 2024. During these operations, 1,480 grams of explosives, 10 detonators, and 10 feet of safety fuse wire, two meters of prima cord, eight grenades, mortar shells, IEDs, one space mine, 2,640 grams of ball bearings, nuts, bolts, five pistols, and a Kalashnikov with ammunition were recovered. Similarly, during 141 search and combing operations, 9,378 houses were searched, details of 12,427 persons were checked, and 4,966 vehicles and motorcycles were inspected. As a result, 201 motorcycles and 17 vehicles were transferred to different police stations for legal action.—APP

Kashmir's demography cannot be changed

ISLAMABAD: Lord Qurban Hussain, a member of the British House of Lords, on Monday described the change of demography in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) an attempt to alter the region's ethnic and religious composition. He expressed these views during 'meet the press' organized in National Press Club (NPC) in Islamabad, where he highlighted the atrocities of Indian army in the disputed territories and acknowledged the role of Pakistan to support Kashmir's issue internationally. As a member of British

House of Lord, he said that he always pointed out the issue and memorized them that Kashmir was left unsolved legacy of British Indian and it is their moral duty to resolve this issue now. He also said that Indian government has introduced law which allowed Indian army to do atrocities, abduct the Kashmiri people and that could not be challenged. While quoting the reports of International organizations and like Genocide watch and United Nation (UN), he claimed that genocide watch organization have indicated that the Indi-

an army has been involved in atrocities and there have been numerous instances of human rights abuses and massacres in IIOJK that leads towards genocide. While UN has also revealed the atrocities by Indian army, he added. He also acknowledged Pakistan's efforts in highlighting the issue of Kashmir as they are actively working to bring the Kashmir issue to the global stage. They've been using various diplomatic channels to raise awareness about the issue and garner international support, he added.—APP

Suleri says 2024 year of economic stabilization

ISLAMABAD: Executive Director, SDPI, Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri on Monday said, 2024 has been a year of economic stabilization and recovery as negative GDP growth, heightened policy and inflation rates had transitioned to positive indicators showing reviving growth trajectory. The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) hosted an insightful seminar on Pakistan's Economic Outlook for 2024 as part of its Monday Seminar Series, with prominent experts discussing the country's economic trajectory amidst political and global challenges. Dr. Suleri acknowledged the substantial progress made in 2024, citing a projected 3% GDP growth, a tripling of foreign reserves to \$12.25 billion, and a significant reduction in inflation and policy rates. He also pointed out that 2025 would be a crucial year, hinging on IMF program commitments, tax reforms, climate change management, and political stability. "Economy in 2025 will depend on a combination of factors, including Pakistan's relationship with the IMF, USA, and China; climate resilience efforts, political stability, and investment in human development," Dr. Suleri said. "The revival of political negotiations is a beacon of hope," he said, noting the positive impact of improved relations between the government and opposition. Dr. Suleri noted the importance of improved administrative control to manage inflation, citing the lack of regulation in sugar mills and poor stock management. As Pakistan navigates a challenging yet promising economic landscape, Dr. Abid Suleri agreed that while stabilization has been achieved, significant reforms and strategic planning would be essential for sustainable growth in 2025 and beyond. Dr. Shafiqat Munir, Deputy Executive Director at SDPI, opened the session by highlighting the government's growing confidence in Pakistan's economic recovery. Referring to a recent press conference by the Finance Minister, Dr. Munir noted the optimistic economic indicators, signaling a potential turnaround after a challenging 2023. Dr. Khaqan Hassan Najeeb, senior economist stressed that Pakistan's economic recovery was only the third time in the last decade that the country had turned to the IMF for assistance. He emphasized the need for urgent reforms in taxation, agriculture productivity, and fiscal expenditure, warning that without substantial restructuring, Pakistan's growth rate would remain below 1%. Dr. Najeeb also called for improved economic diplomacy, particularly with China, to unlock potential investment avenues. Dr. Fareeha Armughan, another SDPI expert, highlighted the government's substantial increase in social protection allocations, marking a historic high of 594 billion rupees. However, she pointed out that critical sectors like education and institutional governance remain underfunded and mismanaged. According to Dr. Armughan, aligning fiscal decisions with climate change and disaster risk reduction policies was crucial for long-term stability. Dr. Sajid Amin Javed, Deputy Executive Director at SDPI, concluded the session by noting the decline in inflation rates and rupee stabilization. However, he emphasized that the government must remain cautious and proactive in 2025, particularly in energy inflation and employment targets.—DNA

How driving school program empowers Pakistani women

LAHORE: Pakistani student Laiba Rashid, 22, hopes her life will change once she learns how to drive a motorcycle after undergoing a training program that teaches women how to operate two-wheelers in the bustling eastern city of Lahore. Although the program is 7 years old, it's rare to see women driving motorcycles. Women driving cars or riding pillion on two-wheelers driven by a male relative is more socially acceptable in the conservative, Islamic nation. "I hope this will change my life because I am dependent on my brother to pick me up and drop me to college," Rashid said on her first day at the Women on Wheels (WOW) driving program offered free by the Lahore traffic police. She said she wants to buy a motorcy-

cle to go to college, adding that, previously, there were no women drivers in her family. "Now everybody is convinced that women should be independent in their movement to schools, jobs and markets," she said. Women driving two-wheelers has been a cultural and religious taboo, said Bushra Iqbal Hussain, a social activist and director of Safe

Childhood, an organization advocating the safety of female children. But more women are now changing the culture, she said, like they did in the 1980s with regular cars, in a bid to reduce their reliance on men to commute. The WOW program has been in operation since 2017, but has become increasingly popular in recent months as

car prices have soared and motorcycles offer a cheaper alternative. "Stagnant wage growth and high inflation have eroded the purchasing power of the middle class, leaving motorcycles as the only viable option for many households," said auto sector analyst Muhammad Abrar Polani of investment house Arif Habib Limited. The cheapest four-wheeler in Pakistan, where the annual GDP per capita is \$1,590, costs about 2.3 million rupees (\$8,265) compared to about 115,000 rupees for the most affordable China-made two-wheeler. Sohail Mudassar, a traffic warden, said the WOW program has trained at least 6,600 women, and Rashid's batch was the 86th since it started. "Women of different ages and segments of society join our camp," said






female trainer Humaira Raftaq, a senior traffic warden who has trained about 1,000 women. "Young women are quick learners because they are enthusiastic and take risks." One of them, Ghania Raza, 23, who is pursuing a doctorate in criminology, said learning to drive a two-wheeler gave her a deep sense of achievement and empowerment: "It was like breaking a glass ceiling," she said. Shumaila Shafiq, 36, a mother of three and a part-time fashion designer, said she has been driving her husband's motorcycle to the market and other places after graduating from the program. She has designed a special short length abaya, a dress used by conservative Muslim women, to wear while operating the motorcycle.—DNA



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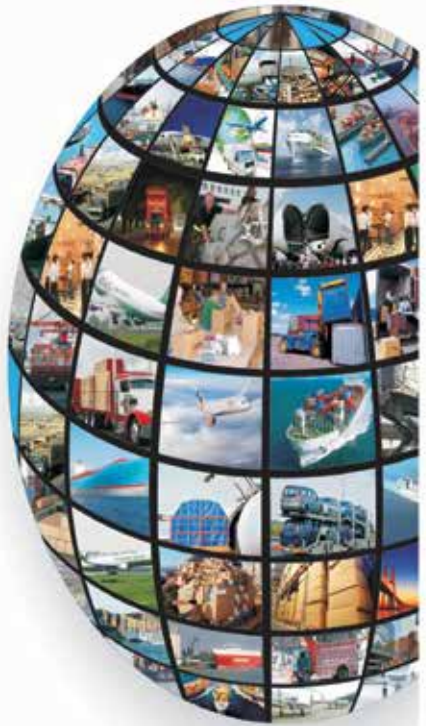
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National Days and Armed Forces Days

- DECEMBER**
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- Dec 05/Thailand National Day
- Dec 06/Finland Independence Day
- Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day
- Dec 09/Tanzania National Day
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- Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day
- Dec 12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day
- Dec 16/Bahrain National Day
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UBG Secretary General discusses trade ties with Somali envoy

During the meeting, Somalia's Ambassador shared that he has served as a minister in various ministries in Somalia and is primarily a politician. He expressed his commitment to enhancing relations, promoting trade, and strengthening diplomatic ties between the two countries during his tenure in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: United Business Group (UBG, FPCCI) Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari met with Somalia's Ambassador, Sheikh Noor Muhammad Hassan, at the Somali Embassy in Islamabad on Monday. The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral trade and cultural ties. Also present on the occasion were former President of Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of Ba-Waqar Pakistan, Waqar Bakhtawari; ICCI Executive Member Roohail Anwar Butt; Fatima Hassan; and the Deputy Head of Mission Yasin Mohamud Mire Counsellor Jama Hassan and other officials from the Somali Embassy. During the meeting, Somalia's Ambassador shared that he has served as a minister in various ministries in Somalia and is primarily a politician. He expressed his commitment to enhancing relations, promoting trade, and strengthening diplomatic ties between the two countries during his tenure in Pakistan. Sheikh Noor Muhammad Hassan highlighted the significant improvement in Somalia's security situation and extended an invitation to Zafar Bakhtawari to visit Somalia with a trade delegation. The Ambassador emphasized Somalia's strategic advantage as a seaport nation, which offers Pakistan the opportunity to expand its maritime trade with other African countries. He stated that strengthening trade relations between Somalia and Pakistan remains his top priority. Zafar Bakhtawari remarked that



ISLAMABAD: Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari presenting bouquet to Somalia's Ambassador Sheikh Noor Muhammad Hassan during his visit to the Somali Embassy. Chairman Ba-Waqar Pakistan Waqar Bakhtawari, ICCI Executive Member Roohail Anwar Butt, and Fatima Hassan are accompanying him.

Somalia is a vital and resource-rich country in Africa. Enhancing trade with Somalia would further deepen mutual relations. Introducing UBG, he explained that it is a representative organization of Pakistan's business community, led by its Patron-in-Chief, S.M. Tanveer, a prominent industrialist. Bakhtawari highlighted the vast

potential for fostering trade relations between the two countries and noted the growing demand for Pakistani products in the Somali market. He emphasized the need to establish platforms to bring the business communities of both countries closer. Waqar Bakhtawari stated that Pakistan's business community is ready to

provide all possible cooperation to strengthen ties with Somalia. He expressed gratitude for the Ambassador's interest and support, noting that fostering close relations between the people of both nations could open new avenues for global trade. Roohail Anwar Butt highlighted the quality and popularity of Pakistani

products in the Somali market. He stressed the importance of establishing direct connections between traders from both countries to make trade easier and more beneficial. This meeting underscored the mutual commitment to fostering stronger trade and cultural relations between Pakistan and Somalia.

ICCI acting President lauds Aurangzeb's call for economic consensus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, has endorsed Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb's appeal for consensus among stakeholders on key economic issues, including the proposed "charter of economy," as a critical step toward sustainable economic stability. The Finance Minister's remarks gain importance amid ongoing political dia-

logue between the opposition PTI and the coalition government. With a second round of talks scheduled for January 2, efforts are underway to defuse political tensions that have long hampered the nation's progress. In his statement, Siddiqui stressed the necessity of constructive dialogue among political stakeholders to resolve the prevailing crisis and pave the way for economic recovery. He also commended the Minister's forward-looking proposal to involve the private sector in revitalizing loss-making public institutions, suggesting that those beyond re-

vival should either be shut down or handed over to private enterprises. Highlighting the government's commitment to stakeholder engagement, Siddiqui welcomed efforts to shape a budget that prioritizes sustainable development and achieves single-digit inflation by 2025. He praised initiatives aimed at reducing electricity costs, broadening the tax base without overburdening existing taxpayers, and fostering greater private sector participation in national development. Addressing critical concerns of the business com-

munity, Siddiqui called for urgent measures to counteract business closures, rising unemployment, and brain drain. He reaffirmed the ICCI's active role in advocating for an ease-of-doing-business environment by strengthening dialogue between private enterprises and government bodies. On his part, ICCI Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry underscored Chamber's dedication to supporting the business community and facilitating a robust economic framework that promotes growth, stability, and long-term prosperity for the country.

Minister calls for premarital testing to combat thalassemia

ISLAMABAD: Housing and Works Minister Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Monday emphasized the need for legislation, awareness, mandatory premarital lab tests, and modern research to combat thalassemia in Pakistan. During his visit to the Thalassemia Centre of Sundas Foundation in F-9 Park, Islamabad, the minister praised the dedication of the senior management in serving humanity. He inaugurated the Activity Room established for thalassemic children and the electric cart donated by Allied Bank to facilitate the transportation of children from the outer gate. The minister, while addressing the ceremony as chief guest, deeply praised the selfless work of the foundation that being a pioneer non-profit organization of its nature, is providing free-of-cost blood transfusion services to thousands of children country-wide. He also remembered the humanitarian work of the founding chairman Muneer Ahmed Qureshi alias Munnu Bhai who demonstrated profound involvement in the treatment of patients suffering from Thalassemia. On this occasion, the minister distributed gifts among the children. Director Sundas Foundation Islamabad Air Vice Marshal HI(M) Aftab Hussain described the functions and operations of the foundation, its current services and its challenges. He said that the foundation has been working for the last 26 years and nowadays it has expanded its services to nine major cities in Pakistan with twelve established centers. This organization is transfusing 30,000 blood bags every year and supplying 250-300 units of healthy and screened blood and blood products daily, he added. He said the center in Islamabad since its inception six years ago, has benefited 52,243 patients with any sort of blood disease or disorder. The Centre provides free-of-cost blood transfusion services, medicines, testing, and investigation facilities, he added. He further informed that to provide a holistic environment an activity room for religious, academic, and extracurricular activities for the thalassemic children has been established. This is the first thalassemic center in the world to have this facility. He counted escalating inflation and varying blood donation trends in society as the major challenges of the organization. In the end, senior actor and Director Khalid Abbas Dar gave a vote of thanks and expressed gratitude to the organizers, donors and the chief guest. —DNA

IRSA releases 31,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 31,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbella Dam was 1471.77 feet and was 73.77 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,100 cusecs and 11,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.70 feet, which was 83.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,500 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 21,100, 10,600, 18,900 and 1,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

President directs Rs 24m relief to bank fraud victims

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has directed six banks to provide financial relief amounting to Rs 24.136 million to 31 victims of bank fraud. He gave these directions while deciding upon 31 representations filed against the decisions of the Banking Mohtasib. The President upheld the Mohtasib's decisions in favour of the victims, delivering justice for the defrauded banking customers, a President's Office news release said. Twelve representations filed by United Bank Ltd (UBL) were rejected, with the bank being directed to compensate the victims with Rs 11,570,191. In ten cases, Muslim Commercial Bank (MCB) was instructed to refund Rs 5,291,500. Five representations filed by Allied Bank Ltd (ABL) were dismissed, and the bank ordered to return Rs 4,049,742 to affected customers. Three representations by the Bank of Punjab (BOP) were also dismissed, mandating the bank to refund Rs 2,315,000. Askari Bank Ltd was directed to refund Rs 490,000 in one case, while Habib Bank Ltd (HBL) was instructed to pay Rs 420,000 to a customer in another case. The victims were defrauded by individuals posing as bank representatives, who acquired sensitive banking details through deceptive phone calls and subsequently drained funds from their accounts. Upon discovering the fraudulent transactions, the customers approached their banks for redress but were denied relief. The affected parties then sought relief through the Banking Mohtasib, who ruled in their favour. In response, the banks filed separate representations with the President, challenging these decisions. Hearings were conducted at Aiwan-e-Sadr, and after listening to the petitioners and respondents and perusing the relevant record, the final decisions were delivered. The decisions reflect the President's commitment to providing justice and prompt relief to the people. The President also emphasised the crucial role played by the Banking Mohtasib in safeguarding citizens against the maladministration of commercial banks and financial fraud. He said that the Banking Mohtasib was a vital institution for the swift resolution of complaints, offering victims timely justice without the burdens of prolonged legal procedures.—DNA

IIFA destroys 5,000 kg of expired products

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Director Operations (DDO) of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), Dr Tahira Saddique, said on Monday that the authority has intensified its campaign against food safety violations and sealed a popular bakery in Blue Area for unhygienic conditions while it raided a distribution center in Koral Town for handling expired products. Talking to APP, she said the authority, accompanied by the Food Safety Teams (FSTs), conducted an inspection at a well-known bakery in Blue Area. The team found hygiene violations during the preparation of bakery items, leading to the immediate sealing of the establishment. Dr. Saddique revealed that several warnings had been issued to the bakery in the past, but the violations persisted. She emphasized that hygiene standards are non-negotiable, promising strict action against food outlets, restaurants, and bakeries violating safety rules across the federal capital. In another operation, the Food Authority raided a distribution point in Koral Town after discovering that expiry dates on products were being altered. More than 5,000 kilograms of expired inventory were seized and destroyed. The facility was sealed, and a case was registered against those involved in tampering with product dates. Dr Tahira described the practice of selling expired goods as a severe threat to public health, stating that suppliers and sellers who endanger lives for profit are "enemies of humanity." She reiterated the Food Authority's commitment to protecting citizens by ensuring food safety across the federal capital. The Islamabad Food Authority has vowed to continue its operations indiscriminately, ensuring that no entity compromises public health standards for monetary gain.—DNA

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Briefs

Plan to ensure smooth traffic flow on New Year night

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have finalized a detailed traffic management plan to ensure smooth traffic flow on New Year night and strict action in accordance with the law will be taken against one-wheelers.

According to a CTP spokesman, the initiative aims to facilitate safe travel for the citizens while enforcing strict measures against one-wheeling.

He informed that, 113 traffic officers, including 11 DSPs/Circle Officers would be on duty on New Year night. Over 50 traffic officers and personnel, including three DSPs/Circle Officers would also be on duty particularly near the parks, he added.

The City Traffic Police Rawalpindi have formed special one-wheeling squad to control one-wheeling. The squad consists of 133 officers and personnel, including four DSPs/Circle Officers, 16 Senior Traffic Wardens, and 86 Traffic Wardens.

The City Traffic Police have also started a special campaign to create public awareness. Under the awareness drive, the citizens are informed about the importance of traffic rules and their benefits.

The CTO has directed the traffic staff to behave courteously with the public and guide them so that New Year Night is peaceful.

Chief Traffic Officer, Rawalpindi, Beenish Fatima urged the citizens to contact the traffic police helpline 051-9274843 immediately in case of any emergency.

Mobile excise van brings civic services to Fatima Jinnah Park

ISLAMABAD: The Excise & Taxation (E&T) Department of Islamabad on Monday set up a mobile van at Fatima Jinnah Park (Bolan Gate) to streamline essential civic services and bring them closer to the community. According to the spokesman of the ICT administration, the exclusive drive will facilitate citizens in the parking lot from 2 to 4 pm. Excise staff will be on-site, offering a hassle-free experience for vehicle owners seeking registration, transfers, and token tax processing. The spokesman said this unprecedented initiative not only caters to vehicular paperwork but also introduces the ICT Doorstep Service. Citizens are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to obtain Domicile Certificates, Birth Certificates, Powers of Attorney, International Driving Permits, Fuel Permits (Domestic/Commercial), or Motor Vehicle Registrations, all at one convenient location, he added. Meanwhile, the Excise & Taxation Department of Islamabad will launch a comprehensive crackdown on vehicles with unpaid token taxes starting January 1. In this regard, Islamabad's excise office has introduced convenient options for paying vehicle token taxes, including in-person.—APP

Renewed fervour requires to tackle climate crises

Dr. Fahad Saeed, a South Asian Regional Climate Scientist from Climate Analytics, highlighted Pakistan's pivotal geolocation, a convergence point for summer monsoons and winter western disturbances

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: "The narrative of climate change reveals deep-seated inequality," remarked Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of the Institute of Regional Studies, during a webinar on 'Navigating Frameworks of UNFCCC through the State of Climate Change in Asia'. Drawing from his experience representing

Pakistan at forums like the UNFCCC, he noted the stark disparity in climate change effects between developing and developed nations. He emphasized the slow progress seen in past Conferences of Parties (COPs) and called for enhanced collaboration to address humanity's greatest existential threat.

Dr. Liudmila Kolomeets, an expert from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Russia, emphasized key find-

ings from WMO's 'State of the Climate in Asia 2023' report in her keynote address. She highlighted concerning trends, including 2023's mean temperature being the second highest recorded in Asia. Additionally, she noted anomalies in precipitation and snow coverage and the ongoing increase in glacial loss in the South Asian region. Dr. Fahad Saeed, a South Asian Regional Climate Scientist from Climate Analytics, highlighted

Pakistan's pivotal geolocation, a convergence point for summer monsoons and winter western disturbances. "This positioning makes the country especially susceptible to climate variations, evident in events such as the 2022 floods, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), and heatwaves", he said adding that, there was a great need of integrating scientific insights into decision-making at national, sub-national, and local levels.

Mr. Talha Tufail Bhatti, Climate Change Researcher at the IRS, noted that this year's COP financial targets disappointed developing nations. With at least 10 countries experiencing extreme temperatures over 50°C and economic losses reaching \$202.7 billion in 2023, the pledges were insufficient. He emphasized, "there is a need for swift and ambitious action from the international community," based on the experts' insights.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers pushing handcarts loaded with oranges at Fruit & Vegetable Market in Federal Capital.

FG Home Economics College F11/1 holds an exhibition

ISLAMABAD(DNA): The Annual Exhibition of FG Home Economics & Management Sciences, F-11/1, Islamabad, concluded leaving behind a trailawe-inspired visitors. The three-day extravaganza showcased an impressive array of handcrafted projects, innovative designs, and artistic creations. The exhibition was inaugurated by the esteemed Chief Guest, Mr. Sayeed Ahmed Masood, Project Director of the National Incubation Center Islamabad. With over three decades of experience in advertising and branding, he has been a long-time supporter of young entrepreneurs, generously extending his expertise to help them flourish. The students of the Department of Interior and Environmental Design Maheen Maryam Zaynab Raza Rabeah binte Tariq and Manal Ahmed stole the show with their stunning furniture designs with carved wood, blend of metal & processed wood, and intricate architecture models. Visitors marveled at the attention to detail and creativity that went into each piece. The Department of Textiles and Fashion Designing also impressed with their vibrant tie-and-dye and block printing on various silk and cotton fabrics. The audience was impressed by the unique patterns of thread embroidered on delicate tapestry. Participants were Hira Khan Areesah Jan Anna Zainab and Rameen Gohar. Art enthusiasts were treated to an array of paintings, sketches, and graphic designs by the talented students Freeha Noureen Aneez Khan Anna Bibi Maryam Murtaza Urwa Faud Muskan Bibi Dua Malik and Manahil of the Department of Art and Design. The exhibition was a testament to the students' hard work, dedication, and creativity. The Principal Prof Rozina Faheem, while talking to the media in a concluding session of this annual exhibition, said that it was an opportunity to showcase the exceptional skills and expertise of our students in Interior, Textiles, and Art & Design. This event demonstrates the perfect blend of knowledge and practice, as our students bring their innovative ideas to life. "I encourage entrepreneurs to join the world of business and collaborate with our talented students." She added "Together, we can create a vibrant and thriving industry that showcases Pakistani talent. We invite industry experts to mentor and guide our students in turning their passions into successful ventures." The exhibition provided a platform for students to showcase their skills, receive feedback from industry experts, and connect with potential employers. It also served as an opportunity for visitors to appreciate the talents of the students and gain insight into the latest trends and innovations in the field. The success of the exhibition was a testament to the dedication and efforts of the students, faculty, and staff of Home Economics & Management Sciences. As the curtains closed on this year's exhibition, everyone eagerly looks forward to next year's event.—DNA

PR refund Rs 380m on account of undue delay

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways (PR) has refunded an amount of Rs 380 million to passengers during a period of three years due to late start of trains from the originating station. "Rs 33 million have been refunded in 2023, Rs 269 million in 2022 and 78 million in 2021 to facilitate the passengers following their complaints regarding undue delay in trains arrival/departure," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said Pakistan Railways is taking several steps to improve the service of the trains and facilitate the passengers and in case of late running of trains, passengers are informed in advance through SMS alerts. The official said the passengers are granted a full refund if a train starts more than six hours late from the originating station. Besides the passengers are also provided with complimentary meals in the event of emergencies, he added. He said in case of disruptions, passengers are transported either by alternative railway path or by road service arranged by the department. To

a question, the official said the transportation of goods through Railways is always economical for bulk cargo and long-distance hauls providing economy of scale, whereas for transportation of goods for a shorter distance and small cargo, the road has the advantage over Pakistan Railways due to its doorstep loading and delivery options. He said the main advantages of rail transportation over road included manifold fuel efficiency and reduction in transportation cost besides ensuring up to 75 percent improvement in the environment. The official said that rail freight pricing in Pakistan and globally differ significantly due to various factors, including infrastructure, government policies, operational efficiency, and market dynamics. About some key points highlighting these differences including many countries of the world have separated and dedicated freight corridors, bulk haulage regulations, and large transport capacities, he added.—APP

Civil servants urged to play role in shaping country's future

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has emphasized that civil service is more than a profession—it is a mission. Addressing the passing-out ceremony of the 47th Specialized Training Program at the Civil Services Academy on Monday, he urged officers to play a pivotal role in addressing Pakistan's challenges and steering the country toward sustainable development. He outlined the various challenges Pakistan faces and stressed the need for sustainable solutions. He stated: "Pakistan is currently facing multiple challenges, but there is no shortage of talent and resources in the country." He called on the officers to reflect on how other nations had surpassed Pakistan in development despite start-

ing from behind. He emphasized four key factors necessary for progress: peace, political stability, policy continuity, and commitment to reforms. "If we are to achieve an honorable position by 2047, we must ensure that we contribute to these factors," he added. He noted that in the next 23 years, governments will come and go, but civil servants will remain a constant. "It is your responsibility to steer the path of this great nation with dedication and vision, transforming it into one of the leading economies of the world by 2047," he remarked. The minister announced that the government would launch the National Economic Transformation Plan 2024-29 the following day, framed around the Five E's Framework. "We examined the

key challenges Pakistan has faced in the past 16 months and identified the priorities required to establish a stable foundation. This led to the development of the Five E's Framework to address our core challenges," he explained. He elaborated that the framework includes expanding and diversifying exports to make export-led growth a cornerstone of economic development, harnessing the power of digital transformation to turn Pakistan into a techno-economy, ensuring environmental, food, and water security to achieve sustainability, focusing on energy efficiency and affordability, and building multi-modal transport corridors. Additionally, it promotes equity, ethics, and empowerment for values-based growth, focusing on youth and

women as drivers of future progress, he added. While addressing the officers, the minister highlighted their critical role in nation-building. "As civil servants, your primary responsibility is to connect citizens with the state," he said. He encouraged them to maintain a stellar reputation, likening it to a fragrance that cannot be hidden. "Your postings may be temporary, but your legacy is permanent. Always strive to uphold it with excellence," he advised. Ahsan Iqbal concluded his address by calling for a commitment to professionalism and integrity. "The country needs capable officers and leaders like you," he remarked, urging them to adopt a character that brings pride to themselves and the nation.—APP

PM grieved over death of Zuberi

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of renowned journalist, Deputy Chief Executive Daily Business Recorder and Director 'Aaj TV' Arshad Zuberi. In a press statement, the prime minister prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the departed soul in Jannah. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the family members of the late Zuberi. "The services of Late Arshad Zuberi in the field of print and electronic media in Pakistan will always be remembered," the prime minister said.—APP

Deputy PM expresses grief over death of Jimmy Carter

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of former US President Jimmy Carter. "With the passing of former US President Jimmy Carter, the world has lost a statesman who exemplified diplomacy and humanity," the deputy prime minister said in his social media post on 'X'. Extending his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and the American people, Ishaq Dar said Jimmy Carter's commitment to global peace and human rights remained a guiding light for leaders everywhere.—APP

Calls for premarital testing to combat thalassemia

ISLAMABAD: Housing and Works Minister Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Monday emphasized the need for legislation, awareness, mandatory premarital lab tests, and modern research to combat thalassemia in Pakistan. During his visit to the Thalassemia Centre of Sundas Foundation in F-9 Park, Islamabad, the minister praised the dedication of the senior management in serving humanity. He inaugurated the Activity Room established for thalassemic children and the electric cart donated by Allied Bank to facilitate the transportation of children from the outer gate.—APP

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Brics push to de-dollarise

WE require a commitment from these countries that they will neither create a new Brics currency nor back any other currency to replace the mighty US dollar, or they will face 100 per cent tariffs and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US economy," Donald Trump warned late last month, referring to a push by some members of the grouping to create a new payment system for their expanding trade. But the US president-elect's diatribe seemed a tad over-dramatic. For a start, India, a key member of Brics, has distanced itself from the idea of creating a new common currency. Moreover, Brics remains divided on many issues, divisions exacerbated at times by territorial disputes between China and India. Meanwhile, the US dollar remains the dominant currency of global trade, with no credible alternative yet. Nevertheless, the expanded Brics grouping is steadily transforming into a formidable platform, which represents the deepening aspirations of rising powers for a more multipolar international order. Anticipating a new round of trade wars and disruptive policies under a second Trump administration, Brics is likely to intensify trade and strategic cooperation among its member-states to de-risk from the US' strategic excesses. For the past half-century, countless pundits have reflected on the United States' supposed decline as the world's superpower. The country has repeatedly been bogged down by seemingly intractable conflicts, such as in Vietnam and Iraq. There were also civil strife and democratic crises, reflecting profound polarisation in American politics. But as perspicacious observers such as historian Adam Tooze have noted, America remains a global colossus, especially in the realm of finance. Top American companies and start-ups dwarf counterparts from across the world in terms of market capitalisation, while the US has maintained a substantial share of global gross domestic product throughout the decades. The US contributes to about a quarter of the world's economic output, and the US dollar is responsible for up to 90 per cent of global foreign exchange transactions. The US' economic preponderance has given it tremendous global influence, allowing it to accrue massive debts, sustain competitiveness in cutting-edge sectors, sanction and isolate rival states, and finance the world's most powerful military. As with all empires in history, however, decline is an inevitability. As historian Paul Kennedy argued in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, imperial decline is often precipitated by unsustainable economic practices. Enter Trump, who has promised to double down on his disruptive policies once he reassumes office. Despite his bluster, Trump's first term was riddled with diplomatic failures. Neither did Iran bend to his "maximum pressure" campaign, nor did North Korea succumb to his charm offensive. If anything, key allies in Europe resisted Trump's bullying on defence and climate change issues, while targeted countries such as China refused to provide any major trade concessions beyond superficial compromises. At times, Trump represented the "America alone" phenomenon when confronted with collective resistance from both allies and adversaries. But should he proceed with even more expansive punitive measures, including massive tariffs on major Asian and European economies as well as sanctions on rivals such as China, Trump will inadvertently contribute to the US' decline in his second term in office.



War in Gaza killing dreams

A MID the rubble of destroyed walls and the danger of narrow alleyways, a group of children decided to snatch moments of joy by playing a soccer match. Their city, devastated by attacks, no longer had a space dedicated to sports activities. Sports clubs were nonexistent, and teams had nowhere to gather. Left with no alternatives, the children sought a reprieve from the world of death and destruction, creating moments of happiness with the meager resources available to them. For a few minutes, the ball moved between their feet. But soon, an Israeli aircraft launched a missile near them, targeting a residential building. Thick smoke billowed from the site, and the children's joyous play turned to sheer panic. They fled in fear, leaving behind their ball and a stark symbol of how even the simplest childhood joys are denied in a landscape scarred by death and devastation. As with everything else in Gaza under the relentless Israeli aggression—ongoing for approximately 15 months—the sports sector has suffered unprecedented destruction. Sports activities, clubs, and players across various disciplines have been decimated, with hundreds killed, injured, or detained. With a soaring number of casualties, injuries, and arrests following Israel's ground invasion of Gaza, sports clubs and facilities were transformed into detention centers and execution sites for civilians. These spaces, once havens for recreation and the nurturing of athletic talent, have been stripped of their purpose. Israeli airstrikes have entirely destroyed numerous key facilities: the UNDP stadium in Rafah, the Friends Equestrian Club, Jabalya Services Club, the baseball and softball field in the Shati Camp, and the headquarters of the Palestinian Olympic Committee. Additionally, the Palestinian Football Association, the Higher Council for Youth and Sports, Palestine Stadium, Gaza Sports Club Stadium, and Khan Yunis' City Sports Complex—along with dozens of other clubs and sports grounds—have been obliterated. The latest statistics from the Palestinian Football Association reveal that 704 athletes and scouts have been killed in the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Hundreds of sports facilities have been destroyed, and the figures are not final due to the high number of missing persons and limited access to information. The Association announced on its official Facebook page that among the victims are 387 individuals affiliated with football as players, administrators, or workers. The casualties include 94 children and 273 young adults. Additionally, 105 scouts and 196 individuals from other sports federations were killed. It also reported that 24 football players have been detained in the West Bank, while no information is yet available on the detention of athletes in Gaza. The Israeli occupation has destroyed 278 sports facilities—268 in Gaza and 18 in the West Bank. Sports journalist Ahmed Al-Agha stated that 70% of Gaza's sports facilities, clubs, and halls have been completely destroyed, with initial losses in the sports sector estimated at \$20 million. This staggering toll is the result of the targeted destruction of buildings, facilities, and fields. Al-Agha also highlighted the deaths of hundreds of athletes in various disciplines, including football, tennis, volleyball, and handball. Among the prominent athletes killed are football striker Mohammed Barakat, a player for the Palestinian national team and a professional for Jordan's Al-Wehdhat Club and Palestine's Al-Shula Club.

Afghanistan the graveyard of empires

Qamar Bashir



The first airstrike was unexpectedly absorbed by the Afghans, which was uncharacteristic given their history of never letting any humiliation go unavenged. However, the second airstrike appeared to exceed their tolerance. This time around, their patience wore thin, and they retaliated in kind. However, unlike Pakistan, they added an interesting and calculated twist. Rather than claiming they attacked inside Pakistan, they stated their actions were directed across the hypothetical line, targeting elements they held responsible for planning attacks within Afghanistan

DO not put your hand in the wolf's den." This famous saying emphasizes that those who heed its wisdom avoid deadly attacks and live longer, while those who ignore it often suffer. Unfortunately, our leadership seems to have disregarded the essence of this adage and has dared to reach into the wolf's den of Afghanistan, hoping to emerge unscathed. Earlier this year, Pakistan carried out airstrikes inside Afghanistan, which generated a strong reaction from the Taliban leadership. Their narrative was straightforward: Pakistan's security agencies should focus on safeguarding their own frontiers, managing their internal law and order, improving intelligence capabilities, preventing their citizens from illegally crossing international borders, and refraining from blaming neighbors for their own shortcomings and weaknesses.

Their narrative carries a lot of weight, as millions of dollars from a poor nation, where 40% of the population lives below the poverty line, were spent to build a barbed-wire wall along the Afghanistan border to prevent cross-border movement. Unfortunately, this wall has proven to be ineffective, as if it does not exist. Smuggling across the border continues unabated, cross-border movement remains unstoppable, and terrorist activities have intensified more than ever before. Perhaps we have only partially learned from cross-border attacks carried out by the USA in various countries and by India, particularly in Pakistan. These countries, while successfully eliminating cross-border threats, also strengthened and fortified their internal security. They did so by implementing foolproof border controls, creating effective surveillance systems, identifying internal threats before they could cause harm, and addressing internal political discontent. These measures ensured comprehensive reinforcement of both internal and external security. One example is the USA after the 9/11 attacks. The country drastically revamped border control protocols worldwide. Security measures for air, rail, land, and sea travel were fortified on a global scale. Within the United States, the Department of Homeland Security was established to evaluate and strengthen the nation's security apparatus. This department assessed civil and military installations, identified gaps, and implemented comprehensive security protocols to eliminate potential threats

effectively. Another example is India, which implemented drastic constitutional changes by bringing Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir under federal control. Since then, a foolproof security protocol has been established across the region. Since 2019, there have been no significant cross-border incursions into the Jammu and Kashmir valley, nor any major freedom movements. Under high-security measures, the Indian government has successfully implemented mechanisms to suppress any substantial freedom movements permanently. Turning back to the situation in Afghanistan, we seem to have forgotten the well-known adage that Afghanistan is the "graveyard of civilizations." This has been proven true in both the distant and recent past, with no evidence suggesting this will change in the foreseeable future.

I vividly recall an interview with an American general who was in charge of operations in Afghanistan after 9/11. He stated that while the adage might have been true for other nations in the past, it would not apply to the United States, given its superior technology and top-notch training. However, the world witnessed the humiliating withdrawal of Allied forces in 2021, leaving behind billions of dollars' worth of military hardware, abandoning Afghan allies to the mercy of the Taliban, and fleeing on C-130 aircraft. The harrowing images of Afghan civilians clinging to the aircraft's wings and falling to their deaths were etched into global memory. Perhaps the Pakistani armed forces believe themselves to be better equipped and trained than the Allied forces, with superior strategies and tactics. This conviction might have led them to carry out airstrikes inside Afghanistan, aiming to eliminate cross-border threats. However, they have failed to stop the infiltration of the Pakistani Taliban—citizens labeled as Khawarij to foster further hatred against them—while disregarding Pakistan's constitution, which forbids discrimination based on color, creed, or religion.

The first airstrike was unexpectedly absorbed by the Afghans, which was uncharacteristic given their history of never letting any humiliation go unavenged. However, the second airstrike appeared to exceed their tolerance. This time around, their patience wore thin, and they retaliated in kind. However, unlike Pakistan, they added an interesting and calculated twist. Rather than claiming they

attacked inside Pakistan, they stated their actions were directed across the hypothetical line, targeting elements they held responsible for planning attacks within Afghanistan. This subtle reframing allowed them to justify their actions without formally acknowledging the border they do not recognize. With the perception of the Pakistan Army at an all-time low, the Afghan government's commitment to establishing a direct trade link with China through the Wakhan border to reduce its reliance on transit trade through Pakistan, the separatist movement in Balochistan, and the alienation of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) from the central government—combined with the prevailing popular narrative against the Pakistan Army—Pakistan finds itself in a precarious position. The ethnic linkage of the Pashtun population in KP and Balochistan with Afghanistan further complicates matters, alongside the country's ongoing economic and financial meltdown.

Pakistan's lack of sovereignty, exacerbated by its dependence on Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and China for maintaining critical reserves to avoid default, highlights its vulnerability. Given these challenges, it is in Pakistan's best interest to improve relations with its neighbors, as its ties with Iran, India, and Afghanistan are perhaps at their lowest point. Instead of taking actions that further deteriorate peace and exacerbate belligerent behavior, Pakistan should focus on fostering better diplomatic and economic relationships to stabilize the region and ensure long-term security and prosperity. If both sides fail to pursue a negotiated settlement, the consequences could be catastrophic. Continued airstrikes and retaliatory attacks risk escalating into open conflict, destabilizing the region and worsening humanitarian crises. For Pakistan, further escalation could strain its already fragile internal security, undermine its international standing, and deplete critical resources. For Afghanistan, emboldened by its ability to strike back, the conflict could cement its role as a destabilizing force in the region. A peaceful resolution through dialogue is urgently needed to prevent these dire outcomes.

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

Building a prosperous 2025: Priorities for growth and stability in Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



On the domestic front, addressing energy shortages is imperative. Inconsistent power supply has not only hampered industrial productivity but also deterred foreign investors. The adoption of renewable energy solutions, such as solar and wind projects, alongside revamping existing energy infrastructure, can offer immediate relief

IN 2024, Pakistan finds itself at a critical juncture, facing challenges that have diminished its standing both domestically and internationally. Restoring its lost stature demands an immediate reevaluation of priorities, accompanied by a pragmatic and well-thought-out strategy. To navigate this path effectively, Pakistan must pursue a dual approach—implementing short-term measures to stabilize the present while developing a long-term vision to ensure sustainable growth and resilience. The foremost goal for Pakistan is economic revival. A robust economy forms the backbone of any nation's international clout and domestic stability. The country must prioritize addressing its fiscal deficit, controlling inflation, and enhancing revenue generation. Immediate measures, such as cracking down on tax evasion, broadening the tax base, and implementing structural reforms in public sector enterprises, are critical. Economic development thrives when a culture of equitable taxation is established, ensuring every citizen, regardless of their economic standing, contributes their fair share. Taxing only the salaried and middle class not only strains these segments but also perpetuates inequality and resentment. The real catalyst for change lies with the affluent class, who must lead by example. When business magnates, landlords, and policymakers demonstrate transparency and diligence in fulfilling their tax obligations, they set a precedent, encouraging widespread compliance. This will not only increase state revenue but also restore public confidence in the system, reinforcing the notion that everyone is equally accountable. Moreover, curtailing wasteful government expenditures is crucial for sustainable progress. Resources squandered on unnecessary perks and extravagant projects drain the national treasury and breed public disillusionment. Streamlining government operations, minimizing redundant expenses, and redirecting funds to critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure can create a ripple effect of economic growth and stability. Simultaneously, fostering a conducive environment for foreign direct investment by ensuring political stability, regulatory transparency, and security will encourage international investors. Pakistan's engagement with global financial institutions

should shift from dependency to partnership, emphasizing capacity building and economic independence.

On the domestic front, addressing energy shortages is imperative. Inconsistent power supply has not only hampered industrial productivity but also deterred foreign investors. The adoption of renewable energy solutions, such as solar and wind projects, alongside revamping existing energy infrastructure, can offer immediate relief. Incentivizing private-sector involvement in the energy sector and learning from global best practices will also play a significant role in mitigating this crisis. Education and human resource development are long-term investments that Pakistan can no longer afford to neglect. The country's youth, which constitutes a significant portion of the population, remains an untapped resource. Expanding access to quality education, aligning curricula with global trends, and promoting technical and vocational training are essential steps. Furthermore, addressing gender disparities in education and employment will unlock the full potential of the nation's workforce. International collaboration in education, research, and technology can provide Pakistan with the tools needed to keep pace with an increasingly competitive global landscape. Security concerns, particularly the resurgence of militancy and regional instability, have marred Pakistan's image internationally. Ensuring internal security through comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and community-based policing will restore confidence among both citizens and the international community. Strengthening diplomatic ties with neighboring countries, particularly Afghanistan and India, is crucial for regional peace and economic collaboration. A pragmatic foreign policy rooted in mutual respect and shared interests will help Pakistan reposition itself as a stabilizing force in South Asia.

In the short term, Pakistan must focus on governance reforms to rebuild trust between the state and its citizens. Transparent mechanisms for accountability, reducing bureaucratic red tape, and implementing e-governance initiatives will enhance efficiency and curb corruption. A decentralized approach to governance, empowering local bodies, will ensure that development initiatives reach marginalized and underserved communities. In the agricultural sector,

which remains the backbone of Pakistan's economy, introducing modern farming techniques and addressing water management issues can significantly boost productivity. Short-term measures, such as subsidies for farmers and efficient distribution of resources, will provide immediate relief, while long-term investments in research and development will ensure sustainability. Additionally, diversifying exports by focusing on value-added agricultural products can enhance Pakistan's global trade footprint. On the international stage, Pakistan must work to repair its image as a reliable partner. Strengthening ties with traditional allies while exploring new partnerships in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America will diversify its diplomatic and economic opportunities. Active participation in global forums and adherence to international commitments, particularly in areas like climate change and human rights, will showcase Pakistan's commitment to being a responsible global player. A critical element of Pakistan's long-term strategy must be addressing climate change, which poses an existential threat. Developing climate-resilient infrastructure, implementing effective disaster management strategies, and investing in sustainable urban planning will mitigate the impact of environmental challenges. International collaboration and securing green financing for such initiatives will further bolster these efforts. Cultural diplomacy and the promotion of Pakistan's rich heritage and tourism potential can also play a pivotal role in enhancing its global image. Revitalizing the tourism industry through infrastructure development, safety assurances, and marketing campaigns can create jobs, attract foreign exchange, and foster cultural exchange. Highlighting Pakistan's contributions to global arts, literature, and sports will further strengthen its soft power. In conclusion, the journey toward reclaiming Pakistan's lost position is arduous but achievable. By addressing immediate economic and security challenges while investing in education, governance, and climate resilience, Pakistan can lay the foundation for a prosperous future. A balanced approach that combines short-term pragmatism with a visionary long-term strategy will enable the nation to navigate the complexities of the modern world and emerge stronger, both at home and on the global stage.

Briefs

New Gwadar airport to create jobs, says PM

FROM PAGE 01
whereas the Pakistan Customs has also notified the airport. Similarly, the staff of various departments such as Pakistan Airport Authority, Airport Security Force, Pakistan Customs, Anti Narcotics Force, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and Border Health Service has already been deputed at the airport, the meeting was told. The land has also been allocated for facilities of cold storage, warehouses, courier services, cargo shades, technical ground support gadgets, fuel farms, hotels and shopping malls at the airport, the meeting was informed. The meeting was told that all the banks registered with the State Bank of Pakistan were also in contact with regard to establishment of bank branches and ATM machines at the airport. Additionally, the meeting was told that the first part of East-Bay Expressway, meant to improve road link with the Gwadar International Airport had been completed while the feasibility of the second part was being prepared.

Sadiq discusses Afghanistan trip with...

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In a statement, Sharif called on Khan to take effective measures aimed at "maintaining stability and advancing the shared interests of both countries." Khan's visit to Kabul came amid heightened tensions following Pakistani airstrikes on four villages in Barmal District, Pakhtika Province, on December 24. According to the Taliban, the strikes targeted displaced residents from Waziristan and killed 46 people. The cross-border attacks have further strained relations between the two nations, with Kabul and Islamabad trading accusations over security and territorial concerns. Khan emphasized the need for continued dialogue to address the challenges facing Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, including security issues and mutual economic opportunities. Both sides have faced criticism over their handling of border tensions, refugee policies, and trade agreements, but Khan expressed hope for progress through enhanced cooperation.

No need for deal, vows to fight cases

FROM PAGE 01
she said, has questioned how were the cases of those leaders who left the party were forgiven. "He said that the May 9 conspiracy was hatched to crush the party," said Khan's sister. Aleema said her brother has reiterated the demands of a judicial probe into May 9 riots and November 26 late-night crackdown and release of "political prisoners". Earlier, PTI Senator Shibli Faraz refuted the "false perception" that Khan was seeking relief for himself in negotiations with PML-N coalition government. The coalition government and the embattled PTI finally came to the table last week to defuse political tensions in the country. Negotiating committees, formed by the government and the PTI, conducted their much-hyped meeting in a conducive environment and resolved to continue the dialogue process earlier this month.

Taliban govt ban...

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design of buildings, was issued following a decree from the Taliban's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada. According to a statement from the Taliban's spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, the ban was put in place to prevent potential "improper exposure" that could occur when women are seen performing daily tasks such as gathering water or working in the kitchen. The Taliban's official X (formerly Twitter) account further emphasised that observing women in these contexts could be deemed inappropriate and offensive.

Wapda clinches Women's Basketball c'ship title

The closing ceremony was attended by General Manager of Wapda Sports, Imdad Ullah Memon, who was the chief guest, alongside Secretary General of the Pakistan Basketball Federation

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Defending champion Wapda secured the National Women's Basketball Championship title once again, defeating a strong Pakistan Army team 38-33 in a thrilling encounter at the Wapda Sports Complex on Monday. Eight teams participated in the five-day championship, including Pakistan Wapda, Karachi, Faisalabad, Islamabad, Pakistan Army, Lahore, Hazara, and Bahawalpur. The event was organized by the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF). The closing ceremony was attended by General Manager of Wapda Sports, Imdad Ullah Memon, who was the chief guest, alongside Secretary General of the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF), Khalid Bashir, and other dignitaries. Wapda dominated the first half of the final, preventing their opponents from mounting any significant challenge. They took a commanding 12-point lead by halftime, with a score of 27-15. In the second half, Pakistan Army fought hard to close the gap but was unable to overcome Wapda's lead. The final score was 38-33 in favor of Wapda. Key players for Wapda, Hijab Fatima and Kainat Zafar, played crucial roles in retaining the championship title. Hijab scored 12 points, while Kainat added 10 points. For Pakistan Army, Fajar Fatima



was the top scorer with 9 points, followed by Aysha Dilashad and Kashifa Noreen, who both scored 8 points each. In the third-place match, Lahore triumphed over favorites Karachi, securing a dominant

48-23 victory. Lahore led the match by 21 points at halftime, with a score of 33-12. Khadija Mushtaq and Aimen Mehmood led the scoring for Lahore, both contributing 13 points each. The closing ceremony also

featured the distribution of prizes, with General Manager of Wapda Sports, Imdad Ullah Memon, and Secretary General of the Pakistan Basketball Federation, Khalid Bashir, presenting awards to the players.

Djokovic and Kyrgios win 'awesome' doubles debut

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: At the peak of a long-running feud between Novak Djokovic and Nick Kyrgios, the prospect of them ever becoming pals seemed ludicrous. After all, how could Djokovic warm to someone who he had "not much respect for" off the court? What could stop Kyrgios thinking the Serb was a "tool" and a "strange cat" with a "sick" obsession for needing to be liked? Yet here we are, a few years down the line, and the once-squabbling pair are now the best of buddies and making their debut as a doubles team. Australian firebrand Kyrgios, often polarising but almost always entertaining, promised fun at the Brisbane International. The pair delivered in front of an enthusiastic sell-out crowd, putting on a show as they secured a 6-4 (4-7) 10-8 win over Aus-

tria's Alexander Erler and Germany's Andreas Mies. A celebratory chest-bump when they completed victory - on their third match point - was symbolic of a



bromance which nobody saw coming. "That was awesome," said 24-time major champion Djokovic. "I want to thank Nick for playing. He said it should

be a pleasure to play with him, it was a pleasure. "I'm glad to share the court with him on his comeback." Their relationship thawed when Kyrgios offered support to Djokovic over a court decision to deport him from Australia in 2022, and has continued to warm ever since. But, before the match, Kyrgios had little idea how things would pan out. The 2022 Wimbledon runner-up was back on a competitive court for the first time in 18 months following a wrist ligament injury which he feared would end his career. How the 29-year-old's body would react was the first unknown. How a new partnership between "two different personalities" would gel was the second. "We might get absolutely snipped," said Kyrgios, who lost to Djokovic in the only major final of his turbulent career at Wimbledon in 2022.

Top SA batter signs up for PSL 10 draft

Van der Dussen becomes third South African to sign up for the draft

LAHORE: The Pakistan Super League (PSL) on Monday, announced that South Africa's top-order batter Rassie van der Dussen has signed up for the highly-anticipated player draft for the league's 10th edition. The announcement was made on the league's social media handles with a compilation video of the right-handed batter's best shots. "South African Right Hand Batter Rassie van der Dussen makes his way back to the HBL PSL Draft." The 35-year-old, who is a key part of South Africa's white-ball sides, represented the Proteas in 18 Tests, 68 ODIs and 50 ODIs, accumulating 4626 runs across formats with the help of six centuries and 29 half-centuries. Van der Dussen also has a wealth of experience in the T20 format, having played 211 matches in the format. In these appearances, he scored 6075 runs at an impressive strike rate of 131.86, including five centuries and 39 fifties. The right-handed batter has also featured in the PSL twice, representing Islamabad United and Lahore Qalandars in 2023 and 2024 editions, respectively. His PSL record is equally impressive as he has 512 runs to his name in 13 innings at an average of 46.54 and a strike rate of 145.86. He has also scored one century and three fifties in the league. Notably, van der Dussen is the third South African and the 20th overall foreign player to register for the PSL 10 draft, which will take place in Balochistan for the first time as Gwadar is set to host the landmark event on January 11, 2025. Rassie van der Dussen, Matthew Short, Gudakesh Motie, Alex Hales, Luke Wood, Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Usman Khawaja, Corbin Bosh, Rilee Rossouw, Colin Munro, Daryl Mitchell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Tom Curran, David Willey, Dawid Malan, Jason Roy, Shakib Al Hasan, Mustafizur Rahman and Sikandar Raza. - DNA

AC Milan sack Portuguese coach Fonseca

ROME: Serie A side AC Milan sacked coach Paulo Fonseca on Monday after only six months in the job after an inconsistent run of form left the club eighth in Italy's top football league. Milan, who drew 1-1 at home against struggling AS Roma on Sunday, have won only two of their last seven league games. The 19-time Italian champions sit eight points off the top four with a game in hand, and 14 points behind leaders Atalanta. "AC Milan announces that Paulo Fonseca has been relieved of his duties as head coach of the men's first team," Milan said in a statement. Local media reports said former Porto boss Sergio Conceicao was set to take over. Fonseca was appointed in June to replace Italian Stefano Pioli, who had helped Milan to a single league title in 2022 during his five-year tenure, finishing second and 19 points off champions Inter Milan in his last season. Expectations were therefore going to be high from the start for former Roma coach Fonseca, who arrived after two seasons at French Ligue 1 side Lille. But Milan got off to a slow start under the 51-year-old Portuguese, drawing 2-2 against Torino and Lazio either side of a 2-1 loss at promoted Parma. Fonseca led Milan to their first win of the season mid-September, a 4-0 home victory over Venezia, before beating rivals Inter 2-1. After a similarly poor start to their Champions League campaign, where they suffered back-to-back defeats by Liverpool and Bayer Leverkusen, they embarked on a four-game winning streak, beating champions Real Madrid along the way. - Agencies

Australia win thriller to take series lead over India

Cummins and Scott Boland finished with three wickets each while spinner Nathan Lyon took two after his batting heroics, falling for 41 in the second over of the day as Australia were all out for 234

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Australia beat India by 184 runs in a thrilling conclusion to the fourth Test in Melbourne to take a 2-1 lead going into the final match of the series. India were set a target of 340 in 92 overs and batted cautiously throughout the innings with little ambition to chase an unlikely victory. But a sensational bowling performance in the evening session saw Australia take the final seven wickets for just 34 runs as India were bowled out for 155 in the final hour. The tourists slipped to 33-3 but opener Yashvi Jaiswal looked intent on securing a hard-fought draw for India before he was caught behind off Pat Cummins for 84 from 208 balls with 21 overs remaining. Jaiswal had battled through a wicketless afternoon session alongside wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant, who made 30 from 104 balls - but they were the only men to

pass double figures. Pant eventually ran out of patience and slogged Travis Head to long-on for another wasteful dismissal and his departure after tea sparked the collapse. Cummins and Scott Boland finished with three wickets each while spinner Nathan Lyon took two after his batting heroics, falling for 41 in the second over of the day as Australia were all out for 234. He was bowled by Jasprit Bumrah, who finished with 5-57 in another scintillating performance. The series concludes in Sydney from 2 January, where a win would secure Australia's place in the World Test Championship final alongside South Africa. In front of a record attendance for a Test match in Australia - with 373,691 spectators at the MCG over the five days - captain Cummins delivered another masterclass with the ball and with his tactics. India opens Jaiswal with the ball and with his tactics. India opens Jaiswal and captain Rohit Sharma started slowly to set the tone for the team's approach, battling to 25-0 from 16 overs with just 12 scoring shots played within the first 90 balls.

Iga Świątek makes blistering start to United Cup

Swiatek drops one game in season debut; Poland edges Norway at United Cup

PERTH: World No.2 Iga Świątek powered a memorable 2-1 victory for Poland against Norway on Monday evening at the United Cup. After Świątek and Casper Ruud earned singles wins in front of the Sydney fans, Świątek and Jan Zielinski battled past Ulrikke Eikeri and Ruud 6-3, 0-6 [10-8] to clinch the tie for their country. "It's still the old year, so I'm happy to finish it like that," Świątek said. "I'm really happy that I could play with Jan and show our game. It was pretty tight, but I'm happy that at the end we stepped up the level and we finished it so Poland could win." Chants of "Ruuuuuuuu!" rang out through the Sydney night to combat shouts of 'Poland! Poland!' Fans were on the edge of their seat at the match reached its climax. Norway led the Match Tie-break 8-6 and Ruud held two served at 8-7, but lost both points. "Even though the second set was 0-6, we knew it was very close. It was a matter of single points, deciding points, 0-30 we had a couple times. We knew this could change at any moment," Zielinski said. "They had their momentum at some point, 8-7 serving, Casper, so we were not in the ideal position. But we stayed tough, we showed some good returns and best tennis when it mattered, so I'm happy with the outcome." With the result, Norway has been eliminated from the United Cup. The winner between Poland and the Czech Republic on Wednesday will win Group B and advance to the quarterfinals of the mixed-teams competition. Barring any

lineup changes, Świątek will face Karolina Muchova in a rematch of the 2023 Roland Garros final. Earlier, Świątek laid down a marker in her season opener in singles, defeating No.404 Malene Helgø 6-1, 6-0. Świątek, 23, led the Hologic WTA Tour in match wins (59) and titles (5) in the 2024 season, and she looked as sharp as ever in her season debut. With new coach Wim Fissette sitting in the coaches' box, Świątek overpowered Helgø from the baseline to tally her first win of the season. "I'm happy for sure with the performance," Świątek said. "It's not easy to play for your country, sometimes the pressure is bigger." Świątek won the first nine points of the match and raced through the 24-minute opening set behind eight forced errors. She held Helgø to just two winners off the ground. Helgø, 25, has emerged as a United Cup stalwart for Norway, having competed in all three editions. Away from the annual competition, she has yet to compete at a tour-level event, peaking at a career-high No.317 on the PIF WTA Rankings. She has won nine titles on the ITF World Tennis Tour. Świątek continued her march through a clinical second set. After coming through a 10-minute game to break Helgø, converting her seventh break point for a 3-0 lead, Świątek sprinted across the finish line to seal a 6-0 minute win. She finished the match with 21 groundstroke winners and just eight unforced errors. She did not face a break point. - Agencies



CM Maryam Nawaz invites...

FROM PAGE 01
She highlighted the strong ties between Pakistan and the UAE, built on mutual trust and respect, and noted their shared vision for regional stability and prosperity. Ambassador Al-Zaabi affirmed the UAE's desire for a developed Pakistan and its commitment to standing alongside the government and people in this journey. He expressed confidence in fostering sustainable growth through public-private partnerships with the Punjab government.

President, PM condole death of...

FROM PAGE 01
In his condolence message the President extended heartfelt sympathies and condolences to Jimmy Carter's family, and the people of the United States. He praised Jimmy Carter's contributions to international peace and human rights, emphasizing that his legacy would be remembered. "Jimmy Carter's legacy as a statesman and his dedication to promoting global harmony will always be cherished," remarked the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister underscored the late US President's invaluable contributions to peace and justice worldwide, describing him as a beacon of wisdom and diplomacy.

Pakistan, Tajikistan vow to...

FROM PAGE 01
considered the constant contacts of representatives of the sectoral structures of the parties a mutually beneficial affair. The parties stressed the need to further strengthen cooperation in the areas of combating terrorism, extremism, radicalism, drug trafficking, and transnational crime. Pakistan and Tajikistan share a historically rich relationship rooted in cultural, linguistic, and geographic commonalities. As neighbors in Central and South Asia, the two nations are strategically linked, offering mutual opportunities for economic, security, and cultural collaboration.

NA speaker to chair govt-PTI...

FROM PAGE 01
Sadiq "will chair a 2nd meeting (in-camera) on negotiations between Treasury and Opposition on Thursday, the 2nd January, 2025 at 11:30am" at the Parliament House. The January 2 date was earlier announced when on December 26, Chairman of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) Sahibzada Hamid Raza announced that the PTI would formally give the government time until January 31 to conclude ongoing negotiations. "The cut-off date for negotiations is January 31," Raza said. "On January 2, when our committee meets the government to continue the negotiations, (Opposition Leader in the National Assembly) Omar Ayub will formally give them this deadline."

Trump loses appeal against...

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past sexual misconduct, making the trial and verdict unfair. The court said that evidence, including Trump bragging about his sexual prowess on an "Access Hollywood" video that surfaced during the 2016 US presidential campaign, established a "repeated, idiosyncratic pattern of conduct" consistent with Carroll's allegations. "Taking the record as a whole and considering the strength of Ms Carroll's case, we are not persuaded that any claimed error or combination of errors in the district court's evidentiary rulings affected Mr Trump's substantial rights," the court said in an unsigned decision. Lawyers for Trump did not immediately respond to requests for comment. A lawyer for Carroll did not immediately respond to similar requests.

Briefs

PSX witnessed bullish trend, gains 3,907 more points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 3,907.82 more points, a positive change of 3.51 percent, closing at 115,259.00 points as compared to 111,351.18 points on the last trading day. A total of 1,059,020,119 shares were traded during the day as compared to 815,920,043 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 40.889 billion against Rs. 32.917 billion on the last trading day. As many as 465 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 333 of them recorded gains and 84 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 48 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Energycico PK with 125,613,935 shares at Rs 7.44 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 111,551,930 shares at Rs 1.83 per share and Bank of Punjab with 84,182,656 shares at Rs.10.47 per share.—APP

Gold rates dip by Rs.600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.600 on Monday and was traded at Rs.272,600 against its sale at Rs.273,200 the previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.514 to Rs.233,711 from Rs.234,225 whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up to Rs.214,235 from Rs.214,706 respectively. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 3,350 and Rs. 2,872.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$6 to \$2,614 against \$2,620, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 01 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Monday depreciated by 01 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.47 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.46. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.05 and Rs 279.55, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 06 paisa to close at Rs 290.21 against the last day's closing of Rs290.15, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.76, whereas a surge of 99 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs349.96 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs348.97. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham remained unchanged to close at Rs75.81, while the Saudi Riyal went up by 01 paisa and closed at Rs74.16.—APP

Death toll in Ethiopia road accident rises to 71

NAIROBI: The death toll from a road accident in southern Ethiopia has risen to at least 71, according to a local police official. In a Facebook post late Sunday, the Sidama Police Commission Traffic Prevention and Control Directorate said that "68 males and three females are known to have died in the accident so far", citing Chief Inspector Daniel Sankura. The police commission said the incident occurred at around 5:30 pm local time (1430 GMT) when the vehicle plunged off a road and into a river. The post added that "two others have sustained heavy physical injuries", but did not detail any further information about the number of passengers onboard at the time of the incident. The accident occurred in Sidama state — some 300 kilometres (180 miles) south of the capital Addis Ababa — in the Eastern Zone, in Bona Zuria Woreda.—APP

Chashma Nuclear Power Plant Unit-5 to create 40,000 jobs: Jiang

Ahsan Iqbal, while terming the Chashma Nuclear Power Project Unit-5 (C-5) a 'milestone', said it reflected the strength of Pakistan-China cooperation and reaffirmed the commitment of both nations to sustainable development and energy security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong Monday said that the Chashma Nuclear Power Plant Unit-5 can create 40,000 jobs directly and indirectly during the peak period of construction. Addressing the First Concrete Date Ceremony for Chashma Nuclear Power Plant Unit-5, the ambassador extended congratulations on the ceremony of the C-5 project of the Chashma Nuclear Power Plant and expressed gratitude to both countries for their long-term promotion of practical cooperation. He said that Pakistan has unique advantages in terms of location, language, and human resources, which can be combined with China's advantages of technology, capital, and market experience, to jointly explore third-party markets. Jiang Zaidong said, "We are pleased to see that according to the latest statistics from the State Bank of Pakistan, despite the overall sluggish economic environment, China's direct investment in Pakistan accounted for 41% of the total investment in Pakistan in the past five months, which shows the vitality and potential of market-driven cooperation." He said that over the past year, in the face of a complex international environment, China-Pakistan relations, especially



the practical cooperation between the two countries, have made progress. "We are ready to continue to work with Pakistani, to adhere to combine high-quality development, to combine quantitative growth with qualitative improvement, to advance both major signature projects and small but beautiful public welfare projects in a coordinated manner, and to consolidate cooperation in traditional areas and steadily expand cooperation in emerging areas in a coordinated manner, so as to foster an upgraded version of CPEC." He said that the China will continue work with Pakistan

to write a new chapter of practical cooperation, to accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, and to continuously enrich the vivid practice of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and the promotion of building a community with a shared future for mankind. He stressed the need to make coordinated efforts to promote the expansion and strengthening of non-CPEC projects. "China-Pakistan relations are all-weather, so our practical cooperation is naturally all-round." He said that

the world's highest altitude Khunjerab-Sost Pass has realized the all-year-round function. The Suki Kinari Hydropower Station, with a total investment of nearly US\$2 billion, has been put into commercial operation. The ambassador said, "These are just an epitome of the achievements of China-Pakistan practical cooperation, but they are good enough to reflect the tenacity and certainty of China-Pakistan cooperation." He said, "We need to closely focus on an upgraded version of CPEC and take more specific and practical measures to adhere to common

development and build a growth corridor as the key to make full use of Pakistan's industrial advantages. Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal, while terming the Chashma Nuclear Power Project Unit-5 (C-5) a 'milestone,' on Monday said it reflected the strength of Pakistan-China cooperation and reaffirmed the commitment of both nations to sustainable development and energy security. He expressed these views while speaking at the first concrete pouring ceremony of Unit-5 (C-5) as chief guest in Chashma (Mianwali), which was attended by Director General of the Strategic Plans Division Lt Gen. Yusuf Jamal, Ambassador of Pakistan to China Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, Vice President of CNNC Zhang Kai, federal secretaries and delegates from China. Recalling his role as the chief guest at the dome placement ceremony of Chashma-4 in January 2014, he said "Witnessing the progress of our nuclear energy program over the years fills me with immense pride and optimism for our nation's future." The minister said nuclear energy played a vital role in Pakistan's energy mix, offering a clean, reliable, and affordable solution to the country's energy challenges.

Syria eyes 'strategic' ties with Ukraine

DAMASCUS: Syria hopes for "strategic partnerships" with Ukraine, its new foreign minister told his Ukrainian counterpart on Monday, as Kyiv moves to build ties with the new Islamist rulers in Damascus amid waning Russian influence. Russia was a staunch ally of ousted President Bashar Assad and has given him political asylum. Moscow has said it is in contact with the new administration in Damascus, including over the fate of Russian military facilities in Syria. "There will be strategic partnerships between us and Ukraine on the po-

litical, economic and social levels, and scientific partnerships," Syria's newly appointed foreign minister, Asaad Hassan Al-Shibani, told Ukraine's Andrii Sybiha. "Certainly the Syrian people and the Ukrainian people have the same experience and the same suffering that we endured over 14 years," he added, apparently drawing a parallel between Syria's brutal 2011-24 civil war and Russia's seizure of Ukrainian territory culminating in its full-scale 2022 invasion. Sybiha, who also met Syria's new de facto ruler Ahmed Al-Sharaa in Damascus on Monday, said Ukraine would send

more food aid shipments to Syria after the expected arrival of 20 shipments of flour on Tuesday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced last Friday the dispatch of Ukraine's first batch of food aid to Syria comprising 500 metric tons of wheat flour as part of Kyiv's humanitarian "Grain from Ukraine" initiative in cooperation with the United Nations World Food Programme. Ukraine, a global producer and exporter of grain and oilseeds, traditionally exports wheat and corn to countries in the Middle East, but not to Syria, which in the Assad era imported food from Russia. Russian

wheat supplies to Syria have been suspended because of uncertainty about the new government in Damascus and payment delays, Russian and Syrian sources told Reuters in early December. Russia had supplied wheat to Syria using complex financial and logistical arrangements to circumvent Western sanctions imposed on both Moscow and Damascus. The ousting of Assad by Al-Sharaa's Islamist group, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, has thrown the future of Russia's military bases in Syria — the Hmeimim air base in Latakia and the Tartous naval facility — into question.—APP

Efforts afoot to strengthen economy: Qaisar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaisar Ahmad Sheikh on Monday said the government was taking all possible measures to strengthen the national economy and address the public issues. Talking to media in Chiniot, the minister emphasized that increasing the per capita growth rate was essential to bring tangible improvements to the lives of citizens. He highlighted the critical role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in economic development by providing financial and technical support to these businesses would reduce poverty and create employment opportunities, thereby improving the standard of living for the people. He underscored the need to expand the tax net, noting that approximately 5.6 million people currently pay taxes, while millions more could be brought into the tax system. Qaisar Ahmad Sheikh said the government was implementing effective measures to simplify and streamline the tax system and eliminate tax evasion to boost national revenue and provide resources for developmental projects. Commenting on the behavior of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the minister remarked that the party's contradictory actions—running a campaign against the establishment on social media while simultaneously calling for negotiations—reflect a lack of seriousness.—APP

IESCO, CDA chiefs discuss steps to prevent electricity theft

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) met with the Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, at the CDA Headquarters on Monday. Chairman CDA welcomed the CEO of IESCO and his team. During the meeting, both sides agreed to enhance mutual cooperation and improve coordination between the two institutions. During the meeting, matters related to electricity theft, illegal connections, and the measures to prevent electricity theft were also deliberated. Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa highlighted the need for effective coordination to address electricity theft and ensure its prevention. During the meeting, it was decided to form a joint committee to resolve mutual issues between the two organizations. Chairman CDA stated that the committee would work on addressing challenges such as overbilling, payment of dues, and other related matters. He emphasized the importance of resolving the dues between CDA and IESCO in a phased manner. Chairman CDA further suggested collaborating with IESCO to develop a comprehensive strategy for regulating new electricity connections in Zone 3 and unauthorized and illegal housing societies. He stressed that no new connections should be issued without CDA's approval and called for strict legal action against illegal electricity connections. Additionally, discussions were held regarding land allocation for the installation of a 220 kV grid station in Islamabad. Chairman CDA directed IESCO to ensure the immediate provision of electricity in Sector C-14 in alignment with ongoing development works in the area.—DNA

Turkiye's \$14b plan to boost uplift in Kurdish southeast

SANLIURFA: Turkiye announced on Sunday a \$14 billion regional development plan that aims to reduce the economic gap between its mainly Kurdish southeast region and the rest of the country. The announcement comes amid increased hopes for an end to a decades-long insurgency waged by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, in southeast Turkiye as well as the advent of a new leadership in neighboring Syria with cordial ties to Ankara. The eastern and southeastern provinces of Turkiye have long lagged behind other regions of the country in most economic indicators including the GDP per capita, partly as a result of the insurgency. Turkish Industry Minister Fatih Kacir told reporters in the southeastern city of Sanliurfa that the government would spend a total 496.2 billion lira (\$14.15 billion) on 198 projects across the region in the period to 2028.—APP

S Korea inspects B737-800 fleet after worst plane crash

"I had a son on board that plane," said an elderly man waiting in the airport lounge, who asked not to be named, saying that his son's body had not yet been identified

MUAN (South Korea): South Korea ordered Monday a "comprehensive inspection" of all Boeing 737-800 aircraft operated by the country's carriers, after a Jeju Air plane crash-landed and burst into flames, killing 179 people on board. Air safety officials and staff from the beleaguered aircraft maker Boeing were arriving to join investigators probing the worst air disaster on South Korean soil, which officials initially blamed on a collision with birds. The Boeing 737-800 was carrying 181 people from Thailand to South Korea when it made a mayday call and belly-landing before crashing into a barrier and bursting into flames. Everyone on board Jeju Air Flight 2216 was killed, save two flight attendants pulled from the wreckage. South Korea began seven days of mourning, with flags flying at half-mast and the acting president flying to the crash site in southwestern Muan for a memorial. Acting President Choi Sang-mok, who has only been in office since Friday, said the government was making "every effort" to identify victims and support bereaved families. Choi, an unelected bureaucrat who became acting president after his two predecessors were impeached, said a "thorough investigation into the cause of the accident" would be conducted. He also said South Korea would conduct "an urgent safety inspection of the overall aircraft operation system" to prevent future aviation disasters. South Korea has a solid air safety record and both black boxes from Flight 2216 — the flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder — have been found. Officials have so far identified 146 victims using DNA analysis or fingerprint collection, said Joo. Victims' families camped out at the airport overnight in special tents set up in the airport lounge after a long, painful day waiting for news of their loved ones. "I had a son on board that plane," said an elderly man waiting in the airport lounge, who asked not to be named, saying that his son's body had not yet been identified.—APP

In Gaza's crowded tent camps, women wrestle with a life stripped of privacy

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza City: For Gaza's women, the hardships of life in the territory's sprawling tent camps are compounded by the daily humiliation of never having privacy. Women struggle to dress modestly while crowded into tents with extended family members, including men, and with strangers only steps away in neighboring tents. Access to menstrual products is limited, so they cut up sheets or old clothes to use as pads. Makeshift toilets usually consist of only a hole in the sand surrounded by sheets dangling from a line, and these must be shared with dozens of other people. Alaa Hamami has dealt with the modesty issue by constantly wearing her prayer shawl, a black cloth that covers her head and upper body. "Our whole lives have become prayer clothes, even to the market we wear it," said the

young mother of three. "Dignity is gone." Normally, she would wear the shawl only when performing her daily Muslim prayers. But with so many men around, she keeps it on all the time, even when sleeping — just in case an Israeli strike hits nearby in the night and she has to flee quickly, she said. Women wait to receive donated food at a distribution center for displaced Palestinians in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, on Dec. 17, 2024. (AP) Israel's 14-month-old campaign in Gaza has driven more than 90 percent of its 2.3 million Palestinians from their homes. Hundreds of thousands of them are now living in squalid camps of tents packed close together over large areas. Sewage runs into the streets, and food and water are hard to obtain. Winter is setting in. Families often wear the same clothes for weeks because they left cloth-

ing and many other belongings behind as they fled. Everyone in the camps searches daily for food, clean water and firewood. Women feel constantly exposed. Gaza has always been a conservative society. Most women wear the hijab, or head scarf, in the presence of men who are not immediate family. Matters of women's health — pregnancy, menstruation and contraception — tend not to be discussed publicly. "Before we had a roof. Here it does not exist," said Hamami, whose prayer shawl is torn and smudged with ash from cooking fires. "Here our entire lives have become exposed to the public. There is no privacy for women." Even simple needs are hard to meet. Wafaa Nasrallah, a displaced mother of two, says life in the camps makes even the simplest needs difficult, like getting period pads, which she can-

not afford. She tried using pieces of cloth and even diapers, which have also increased in price. For a bathroom, she has a hole in the ground, surrounded by blankets propped up by sticks. Wafaa Nasrallah shows her sanitary pads at her tent in a camp for displaced Palestinians in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, Saturday Dec. 28, 2024. (AP) The UN says more than 690,000 women and girls in Gaza require menstrual hygiene products, as well as clean water and toilets. Aid workers have been unable to meet demand, with supplies piling up at crossings from Israel. Stocks of hygiene kits have run out, and prices are exorbitant. Many women have to choose between buying pads and buying food and water. Doaa Hellis, a mother of three living in a camp, said she has torn up her old clothes to use for menstrual

pads. "Wherever we find fabric, we tear it up and use it." A pack of pads costs 45 shekels (\$12), "and there is not even five shekels in the whole tent," she said. Anera, a rights group active in Gaza, says some women use birth control pills to halt their periods. Others have experienced disruptions in their cycles because of the stress and trauma of repeated displacement. The terrible conditions pose real risks to women's health, said Amal Seyam, the director of the Women's Affairs Center in Gaza, which provides supplies for women and surveys them about their experiences. She said some women have not changed clothes for 40 days. That and improvised cloth pads "will certainly create" skin diseases, diseases related to reproductive health and psychological conditions, she said.—Agencies

31 Kurdish, Turkish-backed fighters killed in Syria

BEIRUT: A Syria war monitor said 31 combatants had been killed since Sunday in ongoing battles between Turkiye-backed groups and Kurdish-led forces. Swathes of northern Syria are controlled by a Kurdish-led administration whose de facto army, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), spearheaded the fight that helped defeat the Daesh group in the country in 2019 with US backing. Turkiye accuses the main component of the SDF, the People's Protection Units (YPG), of being affiliated with the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which both Washington and Ankara consider a terrorist group. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that seven pro-Turkish fighters were killed in clashes Monday in the northeastern Manbij region, in Aleppo province. SDF fighters had infiltrated the city of the same name after it was retaken by Ankara-backed groups earlier this month, the monitor said. Six other pro-Turkish fighters and three members of the SDF were killed the day before in the same part of Aleppo province, it said. The SDF said Monday that it had carried out attacks elsewhere in the province that destroyed "two radars, a jamming system and a tank of the Turkish occupation" near a strategic bridge over the Euphrates. According to the Observatory, 13 members of the pro-Turkiye factions and two members of the SDF "were killed as a result of flaring battles" near the bridge and the Tishreen Dam. The Britain-based Observatory said clashes in the area had been going on for around three weeks "as both sides seek to advance."—APP

Carter 'saved countless lives': WHO chief

GENEVA: Former US president Jimmy Carter, who died on Sunday aged 100, "saved countless lives" through his work to eliminate diseases, the head of the World Health Organization said. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was deeply saddened to hear of Carter's passing, calling him a "true leader who inspired so many." "His unwavering commitment to people's wellbeing in the United States and around the world will be remembered forever," Tedros said on X. "His work through the Carter Center has saved countless lives and helped bring many neglected tropical diseases close to elimination. "President Carter's leadership was instrumental in facilitating peace negotiations in the Middle East decades ago, and is a reminder of what our world needs the most today. "Dear President Carter, you will be greatly missed. Rest in peace." The Carter Center works to fight six preventable diseases — Guinea worm, river blindness, trachoma, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis, plus malaria in Haiti and the Dominican Republic — through health education and simple, low-cost prevention and treatment methods.

Belgium becomes first EU country to ban disposable e-cigarettes

BRUSSELS: Wildly popular with young people for their dizzying array of flavours, including apple, watermelon and cola, the time is up for disposable e-cigarettes in Belgium — the first EU country to ban them. From January 1, it will be forbidden to sell single-use vapes in Belgium, a bid to protect young people's health as part of a national anti-tobacco plan. The European Union aims to achieve a tobacco-free generation by 2040, reducing the 27-country bloc's smoking population from around 25 per cent now to less than five per cent of the total. Some EU countries plan to bring that deadline forward. Vapes are often promoted as less harmful than smoking traditional tobacco products.—Agencies

Briefs

Two road accidents leave 18 dead

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: At least 18 people were killed and 37 sustained injuries in two separate traffic accidents on Monday, including a bus overturning incident near Punjab's Fateh Jang and a collision between a wedding van and trawler in Sindh's NaushahroFeroze. 11 people, including six women and five men, were killed after a bus met an accident and overturned on the M-14 Motorway near Fateh Jang. Rescue officials told the media that the number of those wounded in the accident stands at 22, adding that the victims hailed from Bahawalpur, Vehari, Sharapur and Islamabad, added the rescue officials. Furthermore, rescue officials said that six people, including three women, have been shifted to Benazir Bhutto Hospital, whereas one injured has been transferred to Islamabad and District Headquarter Hospital, each. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the Motorway Police said that the bus, travelling from Bahawalpur to Islamabad, met a deadly accident due to the driver's negligence. Motorway Police Inspector General Riffat Mukhtar has ordered an immediate investigation into the bus accident.

Syrian FM receives invitation to visit KSA

DUBAI: Foreign Minister of the transitional government in Syria, Asaad Hassan Al-Shibani, said on X on Monday that he had accepted an invitation from his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan to visit the Kingdom, in what would be his first foreign trip since the ouster of former president Bashar Assad on Dec. 8. "We look forward to building strategic relations with Saudi Arabia in all fields," read a statement posted on the Syrian Arab News Agency's X account. Al-Shibani has expressed optimism about the future of Syrian-Saudi relations, and has emphasized the importance of building strategic ties in all fields, SANA reported. He added, "I am honored to represent my country and look forward to this opportunity to enhance cooperation and dialogue." It follows comments made by Syria's new leader, Ahmed Al-Sharaa, who said Saudi Arabia had a major role to play in his country's future during an interview with Al Arabiya, which aired on Sunday. "Saudi Arabia has a major role in Syria's future, and I take pride in everything it has done for us," he said, adding that he spent his early childhood in Riyadh and hoped to visit the city again. Al-Sharaa also praised recent Saudi statements as "very positive" and commended Riyadh's efforts towards stabilizing Syria. - Agencies

Pakistani pilot among two die in UAE

DUBAI: At least two people including a Pakistani pilot died after a small plane crashed off the coast of United Arab Emirates' (UAE) Ras Al Khaimah city. The incident took place on December 26 which was confirmed by the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) on Sunday, stating that investigations are underway to determine the cause. The pilot, identified as FrianzaParveen, was a 26-year-old Pakistani who died in the crash while her companion identified as a 26-year-old Indian doctor Sulaymaan Al Majid. The diplomatic officials said that the body of the pilot will be repatriated to Pakistan today. The private tourism aviation club plane was used for tourism purposes and crashed in the sea. Sulaymaan's father told Khaleej Times that the crash occurred shortly after takeoff at 2pm near the Cove Rotana Hotel, close to the beach. He had hired the aircraft for sightseeing and his family were at the club to watch the experience. - Agencies

Pak hails Ankara Declaration between Ethiopia and Somalia

During the meeting, Ambassador Dr. Jemal praised the crucial role played by the Republic of Türkiye in mediating the dialogue between the two sisterly countries for resolving their differences which would further integrate the region



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Monday lauded the Ankara Declaration which would resolve the differences between the Federal Democratic Republic of

Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Federal Republic of Somalia. The Ankara Declaration came under discussion during a meeting between H.E. Dr. JemalBeker, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the FDR Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Turkmenistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, and

H.E. Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary (Africa) for the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. During the meeting, Ambassador Dr. Jemal praised the crucial role played by the Republic of Türkiye in mediating the dialogue between the two sisterly

countries for resolving their differences which would further integrate the region and ensure regional peace, prosperity and development. He said the Ankara Declaration is a manifestation of the comprehensive foreign policy reforms undertaken by the Government of Ethiopia, which gives top priority and focus to its neighboring countries to integrate the region by ensuring lasting peace and sustainable development. The Ambassador said the declaration is based on a win-win scenario and aimed at accomplishing peace and stability in the region, and providing Ethiopia an access to sea as enshrined in the international laws. The FDR Ethiopia has rendered numerous sacrifices for global peace by consistently participating in the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in the region and beyond, the Ambassador remarked. On the other hand, Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan commended the Ankara Declaration as a crucial initiative for the regional peace, stability and development. The dialogue is only solution for all the problems, he said while acknowledging the pivotal role played by the FDR Ethiopia in regional peace and stability. During the meeting, both sides also reviewed the full spectrum of the relations between the FDR Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and also discussed future initiatives for further strengthening their bilateral ties including the Single Country Exhibition scheduled for May, 2025 in Addis Ababa.

Pakistani pilot among two die in UAE

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FIA DG summons 31 FIA officers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) DG on Monday ordered all 31 FIA officers and personnel allegedly linked to the Greece boat sinking to appear before him in person for questioning. The DG said he would himself hold an inquiry into the incident and order action against them, if found guilty. "Those who will not appear will face action," he warned. The FIA has banished 18 of its officials and personnel, who were allegedly linked to the Greece boat tragedy, from Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sialkot districts as a first step in the departmental action against these individuals. Those whose transfers were notified on Monday were a sub-inspector, three assistant sub-inspectors, 11 head constables and three constables. The FIA's Gujranwala Zone had also registered cases against two of its personnel who were deputed at immigration counter at Sialkot airport. Also on Monday, SHC accepted the petition filed by the FIA officials nominated in the Greece boat tragedy case, for the immediate hearing of their plea against action against them.

128 children dead in Parachinar due to lack of resources: Turi

The attack triggered the worst clashes in the district, which resulted in the killing of scores of people from both sides

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Former federal minister Sajid Hussain Turi on Sunday said that at least 128 children had died in Parachinar since the conflict started almost three months ago due to the lack of resources. Kurram has remained cut off from the rest of the country due to violent tribal clashes that began there in November, claiming more than 100 lives. All roads in Kurram, including the Parachinar-Peshawar highway, have remained closed to traffic since Nov 21 after a vehicular convoy was attacked in the Bagan area, in which at least 50 people were killed. However, in a statement posted on X on December 27, the federal government announced that one tonne of medication was transported to Parachinar by helicopter despite the blockade. "The sick brothers and sisters were transported to Islamabad in the same helicopters in which medicines were deliv-

ered by NDMA," the statement read. The attack triggered the worst clashes in the district, which resulted in the killing of scores of people from both sides. The conflict escalated when two people were killed and later decapitated after being waylaid on their way towards Parachinar in the Bagan area of Kurram. A grand jirga convened in Kohat late on Saturday night, including local officials, former lawmakers and tribal elders, held multiple sessions but deferred the agreement. A protest has been ongoing in the area for the past 10 days. While speaking to a private news channel yesterday, the former minister said that the number of children who have died at the district headquarters hospital (DHQ) in Kurram since the conflict began has reached 37. "If you accumulate figures from all the hospitals in the surrounding areas, this figure goes up to 128 [children], who died over the last 85 days," Turi said. According to a list issued by a local civil society a total of 128 children had passed away due to a lack of medicines in the area in the past.

Israel intensifies attacks in North Gaza, kills 27 across Strip

Gaza's health ministry said that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks climbed to 45,541 martyrs

NEWS DESK

GAZA: In the midst of catastrophic humanitarian suffering for more than two million Palestinians - half of them children, the Israeli occupation army continued, for the 451st consecutive day, to pound and target different areas and massacre more civilians in the Gaza Strip, especially in the northern areas. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said on Monday that the Israeli occupation army carried out attacks on several homes, civilian targets and shelter centers in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. Israeli attacks have

killed 27 Palestinians and wounded 149 in the latest 24-hour reporting period, Gaza's Health Ministry says. The Israeli army's large-scale genocidal campaign in northern Gaza, especially in Jabalia and Beit Lahia, has entered day 87, where its forces continue to intensively bomb homes and shelters and attack civilians while imposing a tight siege on the entire area. Deliberate Israeli attacks on ambulance and civil defense workers already deprived northern Gaza of any rescue services. Local sources said that a young citizen was martyred in an Israeli attack in Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza. Another citizen was killed when an Israeli drone opened fire at him in the east of Rafah, south of Gaza. More casualties were reported in other areas of Gaza following Israeli aerial, artillery and shooting attacks last night and today. In a related context, the health ministry in Gaza said on Monday that the Israeli army committed three massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, and killed and injured at least 176 civilians, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads. Meanwhile, Israeli forces kidnapped four patients out of 10 as they were transported by the World Health Organization from the Indonesian Hospital to the Al-Shifa Hospital. One of the detained patients was reportedly in critical condition. Meanwhile, The health ministry in Gaza said on Monday that the Israeli army committed three massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, and killed and injured at least 176 civilians, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads.

NPC, PFUJ to be catalyst for promoting Pak, Türkiye ties

"NPC, PFUJ, Turkish embassy decide to organize trade, tourism conference"

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Irfan Neziroglu on Monday said that Pakistan Union of Journalist and National Press Club Islamabad can be Catalyst for promoting Pakistan and Türkiye bilateral economic, diplomatic and cultural ties in future. Pakistan and Turkish economic cooperation is needed for hours and National press Club Islamabad can play a pivotal role in this sector and other activities including international trade conferences from the platform of the National Press Club to be held in near future. He expressed these views during a meeting with a representative delegation of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), National Press Club Islamabad and Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ) at the Turkish here. The delegation comprised included President , PFUJ Muhammad Afzal Butt, President National Press Club Azhar-Jatoi, Secretary National Press Club, Nayyar Ali, Secretary Finance NPC, WaqarAbbasi, President RIUJ, Tariq Ali Virk, Finance Secretary Nadeem Chaudhry and Joint Secretary Gulzar Khan were present. Ambassador of Türkiye said that the brotherly relations between Pakistan and Turkey have historical significance and bilateral ties are rooted in long history. The envoy said the relations established after the independence of Pakistan but during the eras of Late Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Ex. President

of Pakistan General Zia-ul-Haq has become stronger and deeper in later decades. The Turkish envoy said the proportion of young people in the population of Turkey and Pakistan makes them common and this potential to impact on the future economic strength of both sides. "We are working to strengthen bilateral cooperation, bilateral trade and tourism and enhance the connectivity between both sides of the young population to exploit the bilateral potential." He said people-to-people connectivity between both sides are stronger and "We have good ties with every school of thought and institution in Pakistan. The Turkish Ambassador in a meeting with the media leaders delegation said that the Turkish Embassy Islamabad is in constant contact with the institutions of inter-institutional cooperation. Chamber of Commerce and trade and Higher Education of Pakistan. The envoy said that the trade volume between Pakistan and Türkiye is not according to its true potential and there is a dire need for increased bilateral trade. He appreciated the offer of PFUJ and National Press Club to organize conferences on trade and tourism between the two countries along with other stakeholders and said that "We wish to meet people of every school of thought in Pakistan and work for their welfare. The Türkiye Ambassador said that the Türkiye International Cooperation organization TEKA is playing its due role in this regard. He also expressed his keen interest in the tourism and hospitality sector in Pakistan. The Turkish ambassador also showed his interest in the activities organized for children and families at the National Press Club in the Ramadan Festival. He also assured the delegation of playing its due role in other matters including the Journalist exchange program between Türkiye and Pakistan.

Siddiqui hails govt-PTI talks as crucial for stability

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PML-N's parliamentary leader in the Senate and a key member of the government's negotiating team Senator Irfan Siddiqui Monday hailed the ongoing talks between the PTI and the government, emphasizing their importance in achieving political stability and addressing Pakistan's economic challenges. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, he expressed optimism about the negotiations, stating that they are entering the talks with an open mind and heart, setting aside past grievances. He said that the talks between the government and PTI are being held in a cordial atmosphere, with both sides expressing willingness to engage in serious discussions. PTI has agreed to present its "Charter of Demands" in the next round of negotiations, scheduled for January 2, he added. Responding to a query about the demands from the government, Senator Siddiqui has shed light on the government's stance in the ongoing talks with PTI, emphasizing that they have not presented a formal charter of demands. Instead, they are focusing on key discussion points that can foster constructive dialogue, he said, adding that these points include revisiting the Charter of Economy and Democracy, which were previously agreed upon between PPP's Benazir Bhutto and PML-N's Mian Nawaz Sharif. Additionally, the government is keen to discuss a Code of Conduct aimed at addressing terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and promoting political stability nationwide, he mentioned. By exploring these critical areas, both parties can work towards finding common ground and advancing the country's interests, he added.

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