



Islamabad POST

Friday, December 20, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

President Zardari for greater parliamentary coop with Saudi Arabia

Detailed News On Page-08

Zelensky urges strong EU-US unity

Detailed News On Page-08



Nunez helps Liverpool into Carabao semis

Detailed News On Page-06



Calls for investing in youth

Pakistan seeks world response to 'echoes' of innocent Gazans

Investing in youth will help robust economies to face global challenges, says premier

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has underscored the importance of investing in youth and supporting the small and medium-sized enterprises, saying that it is imperative for socio-economic growth of the country. Addressing the D-8 Summit in Cairo on Thursday, the premier said youth as well as the SMEs were major drivers of economic development of any society, emphasising that investing in youth will help build inclusive and robust economies to face the global challenges of today and tomorrow. He said for Pakistan, investing in youth, and supporting SMEs, was crucial for the country's socio-economic development, and progress. "With over 60% of our population under the age of 30, we possess, fountain of potential, for innovation and growth." The prime minister highlighted that unlocking this potential required provision of the right skills, opportunities and financial resources. Similarly, he said through the flagship Youth Programme,

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PM meets Turkish, Iranian Presidents

While talking with Erdogan the two leaders reaffirmed their unwavering support for the Palestinian people

DNA

CAIRO: Prime Minister Mohammad Shehbaz Sharif held a bilateral meeting with the Turkish President H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of 11th D-8 Summit in Cairo. The Prime Minister underscored that the historic, fraternal and multi-dimensional relations between Pakistan and Turkiye are without parallel and have withstood the test of time. He noted with deep appreciation tremendous strides made by Turkiye under President Erdogan's leadership. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that the two countries should increase economic cooperation in new ar-

reas for foreign investment and joint ventures, particularly in IT, agriculture and green technology. Earlier, Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a bilateral meeting with the Iranian President H.E. Masoud Pezeshkian. Both leaders hoped that the decisions taken at the D-8 Summit will pave the way for enhanced cooperation among D-8 member states in mutually beneficial areas. Both leaders expressed resolve to further strengthen Pak-Iran fraternal ties in all areas of mutual interest, particularly trade and economy, energy, security and regional connectivity. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

Continued on Page 06

Govt ally PPP walks out from NA over continued absence of ministers

A similar scenario had unfolded in the Senate

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers in both houses of parliament had expressed outrage last week over the continued absence of the ministers as Deputy Speaker Ghulam Mustafa Shah termed it a "disgrace" to the parliament and declared that they would not hold NA proceedings if the ministers would not be present in the house. Shah had also announced that they would write a letter to the prime minister to apprise him about the situation. A similar scenario had unfolded in the Senate where Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani had to defer several agenda

Continued on Page 06

Rangers personnel dies following injuries

Muhammad Tanveer sustained serious wounds in the protests by the PTI

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

RAWALPINDI: Another Punjab Rangers official, who was injured during the November 26 riots, lost the battle for life. Thirty-seven-year-old Lance Naik Muhammad Tanveer from Narowal district sustained serious wounds in the violent protests by the PTI last month. The number of Rangers martyred in the attacks by PTI miscreants has reached four. Lance Naik Muhammad Tanveer Shaheed performed the sacred duty of defending the homeland for 17 years. He is survived by a wife,

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PTI leaders skip meeting with Imran

Imran Khan had called negotiations team for a meeting inside Adiala Jail on Thursday

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Members of the negotiations team of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) did not reach Adiala Jail on Thursday despite instructions of the jailed former prime minister Imran Khan. According to reports, Imran Khan had called negotiations team leader Omar Ayub Khan, former National Assembly Asad Qaisar, Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza,

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CAIRO: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif shaking hands with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during their meeting. - DNA

'Endanger regional peace'

Pakistan lashes out at 'biased' US sanctions

Islamabad says Pakistan's strategic capabilities are meant to defend its sovereignty and preserve peace

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Hours after the United States announced to impose the additional sanctions related to Pakistan's ballistic missile programme, Islamabad termed the decision as "biased" stressing that the step from the US has "dangerous implications for strategic stability of our region and beyond". Pakistan's forceful response comes after the US said in a statement, issued on the State Department's website, that the decision was taken "in light of the continuing proliferation threat of Pakistan's long-range missile development". Hours later, Pakistan reacted to the US announcement regarding the implementation of sanctions on National Development Complex and three commercial entities.

Continued on Page 06

Zulfi describes US sections as double standards' Says, we strongly oppose the US sanctions

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Zulfi Bukhari has opposed the US sections on Pakistan's ballistic missile programme. Taking to X, he said: "We strongly oppose the US sanctions on National Development Complex and three commercial entities."

Continued on Page 06

Over 17,700 seminars registered across Pakistan

Meanwhile, a copy of "The Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024" was laid before the House

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate was informed today that a total of 17,738 Madaris are registered with the Directorate General Religious Education. Responding to a question during Question Hour in the House this evening, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar informed that out of these Madaris, 10012 are registered in Punjab, 2416 in Sindh, 575 in Balochistan, 4005 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 445 in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 199 in Islamabad Capital Territory and 86 in Gilgit Baltistan. He said 2,249,520. students are studying in these Madaris. Meanwhile, a copy of

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Briefs

Tarar says no NRO for Imran

Tarar accused Imran of pursuing a strategy that aims to harm country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has responded to Imran Khan's call for a civil disobedience movement, saying the former prime minister's "childish and hostile" demands will not lead to any concession, including the much-debated National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO). In a post on social media platform "X," Tarar accused Imran Khan of stubbornly pursuing a strategy that aims to harm both the country and its people, following the failure of his violent actions in the past. Tarar said that Khan's latest move is another attempt to destabilise the nation.

Democracy vital for development

Highlights that Pakistan's economic growth has historically occurred during democratic era

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, head of the Awam Pakistan Party, stressed that democracy is essential for the nation's stability and urged the need for systematic reforms. Speaking to the media in Lahore, Abbasi criticised the current governance structure, stating that provinces operate based on directives from the chief minister, often bypassing broader consultation. He emphasised that Pakistan's economic growth has traditionally thrived during democratic eras. While citing Ayub Khan's tenure as a period of growth, he argued that the results could have been even better under a democratic system.

Imran Khan warns Civil disobedience to begin if demands unmet by Sunday

He alleged that peaceful protesters were fired upon by snipers, resulting in deaths, injuries, and disappearances. He held the govt accountable for finding and releasing missing persons

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Former Prime Minister and Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan, issued a strong message regarding a potential civil disobedience movement via a post on X (formerly Twitter). Imran Khan stated that he has made two key demands to the government. Release of under-trial political prisoners and Formation of a judicial commission for a transparent investigation into the events of May 9 and November 26. Declaring these demands as "legitimate," he warned that failure to implement them by Sunday (November 22) would lead to the launch of the first phase of a civil disobedience movement, termed the "Remittance Boycott." Khan called on

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Qureshi, Gandapur among 14 indicted in GHQ attack case

ATC also indicts other PTI leaders including Kanwal Shauzab and Shibli Faraz

COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: An anti-terrorism court indicted on Thursday 14 more accused including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Kyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Putin says he's 'ready' for potential talks with Trump

President Vladimir Putin says Russia has not been defeated in Syria after rebel groups ousted his ally and longtime leader, Bashar al-Assad, earlier this month

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that he is ready for a conversation with US President-elect Donald Trump at any time and agrees to meet with him. "I am ready for this [conversation], of course, at any time. And I will also be ready for a meeting, if he wants it," Putin said at the combined Direct Line Q&A and year-end press conference, when asked by an American journalist about a possible meeting with Trump. Putin noted that he did not know when he would meet with Trump. "First of all, I don't know when we will meet with him. Because he doesn't say anything about it. I haven't talked to him at all for more than four years," he pointed out. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that he is ready for a conversation with US President-elect Donald Trump at any time and agrees to meet with him. "I am ready for

Continued on Page 06

Syria not a threat to world, says Jolani

FOREIGN DESK

DAMASCUS: The de facto leader of Syria, Ahmed al-Sharaa, has said the country is exhausted by war and is not a threat to its neighbours or to the West. In an interview with the British media in Damascus, he called for sanctions on Syria to be lifted. "Now, after all that has happened, sanctions must be lifted because they were targeted at the old regime. The victim and the oppressor should not be treated in the same way," he said. Sharaa led the lightning offensive that toppled Bashar al-Assad's regime less than two weeks ago. He is the leader of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the dominant group in

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Pakistan, Belarus pledge to solidify relations in all fields

Punjab to send medicines, other goods to Parachinar

The Punjab CM said, "Cancer tumors can be eliminated with liquid nitrogen in a machine as big as an ultrasound while China's latest technique for cancer treatment eliminates the need for chemotherapy"

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired the 21st meeting of the provincial cabinet to discuss and decide on important agenda items. The cabinet approved sending medicines and other goods on the request of people of Parachinar. The chief minister said, "A mobile healthcare unit will also be sent as per needs of the people of Parachinar." She directed the authorities concerned to send relief goods to the people of Parachinar as soon as possible. She added, "The people of Parachinar are our own people; we cannot leave them alone in trouble and difficulty." The provincial cabinet congratulated the chief minister on her successful visit to China. She said that the extraordinary reception received by the delegation in China was a source of pride for the people of Punjab. She added that China developed by making 1.6 billion people its strength. She highlighted, "China's development is an example to be emulated, we too can achieve all that by working hard." Maryam Nawaz said "not even a single piece of paper is seen lying in schools, hospitals and on roads of China." "The attitude of the Chinese people to recognise authority is worthy of imitation and there was an indescribable degree of harmony in the thoughts of Chinese people," she observed. Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that she wish Punjab to develop like China every day. She added that Chinese investors were eager to invest in Punjab and despite holiday, the participation of representatives of large business organizations in the Punjab round table conference on Saturday was commendable. The Chief Minister said that representatives of 60 prominent and large Chinese companies expressed their willingness to invest in Punjab while China-Punjab Desk

has been approved. "Cancer tumors can be eliminated with liquid nitrogen in a machine as big as an ultrasound while China's latest technique for cancer treatment eliminates the need for chemotherapy, she asserted. Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that soon in a hospital in Punjab, a pilot project of Chinese cancer treatment technique will be started. She highlighted that PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif also appreciated the successful visit to China and said that he had not seen such a reception in 40 years. The Chief Minister said that she thoroughly observed agriculture, IT, environment, education, health and other sectors during visit to China and will try to bring those to Punjab as well. "The Punjab delegation was given an unbelievable reception in China, our expertise and keen interest in various issues surprised the Chinese Ministers", she stated. The CM underscored that under Punjab Clean Air Program approved with the support of World Bank, multi-sectoral measures including e-bus, charging station and super seeder will be introduced in the province. The provincial cabinet gave approval of the completion of Pakistan's first green building project. Madam Chief Minister directed the authorities concerned to introduce a farmer-friendly Wheat release policy for the year. The Cabinet approved 2024-25. Sugarcane (Development) cess rates maintained in crushing season 2024-25. It was briefed that agricultural inputs worth Rs 30 billion have been purchased using Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's Kisan Card. It was also apprised that 100% wheat cultivation target in Punjab has been achieved. The Cabinet was further briefed, "4500 tractors have arrived under the Green Tractor Scheme, 1000 of which have been delivered." The Cabinet was also updated, "For the first time, DAP fertilizer rates have neither

increased nor decreased in Punjab. The Chief Minister approved funds for free medicines in hospitals. The Cabinet approved the promotion of shrimp farming and aquaculture in Punjab, besides the approval of terms and conditions for leasing the government land. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the relevant authorities to take vigorous steps for the promotion and export of shrimp farming across Punjab. The Cabinet approved amendment in Punjab Vagrancy Ordinance 1958, under which punishment for begging children has been increased from 01 to 10 years. It also approved funds for Phase-III of 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar program.' Madam Chief Minister directed not to stop funds for the program, and gave approval of the scheme to install latest automatic umbrellas in the courtyard of Data Darbar. The Cabinet approved the recruitment of Special Monitoring Unit of I&C on vacant posts, and approved relaxation of restriction for recruitment again posts of Directorate of Monitoring of Home Department. It also gave approval of relaxation in recruitment rules of Rescue 1122 emergency staff. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed to further expand the scope of rescue emergency services. The provincial cabinet gave approval of Punjab Education Curriculum Training and Assessment Authority, besides the approval to develop Qila Kahna Qasim Bagh Multan for the promotion of tourism and protection of cultural heritage. It also approved amendments in Punjab Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1965 for effective implementation of Axle Load Management Regime in Punjab. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the relevant authorities to take steps to provide furniture in government schools, besides approving the School Management Council Policy 2024.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Mr Ahmad Jawad A Rabei, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

Kashmiris facing worst HRs abuses in IIOJK: Daniyal

ISLAMABAD: Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry on Thursday emphasised Pakistan's steadfast solidarity with the people of Kashmir and reaffirmed the nation's commitment to a just and lasting solution. He was addressing a seminar titled 'Kashmir Conflict: Human Rights Challenges' as a Chief Guest, organized by Directorate of External Linkages & All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad under the chairmanship of Convener Ghulam Mohammad Safi. Barrister Daniyal said, "We stand by our Kashmiri brethren," adding no effort will be spared to expose the atrocities of Indian forces against the Kashmiri people. Parliamentary Secretary said that displacement of Kashmiri population from Kashmir was a major issue, and highlighted that more than 50,000 Kashmiris had been displaced, citing a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Kashmiris facing worst human rights abuses in IIOJK: Barrister Daniyal. He criticized the Modified fascist Indian government for abrogating Articles 370 and 35A and said it was a move to alter the region's demography by settling non-Kashmiris in the territory. After this move, the Government of India began to erode the Muslim identity of the state by illegally and unconstitutionally granting domicile of Kashmiri to non-state residents. "Over 25,000 domiciles have been issued to non-Kashmiris, violating Article 49 of the Geneva Convention," Barrister Daniyal added—APP

Pakistan steps to speed up justice

Supreme Court Justice Mansoor Ali Shah emphasized the importance of alternative dispute resolution, stating that mediation is "the future of Pakistan" and could significantly reduce case pendency

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD :Pakistan is moving forward with efforts to improve its justice system by promoting mediation as an alternative to lengthy court procedures with a 20 million grant from the European Union. Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has teamed up with the Federal Judicial Academy (FJA) to train judges in mediation, aiming to reduce the country's massive case backlog and make justice more accessible. The initiative, supported by the European Union (EU) through the 20 million 'Deliver Justice Programme,' involves a week-long training workshop for 24 judges from high courts and district courts across the country, eight of whom are women. This workshop, led by experts from the Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC), aims to equip judges with the skills needed to promote mediation

in civil and commercial cases. Mediation, a process where an impartial third party helps resolve disputes without going to court, is seen as a key strategy to reduce the backlog of cases in Pakistan's judicial system. According to a 2022 report, there are over 2.1 million cases waiting to be resolved, including nearly 52,000 in the Supreme Court and 1.75 million in district courts. Pakistan's judicial system is under significant strain, with a massive case backlog affecting the timely delivery of justice. Mediation is being presented as an effective and cost-efficient way to ease the pressure on courts. By resolving disputes outside of the traditional court system, mediation can help reduce the number of cases that need to be heard in court, speeding up the overall process of justice. Supreme Court Justice Mansoor Ali Shah emphasized the importance of alternative dispute resolution, stating that mediation is

"the future of Pakistan" and could significantly reduce case pendency. He highlighted the Courtannexed Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) model as a safe and effective way to start promoting mediation across the country. The collaboration between the EU, UNDP, and the FJA represents a major effort to introduce mediation as a standard practice in Pakistan's courts. As part of this initiative, the EU has already supported the establishment of court-annexed mediation centers in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These centers are designed to provide a platform for resolving disputes quickly and affordably. Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Pakistan, noted that the EU is committed to helping Pakistan reduce its case backlog and improve access to justice.

HEC updates BS,MS Physical Education curriculum

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan has reviewed and updated the curriculum of BS and MS degree programmes of Physical Education in line with the emerging trends and needs as well as global standards. Notably, this update is significant, as the curriculum for Physi-

cal Education was last developed in 2014. A two-day meeting of National Curriculum Review Committee (NCRC) brought together representatives of 18 institutions across Pakistan that offer BS and MS programmes in Physical Education at the University of the Punjab, showcasing a

shared commitment to enhancing the academic and professional standards of these programmes. The discussion focused on modernising the curriculum to reflect emerging trends, align with global standards, and address the evolving needs within the Physical Education sector in Pakistan.—APP

Iranian consulate celebrates ancient festival Shab-e-Yalda

PESHAWAR: Iranian consulate here celebrated the ancient Iranian and Asian festival, Shab-e-Yalda (Yalda night) with great enthusiasm providing traditional and spiritual ambience for the attendees. Shab-e-Yalda, celebrated annually under the auspices of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is marked with great enthusiasm not only in Iran but also by Iranians residing in various countries. This year, the Iranian Cultural Center in Peshawar organized a grand event that was attended by Deputy Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Moazzami, Director General of the Cultural Center, Dr Hossein Chakmaqi, President of Peshawar Press Club, Arshad Aziz Malik, Chairman of Persian Department at Peshawar University, Yousuf Hussain Khushi, President of Khyber Khushi, President of Journalists, Kashi-fuddin, senior journalist Shamim Shahid, renowned reciter Hamid Ali Qizilbash and other scholars, Iranian residents, Persian language professors, and students. The event commenced with the recitation from the Holy Quran and Manqabat, followed by captivating verses by Hafiz Shirazi, which drew special attention from the audience. In accordance with the traditions of Shab-e-Yalda, attendees engaged in the customary practice of drawing omens.—APP

KP CM opens modern mobile food testing laboratories

DNA

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Thursday inaugurated state-of-the-art mobile food testing laboratories and emphasized the urgent need for strict measures to combat food adulteration. Addressing the inaugural ceremony here, he said that adulteration in food items was a serious issue and noted that "despite being Muslims, we are involved in such practices, which

are strictly condemned in Islamic teachings." He highlighted the government's commitment to providing citizens with adulteration-free, clean, and healthy food. Praising the Food Authority, he said its performance in ensuring food safety has been commendable. To further strengthen the food safety regime, the government had planned to enhance the capacity of this institution, adding that addition of five modern mobile laboratories would play a crucial role in improving food

safety measures. On the occasion, the CM directed the completion of the static food laboratory in Peshawar within a month. Once operational, the lab would enable the registration of all food items in the province. He mentioned that no food product would be sold in the province without registration and a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from this lab. He said the government was determined to eradicate food adulteration and safeguard public health in the province.

Uzbek envoy visits APP, discuss bilateral media cooperation

ISLAMABAD :Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtayev on Thursday visited Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) and discussed bilateral media cooperation and sharing of mutual institutional experiences with Managing Director, APP Muhammad Asim Khichi. During the meeting, it was also agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the official news agencies of the two countries, APP and Uzbekistan National News Agency (UZNA). Ambassador of Uzbekistan in Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtayev calls on Managing Director Associated Press of Pakistan, Muham-



mad Asim Khichi during his visit to APP Headquarters. The Uzbek Ambassador said that the role of media for mutual information sharing is very significant in the relation of both sides

and there is a need to further enhance cooperation between the two countries in this regard. The Uzbek Ambassador said that there are vast possibilities for mutual news sharing

and information exchange between the Uzbek official news agency, UZA and APP and there is a need to finalize the process of signing of the MoU. He said that there should be an exchange of delegations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan at the media level and there is a need for the media houses of both countries to come closer to each other. The envoy said that the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Islamabad is providing simple and easy visa facilities and in addition, direct air flights have recently started between the two countries, which huge steps need to be highlighted in the media.—APP

RCCI hosts ceremony to mark World Cities Day

Commissioner Rawalpindi Aamir Khattak highlighted the provincial government's commitment to city development. He announced plans to present a detailed briefing on urban planning and ongoing development projects at the RCCI

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) hosted a ceremony to mark World Cities Day, emphasizing sustainable urban development, environmental stewardship, and investment-friendly initiatives. The event saw active participation from Commissioner Rawalpindi Aamir Khattak, RPO Babar Sarfraz, DG RDA Kinza Murtaza, CEO Sweet Homes Zamrud Khan and other esteemed dignitaries. The celebration aimed to address urbanization challenges, collective efforts and foster cooperation to promote sustainable urban development. While urban migration presents

opportunities, it also brings forth complex challenges that require collaborative and innovative solutions. In his address, Commissioner Rawalpindi Aamir Khattak highlighted the provincial government's commitment to city development. He announced plans to present a detailed briefing on urban planning and ongoing

development projects at the RCC. Commissioner Khattak commended RCCI's initiatives under the Revive Pakistan Initiative, particularly the proposal to transform Rashid Minhas Road into Pakistan's first green road. The project includes: Rainwater conservation and recharge system, Conversion of street-

lights to solar energy and Comprehensive plantation drives. The Commissioner assured full support from the district administration to ensure the project's success and reiterated the government's determination to make Rawalpindi a green, environment-friendly, and investment-attractive city. President RCCI, Usman






Shaukat, also addressed the audience, emphasizing the importance of proactive urban planning to meet the needs of Rawalpindi's growing population. He highlighted RCCI's objectives, which include policy advocacy, ease of doing business, and fostering a safe environment for trade and commerce. He expressed gratitude to the Commissioner, RPO, DG RDA, Director AIC Ijaz Qamar Kiani, Zamrud Khan of Pakistan Sweet Homes, and other distinguished guests for their participation and support. He reiterated RCCI's commitment to branding and building a positive image of Rawalpindi and Pakistan, ensuring a better future for its residents.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

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

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Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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

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PIA Cargo.....9280979
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Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Azerbaijan's restoration of Shusha to protect Islamic heritage

Azerbaijan Ambassador Khazar Farhadov highlighted the cultural, historical, and spiritual importance of Shusha, a city in Azerbaijan that has been a beacon of artistic and intellectual achievements for centuries

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The restoration of Shusha, a historic cultural hub, stands as a powerful example of preserving Islamic heritage amidst global challenges. A seminar held here recently celebrated Shusha's recognition as the Cultural Capital of the Islamic World for 2024, emphasizing its significance and the shared responsibility of the Muslim world to protect its rich heritage. The MUSLIM Institute, in collaboration with the Embassy of Azerbaijan, organized a seminar titled "Shusha - Cultural Capital of the Islamic World for 2024: A Testament to the Muslim World's Rich Heritage" here at the National Library of Pakistan. Azerbaijan's restoration of Shusha highlights need to protect Islamic heritage. The event gathered prominent speakers, including Ambassador Masood Khan, former President of Azad Jammu & Kashmir; Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali, Chairman of the MUSLIM Institute; Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan; and Alisher Tokhtaev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan. Azerbaijan Ambassador Khazar Farhadov highlighted the cultural, historical, and spiritual importance of Shusha, a city in Azerbaijan that has been a beacon of artistic and intellectual achievements for centuries. Declared the Cultural Capital of the Islamic World by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), Shusha symbolizes the resilience



and vitality of Muslim heritage. Ambassador said the Shusha had long served as a center for poets, architects, scholars, and musicians. Despite suffering extensive damage during the Armenian occupation, Azerbaijan successfully liberated the city on November 8, 2020, following a 44-day Patriotic War. In January 2021, Azerbaijan's President declared Shusha the cultural capital of the country, marking a significant milestone in its restoration journey. Khazar said restoration of Shusha is seen as a restoration of historical justice for Azerbaijan. Efforts to rebuild the city's historical and cultural identity were commended during the seminar. These efforts not only preserve the city's rich heritage but also serve as an inspiration

for the broader Muslim world, particularly as Islamic heritage faces threats globally. Speakers highlighted ongoing challenges to Islamic cultural heritage. In South Asia, repressive policies such as Hindutva pose threats to Muslim heritage in India. Meanwhile, in Palestine, sacred sites are at risk due to occupation and apartheid policies. Across the Middle East, conflicts and civil wars continue to endanger centuries-old Islamic monuments and traditions. Against this backdrop, Shusha's restoration stands out as a beacon of hope. Azerbaijan's commitment to reviving Shusha's cultural and religious significance offers a model for other nations. The speakers stressed the importance of collective efforts by Muslim countries

to preserve their shared heritage, promote cultural exchange, and ensure that future generations can connect with their history. The seminar also explored the role of cultural preservation in promoting peace and stability. Shusha's legacy serves as a reminder of the power of cultural identity to inspire unity and co-operation. Speakers emphasized that safeguarding Islamic heritage is a shared responsibility, requiring collaboration and determination from the global Muslim community. Discussions at the event also delved into the decades of challenges faced by Shusha during the Armenian occupation. The city suffered immense damage, but Azerbaijan's efforts have ensured its revival. This achievement carries symbolic signifi-

cance, not only for Azerbaijan but for the entire Islamic world. The seminar brought together diplomats, academics, and cultural enthusiasts, creating a platform to reflect on the importance of Shusha in preserving Islamic heritage. Participants agreed that cultural restoration efforts like those in Shusha play a crucial role in inspiring future generations and fostering mutual understanding across borders. In conclusion, the event underscored the shared responsibility of the Muslim world to protect its cultural identity. The restoration of Shusha serves as a powerful example of resilience and dedication to preserving history, offering hope in the face of global challenges to Islamic heritage.

Ayaz calls for consistent reforms in parliamentary process

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday emphasized the need for consistent reforms in the parliamentary process, suggesting that "mistakes from the past must be corrected." "If the government gets more time, the opposition is unhappy; if the opposition gets more time, the government is upset," Sadiq noted, while addressing the inaugural session of 18th Speakers Conference. He stated that managing expectations is the toughest part of his position. Terming the event a great honor, he highlighted the complexities of a speaker's role in balancing the

demands of government, opposition, and backbenchers. Sadiq called for mandatory annual Speakers Conferences and proposed training workshops for universities and colleges to educate students on parliamentary procedures. Highlighting the critical role of chief whips, Sadiq said, "They are my eyes and ears. They know who needs time to speak and who doesn't." He praised Syed Khurshed Shah as a model chief whip who kept the house united. The NA Speaker stressed the significance of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in ensuring transparency, sharing that billions of rupees were recovered through PAC recommendations. "PACs play a

pivotal role in ensuring transparency. We've recovered billions through their recommendations, but provincial assemblies must also empower their PACs to boost oversight and accountability," he noted. He also advocated for legislative bodies to focus on pressing issues like climate change, economic stability, and unemployment, while urging lawmakers to avoid personal attacks and prioritize constructive discussions. Speaker Sadiq highlighted the importance of empowering young minds, pointing to the National Assembly's internship program as a model for provincial assemblies. "Our initiative has received over 3,500 applications, many from underprivileged students, and is

helping to shape the next generation of leaders," he said. "We must institutionalize this forum to ensure continuity, unity, and collective progress," Sadiq remarked, with a proposal to hold the next conference in Muzaffarabad. Reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering support for Kashmir, he declared, "Kashmir remains close to our hearts." The 18th two-day Speakers conference began at the Parliament House in Islamabad today. Speaker National Assembly is presiding over the conference. Chairman Senate, speakers of all the provincial assemblies, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir as well as parliamentary leadership of all the political parties are attending the event.

NEPRA pursues 71 cases of excessive billing against delinquent DISCOs

ISLAMABAD: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) is conducting legal proceedings in 71 cases of excessive billing against various delinquent Distribution Companies (DISCOs), National Assembly was told in a written reply to the question of Ms Sharmila Faruqui Hashaam. During the question hour, the lower house of Parliament was informed that once these proceedings are concluded, the NEPRA authority may impose fines on DISCOs in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations. Additionally, fines have already been imposed on DISCOs for various other violations. The Minister in-charge of the Cabinet Division stated that during July-August 2023, DISCOs issued excessive bills to consumers beyond the billing cycle (i.e., 30/31 days), affecting 4,106,318 consumers. Following the necessary investigation and NEPRA's subsequent directions, consumers' bills were revised using a pro-rata mechanism in cases where the billing period exceeded 30/31 days. Later, during the period from April to June 2024, DISCOs applied the pro-rata mechanism for both cases where the meter reading was taken for more or less than 30/31 days. As a result of the negative pro-rata application, the categories of 1,192,602 consumers were changed again.—APP

CNS Admiral Naveed meets top civil, military leadership of Oman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Admiral Naveed Ashraf on Thursday called on the top military and naval leadership of Oman during an official visit. He held separate meetings with the Minister of Royal Office, General Sultan Mohammad Al Nu'amani, the Commander of Royal Navy of Oman, Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, and the Commander of National Defence College, Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi, said a press release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy). Strengthening of defence co-operation and reinforcing the historic ties between Oman and Pakistan came under discussions during the meetings. Oman's civil and military leadership appreciated Pakistan Navy's efforts in promoting collaborative maritime securi-

ty in the region and acknowledged the importance of strong bilateral naval cooperation, it said. The Naval Chief also visited key facilities, including the RNO Said bin Sultan Naval Base,

Oman Naval Ship, Maritime Security Centre, National Defence College, Military Technical College, and Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, where he received detailed briefings. CNS Admiral

Naveed Ashraf meets top civil, military leadership of Oman. Pakistan and Oman share a historically close relationship, and the visit of Naval Chief is expected to further enhance.



CDA chief reviews detailed plans for the Christmas celebrations

ISLAMABAD: In preparation for the upcoming Christmas celebrations, a meeting was held at the CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa. The meeting was attended by CDA Members, Deputy Commissioner ICT, and other senior officers to review the arrangements for Christmas. During the session, Chief Commissioner and Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa reviewed the detailed plans for the Christmas celebrations. He issued directives to decorate key locations across the city with vibrant festive lights and Christmas trees. Special Christmas bazaars are set to be organized in prominent sectors, featuring live music, fun fairs, and a variety of events to create a joyful festivity for the Christian community. Highlighting the importance of inclusivity, Muhammad Ali Randhawa instructed the Environment Wing and ICT administration to work together to ensure better arrangements for Christmas celebrations. He emphasized providing all necessary facilities to the Christian community and ensuring that Christian neighborhoods are beautifully illuminated with festive lights.—DNA

RUBINA, KRISHNAN discuss maternal and child health initiatives

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, and Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad, met with Deputy Country Director, World Food Programme (WFP), Rathi Pala Krishnan, at BISP headquarters on Thursday. The meeting focused on maternal and child health initiatives under the Benazir Nashonuma Programme, the promotion of awareness campaigns, and BISP programmes under WFP in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During the meeting, Chairperson BISP Rubina Khalid emphasized the importance of BISP's partnership with WFP in promoting the Nashonuma Programme. She stated, "The Benazir Nashonuma Programme is a key initiative for addressing the health and nutritional needs of mothers and children. To maximize its impact, it is important to raise awareness among women so that they can fully benefit from this transformative initiative. Our mission is to expand BISP nationwide, ensuring every child in Pakistan has a healthy start in life, which forms the foundation for a bright and prosperous future." Both parties agreed to enhance collaboration on social protection interventions, addressing health and nutrition needs in Pakistan, and strengthen operations at the provincial level to better serve beneficiaries.—APP

Pakistan's ICT exports reach record \$3.223b

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, the Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, stated that remittances from Telecommunications, Computer, and Information Services hit a record high of \$3.223 billion in exports during the fiscal year 2023-24. In response to Malik Shakir Bashir Awan's question in the National Assembly, she highlighted that Pakistan's ICT sector saw a 24% growth, adding US\$ 627 million to the US\$ 2.596 billion achieved in FY 2022-23. Minister Khawaja highlighted that the IT & TEs industry achieved a record trade surplus of US\$ 2.827 billion in FY 2023-24, marking a 22.31% increase from the previous year's surplus of US\$ 2.297 billion.—APP

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Briefs

Rice exports increased by 35.40% in 05 months of FY2024-25

ISLAMABAD: Rice exports from the country during the first five months of the current financial year registered growth of 35.40 per cent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-November 2024, over 2.377 million metric tons of rice including basmati rice and others valued at \$1.515 billion, were exported as compared to the exports of 1.721 million metric tons worth of \$1.119 billion of the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. In the last 05 months of the current financial year, the exports of basmati rice grew by 34.64 per cent as 370,282 metric tons of the above-mentioned commodity worth of \$386.116 million were exported as compared to the exports of 244,664 metric tons and \$286.778 million of the same period of the last year. Meanwhile, the country earned \$1.129 billion by exporting rice other than Basmati Rice in the last five months of the current financial year as compared to the exports of \$832.523 million in the same period of the last year. During the period under review, over 2.006 million metric tons of rice other than basmati rice were exported in the first five months of the current financial year as compared to the exports of 1.476 million metric tons of the same period of the last year. During the period from July-November, the exports of the other rice witnessed about 35.67 per cent growth as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. Food group exports from the country during the first 05 months of the current financial year grew by 19.58 per cent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-November, 2024, food commodities worth \$3.155 billion were exported as compared to the exports of \$2.638 billion of the same period of the last year. On the other hand, the food group imports into the country during the period under review decreased by 11.13 per cent and it was recorded at \$2.977 billion as against the imports of \$3.350 billion of the corresponding period of the last year.—APP

Report on instruments adopted by 11th ILO session

ISLAMABAD: A report on the instruments adopted during the 11th session of the International Labour Conference (June 2023) was presented in the National Assembly on Thursday. The report was presented by Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain in compliance with Article 19 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Constitution. The submission aimed to provide information to the House regarding the conference outcomes.—APP

BRI Green and Low-Carbon expert network kicks off

The launch of GLEN aligns with President Xi Jinping's eight pledges for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, announced during the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in October 2023. As a core pillar of the BRI International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC), GLEN will serve as a collaborative platform for experts to design green policies, provide project consultations, and develop standards for low-carbon growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The BRI Green and Low-Carbon Expert Network (GLEN), a prestigious international body dedicated to advancing sustainable and low-carbon development under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), was formally launched in Beijing. The network, supported by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China (MEE), brings together global experts to facilitate collaboration, consultation, and capacity building in green development. The opening session was graced by high-level dignitaries, including Zhao Yingmin, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China, Salvador Moncada, Ambassador of Honduras to China, Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China, and Erik



Solheim, Vice President of the BRIGC Governing Board and Co-Chair of the Board of Europe-Asia Center. The session highlighted the critical role of international cooperation in fostering a sustainable, low-carbon future under the Belt and Road framework. In a significant recognition of his contributions and expertise,

Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director of the Pakistan-China Institute, has been appointed as an inaugural member of the BRI GLEN for a 3-year term. Mustafa Sayed's appointment underscores his leading role in fostering sustainable development initiatives, particularly within the Belt and Road framework, and his advocacy for green economic transition across partner nations. The launch of GLEN aligns with President Xi Jinping's eight pledges for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, announced during the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in October 2023. As a core pillar of the BRI International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC), GLEN will serve as a collaborative platform for experts to design green policies, provide project consultations, and develop standards for low-carbon growth. In its capacity, the prestigious network

will contribute its expertise toward supporting BRI partner countries in green development planning and environmental governance. Its role will encompass critical responsibilities such as policy deliberations, providing technical support for green financing and ESG assessments, and advising on environmental impact assessments for international projects. The launch ceremony brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including government officials, financial institutions, industry leaders, and academic experts, reflecting a shared commitment to accelerating low-carbon initiatives. The appointment of Mustafa Sayed highlights Pakistan's growing influence in shaping sustainable global policies and further strengthens the country's partnership with China in driving environmental stewardship under the BRI.

CPEC 2nd phase to promote high-quality Sino-Pak cooperation

He noted that through the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan will not only receive support from China but also collaborate in technological development, benefiting from cutting-edge research and continuous innovation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Following the 2024 China Central Economic Work Conference (CEWC), which emphasized high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and enhancing the overseas service system, Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal highlighted China's significant progress in economic innovation and new technologies. He noted that through

the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan will not only receive support from China but also collaborate in technological development, benefiting from cutting-edge research and continuous innovation. According to China Economic Net, the minister stressed that the adoption of high-quality new technologies will significantly benefit Pakistan, especially in its agricultural sector, as the country aims to boost exports and enhance pro-

ductivity and competitiveness in industry. With a youthful population skilled in information technology, Pakistan sees potential for cooperation in developing a robust digital technology platform. The minister, currently on a visit to China, addressed a press conference where he answered questions on new technological innovations, energy, environmental, and trade cooperation between the two countries. He emphasized, "There is a strong, unconditional bond between the people

of Pakistan and China," reiterating that those behind terrorist activities aimed at undermining the tremendous progress made under CPEC would not succeed. "Pakistan has dedicated over 12,000 full-time army personnel to safeguard Chinese projects. In addition, counterterrorism and police forces are committed to protecting the Chinese workers. We view the Chinese workers in Pakistan as our national guests, contributing to Pakistan's development," the minister added.

Pehchan Pakistan prize distribution ceremony held

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Pehchan Pakistan Prize Distribution Ceremony, a flagship event celebrating creativity, heritage, and inclusivity, was held today in Islamabad. The ceremony was hosted by Meera'n Malik, President of Community Development Council (CDC), and Murad Ali, Secretary of the National Book Foundation. Renowned poet and author Dr. Inam ul Haq Javeid graced the occasion as the chief guest, alongside representatives from the Ministry of Federal Education. Since its inception in 2017 on Pakistan's 70th Independence Day, Pehchan Pakistan has been a pioneering and inclusive platform for students aged 3 to 23. This project, led by CDC, aims to inspire young minds to connect with the country's history, heritage, and culture through creative writing,



art, and storytelling. The contest has successfully bridged generational gaps and fostered a sense of national pride and responsibility in students across the nation. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Inam ul Haq Javeid emphasized the importance of fostering a love for books and heritage among the youth, calling it the cornerstone of building

a progressive and harmonious society. "Programs like Pehchan Pakistan instill a sense of belonging and identity in our students, which is vital for their personal growth and the nation's future," he said. The event recognized the exceptional talents of students from diverse backgrounds, including those with special needs, celebrating their

artistic expressions and creative endeavors in both English and Urdu. The ceremony was a testament to the collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Federal Education, the National Book Foundation, and CDC, who have worked tirelessly to nurture creativity, inclusivity, and national integrity through the Pehchan Pakistan project.

ANF seizes over 348 kg drugs in 8 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 8 operations across the country managed to recover over 348 kg drugs worth Rs 56.3 million and three suspects were arrested, said an ANF spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 5.4 kg ice was recovered from a parcel booked for the Netherlands near Shahabpura Railway Gate in Sialkot and an accused was arrested. 500 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel containing ladies' clothes booked for the UK at GPO Lahore. 54 grams chemical material was recovered from a parcel booked for the UK through a courier office in Rawalpindi. 156.8 kg hashish hidden for smuggling was recovered from Qilla Abdullah in Balochistan. In 5th operation, 90 kg opium and 7 kg ice were recovered from an uninhabited area of Chagai district in Balochistan. In 6th operation, 18 kg opium and 6 kg heroin were recovered from Winder area of Hub in Balochistan. In 7th operation, 60 kg hashish was recovered from Coastal Line Pasni in Balochistan. 5 kg ice hidden in a car near Sahu Chowk Multan was recovered and 2 suspects were arrested. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.

PU students visit Karot Hydropower Project

The Karot Hydropower Project, which is part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is a 720 MW plant that contributes significantly to Pakistan's energy sector by providing sustainable and environmentally friendly electricity

RAWALPINDI: Students and faculty members from the University of the Punjab visited the Karot Hydropower Project, situated on the Jhelum River. The purpose of the visit was to provide students with practical insights into renewable energy technologies, hydropower generation, and sustainable development practices. During the visit, students toured the project site, gaining firsthand knowledge of hydropower plant operations, turbine systems, and the role of advanced engineering in achieving clean energy goals. The Karot Hydropower Project, which is part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is a 720 MW plant that contributes significantly to Pakistan's energy sector by providing sustainable and environmentally friendly electricity. Throughout the year, many such visits to hydropower sites have been organized. Chinese firms involved in various industrial and power projects in Pakistan have been partnering with universities across the country to create platforms and opportunities for young people to grow and learn. These collaborations encompass a range of initiatives, such as internships, research and training opportunities, scholarships to Chinese universities, and educational trips to Chinese project sites to witness real-time operations and implementation.—DNA

NSU holds certificate distribution ceremony

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Second certificate distribution ceremony was held at National Skills University (NSU) in Auditorium after successful completion of the six short courses which included Automotive Technician, Digital Marketing, Digital Marketing and Freelancing, Domestic and Industrial Electrician, Phlebotomy and Professional Programming course. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shehryar Manzoor, a distinguished academic leader at NSU, was the Chief Guest of the ceremony. The ceremony commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by Naat e Rasool (SAW). During the welcome address, Mr. Qaiser Naseem, Controller of Examination NSU, apprised the audience that a total of 105 students have successfully completed the short courses and are now fully equipped to tackle the challenges of the modern industry. So far, NSU has proudly produced 1,538 alumni through its short courses, both by its Islamabad and Sarmad Tanveer Campus Muridke, solidifying its position as a leading institution in skills development and vocational training. These courses are designed to align with modern industry demands which continue to prepare students for contemporary workforce challenges, fostering both professional and personal growth. The Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shehryar Manzoor, congratulated the students on their successful achievements and commended the University administration and faculty for the consistent and diligent efforts to bridge the skills gap in Pakistan. He also emphasized the students to utilize the imparted knowledge further in their professional life in order to contribute towards the development of the country. During the ceremony, the certificates were distributed among the students who successfully completed the short courses.

The ceremony concluded with heartfelt applause for the students, NSU administration and faculty.

Police arrest two bike lifters with 10 stolen motorcycles

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested two bike lifters and street criminals and recovered 10 stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession, said a Police spokesman. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Wah Cantt Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Zeeshan alias Shani and Jaffar and recovered 10 stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Potohar, Nasir Nawaz said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars.

Enhancing maritime security in the Indian Ocean region

ALI BASIT

THE Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is one of the world's significant maritime regions, with a distinction of being the center of economic, political, and strategic activities having an implausible impact on regional maritime security. The region is bordered with more than 30 maritime states. By volume, 80% of global energy trade passes through this region, reaching Middle East, African continent, South Asia, Europe. While having important Sea Lines of communications (SLOCs), the region is experiencing competition among regional and extra-regional players, evolving patterns of convergence and divergence of interests of states, and exploration of living and non-living marine resources further creating vulnerabilities for the littoral states. In

fact, the realities in the maritime domain are complex and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive approach and robust strategies to counter the diverse security threats and challenges that exist. States face not only traditional security challenges within their maritime boundaries but also a range of non-traditional threats that make the security environment increasingly vulnerable and complex. These threats are varied from illegal passage of prohibited vessels/warships, illicit economic activities, theft and smuggling, kidnapping for ransom, high-jacking of boats and ships, piracy, narco-terrorism, and maritime terrorism are considered the most serious threats. As states become more involved in the region, these challenges intensify, especially as shifts in the geopolitical landscape lead to even more pressing maritime security concerns.

Pakistan, strategically located at the crossroads of IOR, plays a significant role in regional geopolitics. Its geographic positioning makes it highly important, given its immense maritime potential both onshore and offshore. Pakistan's vast maritime territory, which includes its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Continental Shelf, places it in close proximity to some of the busiest SLOCs. Additionally, Pakistan's closeness to three critical maritime chokepoints - the Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, and the Mozambique Channel - further enhances its importance. The country's maritime security is also shaped by growing strategic concerns arising from the involvement of regional, sub-regional, and extra-regional actors in the IOR. Pakistan believes in collaborative maritime security mechanisms. Pakistan Navy has long been recognized for

its active role in promoting collaborative maritime security within the IOR through participation in Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 and CTF 151 which has contributed to international efforts to counter illicit activities and piracy at sea. Additionally, Pakistan Navy's establishment of the Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP) has reinforced security, particularly in the Western and Southern Indian Ocean. These patrols have been instrumental in maintaining stability within the Arabian Sea and ensuring a consistent security presence in critical areas of the IOR. A cornerstone of Pakistan's maritime security initiatives is the AMAN exercise series, launched by the Pakistan Navy in 2007. The AMAN exercises provide a biennial platform for regional and extra-regional navies to enhance operational interoperability and collaborate in address-

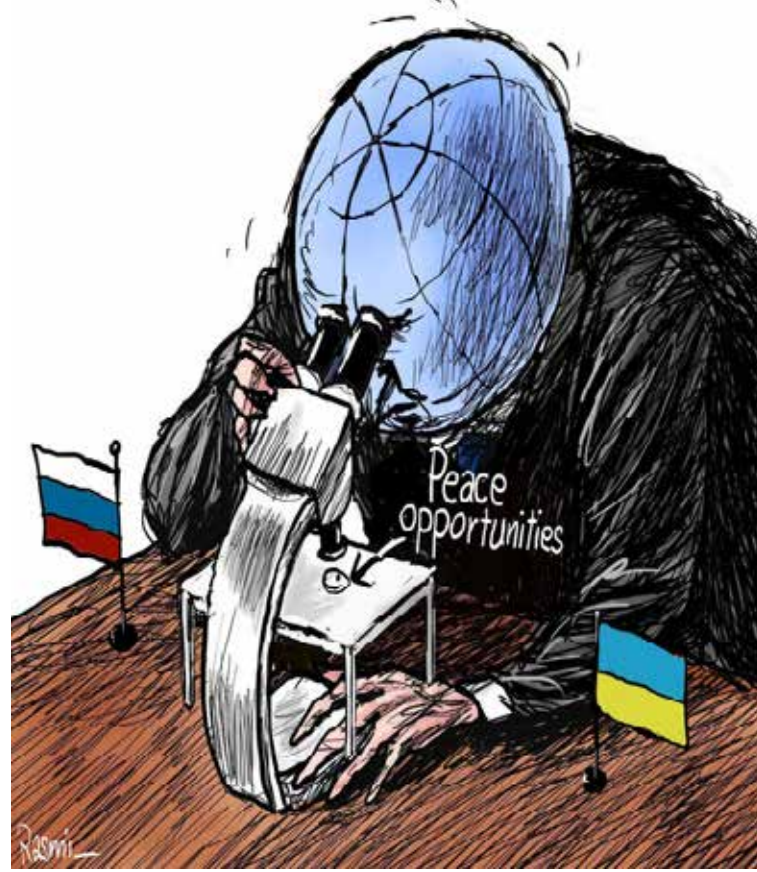
ing shared maritime security challenges. These exercises, which began with the participation of 14 nations in 2007, have grown substantially in scale and scope, drawing participants from around the globe. Each AMAN exercise brings together an expanding coalition of nations, with past iterations attracting contributions from countries such as the US, China, the UK, and Russia, along with specialized teams for Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and maritime special operations. For instance, AMAN-21 saw the participation of 42 navies and a significant increase in observer states, showcasing the growing international trust and reliance on this initiative. The most recent exercise, AMAN-23, held from 10 to 14 Feb 2023, hosted over 50 navies. The AMAN series is unique in its combination of harbor and sea phases, offering a comprehensive approach to mari-

time security training. In the harbor phase, navies participate in operational planning, technical exchanges, and cultural events. The sea phase provides hands-on tactical drills and joint operations, enabling real-time response to simulated threats such as piracy and narco-terrorism. The AMAN exercises underscore Pakistan's commitment to collaborative security, reinforcing its positive image within the IOR and bolstering its capacity for maritime command and control. Pakistan's naval infrastructure, including Gwadar port - a critical node in China's Belt and Road Initiative - benefits from enhanced security and operational capabilities. As the Maritime Silk Road garners global attention, AMAN helps strengthen Pakistan's ability to secure its waters and protect vital infrastructure, aligning with broader geo-economic and geopolitical goals. Through AMAN,

Pakistan not only emphasizes regional cooperation but also aligns its national interests with global security objectives. The exercise enhances Pakistan's diplomatic standing, portraying it as a proactive maritime state committed to peace and stability. This initiative reflects Pakistan's vision of a secure, interconnected IOR where nations work collectively to ensure maritime safety. The upcoming AMAN-25 is scheduled in Feb 2025 and is anticipated to further reinforce international cooperation, adapting to the evolving security landscape of the IOR. By bringing together diverse naval forces to engage in dialogue, tactical training, and collaborative planning, AMAN stands as a beacon of cooperative resolve. The exercise not only strengthens maritime partnerships but also offers a valuable platform for states to address pressing issues, from illegal trafficking to the protection of maritime resources.

Never mind stimulus

FEW would dispute that Chinese stimulus has the capacity to move financial markets. The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index, which tracks Chinese stocks listed in Hong Kong, has been one of the world's best-performing equity gauges this year, up 25 per cent compared with a 24 per cent rise for the benchmark S&P 500 index. Other Chinese equity indices, notably the MSCI China Index of shares listed on the mainland and in Hong Kong, have outperformed emerging market stocks. This includes Indian shares, which have benefited from China's economic woes. The unexpected launch in late September of a package of more forceful and coordinated stimulus measures triggered a fierce rally in Chinese and Hong Kong stocks. Between September 23 and October 8, the CSI 300 index of Shanghai and Shenzhen-listed shares surged 32.5 per cent. Yet it is what happened since that is more revealing. Chinese equities have been volatile during the past two months, even though Beijing announced bolder measures to stabilise the property market and boost domestic demand. The annual central economic work conference earlier this month made lifting consumption the top priority, a major policy shift that Morgan Stanley described as the "most aggressive stimulus tone in a decade". That sentiment towards China has cooled despite a reorientation of policy support towards consumption – a shift markets have long demanded – suggests the size, and even the composition, of the stimulus package are less consequential than previously assumed. Bank of America says that while Chinese stocks have outperformed this year, it is "a bull market that doesn't feel like one". A more reliable gauge of sentiment, and a far more accurate indicator of economic conditions, is the yield on China's 10-year government bonds. Having fallen below the symbolically important 2 per cent level on December 2, the yield has since dropped to a new low of 1.7 per cent, signalling that economic conditions are unlikely to improve and that more aggressive monetary easing is needed to overcome deflation. Speculation is mounting that China's 10-year yield will dip below its Japanese equivalent, which currently stands at 1 per cent, and potentially slide towards zero if policymakers are unable to revive growth. The last few months have revealed much about investor perceptions of China. While external factors – in particular the threat of more punitive tariffs on Chinese goods following Donald Trump's victory in November's US presidential election – contributed to the renewed deterioration in sentiment, it is clear that calls for bigger stimulus masked deeper concerns about China's economy. There were telling results in Bank of America's December survey of global fund managers, which took place the same week Beijing announced that it would "vigorously boost consumption". While stronger-than-expected growth in China was seen as the most bullish scenario for 2025, 61 per cent of respondents believed Chinese households would continue to park their money in savings accounts. Only 16 per cent expected them to splash out on discretionary goods and services. Consumption is the most reliable source of growth given the acute protectionist and geopolitical threats to exports and the declining productivity of infrastructure investment. The lack of confidence in Chinese policymakers' ability to spur consumption accounts for the deeper concerns about the effectiveness of stimulus.



Biden's foreign policy under Trump

US President Joe Biden has reportedly approved a new national security memorandum intended to serve as a "road map" for the Trump national security team on dealing with China, Iran, North Korea and Russia. The memorandum, which reportedly provides recommendations on such things as "improving US government interagency cooperation" and "speeding up the sharing of information with allies", are really critiques on the Biden team's performance. The question needs to be asked: if these were such important steps, why weren't they fully implemented during the last four years? What could really be of use to the incoming national security team are transition memos that provide a real road map on key specific foreign policy challenges. At the end of his presidency, George W. Bush tasked the senior staff of his national security council with writing 40 transition memos on the most critical foreign policy and national security issues. Bush was concerned about the array of challenges the new administration would face and, as he later wrote, "was determined to help the new president get off to a fast start". The memos, many of which were declassified in a book titled Hand-Off: The Foreign Policy George W. Bush Passed to Barack Obama (which former national security adviser Stephen Hadley worked to declassify) dealt candidly with what the White House felt it had accomplished – including successes and setbacks – and elucidated what still needed to be done. The memos, naturally, addressed relations with China, Russia, Iran and North Korea but they also ran the gamut from "biodefence and pandemic planning" to "Africa conflict resolution policy". One that I wrote on "East Asian architecture and alliances" explained how Bush assessed that post-Cold War neglect had allowed China and North Korea to exploit our weaknesses in East Asia and that we needed to act with our partners to hedge against the rise of a belligerent China. We gave ourselves good marks for beginning alliance transformation and defence reforms, such as agreeing to relocate and consolidate US forces from Okinawa to Guam. However, we candidly disclosed to the Obama administration the specific steps we had not completed and felt were needed to ensure the progress did not unravel. Members of the Obama administration to this day tell me how useful they found the memos in quickly orienting them to the foreign policy record. Biden's transition memo on the East Asian (now Indo-Pacific) alliances would, I expect, show some remarkable progress in advancing regional peace and security. The significant steps forward are well documented: the remarkable new era of trilateral security cooperation between the United States, Japan and South Korea announced at Camp David in August last year; the revitalisation of the Quadilateral Security Dialogue with Japan, India and Australia begun by prime minister Shinzo Abe and president Bush in 2007; and the groundbreaking Aukus agreement of September 2021 that looks to transform how we share emerging technologies to build defence systems. But the transition memo on the Indo-Pacific would also have to acknowledge parts of the track record that are less impressive and should suggest a road map, based on experience, for advancing the ball. No area is riper for this kind of soul searching than current US diplomatic efforts on North Korea.

The future of TikTok under Trump

Qamar Bashir



The enactment of PAFCA seems to be based on a "misconceived ideology" and "self-serving objectives".

Labeling China as an "adversary" lacks clear justification or logic, especially considering that the U.S.-China economic relationship is one of the largest and most interdependent bilateral partnerships globally, involving trade and investment worth hundreds of billions of dollars annually.

Despite their strategic competition, the two nations remain deeply economically intertwined, making the framing of China as an adversary contradictory

DONALD Trump, in a recent interview, credited his rising popularity and success in the 2024 elections to his expanded outreach through TikTok. This is particularly intriguing given that Trump was previously one of the strongest advocates for banning TikTok in the United States, citing concerns that the platform, owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, was being used to collect consumer data, promote Chinese products through targeted marketing, and harm U.S. industries and jobs. This situation becomes even more noteworthy when considering that over 15 U.S.-owned social media platforms engage in far worse practices globally. These platforms not only target international consumers for products and services but have also been accused of influencing political processes, including elections and regime changes, raising questions about fairness and consistency in the U.S. approach toward foreign platforms. Allegations of manipulation in elections and fostering regimes favorable to their interests have not escaped the notice of regulators, particularly in European countries. The "European Union" implemented the "General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)", the "Digital Services Act (DSA)", and the "Digital Markets Act (DMA)". Germany passed the "NetzDG", the UK introduced the "Online Safety Bill", and countries like "India", "Australia", and "Brazil" have adopted their own regulations to address misinformation, data misuse, and unfair competition. Under these laws, Meta has been fined €1.2 billion for illegal data transfers and €405 million for mishandling children's data. Google was fined €50 million in France, while WhatsApp and Google have faced substantial penalties for cookie violations and privacy breaches. Globally, the penalties imposed on U.S.-originated social media platforms have been far greater than those imposed on TikTok for similar violations. The United States is perhaps the only country to have passed laws specifically targeting TikTok, owned by the Chinese company ByteDance. This law appears to conflict with the "First Amendment" of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits lawmakers from restricting freedom of the media. The "Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act (PAFCA)", signed into law in April 2024, requires ByteDance to divest TikTok within 270 days, extendable by 90

days, or face a nationwide ban by January 2025. The enactment of PAFCA seems to be based on a "misconceived ideology" and "self-serving objectives". Labeling China as an "adversary" lacks clear justification or logic, especially considering that the U.S.-China economic relationship is one of the largest and most interdependent bilateral partnerships globally, involving trade and investment worth hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Despite their strategic competition, the two nations remain deeply economically intertwined, making the framing of China as an adversary contradictory and counterproductive. Labeling China as an adversary reflects a deeper anxiety about competition rather than a concrete threat. China's rapid rise in technology, innovation, and economic influence has challenged America's longstanding global leadership. Instead of resorting to restrictive measures such as banning a social media platform—an approach that appears reactive rather than strategic—the U.S. could benefit from addressing its internal challenges to maintain its competitive edge. The U.S. should equip the next generation with the skills needed to lead in technological innovation. Greater investment in research and development (R&D) to pioneer breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing would reinforce its leadership in critical industries. Fostering homegrown innovation and entrepreneurship could counter external competition far more effectively than imposing bans or restrictions on foreign platforms. Additionally, the U.S. should embrace healthy competition, strengthen its economic resilience, and leverage its longstanding strengths in innovation, education, and entrepreneurship. Perhaps, before passing the "PAFCA", lawmakers, in their haste, failed to realize that banning TikTok might not harm China as much as it would hurt their own people. TikTok, with over 170 million users in the United States, plays a critical role in supporting the livelihoods of influencers, content creators, and small businesses. It contributes more than \$24.2 billion to the U.S. GDP and supports approximately 224,000 jobs as of 2023. A ban on TikTok would result in widespread job losses, significant revenue declines for businesses, and a weakening of innovation in digital marketing. Many politicians, human rights activists, media freedom advocates, and TikTok users, along with businesses, are now

pinning their hopes on "Donald Trump", who will take office as President in January 2025. Trump's favorable disposition toward TikTok could potentially "reverse or suspend" the current restrictions, including the threat of a nationwide ban under PAFCA, offering relief to those who rely on the platform for their livelihoods.

While a president cannot directly overturn legislation, Trump could issue "executive orders" to deprioritize enforcement or create alternative compliance frameworks through federal agencies. His administration could also negotiate with ByteDance to address national security concerns, such as requiring U.S. user data to be stored domestically or increasing oversight. Additionally, Trump could support "legal challenges" to PAFCA, particularly on constitutional grounds like "First Amendment" violations, influencing judicial interpretations of the law. Finally, policy redirection through agencies like the FTC or Department of Commerce could ease restrictions on TikTok while addressing concerns, offering a diplomatic solution to preserve the platform's operations in the U.S. His pragmatic approach might also leverage TikTok's popularity to negotiate trade benefits with China, treating the platform as an opportunity rather than a liability. Collectively, these changes would secure TikTok's presence in the U.S. while cementing its role as a critical tool for political, cultural, and economic influence.

The U.S. has been and will remain a "beacon of hope and freedom" for people around the globe. The strength of the U.S. is derived from its "Constitution", highly esteemed democratic values, and its commitment to upholding "fundamental human rights", including freedom of speech, religion, and media. Trump appears to recognize that the country is drifting away from these core values, which have been the bedrock of U.S. supremacy and leadership around the world. Under his leadership, there is hope that the U.S. will return to its cherished principles and "regain its global stature" without resorting to shortcuts, such as banning TikTok for misguided reasons.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at Embassy
Former MD, SRBC
Macomb, Detroit, Michigan

Europe must take holistic approach to migration issue

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

Migrants often fill labor shortages in critical sectors such as agriculture, healthcare and construction.

Their contributions boost economic productivity and address gaps in aging labor markets. Studies have shown that migrants are more likely to start businesses, creating jobs and fostering innovation.

Furthermore, remittances sent back to migrants' home countries play a vital role in alleviating poverty and promoting economic stability globally. In addition, migration fosters cultural exchange, introducing new perspectives, cuisines, traditions and artistic expressions to host societies

MIGRATION is one of the most pressing issues in Europe today, as countries grapple with a significant influx of people fleeing conflict, poverty and environmental crises. The movement of individuals across borders has sparked heated debates about border control, integration and the responsibilities of host countries. As Pope Francis eloquently stated last week, migrants must be "welcomed, encouraged and integrated." He urged Europe to confront the challenges of migration with compassion and practicality. Europe has experienced an unprecedented surge in migration in recent years, driven by factors such as conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, the Russia-Ukraine war, economic hardships and climate-induced displacement. Countries like Italy, Greece and Spain, which serve as entry points for many migrants, are particularly strained by the sheer volume of arrivals. Border control has subsequently become a contentious issue, with some countries implementing stricter policies to curb irregular migration. These measures, however, often lead to overcrowded detention centers and dangerous journeys for migrants attempting to reach safety. However, once migrants arrive in Europe, their journey is far from over. Integration into host societies presents a significant hurdle, with language barriers, cultural differences and limited access to education or job opportunities often impeding progress. Many migrants face discrimination and social exclusion, further complicating their ability to contribute to their new communities. The lack of cohesive integration policies exacerbates these issues, leaving both migrants and host societies struggling to adapt. Another issue is that immigration has become a divisive topic across Europe, fueling political polarization and giving rise to far-right movements that capitalize on anti-migrant sentiments. This polarization often results in fragmented policies and a lack of unified action among EU member states. The absence of a cohesive framework undermines the ability to address migration effectively, leaving front-line countries to shoulder disproportionate responsibilities. The existing asylum systems in some European countries are overwhelmed and underfunded, leading to delays in processing applications and inadequate support for asylum seekers. This is partially why migrants often face prolonged uncertainty about their legal status, which hinders their ability to settle and integrate. The disparity in asylum

policies among EU countries is further complicating the situation, creating inequities in how migrants are treated. Countries on the front lines of migration, such as Greece, Italy and Spain, appear to bear the brunt of the crisis. These nations are often ill-equipped to handle the scale of migration they face, leading to overcrowded camps, insufficient resources and strained public services. The lack of equitable burden-sharing among EU member states exacerbates the challenges faced by these countries. Despite the challenges, however, migrants bring significant benefits to their host countries, contributing to economic growth, cultural enrichment and demographic balance. Migrants often fill labor shortages in critical sectors such as agriculture, healthcare and construction. Their contributions boost economic productivity and address gaps in aging labor markets. Studies have shown that migrants are more likely to start businesses, creating jobs and fostering innovation. Furthermore, remittances sent back to migrants' home countries play a vital role in alleviating poverty and promoting economic stability globally. In addition, migration fosters cultural exchange, introducing new perspectives, cuisines, traditions and artistic expressions to host societies. This diversity, when managed effectively, enriches local cultures, promotes tolerance and enhances social cohesion. Migrants also contribute to the global interconnectedness of communities, bridging gaps between different parts of the world. Many European countries face declining birth rates and aging populations, which pose challenges to sustaining economic growth and social welfare systems. Migrants help to offset these demographic trends by bringing younger populations into the workforce. Their presence ensures the long-term sustainability of pensions and healthcare systems, benefiting the broader society. Addressing the challenges of migration requires a multifaceted approach that combines humanitarian values with practical strategies. To manage large influxes of migrants, Europe must invest in more efficient and humane border control measures. This includes enhancing the capacity of border agencies to process arrivals, while ensuring compliance with international human rights standards. Establishing safe and legal pathways for migration can reduce the reliance on dangerous and irregular routes, saving lives and improving the overall management of migration flows. Expanding resettlement programs and issuing humanitarian

visas are practical steps in this direction. Integration is also key to maximizing the benefits of migration. European host countries should invest in language and skills training programs to empower migrants to contribute effectively to their new communities. Promoting intercultural dialogue and combating discrimination through public awareness campaigns can foster social cohesion. Additionally, creating mentorship programs that pair migrants with local residents can facilitate smoother transitions and mutual understanding. To counter political polarization, European leaders must adopt balanced narratives that highlight both the challenges and benefits of migration. Transparent communication about migration policies and their impacts can dispel misinformation and reduce fear-driven rhetoric. Encouraging cross-party collaborations and civil society engagement can also foster more inclusive policymaking processes. Furthermore, the EU must prioritize the reform of its asylum system to ensure the timely and equitable processing of applications. This includes increasing funding for asylum agencies, standardizing procedures across member states and providing adequate support services for asylum seekers. Leveraging technology to streamline case management and improve data sharing among countries can enhance efficiency and accountability. Finally, a fair distribution of responsibilities among EU member states is crucial to alleviating the strain on front-line countries. This could be achieved through a quota system that allocates migrants based on each country's capacity and resources. Establishing a central EU fund to support migration-related expenses can also ease the financial burden on individual countries. In other words, solidarity and cooperation among member states are essential to building a sustainable migration framework. In conclusion, migration presents both significant challenges and profound opportunities for Europe. While issues such as border control, integration, political polarization, inadequate asylum systems and the strain on front-line countries demand urgent attention, the benefits of migration – economic growth, cultural enrichment and demographic balance – cannot be overlooked. By adopting a holistic approach that addresses these challenges while harnessing the potential of migrants, Europe can transform migration into a driver of prosperity and unity.

Briefs

Pakistan seeks world response...

FROM PAGE 01
his government was committed to providing quality education, creating jobs, and offering productive opportunities. Since 2013, he said this programme under the leadership of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had distributed over 6,00,000 laptops to high achievers, awarded hundreds and thousands of scholarships, and trained a huge cohort of individuals in demand-driven skills such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and cyber security. "Pakistan is home to one of the largest freelance communities in the world. We are focusing on IT training at a mass scale to equip our youth with the necessary tools to connect with the digital world and capitalise on those opportunities with the aim to enable job-seekers to become job-creators," he remarked.

PM meets Turkish...

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emphasized on utilizing the vast scope in bilateral trade and economic cooperation by identifying new sectors through various existing institutional mechanisms. In order to develop and improve livelihood of border regions, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressed on the importance to operationalize border markets, which have already been inaugurated and work on the inauguration of remaining markets. Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also held a bilateral meeting with the Chief Adviser of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, H.E. Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus on the sidelines of the D-8 Summit in Cairo today.

Putin says he's 'ready'..

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this [conversation], of course, at any time. And I will also be ready for a meeting, if he wants it," Putin said at the combined Direct Line Q&A and year-end press conference, when asked by an American journalist about a possible meeting with Trump. Putin noted that he did not know when he would meet with Trump. "First of all, I don't know when we will meet with him. Because he doesn't say anything about it. I haven't talked to him at all for more than four years," he pointed out.

Syria not a threat to...

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the rebel alliance, and was previously known by his nom de guerre of Abu Mohammed al-Jolani. He said HTS should be de-listed as a terrorist organisation. It is designated as one by the UN, US, EU and UK, among many others, as it started as a splinter group of al-Qaeda, which it broke away from in 2016. Sharaa said HTS was not a terrorist group.

Civil disobedience to...

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overseas Pakistanis to withhold remittances, highlighting the deteriorating situation in Pakistan, including what he described as the stifling of democracy, judiciary, and media, along with widespread repression. Khan strongly condemned the events of November 26, calling it the "darkest day in the history of Pakistan." He alleged that peaceful protesters were fired upon by snipers, resulting in deaths, injuries, and disappearances.

Pakistan lashes out...

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"Pakistan considers the US decision to impose sanctions on NDC and three commercial entities as unfortunate and biased," the country's Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in a statement on Thursday. "Pakistan's strategic capabilities are meant to defend its sovereignty and preserve peace and stability in South Asia. The latest installment of sanctions defies the objective of peace and security by aiming to accentuate military asymmetries.

Aisam, Murtaza face upset loss in doubles semifinals

In the ladies' singles quarterfinals, Zunaira Noor upset Meheq Khokhar 5-7, 6-4, 6-2 while Sheeza Sajid beat Mahrukh Sajid 6-2, 6-2, Ushna Sohail beat Lala Rukh Sajid 6-1, 6-1 and Amna Ali Qayum beat Labika Durab 6-0, 6-0.

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan ace Aisamul Haq Qureshi and partner Muzammil Murtaza as well as Pakistan's men's champion Aqeel Khan and partner No 1 Muhammad Shoaib were upset in the men's doubles semifinals while Meheq Khokhar was stunned in the ladies singles in the quarterfinals at the Khawaja Iftikhar Ahmad Memorial National Ranking Tennis Championship 2024 at Sports Board Punjab Tennis Courts. In the men's doubles semifinals, Muhammad Abid and Abdullah Anees upset Muzammil Murtaza and Aisam ul Haq 7-5, 6-2 while Barkat Ullah and Yousaf Khalil socked another top ranked doubles duo of Aqeel Khan and Muhammad Shoaib 5-7, 6-4 (15-13). In the ladies' singles quarterfinals, Zunaira Noor upset Meheq Khokhar 5-7, 6-4, 6-2 while Sheeza Sajid beat Mahrukh Sajid 6-2, 6-2, Ushna Sohail beat Lala Rukh Sajid 6-1, 6-1 and Amna Ali Qayum beat Labika



Durab 6-0, 6-0. In the boys U-18 quarterfinals, Abdullah Talha beat Hamza Roman 6-4, 2-6, 6-1, Shehryar Anees beat Asad Zaman 6-2, 6-3, Ahtesham Humayun beat Hamza Ali Rizwan 6-7(6), 7-6(4), 3-0 and Bilal Asim beat M Salar 6-4, 6-1. In the U-12 quarterfinals, Shayan Afridi beat Ansar Ullah 4-2, 4-0, M Ayan beat Junaid Khan 4-2, 4-1, M Muaz beat Ibrahim Sajid 4-0, 4-2, Rashid Ali beat Arsh Imran 4-1, 5-3. In the U-14 quarterfinals, Rashid Ali beat Raziq Sultan 5-3, 4-1, Abdur Rehman beat Mahad Shahzad 1-4, 4-2, 5-3, Shayan Afridi beat Ayan 4-2, 4-1 and Junaid Khan beat Ohad e Mustafa 4-2, 2-4, 4-1. In girls U-14 semifinals, Khadija Khalil beat Aimen Rehan 4-1, 4-2. In the U-18 doubles quarterfinals, Nabeel Ali Qayum and Abdul Basit beat Abdullah Prizada and Yaafat Nadeem 7-5, 6-2, M Yahya and Amir Mazari beat Rohan Noori and Rayyan Ahmad 6-2, 6-2, Abubakar Talha and Hamza Roman beat Allay Hussain and Abubakar Khalil 6-0, 6-0.

ICC delegation visits National Stadium

DNA

LAHORE: ICC delegation visited the National Stadium in Karachi to assess the ongoing preparations for the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan. The delegation, led by ICC Event Manager Aun Zaidi, included members from broadcasting, marketing, and various other departments. The visit focused on reviewing the construction work of the new building currently under development at the stadium. The General Manager of National

Stadium Arshad Khan, Director of International Cricket Usman Wahla and other PCB officials were also in attendance. The delegation spent approximately 30 minutes inspecting the new building's interior and other areas of the stadium. A full briefing was given, highlighting the extensive upgrades and preparations underway to ensure the venue meets international standards for the prestigious tournament. Following the inspection in Karachi, the ICC delegation is set to visit Lahore to continue their evaluation of the

tournament's preparations. The ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 will be played across hosts Pakistan and neutral venue, confirmed by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday. This decision is part of a broader arrangement where matches between India and Pakistan at ICC events during the 2024-2027 rights cycle will be played at neutral locations, ensuring logistical and security feasibility. The 'fusion formula' will apply to major ICC tournaments after Champions Trophy, including the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 (to

be hosted by India) and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 (jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka). Under this formula, the knockout stage matches, including the final, will be played at neutral venue if India and Pakistan qualify. The PCB has also been awarded hosting rights for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2028. Sources indicate that this agreement is part of a compensation to Pakistan for financial losses due to India's refusal to participate in the Champions Trophy 2025 on Pakistani soil.

Nadal reflects on his struggle with syndrome

WEB DESK

MADRID: Legendary Spanish Tennis player recalled the time when he was diagnosed with incurable Muller-Weiss syndrome early in his career, sharing that he was told that he would never play the sport again. According to an Indian media outlet, the 22-time Grand Slam winner, who recently bid farewell to his magnificent career after a defeat in the Davis Cup quarterfinals, shared that he spent many days at home 'crying' after the diagnosis. "I got

hurt when I was 17, and I was told I would probably never play professional tennis again. I learnt that things can end in an instant. It's not just a tiny crack in my foot, it's a disease. There's no cure, only management. Muller-Weiss syndrome," Nadal told The Players' Tribune. "What does that even mean? You go from the greatest joy to waking up the next morning not being able to walk. I spent many days at home crying, but it was a great lesson in humility, and I was lucky to have a father, the real influence I've had in my life, who was always so positive."

CT to be played across Pakistan, neutral venue

DUBAI: The ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 will be played across hosts Pakistan and neutral venue, confirmed by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday. This decision is part of a broader arrangement where matches between India and Pakistan at ICC events during the 2024-2027 rights cycle will be played at neutral locations, ensuring logistical and security feasibility. The 'fusion formula' will apply to major ICC tournaments after Champions Trophy, including the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 (to be hosted by India) and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 (jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka). Under this formula, the knockout stage matches, including the final, will be played at neutral venue if India and Pakistan qualify. The PCB has also been awarded hosting rights for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2028. Sources indicate that this agreement is part of a compensation to Pakistan for financial losses due to India's refusal to participate in the Champions Trophy 2025 on Pakistani soil. The Pakistan Cricket Board reportedly rejected India's initial offer of monetary compensation for the Champions Trophy losses. Instead, it successfully proposed a 'fusion formula', which was subsequently approved by the ICC. Under this arrangement, Pakistan will host 10 games of the eight-team Champions Trophy, including matches featuring Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, New Zealand, and South Africa. However, India's league games, including the much-anticipated India-Pakistan clash, will be staged in Dubai. —DNA

Imam, Sharoon shine as Lions edge past Panthers

The eight-wicket victory lifts Lions to second position in the standings

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Imam-ul-Haq's anchoring half-century, followed by Sharoon Siraj's three wickets, led Lions to a narrow eight-run victory over Panthers in the 16th match of the Champions T20 Cup here at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Thursday. Put into bat first, the Lions accumulated 160 runs before getting bowled out on the second delivery of the final over. The Lions got off to a flying start, courtesy of a brilliant partnership between openers Imam and Hasan Nawaz. The opening pair put together 85 runs inside eight overs until Hasan fell



victim to Test spinner Sajid Khan. The right-handed opener scored a quickfire 41 off 22 deliveries with the help of four fours and three sixes. Imam was then involved in a brief partnership with wicketkeeper batter Rohail Nazir before eventually perishing in the

13th over with 120 runs on the board. The skipper remained the top-scorer for the Lions with a 36-ball 57, laced with eight fours and a six. His dismissal sparked a gruelling collapse, which saw the Lions losing their remaining seven wickets in the span of just 40 deliveries.

Usama Mir was the pick of the bowlers for the Panthers, taking four wickets for just 23 runs in his four overs, while Mohammad Wasim Jr bagged two. In response, the Panthers could amass 152/6 in their allotted 20 overs despite Danish Aziz's unbeaten 38. Danish remained the joint top-scorer for the Panthers with opening batter Umar Siddiq, while the rest of the Panthers' batters made meagre contributions. Sharoon Siraj was the standout bowler for the Lions, returning economical bowling figures of 3/19 in his three overs, while Musa Khan, Khushdil Shah and Mohammad Taha made one scalp apiece.

Nunez scores as Liverpool sink Southampton hopes

LONDON: Darwin Nunez set Liverpool on the path to victory over Southampton as Arne Slot's side reached the Carabao Cup semi-finals. Nunez ended his six-game barren run as he and Harvey Elliott scored to give Liverpool firm control in the first half, although Cameron Archer later pulled a goal back to give the hosts hope. Southampton were led by interim manager Simon Rusk following the sacking of Russell Martin after Sunday's 5-0 home defeat by Tottenham, and they started brightly but fell behind after 24 minutes. Trent Alexander-Arnold did superbly to escape pressure from two Southampton attackers before finding Nunez with a through ball, albeit via a huge deflection off Jan Bednarek. The Uruguay international took advantage of Alex McCarthy's slip to place his finish out of the goalkeeper's reach. Any hopes Southampton fans had that cup duty would distract from their desperate struggles at the foot of the Premier League evaporated when Elliott doubled Liverpool's lead eight minutes later. The England Under-21 midfielder - making his first start of the season - sent a shot into the bottom left corner via a deflection after Cody Gakpo played him in on goal. Slot - sitting in the stands while serving a one-game touchline ban - must have felt the game was going comfortably Liverpool's way given the visitors withdrew Al-

exander-Arnold and Joe Gomez at half-time in favour of Konstantinos Tsimikas and Federico Chiesa. Liverpool eased off and paid the price just before the hour mark when Archer collected the ball, ran half the length of the pitch virtually unchallenged and curled a stunning strike into the far corner of Caoimhin Kelleher's goal. Southampton grew in confidence but had Taylor Harwood-Bellis to thank for clearing Chiesa's goal-bound effort, and while they fashioned

a few promising attacks none of them led to an equaliser. They wanted a free-kick just outside the box in the final minutes of injury time, but referee Simon Hooper judged Jarell Quansah did not drag down Mateus Fernandes when through on goal. Last season's cup winners join Arsenal and Newcastle in the semi-finals, as will one of Tottenham or Manchester United who face off in the final last-eight tie on Thursday (20:00 GMT). Liverpool have drawn their past

two Premier League games but remain top of the table - and they are also setting the pace in the Champions League. A cup defence is also firmly in their sights. They were not at their best at St Mary's, but with Mohamed Salah, Virgil van Dijk and Dominik Szoboszlai all rested it was a weakened Reds side. Slot's youthful line-up - there was a first senior start for 17-year-old Trey Nyoni and a substitute cameo for James McConnell, 20 - took the initiative and then weathered Southamp-

ton's second-half storm. Liverpool made hard work of beating the same opposition in the Premier League last month, coming from behind to win thanks to two Salah goals. That this time they won more comfortably without a full complement of stars suggests the talent in this squad might run deeper than some would suggest. It was a good night for Nunez, too. After scoring for only the fourth time in 21 appearances in all competitions this term, the striker shushed the home fans who had jeered him during the opening stages. Slot will hope his previously goal-shy centre forward can use this as fuel for a busy festive period. Whoever succeeds Martin on a permanent basis faces a mammoth task to save Southampton from relegation. The Saints are rock-bottom of the Premier League, nine points from safety after one win from 16 games. That said, during the second half on Wednesday the home side showed signs of being a team that could launch an improbable fightback. Rusk's players created several decent opportunities after half-time, taking three shots on target compared to Liverpool's one. If the video assistant referee (VAR) was in operation, they might have been awarded a last-gasp penalty to send the tie to a shootout. Harwood-Bellis also produced two heroic clearances to deny Chiesa, the kind of defending that will serve his side well in a relegation scrap. —Agencies



CNS meets Omani civil, mily...

FROM PAGE 01
items due to the ministers' absence. Unmoved over the criticism on them, the ministers had spent a busy day in various activities outside parliament throughout the day which was evident from the press releases issued by the media managers of their respective ministries to the newspapers and TV channels, requesting them to give prominent coverage. The same situation was no different in today's NA session with only Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar present among the treasury benches from the federal ministers during question hour.

Rangers personnel dies...

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two sons and three daughters. On November 26, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers carried out a violent protest, attacking the state assets and leaving a trail of devastation. Besides Rangers, two Punjab Police personnel were martyred and 119 policemen were injured in the riots. Eleven officials of Islamabad Police were too injured in the riots.

PTI leaders skip meeting with Imran

FROM PAGE 01
Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) chief Allama Raja Nasir Abbas and former Supreme Court Bar Association president Hamid Khan for a meeting inside Adiala Jail on Thursday, but only Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and lawyer Salman Akram Raja reached the jail for a meeting with their party founder. Gandapur held a meeting with Imran Khan before and after the hearing of the GHQ gate crash case inside Adiala Jail. He held a group meeting and a one-to-one meeting with Imran Khan.

Zulfi describes...

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He added: "Due to Pakistan's geographical positioning it is imperative that Pakistan always takes the appropriate measures to protect its national sovereignty. "It is unfortunate that even on its last legs President Biden's regime maintains its double standards." The US sanctions targeted four entities that it alleged were contributing to the proliferation or delivery of such weapons.

Over 17,700 seminars...

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bill further to amend the Pakistan Halal Authority Act, 2016 [The Pakistan Halal Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2023] in the House while on behalf of Chairman, Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue Saleem Mandviwalla, Mohsin Aziz presented three reports including transportation charges being charged by Iran on Pakistani transporters and businessmen, authenticity of Islamic Banking in Pakistan and the details of amount collected by the FBR up to July, 2024 in the House.

Qureshi, Gandapur...

FROM PAGE 01
Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in the General Headquarters (GHQ) attack case. The court also indicted other PTI leaders including Kanwal Shauzab and Shibli Faraz for their alleged involvement in the case related to May 9 violent protests which broke out in the country last year. A total of 113 suspects have been indicted in the case so far while the court also summoned the other six accused named in the case on December 21 (Saturday). Following the indictment, Qureshi, Shozab and the KP chief minister filed a petition seeking acquittal in the case which will be heard by the ATC judge tomorrow. During the hearing today, PTI founder Imran Khan, Qureshi, Sheikh Rashid, Fawad Chaudhry, Faraz, Shehryar Afridi and Gandapur were present in the courtroom.

Briefs

ISSI hosts seminar on Prospects and Challenges of Regional Cooperation in S Asia

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a seminar titled "Prospects and Challenges of Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Role of SAARC." The event brought together diplomats, academics, practitioners, and researchers to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation in South Asia under the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, Additional Secretary, MOFA, featured as the keynote speaker, while the panel of distinguished speakers included Ambassador Yuba Nath Lamsal, Former Ambassador of Nepal; Ambassador Babar Amin, Former Ambassador of Pakistan; Dr. Zahid Shahab Ahmad, Associate Professor, National Defence College, UAE; and Dr. Saeed Ahmad Rid, Assistant Professor, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. In his introductory remarks, Dr. Khurram Abbas, Director of the India Study Centre, ISSI, highlighted the importance of fostering a collective regional approach to address the pressing issues faced by South Asia. He pointed towards recent political developments across South Asia that were indicating an enabling environment for the revival of regional cooperation through SAARC. In his welcome address, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the critical need for revitalizing SAARC to address shared challenges and unlock South Asia's potential. Reflecting on the 40th anniversary of the SAARC Charter, he emphasized the importance of evaluating the organization's achievements and finding new pathways to enhance regional integration. He highlighted SAARC's accomplishments, such as the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and the SAARC Development Fund (SDF), while acknowledging structural and political challenges that have hindered progress. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood noted that South Asia remains one of the least integrated regions globally, grappling with poverty, low intra-regional trade, and unresolved political disputes. Despite these constraints, he stressed the indispensability of regional cooperation to tackle trans-national threats like climate change, resource-sharing conflicts, and underdevelopment. He also expressed concern over the phenomenon of over-securitization - engulfing areas like trade, visas, and sports. It becomes even more disturbing, while the "Indo-Pacific" Strategy assigns the role of a "Net Security Provider" to one state in South Asia, in contrast with the aspirations of other countries in the region.—DNA

UK Minister named in Bangladesh corruption probe

LONDON: A Labour minister has been named in an investigation into claims her family embezzled up to £3.9bn (Tk 590 billion) from infrastructure projects in Bangladesh. Tulip Siddiq, who as the Treasury's Economic Secretary is responsible for tackling corruption in UK financial markets, is alleged to have brokered a deal with Russia in 2013 that overinflated the price of a new nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. The allegation is part of a wider investigation by Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) into Siddiq's aunt, Sheikh Hasina, who was deposed as prime minister of the country in August. A source close to Siddiq said these were "trumped up charges". The source also said the allegations were "completely politically motivated" and designed to damage her aunt. Downing Street said Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer had confidence in Siddiq, and she will continue her responsibility as the minister overseeing anti-corruption efforts. Siddiq has "denied any involvement in the claims" accusing her of involvement in embezzlement, according to the prime minister's official spokesman.—APP

Iranian President urges Muslim unity against Israel

The Iranian president suggested that the D-8 Technology Transfer Network, with its secretariat located at Pardis Technology Park in Tehran, could be key in advancing joint youth-related initiatives

DNA

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has highlighted the necessity of unity among Islamic nations, urging collective action to counter the aggressions of the Israeli regime. "Islamic countries must unite and stand against the aggression of the Zionist regime," Pezeshkian said while addressing the D-8 group of developing nations' summit in Cairo on Thursday. "It is our religious, legal, and humanitarian duty to take more immediate and practical measures to prevent further harm to our loved ones in crisis-hit areas," he emphasized. The president also expressed hope for strengthened relations among D-8 member states during Egypt's presidency of the organization. "I hope this period will witness deeper friendship and brotherhood between members and significant steps toward enhancing multilateral cooperation," he said. "The importance of preserving friendships and forging new bonds through multilateral cooperation among Islamic countries, based on development and collective benefits, is now felt more than ever. Moving toward multilateralism and establishing smart economic and trade networks among nations is a rightful course of action, reflecting the will of the majority of countries," Pezeshkian further noted. "The Islamic Republic of Iran, while expressing its

Turkiye refutes US claims of ceasefire with Syrian Kurdish fighters

Turkiye has hit back at claims by the United States that it agreed to a ceasefire with Kurdish fighters in northern Syria, and has vowed to continue working to clear them from the territory - a military operation that was launched after the fall of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. A senior Turkish defence official on Thursday rubbished claims made by US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller that a Washington-brokered ceasefire between Turkish-backed rebels and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) around the Syrian city of Manbij had been extended until the end of this week. The SDF is supported by Washington in its fight against ISIL, but Ankara views it as a "terrorist organisation", alleging links with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged a four-decade armed rebellion on Turkish soil. On Thursday, the Turkish official described Miller's statement as "a slip of the tongue", saying it was "out of the question" for Turkiye to talk to the SDF, a group spearheaded by the People's Protection Units (YPG), which is seen as an extension of the PKK. "Until the PKK/YPG terrorist organisation disarms and its foreign fighters leave Syria, our preparations and measures will continue within the scope of the fight against terrorism," said the official. Turkiye regards the PKK, YPG and SDF as "terrorist" groups. The US and Turkiye's Western allies also list the PKK as "terrorist", but not the YPG and the SDF. Renewed fighting between Turkish-backed factions and Syrian Kurdish fighters comes more than a week after fighters led by opposition group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) toppled Syria's longtime strongman Bashar al-Assad. Reporting from Istanbul, Al Jazeera's Sinem Koseoglu said that Turkiye believed it was up to the new Syrian administration to remove "foreign fighters" - an allusion to PKK members of the YPG - from its territory. "Turkiye considers all those PKK ranks within the YPG as foreign fighters and the Turkish foreign minister said these foreign fighters.—APP

interest in sharing its experiences and achievements, will support any initiative or proposal that fosters synergy in economic fields and paves the way for the involvement of young people in development-oriented programs," the Iranian president stressed. Pezeshkian also said that Iran is ready to undertake joint actions within the framework of the D-8 to collectively support young entrepreneurs, such as "establishing a D-8 Joint Bank of Ideas and Capital", "creating shared science and technology hubs and parks", "organizing scientific and technological tours and meetings", "offering educational and research opportunities, scholarships, and exchange programs for professors and students", "providing entrepreneurship facilities for young people", "investing in small and medium-sized enterprises to address youth employment challenges." He also proposed "holding exhibitions showcasing knowledge-based achievements and products in collaboration with member states." The Iranian president suggested that the D-8 Technology Transfer Network, with its secretariat located at Pardis Technology Park in Tehran, could be key in advancing joint youth-related initiatives. Pezeshkian, however, expressed concern that member states still have a long way to go to reach the D-8's 2030 vision. "The volume of trade among D-8 member countries is

still far from the organization's 2030 vision. We hope that during Egypt's presidency of the organization, we will witness an acceleration in trade volume among the members. In this regard, barter trade can play a decisive role in increasing trade volume between the members," he said. The Iranian president also announced that the next meeting of the "D-8 Permanent Committee on Communications and Information Technology" would soon be hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran and that Tehran could begin working on this directive in collaboration with the member states. "In my view, knowledge-based companies and new technologies, including artificial intelligence, have created suitable and innovative opportunities for the youth of Islamic countries to collaborate, enabling them to take significant steps toward the development and advancement of their nations and communities while preserving their indigenous and religious values," Pezeshkian stressed. The D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, also known as Developing-8, is an organization for developing cooperation among Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey. Leading a high-profile delegation, President Pezeshkian arrived in Cairo on Wednesday to take part in the D-8 summit. It is the first visit by an Iranian president to Egypt in 11 years.

Zelensky urges EU-US unity at bloc's last summit before Trump

BRUSSELS, Belgium: Donald Trump loomed large over EU leaders Thursday at their last summit before he reclaims power in the United States, with President Volodymyr Zelensky saying only transatlantic unity can "save" Ukraine. The upheaval in Syria after the toppling of Bashar al-Assad, and how to deal with the new leadership, was also high-up on the agenda of the gathering. But officials expect the talks to focus largely on how to strengthen Kyiv's hand, and the European Union's own position, for the volatile Republican's second term. Before attending the summit, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky held a conclave Wednesday in Brussels with NATO chief Mark Rutte and key European leaders. Trump moves into the White House next month having pledged to bring a swift end to a conflict that NATO says has left over one million dead and wounded since Russian President Vladimir Putin's 2022 invasion. EU leaders - kept not to be left on the sidelines - are scrambling to come up with their own plans as fears swirl that Trump could pull US support for Kyiv and force it to make painful concessions to Moscow. "Especially from the very beginning of next year, we need very much unity between the United States, and the EU," Zelensky said at the start of the summit. "We need this unity to achieve peace, and I think only together the United States and Europe can really stop Putin and save Ukraine." Discussions have begun between some capitals over the potential deployment of European troops in Ukraine to secure any eventual ceasefire. Zelensky said he had discussed with French President Emmanuel Macron an initiative from Paris on "the presence of forces in Ukraine that could contribute to stabilising the path to peace".—APP

Telenor signs Pakistan's First-Ever tripartite MoU for smart metering

ISLAMABAD: Telenor Pakistan has signed Pakistan's first-ever tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement smart metering at its Base Transceiver Station (BTS) sites across Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K). According to a news release the initiative aims to empower societies by leveraging smart metering technology to enhance energy efficiency and ensure consumption accuracy. The tripartite agreement brings together Telenor Pakistan, Government of AJ&K and SBEC to pilot a smart metering solution enabling both consumers and the power distribution company to monitor electricity consumption in real time. The solution will help ensure precise billing, minimize energy wastage by monitoring usage patterns and support data-driven decision-making to optimize resource utilization. The initiative also aligns with Telenor Pakistan's larger vision of promoting digital solutions for socio-economic development. The tripartite MoU was signed at Telenor Pakistan's Campus 345 in Islamabad and was attended by Awais Vohra, Chief Technical Officer, Telenor Pakistan; Irshad Ahmed Qureshi, Secretary, Electricity Department, Government of AJ&K; Zaffar Sami, Executive Director SBEC, along with senior officials of the respective organizations. Speaking on the occasion, Awais Vohra, Chief Technical Officer, Telenor Pakistan, said, "This pilot project, the first-ever collaboration with any DISCO, marks a significant step in the digital transformation of the energy sector. We thank the AJK government for its pragmatic and forward-looking approach in adopting new technologies. This initiative ensures real time consumption data monitoring, drives digitalization, and addresses system deficiencies to reduce losses impacting consumers.—APP

Yunnan continues assisting Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The relations between China and Pakistan are not only limited to economic activities but China always support Pakistan in social and community uplift programs. Now, not only Chinese federal government and institutions are collaborating with Pakistan, but Chinese provinces are coming forth with their own projects and initiatives to help Pakistan. One such notable example is that the Overseas Representative Office (ORO) of Yunnan Commerce in Pakistan in collaboration with Yunnan Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries is playing a leading role in socioeconomic development in Pakistan. Under "Yunnan Hand in Hand Program" a project of "Yunnan Pani" was initiated in 2022 to provide clean and safe drinking water for the residents of rural areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. With the help of this project, thousands of rural people are benefitting by installing solar-powered wells / pumps, water filtration units and water storage tanks etc. Up till now, 13 systems have been installed in various localities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad at Rawat, Sangiani, Tarnol, Sarai Kharboza and Jhangi Syedaan in coordination with Local Body Administration and handed over to the respective communities of the areas. In 2024, three (3) clean drinking water systems have been installed in Tarnol, Sarai Kharboza and Jhangi Syedaan areas; whereas five (5) system were installed in 2023 in the areas of Rawat, Tarnol and Sangiani areas and five (05) in 2022. The initiative is the best example of community participation by engaging the mosques of beneficiary areas to use their already available wells and by constituting "Yunnan Pani Committees" comprising of local community members to take care of the systems installed including repair and maintenance, security and smooth running of systems to ensure the availability of clean drinking water to community. Thousands of people are benefitting from this facility at their doorstep, which earlier lacked of clean drinking water facility. Mr. Li Ping, Director of Yunnan Commerce in Pakistan has expressed his resolve that Yunnan province intends to continue and expand such social impact contributions in future as well.

Israel's deprivation of water in Gaza is act of genocide

THE HAGUE: Human Rights Watch said on Thursday that Israel has killed thousands of Palestinians in Gaza by denying them clean water which it says legally amounts to acts of genocide and extermination. "This policy, inflicted as part of a mass killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, means Israeli authorities have committed the crime against humanity of extermination, which is ongoing. This policy also amounts to an 'act of genocide' under the Genocide Convention of 1948," Human Rights Watch said in its report. Israel has repeatedly rejected any accusation of genocide, saying it has respected international law and has a right to defend itself after the cross-border Hamas-led attack from Gaza on Oct. 7, 2023 that precipitated the war. Although the report described the deprivation of water as an act of genocide, it noted that proving the crime of genocide against Israeli officials would also require establishing their intent. It cited statements by some senior Israeli officials which it said suggested they "wish to destroy Palestinians" which means the deprivation of water "may amount to the crime of genocide." "What we have found is that the Israeli government is intentionally killing Palestinians in Gaza by denying them the water that they need to survive," Lama Fakih, Human Rights Watch Middle East director told a press conference. Human Rights Watch is the second major rights group in a month to use the word genocide to describe the actions of Israel in Gaza, after Amnesty International issued a report that concluded Israel was committing genocide. Both reports came just weeks after the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defense chief for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity. They deny the allegations.—APP

Ahsan hails "Iron Brother" relationship with China that keeps growing

BEIJING: Pakistan's Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, lauded the "iron brother" relationship between Pakistan and China on Wednesday, likening the partnership to a garden that only experiences spring. He emphasized the enduring mutual affection between the two nations and highlighted the significant role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in driving economic development. In an interview with China Economic Net, Iqbal noted the relationship between China and Pakistan has flourished over decades and culminated in the development of CPEC as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). "In 2022, we faced a significant disaster in the form of floods and rains, costing Pakistan's economy \$30 billion. We are looking to learn from China in environmental issues," he added. Reflecting on CPEC's first decade, Iqbal underscored its crucial contributions to Pakistan's economic growth. The addition of 8,000 megawatts of energy helped Pakistan overcome the power crisis of 2013. Modern highways and motorways have connected regions, stimulating greater economic activity. The installation of a fiber optic cable has strengthened Pakistan's digital infrastructure, linking the country with China. Iqbal also highlighted the progress at Gwadar Port, envisioning it as a "smart port" with vast potential to become a regional trade hub by connecting the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean to western China, Central Asia, and beyond. For the upcoming second phase of CPEC, Iqbal outlined an ambitious vision for the high-quality modernization of Pakistan's economy with Chinese technological assistance. This phase will focus on five key corridors: the Growth Corridor to drive economic expansion, the Livelihood Corridor to enhance living standards and create jobs, the Innovation Corridor to foster technological advancements, the Green Economy Corridor to promote sustainable development and renewable energy, and the Open and Inclusive Development Corridor to encourage regional cooperation and integration. Pakistan has introduced a '5Es' framework to align with these goals: Export-Led Growth, E-Pakistan, Environment and Climate Change, Energy and Infrastructure, and Equity and Empowerment," he added. Following the 2024 China Central Economic Work Conference (CEWC), which emphasized high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and enhancing the overseas service system, Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal highlighted China's significant progress in economic innovation and new technologies, according to another of CEN. He noted that through the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan will not only receive support from China but also collaborate in technological development, benefiting from cutting-edge research and continuous innovation. According to China Economic Net, the minister stressed that the adoption of high-quality new technologies will significantly benefit Pakistan, especially in its agricultural sector, as the country aims to boost exports and enhance productivity and competitiveness in industry.

Malaysia donates 5m US dollars to the Palestinian people

DNA

KUALUMPUR: Malaysia donates 5 million US dollars to the Palestinian people through the initiative of the Jordanian government's Hashmi On Wednesday, 18-12-2024, the state of Malaysia donated about 5 million US Dollars to the Palestinian people through the initiative of the Hashmi Jordanian government, to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians who are facing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamed Hassan presented this donation to the Jordanian Ambassador to Malaysia Dr. Ismail Al-Maita at the Ministry Building here, with the participation of Ambassador Walid Abu Ali, and the presence of ambassadors of some Arab countries. Mohammed said the money came from Malaysian donations to the Palestinian Special Credit Fund. He added: "This is an effort by Malaysia, people and government, to continue helping the Palestinian people who suffer from inhu-

mane cruelty. We are saddened by the ongoing tragedy for the Palestinians." He explained in a press conference on the sidelines of the donation delivery

ceremony from Malaysia to Palestine under the Jordanian government's Hashmi initiative: "Malaysians already have a cooperative spirit always to help any-

one facing problems." He also noted that today's delivery of the donation is an embodiment of support for the initiative led by the Jorda-

nian-Hashmi government, and said that cooperation between Malaysia and Jordan was implemented immediately when my Jordanian counterpart informed me of the plan of Al-Jordanian King Abdullah II to lead a comprehensive operation aimed at establishing an airbridge between Zarqa and Jordan and the Karni crossing near Gaza", As he expresses it. He clarified: "This mission, which will last for seven days, will use helicopters to send about 238 tons of aid to the Palestinian people, making it easier for the international community to ensure the safe and efficient delivery of key humanitarian aid to those in need." Ambassador Walid Abu Ali on his side expressed his deep gratitude to the State of Malaysia and the Malaysian people for their steadfast support for the Palestinian cause, emphasizing that this support reinforces the Palestinian people's resilience and reflects Malaysia's steadfast commitment to standing by the Palestinian people's rights in all concerts and fields.



Briefs

UK to end Afghan refugee schemes

LONDON: The UK is to close its resettlement schemes for people fleeing Afghanistan, The Times reported. Defense Secretary John Healey said the UK's two programs for Afghans could not be "an endless process" as he laid out plans to move refugees out of temporary accommodation. He added that over 1,000 Afghan families have arrived in the UK in the past 12 months. Though no time frame has been announced, the government aims to limit the amount of time Afghans can stay in hotels and other temporary housing to nine months. The two refugee programs — the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy — were introduced in 2021 after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban following the withdrawal of US-led coalition forces. Thousands of people were evacuated to the UK during an airlift mission known as Operation Pitting. UK authorities have struggled to find suitable permanent housing solutions for many Afghan refugees due to the large size of typical Afghan families — more than double that of the average British family. A total of 30,412 Afghans were eventually taken to the UK under the two schemes. Under ARAP, 2,729 Afghans were placed in temporary Ministry of Defense accommodation and a further 288 in Home Office housing, amid a broader backlog of over 100,000 asylum seekers requiring assistance in the UK — 35,651 of whom were put up in hotels. — **Agencies**

PTI sacks Salman Ahmad

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has terminated the basic membership of Salman Ahmad, a veteran Pakistani musician and close aide of PTI founder, for "posting" against the incarcerated PTI founder's family. The former ruling party issued a notification which blamed Ahmad for "sowing division and discontent" among the party members and supporters through "unwarranted and scurrilous posts" on social media. It added that the party "had dissociated itself from your conduct and statements and had warned you about the consequences of your conduct". "You had been consistently asked, inter alia, through press releases issued by the Core Committee of PTI to desist from posting those objectionable posts." "And whereas you continued to defy the instructions of the Founder Chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf despite repeated warnings to the contrary," it added.

President Zardari for greater parliamentary coop with KSA

The President expressed concern over the grave situation in the Middle East, arising out of the Israeli aggression targeting innocent civilians in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasized the need for enhancing parliamentary cooperation and high-level exchanges with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to further deepen the fraternal relationship

between Pakistan and KSA. The President reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening economic, political, and cultural ties with KSA for the mutual benefit of both nations while talking to the Chairman of the Shura Council of KSA, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh, who along with members of the Shura Council

called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, a President Office's press release said. Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf Bin Said Al-Malki, members of Parliament and senior government officials also attended

Government demands KP government's resignation

FIR for security personnel should be registered against CM Gandapur, says Faisal Karim Kundi

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor Faisal Karim Kundi demanded the resignation of the provincial government over a law and order issue. Speaking to the media in Peshawar, the governor expressed concerns over the worsening security situation in the province. He suggested that the FIR for the martyrdom of security personnel should be registered against the Chief Minister, holding the KP government responsible for the province's deteriorating state. Governor Kundi remarked that while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is burning, Punjab's border is not far from it. "There must be accountability for those who brought terrorism back to KP. Why was Ali Amin Gandapur armed when heading to Islamabad?" he questioned. Criticizing both federal and provincial governments, Kundi accused them of being indifferent to the plight of the people. "The province is ablaze, yet the government remains in a deep slumber. The failure to resolve the issue in Kurram is a testament to the provincial administration's incompetence. There's a shortage of medicine and food in Kurram, but the provincial and federal governments have turned a blind eye," he lamented. Kundi described the delay in resolving Kurram's crisis as a "gross injustice," suggesting that governments might be waiting for a major tragedy to act. "Political parties have reduced themselves to exploiting tragedies for political gain," he said. He further criticised the lack of action by federal authorities and the judiciary, stating that no inquiries have been initiated to address the escalating violence. "Both federal and provincial governments are oblivious to the law and order crisis. Ministers complain about their issues rather than addressing the province's deteriorating state," he said. The governor praised the bravery of the police but noted that they were ill-equipped to combat the terrorism gripping Kurram. "Kurram is burning due to the tussle between federal and provincial governments. Security forces and police are laying down their lives, but both administrations remain silent," he said.



CAIRO: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov on the sidelines of 11th Summit of Developing Eight Countries, being held in Cairo. — **DNA**

Govt promises progress on electricity relief: Naqvi

Interior Minister meets Jamaat-e-Islam leaders to discuss IPPs and electricity issues

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Hafiz Naeemur Rahman in Mansurah and informed about the government's initiatives and progress on the IPPs issue. Secretary General Amirul-Azeem, Deputy Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami Dr. Osama Razi were also present on the occasion. The Interior Minister said that the government is sticking to the promises made during the Rawalpindi Agreement with Jamaat-e-Islami. People will soon get good news regarding IPPs contracts. Amir Jamaat said that Jamaat-e-Islami will continue its struggle until people get relief regarding electricity prices. The Home Minister said that the government is trying to finalize the negotiations with the IPPs owners very quickly. Amir Jamaat said that the work done so far in this regard should be brought before the people. Electricity bills should be reduced in basic tariff.

PEMRA's ISPR approval rule for defence analysts suspended

COURT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has suspended a Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) notification that made it mandatory for defence analysts to obtain approval from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) before appearing on television channels. The court heard the case regarding the PEMRA notification, which stipulated that only retired officers of the armed forces could participate in TV programs, provided they received prior permission from ISPR. Express News reported. The notification, issued in 2019, had drawn criticism for placing restrictions on retired defence personnel's media participation. During today's proceedings, Justice Babar Sattar issued a written order against the notification, noting that PEMRA's legal counsel did not appear in court. An associate lawyer, citing the illness of a senior counsel, requested a postponement. Based on the arguments presented during the hearing, the court decided to suspend the PEMRA notification. The Islamabad High Court further stated that the suspension of the notification would remain in place until the final decision in the case. Following the hearing, the court adjourned the case until February 11. Earlier in September, the IHC had sought clarification on why the military's media wing, the ISPR, had considered it a special privilege to determine defence analysts presenting the viewpoints on TV channels. Justice Babar Sattar had issued a written order regarding the hearing of a case, challenging a Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) notification that restricted defence analysis on TV channels to only retired military officers. The court had also sought the original records and inquired about the basis of Pemra's notification. It had also asked the defence ministry to clarify the legal standing of the ISPR and why the ISPR deemed the designation of defence analysts as its exclusive authority.

Israeli warplanes conduct deadly strikes across Yemen

Hamas Movement has condemned the Israeli aggression on Yemen saying, "the Zionist terrorist attack on Yemen is a dangerous escalation and extension of its aggression

FOREIGN DESK

SANA'A: Israeli warplanes have conducted fresh aerial assaults on the Yemeni capital of Sana'a and the strategic western province of Hudaydah, killing and injuring several people. Yemen's al-Masirah television channel reported on Thursday that the airstrikes targeted the Haziz and Dhahban power stations near the capital, as well as the Hudaydah port and Ras Isa oil facility. It said that nine civilians were killed and three others were injured in the attacks. Civil defense teams managed to extinguish fires at the Dhahban power station, while efforts continue at Haziz, the report added. Meanwhile, the Israeli military confirmed in a statement that its fighter jets had bombed Yemen following repeated missile and drone attacks on the occupied territories. It also claimed that the targets struck were used by Yemeni forces "for their military operations." Hamas Movement has condemned the Israeli aggression on Yemen saying, "the Zionist terrorist attack on Yemen is a dangerous escalation and extension of its aggression on Palestine and the Arab region." In a press statement on Thursday, the Movement condemned in the strongest terms "the brutal Zionist aggression on Yemen," which targeted civil and public service facilities in the capital Sana'a and

in the port of Hodeidah, west of the country, calling it "a dangerous escalation and extension of the aggression on our Palestinian people, Syria, and the Arab region." The Movement stressed that "the criminal enemy will not undermine the morale of our people or the peoples of our region and will not break the resolve of Yemenis or dissuade them from adhering to their supportive position for our Palestinian people until the end of the Zionist aggression on Gaza." Hamas mourned the martyrs of the Yemeni people who were killed as a result of the Zionist raids on Yemen and expressed its full solidarity with Yemen and the Ansar Allah group in the face of the US-UK backed aggression. The Movement called on the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to "condemn the aggression on Yemen, to take effective steps and decisions to curb the Zionist aggression and encroachment in the Arab region, and to force it to stop its aggression and extermination war against our people in the Gaza Strip." Reacting to the aggression, Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the political bureau of the Ansarullah resistance movement, said the "US-Israeli bombing of civilian facilities" in Yemen reveals the truth about the West's hypocrisy and refutes all its humanitarian claims. In a post on his X account on Thursday morning, Al-Bukhaiti reaffirmed that the Yemeni Armed Forces' military operations in support of Gaza will continue.

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