



Islamabad POST

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US sanctions will have 'zero impact' on Pakistan: Lodhi

Detailed News On Page-08

Our doors are open for negotiations

Detailed News On Page-08



City's Dias ruled out for '3 or 4 weeks'

Detailed News On Page-06



Fazl expects 'good news'

PM for swift resolution of seminary issue

Fazlur Rehman said that positive progress was made on the bill

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has stated that their demands regarding the seminary bill align with the Constitution and will be accepted. Speaking to the media after meeting Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said the prime minister had invited him for discussions on madrasa registration bill. Fazlur Rehman said that positive progress was made on the bill. "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed that the matter be resolved promptly. The Ministry of Law has been instructed to take steps per the constitution to address the issue," he added. He mentioned that both houses had passed the seminaries bill and it is now an act. The discussion with the prime minister focused on this bill, he added. "If the president has any objections to the bill, he should have raised earlier. Once the speaker has responded to the objection and the constitutional period has elapsed, further objections are invalid," he added. Fazlur Rehman expressed optimism, stating that their stance might not require a joint session. The prime minister gave a positive response and was requested to take immediate steps in line with the constitution. He hoped constitutional action would be taken as per their demands. He clarified that today's discussion was solely about the madrasa bill. Fazlur Rehman briefed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the consultations held with scholars regarding the bill. JUI-F leaders Senator Kamran Murtaza and Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri also attended the meeting. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Rana Sanaulah, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, and Information Minister Atta Tarar represented the government in the meeting. From the Pakistan Peoples Party, Raja Pervez Ashraf and Qamar Zaman Kaira were present. According to sources, PM Shehbaz on Thursday

Continued on Page 06

Greek boat tragedy

PM orders 'stern action' against FIA officials

"Human trafficking earns a bad name for Pakistan," says premier while ordering to complete probe at earliest

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Following the Greek boat tragedy in which at least 40 Pakistani nationals are feared dead, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday ordered strict action against Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) officials, who are involved in facilitating human traffickers. The premier issued these directives while presiding over a meeting regarding the prevention of human trafficking in Islamabad. He also instructed the authorities concerned to complete the ongoing probe into the human trafficking issue at the earliest and submit concrete recommendations, saying that such incidents earn a bad name for Pakistan in the entire world. PM Shehbaz noted that a substantial delay was committed in taking action against the responsible following the boat capsizing incident in 2023. The meeting was briefed on the measures taken so far to prevent human

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: President Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

SC judge laments

State busy in forming and dislodging govts

"State is busy toppling and forming govts," laments Justice Minallah during a hearing of murder case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: A pending trial of a 2017 murder in the Supreme Court prompted the senior judges to criticise the state institutions role in the political matters with Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail reprimanding them for involving in "political engineering" instead of performing their constitutional duties. Besides Justice Mandokhail, SC's Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan also lamented the state of affairs prevailing in the country while hearing a bail petition of a murder suspect Ishaq on Friday. It is noteworthy to mention here that Ishaq fled after securing bail in the case and has yet to be arrested again. "This case has been pending in the Supreme Court since 2017," Justice Minallah remarked, adding: "[...] and the state is busy toppling and forming a government.

Continued on Page 06

GHQ attack case

ATC rejects Imran, others' acquittal pleas

Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Shibli Faraz, Shahrar Afridi, Kanwal Shauzab and Fawad Chaudhry's pleas also dismissed

COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Rawalpindi on Friday dismissed the acquittal pleas of PTI leaders including party founder-chairman Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the GHQ attack case related to the May 9, 2023,

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

'Govt not willing to hold negotiations'

'PTI founder formed negotiation committee with pure intentions'

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub said on Friday that everybody had realised that the government was not willing to hold negotiations. Expressing his thoughts, Ayub said, "The PTI founder had formed the negotiation committee with pure intentions and also revealed the conditions for the talks." "It's been two weeks since the negotiation committee had been formed, but there is no development so far in line with the talks," said Ayub.

6 awarded life sentences in Soomro's murder case

Deceased JUI-F leader's son demands death sentences for convicts, says will move high court

DNA

SUKKUR: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Sukkur on Friday sentenced six individuals to double life imprisonment in the murder case of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) leader Dr Khalid Mehmood Soomro. The convicts were also handed seven-year terms for weapons charges and fined more than Rs1 million each for their crimes.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

To restore peace

KP apex committee to dismantle all bunkers

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi assures committee of centre's full support

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Apex Committee on Friday decided to dismantle all private bunkers in the Kurram district as part of efforts to restore peace in the region. The significant decision was made during the high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and attended by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, the Peshawar Corps Commander, the provincial chief secretary, the inspector general, and key cabinet members. Tribal clashes have killed more than 200 people since July, with various truces announced since the latest round of fighting began, as elders from the two sides negotiate a lasting agreement. In the meantime, the government has shut down key roads in and out of the district in an attempt to quell the violence, after a security convoy escorting residents was attacked in November,

Continued on Page 06

JI emir criticised govt for failure to curb inflation

The day gas prices increased, MPAs received pay raises, Hafiz Naeem lambasted

DNA

FAISALABAD: The Jamaat-e-Islami emir, Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman, criticized the government for its failure to curb inflation, asserting that the rising cost of living continues to plague the nation despite repeated promises. Speaking to the media in Faisalabad, Hafiz highlighted that inflation, which surged by 20% last year, has risen by another 18% this month. "Over 50% of textile mills in Faisalabad have shut down, leaving thousands unemployed. The situation in Faisalabad echoes that of Karachi and

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan's mpox tally reaches 8

Man returning to Pakistan from Gulf country tests positive for deadly virus

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A 32-year-old man returning to Pakistan from a Gulf nation recently tested positive for mpox, marking the country's eighth confirmed case of the virus this year, officials from the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS) Regulations and Coordination announced on Thursday. The man, who hails from Upper Dir in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, arrived at Islamabad International Airport on December 18, exhibiting lesions and other symptoms consistent with the infectious disease. He was promptly transferred to the Pakistan Institute of

Continued on Page 06

6 embassies damaged in Russian attack on Kyiv

The German chancellor says he will speak with Putin again after reinitiating contact with him more than a month ago

FOREIGN DESK

KIEV: At least one person has been killed and several embassies have been damaged in an early morning Russian missile attack on Ukraine's capital Kyiv. The Kyiv City Military Administration confirmed the death in a post on Telegram, adding that 12 others have been injured. Of those injured, five were hospitalized while the rest were treated at the scene. It comes a day after Russian leader Vladimir Putin challenged Ukraine to a "duel" in his end-of-year conference, prompting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to call the

Continued on Page 06

We will continue to support Ukraine: Polish ambassador

Says he was happy to report that our bilateral trade with Pakistan has been steadily increasing, with a significant jump from €456.74 million in 2018 to €861 million in 2023. This growth in trade is a reflection of the strengthening economic ties between our two countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisarski has said both Poland and Pakistan have developed friendly and productive cooperation over the 62 years. A broader framework of this relationship is to uphold the international order based on the UN Charter and other relevant international treaties. "Respect for sovereignty, legal equality of all states, territorial integrity and rejection of military means as a way of solving international problems are among the most fundamental values of that order". The ambassador expressed these views in an extensive media briefing. The ambassador touched upon various issues ranging from bilateral issues to regional and international challenges confronting the world today. Ambassador Pisarski further said, Poland congratulates Pakistan on the election to the UN Security Council for 2025-2026 and looks forward to working with Pakistan on preventing and solving conflicts and crisis which undermine our security. "We believe that activity of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in this international body will contribute to building lasting peace and security in the world. We fully appreciate a longstanding participation of Pakistan in the UN peacekeeping missions". Talking about the trade relations the Ambassador said, he was happy to report that our bilateral trade with Pakistan has been steadily increasing, with a significant jump from €456.74 million in 2018 to €861 million in 2023. This growth in trade is a reflection of the strengthening economic ties between our two countries. He high-

lighted the successful economic mission led by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Islamabad under the GreenEvo initiative. The mission brought together representatives from nine Polish businesses providing innovative green technology solutions, and featured business events in Karachi and Lahore. We believe that such initiatives will help to further boost our bilateral trade and economic cooperation. 'Polish Oil and Gas Company/Orlen Group through its Pakistan



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisarski addressing the year-end media briefing. - DNA

Branch has been in operation in Pakistan since 1997. Since 2005 the company has been operating in the Kirthar concession. As a result of the work done, the company has made three tight gas discoveries (Rehman, Rizq, and Rayvan fields), making it a pioneer in the exploration and production of unconventional gas deposits in Pakistan. The company has made over USD 450 million in investments thus far, he added. Talking about Poland's Economic Growth and Resilience the ambassador said, the level of our trade is not satisfactory. It does not yet reflect and strength of the Polish economy and the potential of the Pakistani markets. To ensure a conducive, stable, transparent and fair economic environment for foreign companies and investors who have operated or consider to establish a relationship with Pakistani partners is of a paramount importance. 'Firstly, I would like to highlight Poland's remarkable economic growth since 1989. Our GDP has increased by an impressive 826.96%, making us the most successful economy in Europe. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Polish people, as well as the effective economic policies implemented by our government. We have also become the fastest-growing large economy in the world among upper-middle-income and high-income countries, surpassing even the Asian tigers such as South Korea and Singapore'. Our GDP per capita PPP has almost tripled, from \$10,300 in 1990 to over \$28,000 in 2018. This significant increase in GDP per capita has resulted in a substantial improvement in the standard of living for Polish citizens.

Continued on Page 06

AIOU's Matric to Ph.D admissions to begin from Jan

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the schedule for admissions for the Spring Semester 2025. Previously, the university conducted admissions in two phases until Autumn Semester 2024. However, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood has introduced reforms to further improve the admission and examination systems. According to the new policy, admissions for all programs from Matriculation to PhD will now be conducted in a single phase starting on January 1. Programs open for admission in Spring 2025 include Matriculation, FA, ICom, Associate Degrees in Arts, Commerce, and Education, BEd, BS face-to-face and ODL programs, Postgraduate programs, MS, MPhil, PhD, Diploma programs, and Certificate courses. Admission forms and prospectuses for all programs will be available on the university's website www.aiou.edu.pk starting January 1.—APP

Zero dengue, only 08 patients hospitalized

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi witnessed the first day without any new dengue cases in four months, as no patient with positive dengue symptoms was reported during the last 24 hours. According to the details released by the health authority on Friday, the continuously declining graph of the endemic has touched down to zero. The variable declining average of dengue cases remained 2 per day during the last week, finally reaching null. The dengue stats show only 8 patients who are still admitted in hospitals for treatment. However, the pace of discharging from the hospital suggests that a less than or equal to a week, is required for the complete recovery of the under treatment patients.—APP

Kundi calls for swift relief steps for Kurram affectees

PESHAWAR :Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday called for prompt relief measures for the affected people of Kurram district, hoping that the provincial government would show indifference regarding the situation in Kurram. He made these remarks during an online session with overseas Pakistanis on "Parachinar Humanitarian Relief," organized by Sehar International, Peace Network, and IMI International, said an official statement issued Friday. The session included participants from the US, Canada, Dubai, Kuwait, Sharjah, London, Frankfurt, and other Central Asian and European countries. Governor Kundi highlighted ongoing relief efforts in Kurram, stating that medicines are being provided and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is distributing food and essential items to internally displaced persons (IDPs) daily. "Tents have been provided to the displaced families, but the role of NDMA has been disappointing, with only 75 tents sent", he said. He criticized the KP government saying that it remained criminally silent on Kurram's plight, not even offered prayers in the provincial assembly for the martyrs of Kurram. The governor emphasized the urgency of reopening blocked roads.—APP

Riphah University hosts dinner to welcome Palestinian students

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Riphah International University organized a distinguished dinner to honor Palestinian students, recognizing their resilience and sacrifices. The event, held at Gulberg Greens Islamabad, was graced by the presence of the Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, H.E. Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamdallah Zaid, and Dr. Hafeez ur Rehman, President of Al-Khidmat Foundation. The evening began with the recitation of the Holy Quran followed by the national anthems of Pakistan and Palestine, symbolizing the solidarity between the two nations. In his welcome address, Mr. Hassan Muhammad Khan, Chancellor Riphah International University, reaffirmed the university's commitment to supporting Palestinian medical students in their academic pursuits. Representatives of the Palestinian student community in Pakistan shared inspiring stories of resilience and determination, which were met with great admiration from the audience. H.E. Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamdallah Zaid expressed gratitude for Pakistan's unwavering support



for Palestine and highlighted the strong bond between the two nations. Dr. Hafeez ur Rehman emphasized the transformative power of education in fostering resilience and hope among students. The evening concluded with a souvenir distribution ceremony to honor the distinguished guests and acknowledge their contributions, leaving the attendees inspired by the messages of solidarity and hope.

Pakistan's economy shows promising signs of growth as inflation eases

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Finance Minister Khurram Shahzad on Friday expressed optimism that the inflation rate has significantly declined compared to previous years, driven by the favorable impact of international oil market prices, which is expected to trigger a further decrease in energy costs in the coming months. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, the Adviser to the Finance Minister expressed confidence about Pakistan's economic future, adding, that the country has made significant strides, with the inflation rate plummeting to a 79-month low which is a notable achievement. In a welcome development, Pakistan's inflation rate has witnessed a significant decline, paving the way for the country's long-awaited economic turnaround, he added. This downward trend in inflation is a testament to the government's prudent economic policies and is expected to boost economic growth, increase investor confidence, and provide relief to the common man, he highlighted. The reduction in energy costs is also expected to have a positive impact on various sectors, including industry and commerce, he added. Furthermore, the decrease in the inflation rate is also expected to attract foreign investment, improve the country's trade balance, and strengthen the value of the Pakistani rupee. The adviser also mentioned that the prices of other essential items, such as wheat, tomatoes, and pulses have also decreased compared to previous years. He stated that the prices of tomatoes, which had skyrocketed in previous years have now stabilized and decreased, providing relief to consumers. These decreases in prices are expected to have a positive impact on the overall inflation rate and provide relief for middle man consumers, he mentioned. Responding to a query, the adviser to the finance minister stated that the government is taking drastic measures to curb losses and theft, while also expanding the tax network. This multifaceted approach is expected to bring significant relief to the people and potentially boost the economy, he added. By closely monitoring and addressing losses and theft, the government aims to increase revenue and allocate it more efficiently, he mentioned. By leveraging technology and digital transformation, the government is also enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of tax collection, ultimately benefiting the economy and the people, he said.—DNA

36th convocation ceremony held at Pakistan Navy Engineering College

DNA

KARACHI: The 36th Convocation ceremony of Pakistan Navy Engineering College (PNEC) was held in Karachi. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Commander Karachi, Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi, and Rector NUST, Lt General Dr. Muhammad Zahid Latif Mirza (Retd), were also present at the event. During the ceremony, the Chief of the Naval Staff awarded medals to 33 outstanding position holders. Additionally, Rector NUST conferred degrees upon 372 postgraduate and undergraduate students. In his address, the Chief Guest emphasized that PNEC has consistently fostered and promoted a strong culture of research and development. He praised PNEC for launching postgraduate and undergraduate programs in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Science, and Computer Science. He also congratulated the Rector NUST and Commandant

PNEC on the inaugural graduation of BE Naval Architecture batch. The Chief Guest extended his felicitations to prize winners, graduating students, and their parents



for the successful completion of their degrees. He advised the graduates to uphold strong character, prioritize national interests over personal gains, and always seek

guidance and strength from ALLAH (SWT). Earlier, the Commandant PNEC, Commodore Mudassar Khurshid, reiterated PNEC's commitment to providing quality education,

highlighted that the university's international ranking has improved significantly this year, ascending 14 places in global rankings; reflecting its unwavering commitment to excellence in education. The convocation was attended by a large number of civil and military dignitaries, as well as the parents of graduating students.

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ISSI, Lightstone Publishers host 9th Adab Festival Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Lightstone Publishers, is all set to host the 9th edition of the "Adab Festival Pakistan" in Islamabad on Sunday, December 22, 2024. This premier literary and cultural event will be held at the Institute's premises from 11:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Joint hosting of the Festival illustrates the ISSI's growing outreach and its endeavors to promote intellectual discourse in close engagement with civil society. The "Adab Festival Pakistan" has established itself as a significant platform to celebrate Pakistan's rich literary heritage, while fostering meaningful discussions on critical socio-political and cultural themes. This year, the Festival promises an engaging lineup of sessions, reflecting on Pakistan's historical, cultural, and geo-political narratives, featuring some of the esteemed intellectual and writers. Key highlights of the Festival include a thought-provoking book talk on Jinnah's Vision for Pakistan - A Call for Action by Yasser Latif Hamdani and Ilhan Niaz, followed by the launch of Zahid Hussain's A Dialogue with History: Interviews with World Leaders with Dr. Maleeha Lodhi and Arifa Noor as panelists.

No shortage of medicines in Kurram: Saif

PESHAWAR :Adviser to the Chief Minister for KP for Information, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif clarified that there was no shortage of medicines in Kurram district and all emergency medicines provided to Parachinar hospitals. He said that medical and life saving medicines were also dispatched in Kurram, adding that negotiation of grand tribal jirga on Kurram situation was in progress in Kohat and hopefully the problem would be addressed in next few days. Talking to media, Barrister Saif said that KP Govt was committed to provide all modern facilities to Govt hospitals in the province. He said that dismantling of bankers and handing over of heavy weapons to Govt authorities were necessary for lasting peace in Kurram. The CM aide sought the cooperation of tribal elders and Malik of Kurram in persuading warring tribes in handing over of heavy weapons and rocket launchers besides vacation of bunkers.—APP

Youth directorate engages 2,500 youth in various training programs

PESHAWAR :The Directorate of Youth Affairs, under the District Sports Office Peshawar, launched a dynamic strategy in 2024 and engaged 2500 youngsters in various social, educational, and cultural initiatives in last six months. According to information obtained under the Right to Information Act, between July and December, over 2,500 participants took part in various programs addressing critical topics such as environmental sustainability, digital skills, patriotism, interfaith harmony, community capacity building. Over 450 students participated in Web Development Bootcamp and Digital Skills Empowerment Programs and educated about the growing demand for digital education. Additionally, cultural and national awareness events like Independence Day celebrations, Defence Day, and Kashmir Black Day fostered patriotism and provided platforms for youth to discuss

national issues. Efforts such as International Volunteer Day and Mashal-e-Aman (Torch of Peace) emphasized the role of youth in promoting peace and interfaith harmony. These programs aimed to foster unity within a diverse society. Meanwhile, awareness sessions on drug abuse and anti-corruption seminars focused on equipping young people to tackle pressing societal issues. Highlighting the importance of youth skill-building, the year concluded with initiatives like the Science and IT Exhibition and continued digital skills programs. These efforts underscored the Directorate's commitment to youth development, social awareness, and national cohesion. "This array of programs demonstrates the Directorate's dedication to empowering youth, fostering social awareness, and promoting national harmony," said a representative from the District Youth Office.—DNA

Israeli occupation of Harmon Heights after the Golan

JAWAD AHMAD



THIS is what happens when the reflection and defense machinery of a state is busy suppressing the fire at home and ignores its bor-

ders and invests all its resources in stopping the rebellion, then the enemy easily and without any resistance takes the extreme measures of the country's defense. Occupies the most important fronts. This has all happened in Syria and is still going on. Israel first occupied the Golan Heights and now it has also occupied the Harmon Heights. Harmon is a defensive barrier for Syria. What was Now the most important installations in Syria are on the target of Israeli artillery. Harmon is also called Jabal al-Sheikh in Arabic. This mountain range completes the southern end opposite Lebanon. The Israeli occupation of the hills can be a big blow for Syria. He had said that if you want to defeat

a nation without a war, make immorality common in this society. He has observed in his country Pakistan, the army is the backbone of the country, if this backbone is broken, then the whole body is lying on the bed like a paralyzed person. Israel Hormone Heights He was sitting with his eyes closed Later, Israel is regularly starting to settle its people on these hills, now the same year protests will start, resistance resolutions and appeals to vacate the occupation will begin. Why did Israel need to occupy the highest hills of Syria? Let's try to find out Israel has captured Mt Hermon, the highest mountain in Syria, its peak reaching 2,814m. Syria's capital, Damascus, is only 40 km away, now with-

in range of Israel's artillery shells. Here's why Israel took this mountain: For decades, Israel's northern defenses were overshadowed by Syria's Mt. Hermon. No longer. The most important natural fortress in the region is now in the hands of Israel. Israel did it quietly, driving into Syria's abandoned positions and taking them without a fight. (When the National Military crumbles, the Nation gets raped in every dimension). In last 72 hrs, Israel has DESTROYED the Syrian Airforce. Israeli sources are themselves claiming it to be the biggest victory against an Arab Airforce since 1967 war. Lesson: Once military crumbles, states are made naked. The enemy then has a dance of the vampire.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER
Dec 01/Romania
National Day

Dec 02/United Arab Emirates
National Day

Dec 02/Laos Republic
National Day

Dec 05/Thailand
National Day

Dec 06/Finland
Independence Day

Dec 07/India
Armed Forces Flag Day

Dec 09/Tanzania
National Day

Dec 11/Oman
Armed Forces Day

Dec 12/Kenya
Independence Day

Dec 12/Turkmenistan
Neutrality Day

Dec 16/Bahrain
National Day

Dec 16/Kazakhstan
Independence Day

Dec 18/Qatar
National Day

Dec 18/Niger
National Day

Dec 23/Philippines
Armed Forces Day

Dec 23/Japan
National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Tariq Usmani elected President of RIUJ; Rizwan Secy General

Finance Secretary Yasar Nazar and Mudassir Ilyas Kayani Co-Secretary Information have been elected unopposed. Faisal Awan, Mohsin Ejaz and Jawaria Siddique have been elected as Vice Presidents, similarly Abdul Waheed Janjua, Khalid Malik and Mehwish Qamas have been elected as Joint Secretaries respectively; Fiaz Chaudhry elected executive committee member

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists election results for 2025-27 have been announced, according to the announcement of the election results by Chairman Election Committee Tariq Masood, Senior Journalist Tariq Usmani President, Rizwan Ghalzai. General Secretary, Finance Secretary Yasar Nazar and Mudassir Ilyas Kayani Co-Secretary Information have been elected unopposed. Faisal Awan, Mohsin Ejaz and Jawaria Siddique have been elected as Vice Presidents, similarly Abdul Waheed Janjua, Khalid Malik and Mehwish Qamas have been elected as Joint Secretaries respectively.

Similarly, 39 delegates were also elected. According to Tariq Masood, chairman of the Election Committee of RIUJ, 20 candidates had submitted their nomination papers for the executive body, one panel withdrew its papers and Tariq Usmani's panel's right. In the election of 39 delegates Abdul Razaq Sial, Adnan Ghafoor Abbasi, Aslam Dogar, Babar Bhatti, Dr. Farqan Rao, Faisal Awan, Faisal



ISLAMABAD: Newly-elected office bearers of RIUJ posing for a picture along with group leaders Furqan Rao and others. DNA

Kaleem, Farhat Fatima, Farrukh Nawaz Bhatti, Imran Qureshi, Ishaq Chaudhry, Ijaz Ali Sagar, Jameel Mirza, Mudassar Ilyas Kayani, Khalid Malik, Muhammad Amir Nawaz Khan, Muhammad Faiz Chaudhry, Mohammad

Abrar, Mohammad Zarif, Naeem Sindh, Noman Haider, Qaiser Mirza, Raja Abdul Waheed Janjua, Shabir Hussain Masoom, Rana Rizwan Arshad, Rizwan Ghalzai, Rizwan Qazi, Shakeel Ahmed, Sadiq Anshar, Tariq

Usmani, Umar Jat, Usman Javed Malik, Yasir Nazar, Yasir Zubair, Zaigham Naqvi, Zubair Khan have been elected who later in February 2025 will cast their votes in the elections of the Pakistan Federal Union journalists.

Usmani, Umar Jat, Usman Javed Malik, Yasir Nazar, Yasir Zubair, Zaigham Naqvi, Zubair Khan have been elected who later in February 2025 will cast their votes in the elections of the Pakistan Federal Union journalists.

ANF seizes 1565 kg drugs in 7 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 7 operations across the country managed to recover 1565 kg drugs worth Rs 420 kg and arrested 5 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that 367 kg opium, 55 kg hashish, 19.5 kg ice, 79 kg cannabis seeds, 58 kg poppy seeds and 554.232 kg suspicious material were recovered from Bharabcha area in Balochistan. 180 kg heroin was recovered from Akhtarabad Hazarganji, Quetta and 169 kg hashish was recovered from Jabal Noor in Quetta while 2 suspects were also arrested. 24 kg opium and 48 kg hashish were recovered near Tablighi Markaz on Srinagar Highway Islamabad. In 5th operation, 6 kg ice was recovered near a hotel in Satellite Town Kech. In 6th operation, 2 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a suspect rounded up near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza, Attock. In 7th operation, 1.1 kg weed and 1.3 kg ice hidden in a car near Sher Shah Toll Plaza Multan were recovered and 2 suspects were arrested during the operation.—APP

The Collapse of Assad's govt emboldened Israel, US journalist

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "The collapse of Assad's government in Syria have emboldened Israel", said Mr. James M. Dorsey, an award winning US journalist and the Senior Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He was speaking to an event organized by the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad.

Mr. James Dorsey was of the view that Iranian influence in the region had reduced as observed in Doha by the recent visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. Abbas Araghchi. He added that the collapse of Assad in Syria provided a risky landscape to Iran in the region. With Assad's demise, Iran lost a major ally as well as strategic depth in Syria, Mr Dorsey argued. He further analyzed the Western and regional states' possible pressure on Iraq to disarm Iranian

an-backed Popular Mobilization Unit in Iraq with its possible integration into Iraqi Armed Forces. Mr. Dorsey highlighted that in recent past, Assad's foreign policy was aimed at engagement with the UAE and the Arab world while opting out of Iran-led Axis of Resistance operations against Israel. While responding to a question, Mr. Dorsey mentioned Iran's approach of having amicable relations with Syria under HTS. However, for now, Iran would

adopt a "wait and see" policy towards Syria, he told the audience. Earlier, Mr. Fraz Naqvi, Head of Iran Program at IRS, argued that while Iran-led Axis of Resistance had certainly faced setbacks yet Iranian proxy partners were able to showcase resilience in the wake of any Israeli offensive. He also mentioned that Iran might seek military modernization as a method of self reliance to compensate for the losses of its proxies.

BISP organizes Christmas, Quaid-e-Azam's birthday celebrations

The event concluded with Senator Rubina Khalid, alongside members of the Christian community, cutting the Christmas and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah birthday cake and distributing gifts to children from Christian families on behalf of BISP

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme Friday organized a ceremony to celebrate Christmas and the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at its headquarters today. The event was attended by Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid, Additional Secretary BISP Dr. Muhammad Tahir Noor, Director Generals from different wings, BISP employees from the Christian community, beneficiaries and media representatives. Addressing the gathering, Chairperson Rubina Khalid highlighted the shared vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the founder of BISP, and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan—a vision of a united and peaceful Pakistan. She emphasized the importance of religious harmony, noting that all religions advocate serving humanity. She stated that the mission of BISP is to support the poor and deserving, irrespective of religion, language, or ethnicity. "We are committed to bring positive change to the lives of the underprivileged through BISP. Your cooperation is essential in this mission, and we promise never to let you down. We share the joy of Christmas with you," she said. Senator Rubina Khalid further remarked that all Pakistanis have a duty to support their fellow citizens by promoting peace, tolerance, and compassion. She stressed the importance of putting Pakistan first and working for its development. "Today, we must hold ourselves accountable and avoid chaos. While freedom of expression is a fundamental right, it comes with responsibilities. We must prioritize truth and national interests" she added. She concluded by urging everyone to unite without discrimination and contribute to the development and prosperity of Pakistan. The Christian community expressed gratitude to Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid and the BISP administration for organizing the Christmas celebration. They offered prayer for the success of BISP's mission to serve the underprivileged. The event concluded with Senator Rubina Khalid, alongside members of the Christian community, cutting the Christmas and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah birthday cake and distributing gifts to children from Christian families on behalf of BISP.—DNA

Astro adventure program to unveil wonders of space at IMCG I-8/4

ISLAMABAD: In an exciting initiative to ignite a passion for space science among students and the community, Islamabad Model College for girls I8/4 organized an event titled "Astro Adventure" program at college. The estimated number of spectators was more than a thousand including students and parents. The program promises to be an engaging exploration of the cosmos, featuring a hands-on telescope experience. In which the students, as well as, parents viewed the planet Saturn. This unique event is spearheaded by the Principal Prof Shagufta Naz, this was the initiative upon the receiving of telescope by the special efforts of Federal Secretary Education, Muhayyudin Wani, who took this initiative for students of federal capital and handed Telescopes to 18 colleges worth of Rs12 Million. By this it is effort to step forward to future latest Technology studies to meet challenges of 21st century. In this ceremony Mr Sanan and Mr. Shahryar, two accomplished physics graduates driven by their shared love for space science. The duo guided attendees in understanding the wonders of the night sky and the practicalities of operating telescopes to students. While talking about scope and benefits of this program principal Shagufta said that this event also aims to shed light on the vast opportunities and potential of space science and technology. Space science has proven to be pivotal in advancing communication systems, navigation, environmental monitoring, and fostering international collaborations for space exploration. By exposing participants to the field, Astro Adventure seeks to inspire future scientists, engineers, and innovators. With its blend of education and inspiration, this event proved a must-attend for anyone curious about our universe.—APP

Winter break in Islamabad schools to start from Dec 21

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad authorities on Friday announced the schedule of winter break in schools and all educational institutes in the federal capital. A notification issued in this regard said that all the public and private schools in Islamabad will remain closed from December 21 (Saturday) till January 5, 2025.

The education departments in Punjab and other provinces have also announced winter vacations in their respective regions. According to the latest notice, the winter break in Punjab schools will begin on December 23. The schools will reopen on January 13, 2025. Meanwhile, educational institutions in Sindh will observe winter holidays from December 21 to December 31, with both private and public

schools closed during this period. The winter vacations in schools across Balochistan had started on December 16 owing to the cold weather conditions in the province. A statement issued by the Balochistan Education Department said that the schools, colleges and universities will close in 20 districts, including Quetta, from December 16. As per the winter vacation schedule announced by the authorities, the

educational institutes in areas with colder weather will remain closed till February 28. Meanwhile, the parts of the southwestern province with relatively warmer weather will have a 10-day vacation period, starting January 1 till January 10. Various areas of the country are experiencing chilly weather with intermittent snowfalls in the hilly areas in the north of the country as winter takes hold.

ICCI-ICSTSI agree to collaborate for ease of doing business

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), emphasized the importance of unity among business community members to create a favorable business environment and drive economic growth. He made this statement while meeting with a delegation from the Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries (ICSTSI), led by its President Mohammad Awais Satti. The delegation comprised ICSTSI Chairman Qazi Mohammad Ilyas, Vice President Sardar Zaheer Ahmed, former



President Malik Nadeem, and other prominent members. President Qureshi welcomed the delegation and appreciated their gesture of felicitating the new office bearers of ICCI. The ICCI President discussed his initiatives to enhance the Chamber's service delivery, including introducing

corporate culture, digitalizing the membership department, and organizing expos. He also mentioned the Chamber's efforts to acquire land for the Islamabad Industrial Estate and the establishment of Facilitation Desks of various organizations to support the

business community. The ICCI President informed the delegation about the Facilitation Desks working at the Chamber, including those for NADRA, Police, Federal Tax Ombudsman, IESCO, and the Mediation Council. He also announced that another Facilitation Desk of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) would be inaugurated on Saturday. He also extended an offer to ICSTSI members to utilize the Chamber's facilities and collaborate to resolve traders' problems. He assured that ICCI's doors are open for ICSTSI members and that both organizations should work together to promote the ease of doing business.

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Briefs

PTA resumes granting class license for Data services

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has resumed granting Class License for Data Services for the provision of Data Services for Pakistan. According to the PTA news release the VPN service providers are required to obtain a Class License for Data (Data Services) to provide VPN and related services. As per the news release, this resuming of Class License for Data does not include the Internet Services provision category. It is further clarified that Local Loop Licensees are permitted to offer any class license services such as VPN services, subject to obtaining separate prior permission from PTA. This initiative underscores PTA's commitment to fostering a secure, transparent, and innovative digital ecosystem while safeguarding the interests of users and stakeholders.—APP

E&T dept offers vehicular related services at Shalimar Ground

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Excise & Taxation department of Islamabad on Friday offered vehicular-related services to facilitate the citizens at Shalimar Cricket Ground's parking lot from 2 to 4 pm. In a move to streamline essential civic services and bring them closer to the community, Director General Excise Department Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon initiated an exclusive drive to facilitate the citizens. The excise staff will be on-site, offering a hassle-free experience for vehicle owners seeking registration, transfers, and token tax processing, said the spokesman of the ICT administration. He said that this unprecedented initiative not only caters to vehicular paperwork but also introduces the ICT Doorstep Service. The citizens are encouraged to avail the opportunity to obtain their Domicile Certificate, Birth Certificate, Power of Attorney, International Driving Permit, Fuel Permit (Domestic/Commercial), or Motor Vehicle Registration, all at one convenient location, he added. He emphasized that the facilitation centers provides a seamless and efficient solution for various administrative needs. He said that whether you're a vehicle owner looking to sort out your paperwork or in need of essential documents, this event promises efficiency with a touch of convenience to the masses. Meanwhile, people could contact at toll-free number 051-111-383-383 and set a time and destination to take advantage of these services.

More lives lost in quest for going abroad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Whether it is a craze for going abroad or compulsion for earning bread and butter for families, more Pakistanis lost their lives in this quest when a boat capsized near to Gavdos Island, South of Crete, Greece. The incident follows a similar tragedy in June 2023 when an overcrowded vessel capsized off Pylos, becoming one of the deadliest boat disasters in Mediterranean claiming lives of dozens of illegal migrants including Pakistanis. December 14 was another tragic day when five of Pakistani citizens were confirmed dead after their bodies were recovered during search operation with 35 others declared missing dead in an endeavor to illegally move to Europe. Why such tragic incidents again and again, is a question haunting many of us. Why people try their luck again and again by cruising on unsafe waters of Mediterranean in a wooden boat. May be it is a craze or compulsion to go abroad. But why to risk their lives by using illegal means is yet another food of thought for top masters. Those died in this incident, were no doubt fathers, sons, brothers or husbands of somebody and

18th Speakers' moot concludes in Islamabad

The two-day event, which brought together key parliamentary figures, including Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, and provincial legislative speakers, focused on addressing pressing constitutional and legislative issues

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The 18th Speakers' Conference, hosted by the National Assembly after a decade-long gap, concluded Friday on a high note as political leaders reaffirmed their commitment to fortifying democratic governance in Pakistan. The two-day event, which brought together key parliamentary figures, including Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, and provincial legislative speakers, focused on addressing pressing constitutional and legislative issues. In his opening remarks, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani highlighted the forum's significance in promoting dialogue and collaboration among Pakistan's democratic institutions. "This conference is a testament to our shared resolve to enhance the effectiveness, transparency, and inclusivity of our legislatures," he stated. A major focus of the conference was the review of the 18th Amendment, a landmark constitutional reform that decentralized legislative, administrative, and financial powers to provinces. Delegates emphasized the need to refine its implementation, addressing challenges to ensure participatory governance and provincial empowerment. The sessions also explored critical themes, including expanding the mandate of the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, fostering international partnerships, and



strengthening oversight mechanisms such as Public Accounts Committees. The establishment of an Association of Secretaries was also discussed as a way to streamline legislative operations. In his concluding remarks, Chairman Gilani called for collective action to uphold constitutional principles and modernize legislative practices. "The way forward requires a spirit of unity and

cooperation. Our assemblies must work collectively to address challenges, from constitutional ambiguities to the critical need for inclusivity in decision-making," he said. The event concluded with the adoption of the Islamabad Declaration, a strategic roadmap aimed at enhancing parliamentary governance, fostering regional collaboration, and advocating for Pakistan's interests on global platforms.

The declaration underscores the commitment of all participants to translate conference recommendations into actionable reforms. As the curtains closed on the 18th Speakers' Conference, participants hailed the event as a milestone in advancing Pakistan's democratic traditions, with hopes for a more inclusive, transparent, and capable parliamentary system in the years to come.

Efforts afoot for promotion of tourism

ISLAMABAD: The development and prosperity of Gilgit Baltistan were the top priority of the Federal Government and in this regard, various projects of development had been launched for the promotion of the tourism sector, health facilities, improvement in the education sector and mitigate the pressure of unemployment in this area. An official source told APP here on Friday, he said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently announced a series of mega development projects for the development of the remote areas of the GB. He said the incumbent regime also focused on developing the road network and connectivity of slum areas with each other to facilitate the local community. The local government also upgrading the basic health units in the far-flung areas of the GB. He underlined that tourism is a lucrative business of the local community and in this regard, GB government provides training facilities to the youth of the area. Tourism is the best source of income for the local population, as millions of tourists visit this area every year. He commended the federal government's efforts in promoting tourism and emphasized the need for its enhancement. He proposed the establishment of camping sites and tourism facilitation centers across all provinces aimed at facilitating tourists and promoting local attractions. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of extensive promotion of the Salam Pakistan portal, a dedicated platform designed to guide and assist tourists visiting Pakistan. He stressed the significance of leveraging technology to provide seamless experiences for travelers.—DNA

Civil disobedience to hamper economic stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Friday that the demand for early elections by some political forces is not compatible with the political and economic stability of the country. He said the call for civil disobedience and demand for early elections should be stopped so the economy develops and the people can get a break. Talking to the business community, Shahid Rasheed Butt said that protests and political instabil-

ity do not solve problems. He said that since the country was formed, it has suffered from economic distress, which had peaked in the last few years. The situation is being improved with great difficulty, which is unacceptable to some elements. The business leader noted that some people want political instability and ruin the country's economy, severely affecting the economy and the commoner's income. A large number of people are fleeing the country, risking their lives. The continuous depreciation of the rupee for four years has broken the back of the people, increasing the country's

debt from twenty-eight thousand to sixty-seven thousand billion. Shahid Rashid Butt said that in these four years, foreign exchange reserves had reached extremely low levels many times, which had worried the entire nation, but now the situation is rapidly improving. International organizations and local experts saw the value falling below three hundred and fifty rupees against the dollar. Still, the government saved the rupee from falling further and things worsening. Inflation is decreasing, and the rate of people living below the poverty line, exceeding forty per cent, will soon start decreasing. CPEC,

pushed back for many years, is now beginning to work, and vigorous efforts are being made to overcome the energy crisis. The stability of the dollar is a clear proof of economic reforms. The encouraging results of government policies are starting to emerge, and they are being recognized at home and abroad. In ten months, the manufacturing sector has increased from 2% to 6%, and the manufacturing sector has increased from 7% to 30%, which is expected to grow further. In these circumstances, derailing the current system for the sake of politics is against the national interests.

Gas price hikes affect consumers and businesses

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Friday that the increase in gas tariff due to IMF pressure will affect the public and the industrial sector. He said the move will also increase electricity consumption, which will reduce the losses of the bleeding power sector. Mian Zahid Hussain said that increasing the price of gas will increase the public's burden by at least Rs 847 billion, but at the same time, the gas sector's circular debt will also be reduced. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that, on the recommendation of OGRA, the

gas tariff for Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been increased by 8.7 per cent, after which the price of gas will be Rs 142.45 per MMBTU. Meanwhile, the gas tariff for Balochistan and Sindh has been increased by 25.78 per cent or Rs 361 per MMBTU, which will be implemented in February. He informed us that the gas price had been increased by 8.7 and 25.78 percent, while the SSGC demanded an increase of at least 200 percent. The gas price hike will be made before the arrival of the IMF mission, due to which the second instalment of the loan will be available, and if this were not done, the IMF program would have gone sour, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that this increase has been done thoughtfully, which will balance the price of gas across the country because industrialists and consumers of the two provinces used to get gas more expensive than the other two provinces, which they

complained of discrimination. Mian Zahid Hussain said that although its price continuously increases to reduce losses in the gas sector, significant efforts are not being made to eliminate corruption, mismanagement and politics, which is regrettable. Mian Zahid Hussain said that, on the IMF's demand, gas connections of Captive Power Plants will also be disconnected from next month so that gas-based power plants can use grid electricity. However, this may affect production and exports because interruptions in the power supply are common. Disconnecting gas from Captive Power Plants will add additional cost to the system while gas-supplying companies will also have to bear financial losses. This will make gas more expensive for domestic consumers. By cutting off the gas supply, the industries will no longer bear the burden of domestic gas consumers, which will improve matters eventually.

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NLPD organizes sixth session of 'Muqalma' series

ISLAMABAD: National Language Promotion Department (NLPD) here late Thursday organized the sixth session of the 'Muqalma' series with acclaimed poet and critic Farrukh Yar. "Farrukh Yar avoids self-promotion and refrains from participating in poetry recitals," said notable poet, columnist, and writer Muhammad Izhar ul Haq on the occasion. "Farrukh is not only an excellent poet and writer but also a skilled banker," he noted. "Farrukh's poetry emerges from his love for language, land, people, history, and culture, said renowned writer Muhammad Hamid Shahid. The Director-General of the NLPD, Professor Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, on the occasion said, "Islamabad is rich in literature and culture." He added that individuals associated with literature, culture, and the arts in Islamabad recognize and respect each others stature and achievements. The younger generation must inherit this reverence for literature and its creators," he said. Farrukh Yar shared that he began reciting poetry in 1985 at the sessions of Halqa Arbabe-Zauq but soon realized that ghazal was not his true calling and gradually gravitated toward writing nazms. He revealed that he studied the works of Nasir Kazmi, Sahir Ludhianvi, Mustafa Zaidi, and Majeed Amjad.—APP

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Palestine and Syria

THE events in Syria have occupied the news cycle for the last few weeks and while these events are no doubt important—the Arab region being the main theatre of imperialist kinetic warfare and thus the national question remaining crucial—it seems that in the corporate media and even in some left-wing independent media, Palestine has been obscured from view. The holocaust in Gaza continues, with daily massacres committed by the Zionist entity. Resistance continues daily as well. The defeatism on the left is both ideologically the incorrect position and a sickness that spreads like wildfire if left unchecked. So, because Palestine is at the heart of the national question in the Arab-Iranian region, the events in Syria must be analyzed through this lens. How do we make sense of Hamas' congratulatory message to the people of Syria? How can we understand both the PFLP and DFLP's warnings regarding Israeli land grabs in the Golan and beyond? Who are the new "rebel leaders" in Syria and what is their relationship to the Zionist entity and their NATO backers? Hay'atTahrir al-Sham (HTS) is the force behind the advances on Hama, Homs, and the eventual capture of Damascus. While it is politically irresponsible to reduce the Syrian opposition to HTS and other Al-Qaeda and Daesh splinters, the reality on the ground is that this is the armed group that has taken state power. We must operate from this reality as our launching point for analysis. In an interview with a high-ranking HTS official, a reporter from DropSite News was stunned that the official refused to criticize "Israel" or even comment on the fact that "Israel" has conducted over 300 bombings of strategic Syrian military sites. There are multiple possible readings of this response. On the one hand, HTS members and their allies have been happy to do interviews on Israeli TV and praise the Zionists for helping them against their "main enemies" Iran and Hezbollah. On the other hand, it makes sense for a government to attempt to restore civil life after years of war. Most serious analysts are partial to the first reading. HTS is a Takfiri movement, a sectarian organization, concerned with its own narrow and sclerotic interpretation of Islam, which excludes minorities, women, and other Muslims from governance and social life. Martyr FathiShiqqi of PIJ knew that "the persistence of the Zionist entity means the failure of all [Islamic] renaissance projects." Thus, it is clear that due to the HTS ideology, they are not presenting "a serious endeavor to build an integrated and coherent strategy for the contemporary Islamic renaissance's project." Instead, they are a useful tool of the West, denigrating Islam and the Syrian nation. Meanwhile, the US and their European vassals are scrambling to take HTS off their "terrorist lists". So what of al-Assad? What about the Resistance? Former President Bashar al-Assad has fled to Russia; the combination of the American Caesar sanctions, corruption, and bribery in the Syrian Arab Army ended al-Assad's mandate in the eyes of the Syrian people. Ansar Allah and Hezbollah apparently pleaded with al-Assad to open up a front on the Golan Heights against the Zionists, which he refused. This was likely due to the weakness of the SAA as well as the fragility of the Syrian state in its fractured form. Within the last few days, the Zionists have destroyed quite literally every defensive battery in Syria, and they have advanced well beyond the UN buffer zone, now occupying the hills overlooking Damascus at a distance of only 25 kilometers. So where does this leave the Axis of Resistance and the patriotic political forces in Gaza and the rest of Palestine?



China's record breaking spacewalk

CHINA'S space exploration has made history once again. On Tuesday, the Shenzhou-19 crew members - astronauts CaiXuzhe, Song Lingdong and Wang Haoze - closely coordinated with each other and, with the assistance of the space station's robotic arm and a team on Earth, successfully completed the first extravehicular activities (EVAs) of their mission in nine hours. This achievement set a new record for the duration of EVAs by Chinese astronauts. CNN noted that this duration surpassed the previous record of eight hours and 56 minutes set by US astronauts in 2001, calling it the "latest milestone" in China's space technology development. This accomplishment marks another significant step in both China's space exploration and humanity's overall progress in space, which is worth celebrating. Looking back at the history of human spacewalk, it is evident that this is a gradual accomplishment. 59 years ago, a Soviet cosmonaut became the first person to walk in space, lasting about 12 minutes. 23 years ago, US astronauts set the record for the longest EVAs. 16 years ago, astronaut ZhaiZhigang during the Shenzhou-7 mission conducted China's first spacewalk, lasting approximately 19 minutes. Now, China has once again raised the limits of human adaptability to the space environment. From 19 minutes to nine hours, this is a major advancement for China's space program, reflecting improvements in material science, engineering design and other fields, represented by the two generations of spacesuits, as well as the enhancement of astronaut skills and psychological endurance through scientific training. The nine-hour EVAs also indicate the rich scientific research activities conducted aboard the Chinese space station. Therefore, it is completely natural for people to feel proud and excited when this good news reaches Earth. In space exploration, although China is a latecomer, it has become a leader and contributor. Media outlets in countries such as India, Pakistan, and Thailand have widely covered the record of China's spacewalk, reflecting the attention and expectations of many "Global South" countries regarding China's advancements in space technology. Amid the surging wave of modernization among "Global South" nations, space cooperation between China and these countries is thriving. For instance, the six earth-resource satellites jointly developed by China and Brazil have been safeguarding the Amazon rainforest for over 30 years. China's Fengyun meteorological satellites have helped numerous African countries enhance early warning capabilities. A Thailand-developed global space weather monitoring device will, for the first time, enter deep space from Earth orbit aboard the Cheng'e-7 mission. Furthermore, China is "teaching others to fish," helping "Global South" countries cultivate local aerospace talent and promoting technology transfers. These collaborations not only break the past exclusivity of space exploration by an "elite club" of nations and fulfill the space dreams of many developing countries, but they also bring tangible benefits to local livelihoods.

Blue economy potential of Pakistan

Commander Anees M. Khan (R)

The development of the Blue Economy contemporary model is of paramount importance to Pakistan, with over 90% of its trade and fuel imports relying on maritime routes. If fully developed, it could yield substantial financial benefits by 2030-2035, with projected revenues of \$8-10 billion from shipping, \$7-8 billion from fisheries, up to \$10 billion from aquaculture, up to \$20 billion from CPEC, \$5-6 billion from Maritime Tourism, up to \$10 billion from Renewable Energy Projects, \$2-3 billion from Ship Recycling Industry at Gadani, and \$6-8 billion from transforming Ports and Harbor's into Environmentally friendly so called Green Ports. Presently, the Blue Economy contributes between 1.5% and 3% to the Pakistan's GDP...

MARITIME is generally referred to as any activity which concerns oceans and seas. When coupled with economics, it obviously means all activities which generate or facilitate economic development in one way or the other through uses of oceans and seas. The great USA Maritime Strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan has very rightly said that 'Greatness and strengths of the nations is the product of wealth, derived from sea and trade'. Maritime Economy is also generally referred, although wrongly, as Blue Economy since Maritime Economy in itself is a part of Blue Economy and not exclusively represent Blue Economy. The term Blue Resources is also occasionally associated with Blue Economy due sea, oceans, rivers etc. It's but obvious that Blue economy flourishes in proportion to the maritime sector investment of any country with particular reference to its security spectrum. The development of the Blue Economy contemporary model is of paramount importance to Pakistan, with over 90% of its trade and fuel imports relying on maritime routes. If fully developed, it could yield substantial financial benefits by 2030-2035, with projected revenues of \$8-10 billion from shipping, \$7-8 billion from fisheries, up to \$10 billion from aquaculture, up to \$20 billion from CPEC, \$5-6 billion from Maritime Tourism, up to \$10 billion from Renewable Energy Projects, \$2-3 billion from Ship Recycling Industry at Gadani, and \$6-8 billion from transforming Ports and Harbor's into Environmentally friendly so called Green Ports. Presently, the Blue Economy contributes between 1.5% and 3% to the Pakistan's GDP, but this could increase to 10% to 15% through strategic development of this sector & subsequent tactical level execution. It is pertinent to highlight that Regional countries with almost same resources and constraints as Pakistan are fetching the dividends of this sector. Bangladesh & India are earning

\$6-8 billion and \$7-10 billion annually respectively. However, Pakistan is still lagging behind than its true potential. Pakistan Vision Document 2025 also does not dwell much on development of Blue Economy. Although, with the development of Gwadar port with its peculiar geographical location coupled with China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, a renewed focus on the Government level has been given to explore this sector to the fullest eyeing capitalizing up to \$ 60 Billion CPEC projects with Gwadar and North Arabian Sea (NAS) as its center stage. Renewed focus on this sector can also be gauged from the fact that year 2020 was declared as the 'Year of Blue Economy' by the Government of Pakistan. Food Processing, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) exploration, Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) & Liquid Nitrogen Gas (LNG) Terminals, Coastal Development & Shipping industry uplift were included for improvement. However, in spite of passing of four years, it has not been able to make any practical impact in improving this sector due numerous manageable factors. In Shipping Industry, for example, for last two decades, no new Ship has been registered. This is in contrast to the thriving shipping industry of country in 1970s. Notwithstanding, Pakistan has lot of potential in development of its maritime sector. With its over 100 km coast line and beautiful beaches, Maritime tourism development is one such avenue which needs to be developed & explored through Public-Private Partnership in Sindh & Balochistan province. It's heartening that private sector is now investing in this field. Local companies are taking tourist to Ormara beaches in Balochistan and local ferries are being considered for furthering maritime tourism in Karachi. These all are good omens, however, they need continued government support for obvious reasons for long term continuity. About the potential of EEZ in under water mineral exploration, international experts believe

that one Square Mile of sea bed, in any part of the world, may be covered with 70000 tons of minerals including manganese, aluminum, cadmium, iron, cobalt, nickel, copper worth Billions of dollars financial worth in the open market. About hydrocarbon, it requires continued efforts. In a comparatively recent attempt for its exploration in January 2019 by Oil and Gas Development Corporation (OGDCL), Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and Exxon-Mobil, whereby 5500 meter deep drilling was conducted in the Indus Basin however it could not succeed. However, the EEZ of Pakistan needs continuous exploration since it yields dividends sometime in hundreds of attempts. Norway for example succeeded in its 78th attempt in its own EEZ. Blue Economy models are contemporary and need to be understood and implemented in Pakistan. First and foremost is the true understanding of the potential of this sector. Subsequently, National Maritime Policy be implemented while cognizant of the ground contemporary realities since its last revision in 2001-02. Blue Economy concept has emerged from 2010 onward and Pakistan is involved in CPEC since 2015. These two new avenues need to be incorporated in the policy document and then be promulgated. It be then followed by a development of a hierarchical system of sector through setting up of a National Maritime Authority in line with the guidance and charter in the Policy Document. National Maritime Authority shall be a wholesome body consisting of all stakeholders including maritime sector which shall then oversee the same. It will need all stakeholders and require a comprehensive approach which shall cater for maritime security, governance, law and above all sustainability of resources in Pakistan's EEZ so to ensure that maritime economy is developed inline with modern concept of Blue Economy. If done, Pakistan would be an economically self-sufficient state by year 2030.

Can China counter US arms sales to Taiwan?

Qamar Bashir



In contrast, the USA is perceived as more openly involved in the internal affairs of its allies, often justified under the banner of promoting democracy, human rights, and free markets. This includes imposing conditions on aid, providing direct political support, or pressuring allies to align with its foreign policy objectives others and viewed as intrusive and undermining sovereignty

THE first batch of 32 Abrams Tanks, the heaviest and most lethal "steel mountain" and battle-proven, was handed over to Taiwan this week. The deal is for 108 tanks to be delivered by 2024. Interestingly, while the economies of both the USA and China are highly intertwined and inseparable, the USA seems to leave no stone unturned in poking China, bringing it to a point where it might abandon its measured patience and respond in kind. For example, to counter the American strategy of bolstering military hardware and services in the Taiwan, China could begin supplying military hardware to Puerto Rico, which holds a similar strategic and geopolitical position relative to the USA as Taiwan does to China. Like Taiwan to China, Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory with considerable autonomy but remains under U.S. sovereignty, lacking full independence, similar to how China claims Taiwan as part of its territory. In contrast, Taiwan operates as a de facto independent nation with its own government and military. Both Puerto Rico and Taiwan reflect elements of disputed sovereignty and territorial claims, neither perfectly mirrors Taiwan's unique geopolitical situation. In addition, United States has built strategic alliances and partnerships to counter China's perceived influence in the South China Sea, Pacific, and Indian Ocean regions such as Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), the AUKUS pact between the U.S., UK, and Australia and strengthening bilateral security agreements with allies like the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea. But China response to these military alliances is economic and infrastructure development and making alliance in resourceful countries in all continents to ensure regular supply of raw material to fuel china's enormous economy by pursuing President Xi's win win philosophy. China has established global infrastructure, port, and mineral exploration alliances through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In Asia, it has built roads, railways, and ports like Gwadar (Pakistan) and Hambantota (Sri Lanka), while investing in minerals in Afghanistan and Central Asia. In Africa, China has developed railways, highways, ports like Djibouti and Kenya's Lamu Port, and mines for cobalt and copper in the DRC and Zambia. In Europe, it funds rail links (e.g., Budapest-Belgrade railway), ports like Piraeus

(Greece), and rare earth processing in Eastern Europe. In Latin America, it builds highways and railways, invests in ports in Panama and Argentina, and mines lithium and iron ore in Chile and Brazil. In Oceania, it focuses on Pacific Island infrastructure, ports, and mining in Australia and Papua New Guinea. Interestingly, although China is investing trillions of dollars in development projects across continents but emphasizes a policy of non-interference, presenting itself as a partner that respects sovereignty and refrains from meddling in domestic politics. It does not form military alliances, meddle in internal politics, or involve itself in the internal conflicts of its allied countries. This non-interventionist approach also includes staying clear of internal matters in these states. In contrast, the USA is perceived as more openly involved in the internal affairs of its allies, often justified under the banner of promoting democracy, human rights, and free markets. This includes imposing conditions on aid, providing direct political support, or pressuring allies to align with its foreign policy objectives others and viewed as intrusive and undermining sovereignty. Thus, China is often seen as a pragmatic economic partner with strategic conditions, while the USA is regarded as a political and military ally that expects ideological and policy alignment. In a hypothetical situation, if China reverse its policy of restraint and strategic tolerance and with a view to counterbalance US's policy to arm Taiwan, if China starts openly supporting Puerto Rican perhaps, the US will not tolerate this Chinese intervention and would be perceived as a direct challenge to its influence in its "backyard," leading to a strong response. Domestically, Puerto Rican independence movements could gain momentum, causing political unrest and division. Militarily, the U.S. would reinforce its presence in the Caribbean, escalating tensions with China and risking a confrontation. For the region and China, this scenario would create profound consequences. The Caribbean could become a proxy battleground, destabilizing smaller nations and forcing them to choose sides, with economic and political fallout across Latin America. China's involvement risks overreach, provoking a strong U.S. response and alienating regional allies wary of external interference. Globally, the confrontation could lead to a new Cold War dynamic, with heightened militarization in both the Car-

ibbean and Indo-Pacific regions. While China might expose U.S. vulnerabilities, it would also face significant diplomatic and economic pushback, diverting resources from its primary focus on Taiwan and the Asia-Pacific. Given the potential for escalating tensions and global instability, both China and the United States should seriously reevaluate their policy toward Taiwan and adopt a more balanced approach that prioritizes dialogue over provocation. While supporting Taiwan's democratic aspirations is important, overt actions that appear to challenge China's sovereignty risk triggering a dangerous cycle of countermeasures, such as potential Chinese interference in Puerto Rico or elsewhere, that could destabilize multiple regions. Instead of a confrontational stance, the U.S. should focus on fostering regional stability through multilateral diplomacy, reducing militarization, and encouraging peaceful coexistence between Taiwan and China. A restrained and pragmatic approach would not only prevent unnecessary conflicts but also safeguard U.S. interests, maintain global economic stability, and uphold a rules-based international order without forcing China into retaliatory measures that could spiral into a cold or even hot war. While this scenario is highly unlikely and a distant possibility, it is important to acknowledge that China, known for its strategic restraint, ideological depth, and long-term vision, is unlikely to deviate from its path of patience and pragmatism. Much like Hong Kong, Taiwan may eventually find itself within China's fold—whether through a gradual process of integration or other mechanisms. While U.S. support for Taiwan may slow this trajectory, it is conceivable that, in the long run, such integration could become a fait accompli. However, both the United States and China should prioritize redefining their policies and working together constructively to address this complex issue. By jointly facilitating a natural and peaceful resolution to the Taiwan conflict, they can set a precedent for diplomacy and collaboration, proving that geopolitical disputes can be resolved without resorting to hostility or conflict.

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

Briefs

PM for swift resolution of seminary...

FROM PAGE 01 contacted Maulana Fazl and asked him to hold talks on the issue of the proposed law on seminaries. Soon after receiving PM's invitation for talks, Maulana Fazl contacted Mufti Taqi Usmani for consultation. It had Tanzeemati-Madaris Pakistan Tuesday deviated from a 2019 stance and announced that "seminaries will not become part of any government department and remain autonomous."

PM orders 'stern action' against...

FROM PAGE 01 trafficking and about the recent boat incident in Greece. It was briefed that five Pakistanis, who died in the Greek boat incident, have been identified while the process for identification of others is underway. It was further informed that the Pakistan Embassy in Athens is consistently in touch with the Greek authorities regarding the boat incident. According to a report from the Pakistani Embassy in Athens, at least 40 Pakistanis lost their lives in the incident of boats capsizing near Greece. The report mentioned that bodies of 35 people remain missing, with little to no hope of survival, while five bodies have been retrieved. It added that the missing travellers should be presumed dead as the Greek Coast Guard has cancelled the maritime rescue efforts.

KP apex committee...

FROM PAGE 01 leaving more than 40 dead. Meanwhile, participants of the Apex Committee were briefed on the province's peace initiatives and the progress of the grand jirga. The committee discussed strategies to prevent future unrest, emphasising the need for disarmament alongside the removal of private bunkers. Interior Minister Naqvi assured the committee of full support from the federation, saying that ensuring peace in Kurram is a top priority. He also pledged to enhance the capabilities of law enforcement agencies within the province. The committee acknowledged the importance of continued dialogue with local residents to facilitate the return of weapons. The dismantling of private bunkers is expected to contribute significantly to stabilising the region and fostering long-term harmony.

JI emir criticised...

FROM PAGE 01 Lahore," he declared. He emphasised that without a reduction in electricity tariffs, the economic conditions cannot improve. Referring to his meeting with Mohsin Naqvi, Hafiz Naeem said, "Naqvi mentioned the possibility of revisiting agreements with independent power producers (IPPs), but mere discussions will not suffice if electricity prices remain unchanged." The JI head warned that the public would be left with no option but to resort to large-scale protests if electricity costs are not reduced. "The day gas prices were increased, provincial assembly members received pay raises. This reflects an anti-people attitude by the government," he remarked.

State busy in forming...

FROM PAGE 01 All institutions are chasing political opponents. This situation would be different if the Constitution is implemented." Justice Mandokhail also expressed displeasure over the performance of the state institutions and questioned what happened to cases after three prime ministers were killed in the country. He also remarked that a senior-most judge was killed in Balochistan. The jurist noted that the major reason was the state institutions' "unwillingness to do something". "Compared to the other two provinces, the state of police prosecution is deplorable in Sindh and Punjab," he observed.

Mohammad Ali takes four as Stallions stun Markhors

Stallions pip Markhors to top Champions T20 Cup standings

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Test pacer Mohammad Ali-led bowling attack steered Stallions to thump leaders Markhors by 29 runs in the 17th match of the Champions T20 Cup here at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Friday. Put into bat first, the Stallions only managed to score 147/9 in their allotted 20 overs as none of their batters could register a big score against a disciplined Markhors' bowling attack. Veteran all-rounder and mentor Shoaib Malik remained the top-scorer for the Stallions with a cautious 27 off 28 deliveries, laced with three boundaries. Besides him, opener Maaz Sadaqaq and middle-order batter Taimur Khan made notable contributions, scoring 20 each. For the Markhors, Zahid Mehmood, Akif Javed and Bilawal Bhatti claimed two wickets each, while skipper Iftikhar Ahmed made one scalp. Chasing a modest total,



Markhors' batting unit skittled for a meagre 118 in 18.3 overs despite a 57-run partnership for the seventh wicket between

Nisar Ahmad and Saad Masood. The leaders had a disastrous start to the pursuit as they were reduced to 37/7 in eight overs,

courtesy of Jahadad Khan's sensational opening spell. The left-arm pacer dismissed three Markhors' batters, while Ali and in-form spinner Usman Tariq supported with two strikes each. Following the slump, Nisar and Saad fought valiantly and knitted a crucial partnership to keep Markhors in the hunt. The pair had lifted the Markhors to 94/7 in 15 overs but both perished in successive overs, bringing the total down to 107/9 in 16.1 overs. Saad remained the top-scorer with a gutsy 38 off 29, while Nisar made 22 from 21 balls. Ali then claimed the remaining Markhors' wicket by getting Zahid caught behind in the penultimate over to cap off a rewarding victory for the Stallions. The right-arm pacer led the Stallions' bowling charge with 4/13, followed by Jahadad's 3/9, while Usman Tariq bagged two wickets. The 29-run victory helped Stallions replace Markhors at the top of the Champions T20 Cup standings. Both teams have 10 points after seven matches.

PSL draft to take place in Balochistan Gwadar will host PSL 10 draft

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to take the Pakistan Super League (PSL)'s draft to Balochistan for the first time in league's history. As per the announcement, the draft will take place in Gwadar, the port city of Pakistan's biggest province, on January 11, 2025. PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi stated, "Gwadar, with its stunning coastal scenery and strategic significance, is the heart of Pakistan's economic future. By hosting the HBL PSL Player Draft here, we aim to highlight its cultural and economic importance while celebrating cricket, a sport that unites

our nation. I look forward to welcoming all franchisees and stakeholders to the beautiful city of Gwadar on January 11 as we take a significant step towards the 10th edition of Pakistan's biggest sporting event." The decision is a part of PCB's plan to expand the league beyond four major cities and to inspire the local community and encourage the younger generation of this region to adopt cricket as a professional sport. HBL PSL Chief Executive Officer Salman Naseer expressed his excitement, saying, "I am proud to announce Gwadar as the host city for the HBL PSL Player Draft. This initiative reflects our commitment to extending the league's reach across

Pakistan and showcasing the country's beauty to the world. HBL PSL is more than just a cricket league for our passionate fans; it represents Pakistan's spirit, talent, and charm. Hosting the draft in Gwadar is a step towards inspiring young cricketers in Balochistan and beyond to dream big." However, the announcement for player relegation and retention is scheduled for the end of December. Remember, the registration window for the overseas players to offer their availability for the PSL 10, has already been opened. Whereas, the cricket board has also announced the category renewals of 87 local players for the upcoming edition of the marquee league, which

saw Karachi Kings' Hasan Ali, alongside Quetta Gladiators' Mohammad Amir, Peshawar Zalmi's Saim Ayub and Multan Sultans' Usama Mir being promoted to the platinum category. The four players join Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan, Naseem Shah (Islamabad United), Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Shaheen Shah Afridi (Lahore Qalandars), Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Rizwan (Multan Sultans), Babar Azam (Peshawar Zalmi), who have all been retained in the premium category. The Diamond category features a total of 16 players, including former Gladiators captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, veteran all-rounder Shoaib Malik and Test skipper Shan Masood.



Man City's Dias ruled out for '3 or 4 weeks'

LONDON: Manchester City have suffered a fresh injury blow with manager Pep Guardiola confirming Portugal central defender Ruben Dias has been ruled out for "three or four weeks" with a muscle injury. Dias, who suffered the injury in Saturday's 2-1 defeat by Manchester United, will miss the entire festive programme and potentially the FA Cup third-round tie with Salford on 11 January. The 27-year-old also faces a battle to be fit for City's crucial Champions League trip to Paris St-Germain on 22 January. Dias has already missed seven games with a calf injury this season, adding to a defensive injury list that has seen John Stones, Nathan Ake, Manuel Akanji and Kyle Walker all ruled out at various points, while Ballon d'Or winner Rodri will miss the remainder of the domestic season after suffering a cruciate knee ligament injury. "It's a muscular problem and he will be out for three to four weeks," said Guardiola. "After 75 minutes against United he felt something. But he's so strong and wanted to stay on the pitch. Now he's injured." Guardiola confirmed Stones, Akanji and midfielder Mateo Kovacic have all trained this week and could feature at Aston Villa on Saturday (12:30 GMT), but said goalkeeper Ederson was "a doubt" with an unspecified problem. Amid City's current run of one win in 11 games, surprise has been expressed about Guardiola's use of youngsters James McAtee and Nico O'Reilly. City made a point of keeping both players despite numerous loan options. Yet McAtee has made just two substitute appearances - coming on in the last minute on both occasions - while O'Reilly is yet to make his league debut. But it seems they will stay at the club for the second half of the season, with Guardiola replying "I don't think so" when asked if players might leave during the January transfer window. Guardiola's mood was so downbeat in the immediate aftermath of the United defeat it was easy to imagine he might conclude he was no longer capable of doing the job. - Agencies

Barcelona host in-form Atletico with lead at stake

Atletico and Barcelona are level with 38 points

WEB DESK

BARCELONA: Barcelona are set to host a sizzling Atletico Madrid on Saturday in a highly-anticipated LaLiga clash that will see top spot in play between two sides with completely different momentum. Diego Simeone's red-hot Atletico are one of the most in-form teams in Europe on an 11-game winning streak in all competitions and looking like a well-oiled machine with Antoine Griezmann, Julian Alvarez and Rodrigo de Paul firing on all cylinders. While Atletico have won all their games since late October, LaLiga leaders Barca have stumbled in the last few weeks with a series of poor performances that have seen a comfortable nine points lead completely eroded by Saturday's opponents. They suffered a 1-0 defeat by lowly Leganes on Sunday, their second consecutive home loss, and have only one win in their last six league matches. Atletico are now level with Barcelona on 38 points after a hard-fought 1-0 home win over Getafe while third-placed Real Madrid are only one point behind. To make things worse for Hansi Flick's Barca, Atleti and Real have a game in hand, putting even more pressure on the Catalan giants to step up in front of their fans on Saturday. They will have to do it without talisman Lamine Yamal, who will be out for at least three more weeks with an ankle injury sustained against Leganes. Barcelona have struggled without their teenage winger, who has won multiple awards as the world's best young player to cap a year

in which he helped Spain win Euro 2024 aged only 17. They won only one of the three games he missed last month due to another ankle injury. Real will be closely watching their rivals clash as they could move top with a win over struggling Sevilla on Sunday if Atletico and Barca draw. After a 3-3 stalemate at lowly local rivals Rayo Vallecano last weekend, Real got a boost by lifting the Intercontinental Cup with a 3-0 win over Mexico's Pachuca on Wednesday. Their latest triumph made Carlo Ancelotti the manager with the most titles in the club's history with 15 trophies, surpassing the late Miguel Munoz, who he equalled in August by winning the European Super Cup against Atalanta. On Tuesday, Real's Brazil forward Vinicius Jr was named FIFA's player of 2024, which was another accolade for the club in a year when they won a LaLiga-Champions League double.



ATC rejects Imran, others' acquittal...

FROM PAGE 01 violent protests. The court also rejected the acquittal pleas of PTI leaders Shibli Faraz, Shahryar Afridi, Kanwal Shauzab, Umar Tanvir Butt and former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry. Special Public Prosecutor Zaheer Shah presented arguments against the acquittal petitions, while lawyers Faisal Chaudhry and Faisal Malik represented the PTI leaders along with the legal team. Rejecting the pleas, the ATC said acquittal petitions became infructuous after the indictment of the accused in the case. The court also rejected the pleas of four accused to go abroad due to incomplete documents. A day earlier, ATC Rawalpindi Judge Anjad Ali Shah indicted PTI leader Qureshi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur among 14 in the GHQ attack case. 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 tomorrow (Saturday). The GHQ attack case emanated from the May 9 riots that broke out in several parts of the country following the arrest of former PM Imran in a corruption case.

6 embassies damaged...

FROM PAGE 01 the Kyiv City Military Administration, said on Telegram. In another district, a fire broke out at the site of a building under construction. Several embassies housed in the same building were damaged, according to Ukraine's foreign ministry, with a spokesperson, Heorhii Tykhyi, calling the attack "barbaric." "These are the embassies of Albania, Argentina, Palestine, North Macedonia, Portugal and Montenegro," Tykhyi told a media briefing. "Windows and doors were smashed in the premises." Portugal said the facility suffered light damage and summoned the Russian chargé d'affaires to protest. Russia's defense ministry said it launched long-range missiles at Ukrainian military targets on Friday, in response to a Ukrainian attack targeting a chemical plant in Russia's Rostov region earlier this week. That attack was carried out using American-made ATACMS missiles, the ministry said.

OGRA reduces...

FROM PAGE 01 price for SSGCL is \$12.54 per MMBTU. The reduced prices will be applicable for the month of December. Earlier, Pakistan announced the successful procurement of a second LNG cargo from the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR). According to the statement, Energy Ministry and Pakistan LNG Ltd (PLL) secured LNG cargo agreement from SOCAR. In July last year, Pakistan had signed a landmark framework agreement with Azerbaijan for LNG procurement on flexible terms. Pakistan also purchased a liquefied natural gas shipment to address fuel deficit this winter. Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) has awarded tender to Oman's OQ Trading for a spot LNG cargo to be delivered in January.

Pakistan's mpox tally...

FROM PAGE 01 Medical Sciences (PIMS) for evaluation. His samples were subsequently collected and sent to the NIH for testing. "Subsequent testing at the NIH confirmed the mpox infection. Genetic sequencing is being performed to ascertain the type of virus," an NHS official said. Dr Naseem Akhtar, head of the Infectious Diseases Department at PIMS, confirmed that the patient is in stable condition and receiving appropriate medical care. The latest mpox case comes despite federal health authorities stressing the need for increased vigilance, particularly at international entry points, to further prevent the spread of the virus. Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, is a viral disease characterised by fever, skin rashes, and swollen lymph nodes.

We will continue to support Ukraine: Polish ambassador

FROM PAGE 01

According to the OECD Economic Outlook, Poland's GDP is expected to rise by 3.4% in 2025, solidifying our position as a robust and resilient economy. On Ukraine he said, the goals of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine and durable security for Europe are inseparable. Ukraine must prevail. This is why after more than 1,000 days of Russia's illegal war against Ukraine, we remain steadfast in our solidarity. We will continue to support Ukraine in its right of self-defence against Russian aggression. "We condemn Russia's decision to escalate its war of aggression through brutal and deliberate attacks against Ukraine's cities and critical civilian infrastructure, by the deployment of DPRK troops and by using intermediate range ballistic missiles

to attack Ukraine'. Using North Korean troops joins up Europe's and Asia's security paradigms in a dangerous and destabilizing fashion. (Asia is being dragged into a war in Europe). The Russian aggression against Ukraine is not "an European war" - as some of analysts have claimed - any longer. "Regrettably, we are witnessing a surge in disinformation campaigns orchestrated by Russia, aimed at destabilizing Poland, Ukraine, and the EU. These disinformation campaigns are a key component of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy, which seeks to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine". He said, regarding the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, we have witnessed a significant increase in attempts to illegally cross the border. According to data from the Polish Border Guard, there were over

15,000 attempts to illegally cross the border in 2022, and this number has continued to rise in 2023 and 2024. We are working closely with our EU partners to address this challenge and ensure the security of our borders. The ambassador also talked about the Middle East situation saying international protection of civilian population and humanitarian law must be respected. "We are also committed to supporting international efforts to address the Middle East crisis, particularly in Palestine. In 2024, Poland contributed \$5 million to humanitarian efforts for Palestinians, and we have provided assistance worth over \$12.2 million to Palestine in 2023-24". Briefing the media people about the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2025 he said he would like to highlight Poland's upcoming presidency of the Council of the Eu-

ropean Union in 2025. Our presidency will focus on building a secure and resilient Europe, with seven key security dimensions, including defense and security, protection of people and borders, and resistance to foreign interference and disinformation. During our presidency, we will prioritize measures to strengthen the EU's defense and security capabilities, including the development of a European Defense Fund and the enhancement of EU-NATO cooperation. We will also focus on protecting the EU's external borders and addressing the root causes of migration. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Poland's commitment to strengthening our bilateral and international relationships, promoting economic growth and development, and addressing the key security challenges facing our region and the world. Thank you for your attention, and I welcome your questions.

Briefs

PSX turns
around to
bullish trend,
gains 3,238
points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Friday, gaining 3,238.17 points more points, a positive change of 3.05 percent, closing at 109,513.15 points as compared to 106,274.98 points on the last trading day. A total of 754,917,969 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,167,361,955 3 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 39.424 billion against Rs.56.797 billion on the last trading day. As many as 459 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 281 of them recorded gains and 119 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 59 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 99,942,750 shares at Rs 1.60 per share, Pace (Pak) Limited with 43,280,462 shares at Rs 7.19 per share and K-Electric Limited with 40,644,312 shares at Rs.5.32 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs. 774.38 per share price, closing at Rs 21,399.80, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs 70.28 rise in its per share price to Rs 7,311.65. Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 60.45 per share closing at Rs 9,190.13 followed by Shahmurad Sugar Mills Limited with Rs 45.65 decline to close at Rs435.87.—APP

Rupee sheds
06 paise
against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Friday depreciated by 06 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.41 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.35. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 277.95 and Rs 279.45 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 42 paise to close at Rs 289.05 against the last day's closing of Rs 289.47, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.77, whereas a decrease of Rs2.95 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs348.09 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs351.04. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went up by 02 and 01 paise to close at Rs75.80 and Rs74.07, respectively.

SCCI chief
calls for
concrete steps
to improve
regional trade

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President, Fazal Moqem Khan called for concrete steps to improve regional trade. Talking to a representative delegation of Azerbaijan and Turkey headed by Sohail Sajjad here at the chamber house on Friday, Fazal Moqem said KP is a gateway for trade and export to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries. He stressed for joint initiatives to improve mutual trade with Azerbaijan and Turkey. The meeting was attended by SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, executive committee member Ashfaq Ahmad, a representative from Turkiye Muhammad Afzal, Secretary General Murtasid Ahsan and others. The SCCI chief stated that traders from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa mostly depend on trade with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries. He, however, said cross-border trade and transit trade had been adversely affected owing to non-consistent policies and imposition of heavy duties/tariffs by both governments, which should be reviewed. Moqem also mentioned that the imposition of Infrastructure Development Cess on export by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has become the cause of the complete shift of exports from KP to other provinces, owing to which traders were faced with difficulty.—APP

Pakistan takes TVET
Forum initiative in Beijing

The keynote speakers included Jia Peng, Deputy Director General of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, Ministry of Education; Xu Yan, Deputy Director General of China People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC); and Ms. Yang Yi, Director of the Vocational Training Division, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan Embassy, Beijing hosted on Thursday the inaugural China-Pakistan Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Forum as a ground-breaking initiative to promote bilateral cooperation in education and human resource development. Titled as "Forging a Brighter Future," the Forum brought together policy makers, high-level government officials, renowned TVET service-providers, representatives of enterprises and leadership of technical and vocational institutes from across the breadth of China. The keynote speakers included Jia Peng, Deputy Director General

of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, Ministry of Education; Xu Yan, Deputy Director General of China People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC); and Ms. Yang Yi, Director of the Vocational Training Division, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. The speakers emphasized the pivotal role of TVET in equipping individuals with practical skills, fostering employability, and driving innovation in modern industries. They also underscored China Pakistan TVET cooperation as a shining manifestation of iron-clad friendship between the two countries. In his welcome remarks, Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China, described the

Forum as a vital milestone in Embassy's efforts to support the process of industrialization in Pakistan. Ambassador Hashmi expressed the hope that the Forum would contribute to building a productive workforce equipped with essential skills to deliver on CPEC projects in its next phase. He appreciated the exceptional support rendered by ITMC, China in introducing high-quality TVET programs in Pakistan. In a pre-recorded message, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Pakistan underlined the critical role of TVET in achieving sustainable economic growth. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to working with China to expand TVET programs as part

of five E's development framework of Pakistan. The Forum also featured video remarks by Federal Secretary Education and speeches by Sardar Amir Altaf Khan, Minister TEVTA, AJK, Brig. (R) Muhammad Sajid Khokhar, Chairperson, Punjab TEVTA, Mr. Amir Afaq, Secretary Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, KPK, who presented an overview of TEVT landscape in Pakistan, outlined emerging trends and shared recommendations for future collaboration. Three panel discussions were also organized during the Forum to enlighten the audience on various dimensions of the TVET cooperation. On the occasion, several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were also signed by the Chinese pol-

technic institutes, TVET enterprises and service-providers and provincial Technical Education and Vocational Training Authorities (TEVTA's) of Pakistan. A plaque unveiling ceremony to inaugurate "Kaiwu Workshop" at the National University of Technology (NUTECH), Islamabad was another highlight of the event. In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi congratulated the Embassy team on the successful convening of the Forum and underlined the importance of effective implementation of the MoU's signed at the event. He also expressed determination to make the Forum part of annual calendar of major events organized by Pakistan Embassy in Beijing.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Chaudhary Salik Hussain presenting souvenir to Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins on Friday.

KSrelief to build
homes for thousands
of Bangladeshi flood
survivors

DHAKA: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center is helping build housing for thousands of Bangladeshis rendered homeless by this year's devastating floods. Bangladesh — one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change — faced a series of consecutive climate-related disasters this year. Following the landfall of Cyclone Remal in May, communities in northeastern and southeastern Bangladesh were hit by flash floods and riverine flooding, affecting an estimated 18 million people. Many lost their homes or had them severely damaged. The KSrelief-funded project launched earlier this week will help build 630 homes in nine worst-affected districts. "The scale of the destruction highlighted the urgent need for sustainable relief projects," Saudi Arabia's Deputy Ambassador Abdulaziz Fahad Al-Habrahim told reporters in Dhaka. "(This) program is part of the ongoing humanitarian efforts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support those affected by natural disasters around the world." The homes will be built by KSrelief's local partner, the Sunbulah Welfare Association, which designed them to resist extreme weather. "The floor of the houses will be made with concrete, while the walls and roof will be built with tin, which will be strong enough to withstand future flooding and cyclones," Dr. Mohammad Shakir Hossain, Sunbulah's founder and chairman, told Arab News. The construction of one such home is estimated to cost around \$1,400. "We will complete the construction within the next three months. The first phase of construction works will begin next week," Hossain said. "More than 3,000 people will receive shelter ... It will help a lot of people in the flood- and cyclone-hit areas. Many people in the villages can't build a house like this. For them, a good shelter is a dream." One region where the houses will be built is the southwestern district of Pirojpur. Imam Hossain, 30, a day laborer whose house was destroyed by Cyclone Remal in May, will be among the program's beneficiaries.—APP

Sudanese envoy urges world to
play role for peace in Sudan

KARACHI: The Sudanese Ambassador, Saleh Mohammed Ahmed Mohammed Siddiq, visited the central office of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and

Industry (FPCCI) along with Honorary Consul Aleem Adil Sheikh and a delegation. Saleh Mohammed Ahmed discussed the current situation in Sudan, including political, economic, social conditions, and security challenges, with representatives of the business community. Both sides held a detailed discussion on the potential for exporting Pakistani prod-

ucts amidst the industrial, business, and production crises due to Sudan's unique circumstances. They agreed to maintain effective communication between the FPCCI

and NADRA will work jointly to ensure that services are delivered to residents at their doorstep. He reiterated the shared commitment of both organizations to improve the quality of life for the people of Islamabad through innovative and citizen-focused initiatives and services. Meanwhile, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, met with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) delegation to discuss key initiatives and projects aimed at enhancing Islamabad's infrastructure and services. The meeting was also attended by CDA members, NESPAK consultants, and senior officers from the authority. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa warmly welcomed the ADB delegation, underscoring the significance of their partnership in advancing critical projects for Islamabad. He stressed the need for exploring potential avenues of collaborations and ADB's support in various areas such as water resource management, eco-friendly



ty, warmly welcomed the delegation and presented a commemorative shield to the Sudanese Ambassador. Meanwhile, former FPCCI Vice President Zahid Iqbal

of Pakistan's Al-Khidmat Foundation and various organizations participating in relief activities and stressed the need for business entities, welfare organizations,

and philanthropists to stand shoulder to shoulder with their Sudanese brothers in this humanitarian crisis. Zahid Iqbal Chaudhry emphasized that addressing Sudan's challenges—including sustainable peace, famine, poverty alleviation, and political and economic stability—is a crucial responsibility for the global community in these pressing times.—DNA

NADRA, CDA chiefs call for promotion of key initiatives
Chairman CDA meets with ADB delegation to seek collaboration on key projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman NADRA, Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar, visited the CDA Headquarters, where he was warmly welcomed by Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa. The meeting focused on strengthening mutual collaboration and enhancing coordination between the two institutions. Both sides agreed to promote cooperation across various areas to improve service delivery to the residents of Islamabad. During the meeting, the two organizations mutually agreed on providing technology-based public welfare services and solution to the residents of Islamabad. Chairman NADRA emphasized aligning the features of the upcoming Islamabad Super App with the apps and services provided by NADRA. He also commended CDA's efforts in delivering better services to the citizens of Islamabad. Chairman NADRA highlight-

ed NADRA's various operational services and expressed a desire to expand the scope of facilities for Islamabad's residents with CDA's support. He assured full cooperation in extending services such as the issuance of birth and death certificates and other citizen-centric services throughout the city. Chairman CDA, Muham-

ad Ali Randhawa, offered to establish dedicated NADRA service desks at Basic Health Units in Islamabad to facilitate the delivery of services. He also proposed that NADRA set up a desk at the upcoming Business Facilitation Center in Islamabad, ensuring all services are accessible under one roof. CDA emphasized that CDA

and NADRA will work jointly to ensure that services are delivered to residents at their doorstep. He reiterated the shared commitment of both organizations to improve the quality of life for the people of Islamabad through innovative and citizen-focused initiatives and services. Meanwhile, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, met with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) delegation to discuss key initiatives and projects aimed at enhancing Islamabad's infrastructure and services. The meeting was also attended by CDA members, NESPAK consultants, and senior officers from the authority. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa warmly welcomed the ADB delegation, underscoring the significance of their partnership in advancing critical projects for Islamabad. He stressed the need for exploring potential avenues of collaborations and ADB's support in various areas such as water resource management, eco-friendly

transportation including Inter-city Bus Terminal for Islamabad, and the development of bicycle tracks. The meeting discussed Islamabad's water issues and challenges of Islamabad, including supply-demand gaps, inequitable distribution, water theft and leakage. The discussion also covered the potential of a major water projects to secure long-term water supply for Islamabad. Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa stressed the importance of introducing different interventions, including net metering, revised tariffs, and improved revenue systems. He stated that the shortage of water is the real issue of Islamabad which needs to be addressed at the priority level. He highlighted that after the establishment of Islamabad Water Agency, we can better focus on water issues and would enable Islamabad to secure international funding. He directed to and prepare short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans for addressing the water issues.

UN HRs office
to send team
to Syria next
week

GENEVA: The UN human rights office will send a small team of human rights officers to Syria next week for the first time in years following the overthrow of President Bashar Assad, UN spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan told a press briefing on Friday. As part of the takeover, rebels have flung open prisons and government offices and raising fresh hopes for accountability for crimes committed during Syria's more than 13-year civil war. Under Assad, the UN human rights team has not been allowed in Syria for years, Al-Kheetan said, and has been monitoring abuses remotely. He said that the team would support human rights issues and help ensure that any power transition is "inclusive and within the framework of international law." "It is important for us to start establishing a presence," he said. A UN investigative body also hopes to travel to Syria to secure evidence that could implicate top officials of the former government.

Earlier on Friday, the head of the UN migration agency warned that large-scale returns of refugees to Syria could overwhelm the country and even stoke conflict at a fragile moment with the fall of Assad regime. The UN refugee agency has estimated that 1 million people will return to Syria in the first six months of 2025. Some European countries have already frozen asylum applications for Syrians. "We believe that millions of people returning would create conflict within an already fragile society," Amy Pope, director-general of the International Organization for Migration, told a Geneva press briefing after a trip to Syria. "We are not promoting large-scale returns. The communities, frankly, are just not ready to absorb the people who are displaced," she said, calling for support from donors to help stabilize and rebuild the country.—APP

Sri Lankans
demand
screenings of
Israeli visitors
to keep out
war criminals

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan civil society groups protested on Friday to demand special screenings of Israelis arriving in the country after a soldier accused of war crimes in Gaza was spotted in Colombo. A video of the soldier boasting about the killing of a Palestinian civilian was posted by the Hind Rajab Foundation on Wednesday with an appeal to Sri Lankan authorities to arrest him, as the organization identified the man as staying in the country's capital. The Belgian-based NGO, which pursues legal action against Israeli military personnel involved in the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza over the past 14 months, has named the man as Gal Ferenbook, a member of an Israeli military infantry brigade. The video, which the foundation said was posted by Ferenbook on his Instagram account on Aug. 9, showed him inside an armored vehicle in Gaza, looking at the remains of a dead person. A second individual's voice, speaking in Hebrew, mocked the situation and referred to Ferenbook as "our terminator," while the soldier boasted about his involvement in the killing. While Israeli TV Channel 12 reported on Thursday night that Ferenbook had fled Sri Lanka following the arrest request, his presence in the country has raised concerns about the arrival of other Israeli nationals. "We are protesting against Israeli atrocities against the Palestinian people and request that the Sri Lankan government stop Israeli soldiers from entering Sri Lanka to spend their holidays here," said Swasthika Arulingam, human rights lawyer and leader of the People's Struggle Movement, which co-organized Friday's protest. "Sri Lanka is a member of the UN, and it has an obligation to support the Palestinians and oppose Israeli atrocities at all costs." Arulingam told Arab News that there were fears over the impact of the presence of Israelis in the country on local communities. "War criminals, particularly Israeli war criminals, when they come to Sri Lanka to have fun, they probably will be creating chaos in this country as well," she said.—APP

Briefs

6 arrested after polio team 'attacked'

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Six people were arrested on Friday after a polio vaccination team and policemen accompanying them were allegedly "attacked" by residents in an informal settlement in Karachi's Korangi. Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world, alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic, with the disease mostly affecting children under five, and sometimes causing lifelong paralysis. Despite global efforts to eradicate the virus, challenges such as security issues, vaccine hesitancy, and misinformation have slowed progress. Amid persistent alarm over polio, the Sindh government launched a week-long immunisation drive on Monday against the debilitating disease that has so far affected 18 children in Sindh. This year's last polio vaccination drive targeted 10.6 million children under the age of five. A total of 64 children in Pakistan have contracted the poliovirus this year. A statement from the Korangi senior superintendent of police's (SSP) spokesperson said polio personnel and their security staff arrived at the door of a tribal family in an informal settlement and were subsequently "attacked" by the women present there.

Israeli genocidal war on Gaza continues

GAZA: In the midst of catastrophic humanitarian suffering for more than two million Palestinians — half of them children, the Israeli occupation army continued, for the 41st consecutive day, to pound and target different areas and massacre more civilians in the Gaza Strip, especially in the northern areas. Reporters for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said on Friday that the Israeli occupation army carried out attacks on several homes, civilian targets and shelter centers in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. The Israeli army's large-scale genocidal campaign in northern Gaza, especially in Jabalia and Beit Lahia, has entered day 77, where its forces continue to intensively bomb homes and shelters and attack civilians while imposing a tight siege on the entire area. Deliberate Israeli attacks on ambulance and civil defense workers already deprived northern Gaza of any rescue services. Hajj Yousef Al-Zard, his wife, two sons, and his son's family were all killed in the Israeli attack on their family house in the Al-Daraj neighborhood in Gaza City on Thursday. The Israeli warships also bombed the Al-Mawasi area west of Rafah city. — Agencies

Japan and UNDP helping flood-affected individuals

The project created a lasting impact by empowering over 141,000 individuals in flood-affected areas, with women comprising almost half of the beneficiaries



MAHNOOR ANSAR

Islamabad: A closing ceremony is held today to mark the successful completion of the project "Community-led Flood Rehabilitation and Restoration in Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces of Pakistan". This project, supported by the Government of Japan in partnership with Pakistan's federal and provincial governments, was a key component of UNDP's flagship Pakistan Flood Recovery Programme, launched in April 2023 to support one million of the most vulnerable people impacted by the devastating floods of 2022.

With a generous contribution of USD 4.6 million from the Government of Japan, the project focused on six of the most severely flood-affected districts: Dera Ismail Khan, Naseerabad, Jafarabad, Dadu, Larkana, and Jacobabad. The project created a lasting impact by empowering over 141,000 individuals in flood-affected areas, with women comprising almost half of the beneficiaries. It helped revive local livelihoods, restore safety and dignity, and improve access to markets and social services by supporting the revival of micro-enterprises and distribution of 20,000 agricultural toolkits. In addition, it helped improve safe living conditions by providing 6,000 health and

hygiene kits; 2,000 household solar energy systems; 2,000 water filtration systems, and insect repellents. These efforts have addressed the immediate needs of flood-affected communities while laying a strong foundation for long-term recovery and resilience. Addressing the ceremony, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi stated, "We believe that such a holistic approach is critical to bringing sustainability and resilience in the most vulnerable communities in Pakistan. With the increasing climate risks, community resilience to the impact of disasters and emergency situations is the cornerstone of remaining on track for sustainable develop-

ment pathway in Pakistan." Ms. Ms. Nasira Batool, Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs Division, expressed her gratitude and re-iterated the Government's commitment to sustainable development: "I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Japan for their unwavering friendship, and to UNDP for their exceptional contributions. This initiative has provided essential relief and long term resilience to over 141,000 people across Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this project's success. Together, we have proven that unity and determination can overcome even the greatest challenges." While the project has officially concluded, its impact endures through resilient communities and stronger local institutions, paving the way for sustained recovery in Pakistan through restored livelihoods, improved living conditions, and empowered communities. In thanking the Government of Japan, UNDP Pakistan Resident Representative Dr. Samuel Rizk, stated, "This project stands as a testament to the resilience of flood-affected communities in overcoming hardship and adversity. Together, we have supported the implementation of locally-led solutions that not only restore hope but also empower these communities as they rebuild their lives and livelihoods in the aftermath of the floods. At the successful completion of this project, UNDP reaffirms commitment to accompany the people and institutions in Pakistan on their path toward resilience, recovery and sustainable development."

Most-wanted terrorist killed in Tank

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Security forces gunned down seven Khwarij terrorists, including a most-wanted terrorist of Fitna Alkhwarij, in an Intelligence-Based Operation (IBO) in Tank, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to security sources, the operation was conducted on the night of December 17-18 in Tank. During the successful operation, security forces killed seven Khwarij terrorists, including a top commander, Ali Rahman alias Tauha Swati. Ali Rahman was a close associate of Fitna Alkhwarij's key commander, Mufti Fazalullah. He had joined the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2010 and was a key member of the Khwarij's Shura. Ali Rahman was also associated with Fitna Alkhwarij's key commander, Qari Amjad alias Mufti Mazahim. During the operation, the terrorists took two children hostage and tried to use them as human shields. The terrorist also wore a woman's dress to escape, but the security forces' successful strategy led to the safe recovery of the two children. The local population appreciated the Pakistan Army's efforts in rescuing the children safely. The security forces also recovered a vehicle loaded with arms and explosives from the killed terrorists. The explosives were intended to be used for a major terrorist activity. Earlier, eight khwarij were killed in two separate operations conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province from 29 November to 1 December 2024.

8 former bar presidents challenge 26th Amend

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Eight former presidents of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan (SCBAP) have filed a petition against the 26th Constitutional Amendment, seeking to have it annulled. The petition urges the court to declare the amendment null and void and suspend all actions taken under it until a final decision is reached. The petition claims that the 26th Amendment conflicts with the independence of the judiciary and violates the principle of the separation of powers. The former presidents of the SCBAP further argued in their petition that the 26th Amendment could not have been enacted without a decision on reserved seats in the parliament. As per the channel report, the petition was filed through senior lawyers of the Supreme Court, Sardar Latif Khan Khosa and Barrister Salahuddin. On December 6, 2024, during the Judicial Commission of Pakistan meeting under the chair of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Yahya Afridi, the letter of Justice Mansoor Ali Shah was also discussed. Justice Mansoor had suggested the formation of a full court on petitions against the constitutional amendments.

Our doors are open, but can't force anyone: Ayaz
Speaker says he's sure the day negotiations begin, issues will definitely move forward

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq underscored the importance of dialogue and democratic principles during his media talk on Friday. Reiterating his commitment to facilitating negotiations, he stated, "If someone comes to us for negotiations, we will play a role. Our doors are open, and we will not refuse anyone." Sadiq expressed optimism about resolving political tensions, emphasizing that initiating talks would pave the way for progress. He said, "I am sure that the day negotiations begin, the matter will definitely move forward. We will facilitate quietly and recite Ayatulkursi and Durood Sharif for everyone's betterment." He further said that the day the PTI members came to him, they'd discuss negotiations, adding that they could not force people to come and talk.

US sanctions will have 'zero impact' on Pakistan: ex-envoy
Former diplomat Maleeha Lodhi criticises US double standards, defends Pakistan's nuclear programme

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's former ambassador to the United Nations, Maleeha Lodhi, has dismissed the impact of US sanctions on Pakistan, saying they will have "zero effect." Speaking to a private news channel Lodhi highlighted that US sanctions are not a new development for Pakistan. "Ever since Pakistan pursued its nuclear programme, the US has imposed sanctions, yet they have had no real impact," Lodhi, who also served as the envoy to the United States, said. Lodhi criticised what she described as the US's discriminatory approach, pointing out that no such sanctions have been imposed on India, whose missile programme is far more advanced. "This is a clear double standard by the US," she said, reiterating that the sanctions will not affect Pakistan. She further noted that Pakistan is no longer a priority in US foreign policy, especially since the American withdrawal from Afghanistan. "The Trump administration's focus was on China, and US-Pakistan relations have been

at a crossroads ever since," Lodhi observed. Commenting on the domestic discourse surrounding Pakistan's nuclear programme, Lodhi emphasised that no Pakistani would support the US's discriminatory behaviour. "There should be no political point-scoring on our nuclear programme," she asserted, underlining the importance of national unity on such issues. A senior White House official on Thursday said nuclear-armed Pakistan is developing long-range ballistic missile capabilities that eventually could allow it to strike targets outside of South Asia, including the United States. Deputy national security adviser Jon Finer said Islamabad's conduct raised "real questions" about its intentions. The statement came only a day after the US State Department said it was imposing additional sanctions related to Pakistan's ballistic missile programme, targeting four entities that it said were contributing to the proliferation or delivery of such weapons. The statement, issued on the State Department's website, said that the decision was taken "in light of the continuing proliferation threat of Pakistan's long-range missile development".



PESHAWAR: Federal minister of Interior, Mohsin Naqvi meets Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur at CM office. — DNA

Pir Pagara decries interference in election process
Urges powers that be to respect people's choice

NASEERABAD: Pir Pagara, Pakistan Muslim League (F) chief, on Friday deplored that the choices made by the people to elect their representatives were not respected in the election. Lambasting the incumbent government, he said the current rulers are not able to even provide dignity to the masses let alone job opportunities. He said the ministers sitting in the cabinet were themselves giving contradictory statements. As for the water issues, he said he was immensely worried about the alarming situation in Balochistan as even people, in many areas, did not have enough water. Mentioning the 2022 floods in Sindh, he said even during that period, people were fighting for water. Imagine the condition of water resources in a normal season," he deplored. Mentioning the recent elections of February 8, he said it was good that the international community came to realize how the polls were held under dubious circumstances. — DNA

IHC questions US silence on PM's letter regarding Aafia

Islamabad High Court wants updates on efforts to secure Aafia Siddiqui's release from US

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has ordered the government to provide details of the prime minister and foreign minister's foreign visits since the filing of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's clemency petition in the United States. The order was issued during a hearing of the case regarding Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's release and return to Pakistan, based on a petition filed by her sister, Dr. Fouzia Siddiqui. The hearing was presided over by Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan. Dr. Fouzia Siddiqui appeared via video link, while the petitioner's lawyer, Imran Shafiq, and former Senator Mushtaq were present in court. The Additional Attorney General and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also attended the hearing. The court reviewed a declaration presented by Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's U.S. lawyer, Mr. Clive Smith, and commended his efforts. IHC directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to submit a detailed report on Mr. Smith's declaration and to address the matter on a diplomatic level. Justice Khan remarked that while the U.S. is a sovereign nation and has the authority to reject visa applications, in-

cluding that of Dr. Fouzia Siddiqui or even the Prime Minister, diplomatic efforts are essential in such cases. Dr. Fouzia Siddiqui stated that when the head of one country writes a letter to the executive of another country, a response is expected. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative confirmed that no response had been received to the letter written by Prime Minister Imran Khan to U.S. President Joe Biden. Additionally, arrangements had been made for a Pakistani delegation to meet Dr. Aafia in the U.S. The court inquired about the delay in the delegation's arrival and questioned the absence of the Pakistani ambassador in the process. Justice Khan emphasized that such matters should be handled by the ambassador, especially in cases where the head of state has written a letter and not received a response. The court further noted that the Pakistani ambassador should have arranged a meeting with the Biden administration. The court has now requested detailed reports on the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's visits abroad. The Additional Attorney General sought to withdraw the request for the visits' details, but the court decided to proceed with the inquiry. The court adjourned the case until January 13, 2024.

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