



Islamabad POST

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No one can stop China's 'reunification' with Taiwan, says Xi

Detailed News On Page-08

2024 was a success on diplomatically

Detailed News On Page-08

Tim Southee signs up for PSL-10 draft

Detailed News On Page-06



PM urges 'political harmony'

Govt unveils 'Uraan Pakistan' plan for economy

"Team Pakistan must put its hands together and march forward with unity of thought and action," says premier

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has rolled out the ambitious economic reforms package dubbed as "Uraan Pakistan," aimed at boosting growth and improving lives of the masses. "Today is a great day," PM Shehbaz said in his opening remarks while addressing the ceremony in Islamabad on Tuesday. The premier said that they have just listen to a "remarkable and brilliant" narration from the finance minister, planning minister and deputy prime minister along way very informative presentation. "The crux is that in the last nine months we negotiated huge challenges and difficulties and through untiring efforts of the federal government provincial governments and our international partners and friends, we have been able to achieve macro economic stability but this is just the beginning of a long journey which would entail sacrifice, blood and sweat to achieve economic growth and finding our lost place among nations," he added. The premier stressed that this requires Pakistan to put its hands together and march forward with unity of thought and action. He also congratulated Ahsan Iqbal, Muhammad Aurangzeb and the entire federal cabinet and federal officials, secretaries, SIFC, and provincial chief ministers and the governments for their "great support and cooperation to carve out this homegrown programme." "During the journey from default to development and from stable economy to strong economy, we witnessed several phases and faced difficulties," he said. "When Pakistan was on the verge of collapse, we under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, and our coalition partners agreed that they would sacrifice their politics for national interest," he said. In 2023, the prime minister said, when the government was making all-out efforts to secure an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme

Continued on Page 06

PM's reforms to boost growth: Attaullah Tarar

FAISAL SEIHKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday that the prime minister's homegrown economic reforms package will significantly improve citizens' lives, stimulate growth, and strengthen the economy. In an exclusive statement regarding the prime minister's five-year National Economic Transformation Plan 2024-29, titled "Udan Pakistan: Homegrown National Economic Plan," Tarar revealed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will unveil the ambitious agenda today. Tarar stated that Pakistan has moved from the verge of default to stability and is now on the path to progress. He expressed gratitude, highlighting improvements in all economic indicators. Describing the Home-Grown Economic Agenda as a reform-driven plan centered on "Made in Pakistan," Tarar stressed its vital role in fostering economic growth and bringing positive change to the people of Pakistan. The economic reform agenda is designed to accelerate the country's development and ensure the prosperity of its citizens.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inaugurating the logo & website of the National Economic Transformation Plan 2024-2029, titled "Uraan Pakistan". - DNA

DPM Dar meets with Pakistan's Envoys

Deputy PM urges envoys to boost Pakistan's global profile

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar today chaired a meeting of Pakistan's envoys at key multilateral and bilateral Missions. Foreign Secretary Ms. Anna Baloch and Additional Foreign Secretaries and senior Directors General of the Ministry also attended the meeting. The Envoys shared their assessment and views on the regional and global developments and inputs for foreign policy priorities for 2025 and beyond. In his keynote address, the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister shared the vision

Continued on Page 06

ECP restores Adil Bazai's membership

He is disqualified by the ECP based on a reference filed by PML-N President Nawaz Sharif

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has reinstated the membership of Adil Bazai as Member National Assembly (MNA) and issued a notification designating him as an independent candidate. The ECP restored Bazai's membership for NA-262 Quetta through an official notification, which clarified that he would be considered an independent candidate rather than affiliated with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Continued on Page 06

Criticizes Pak airstrikes

Imran rejects ISPR statement on talks with TTP

Addressing the Afghanistan issue, Khan stated that negotiations remain the most effective solution, criticizing the contradictory approach of sending special envoys to Kabul while simultaneously conducting airstrikes

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Faisal Chaudhry, lawyer of the founding leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emphasized that all cases against Imran Khan and party members are politically motivated. Speaking to the media outside Adiala Jail after a meeting with Imran Khan, Faisal Chaudhry asserted that these cases lack substance and are designed to target the party's leadership and workers. Faisal Chaudhry confirmed that 21 PTI detainees have been granted bail, and 99% of workers in Punjab have already been released. According to Chaudhry, PTI founder Imran Khan has urged the establishment to form a judicial commission to investigate the May 9 events and the November 26 protests. Addressing the Afghanistan issue, Khan stated that negotiations remain the most effective solution, criticizing the contradictory approach of sending special envoys to Kabul

Continued on Page 06

US sanctions Pakistan recalls ambassador for consultations

Envoy Rizwan Saeed Sheikh to hold meetings with PM, FM to plan future strategy; US delegation's visit to Pakistan anticipated in 2025

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has recalled its envoy to Washington, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, for critical consultations as the country prepares to address anticipated US pressure and sanctions on its missile program in 2025. According to diplomatic sources, Pakistan is deliberating various strategies to counter expected US pressure on its

Continued on Page 06

Briefs



DAILY Islamabad POST wishes a very happy new year to all its readers.

- Editor

Former GB CM awarded 34-year jail

In July 2023, Khalid Khurshid was disqualified on a fake degree

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court in Gilgit-Baltistan on Tuesday awarded 34-year jail sentence to former chief minister Khalid Khurshid Khan for threatening security personnel and institutions. In July 2023, Khalid Khurshid, who is also PTI's regional president, was disqualified by the GB Chief Court for allegedly obtaining a licence from the GB Bar Council based on a fake degree. - DNA

UN slams Afghan Govt for banning Women working

NEW YORK: UN human rights chief Volker Turk said on Tuesday that Afghanistan's governing Taliban authorities must reverse their ban on Afghan women working for NGOs. Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, women have been progressively erased from public spaces, prompting the United Nations to denounce the "gender apartheid" the administration has established. "I am deeply alarmed at the recent announcement by the de facto authorities in Afghanistan that non-governmental organisations' licenses will be revoked if they continue to employ Afghan women. - DNA

Kurram dispute

Grand jirga adjourned without any proceedings

Grand jirga will reconvene tomorrow under the chairmanship of the Kohat commissioner

SHAMIM SHAHID

KOHAT: A peace agreement in Kurram District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, failed to be finalized as one party did not sign the accord during the grand peace jirga held in Kohat. Sources indicate that one party had already signed the agreement, and the second party was expected to sign today, but the jirga session has been adjourned and is likely to continue tomorrow. A jirga member mentioned that the deadline for the agreement had been extended to Wednesday, and the jirga had been summoned earlier today. Haji Malik Thawab Khan expressed optimism that the jirga would soon reach a resolution, adding that the government had set Wednesday for a final decision. Both parties are reportedly agreeing to vacate and demolish fortifications. However, one party remains hesitant to disarm due to fears of attacks from Afghan border militants. Efforts are ongoing to resolve issues and reopen the roads. Meanwhile, the closure of key routes, including

Continued on Page 06

KP's peace is my responsibility: CM

The Chief Minister also highlighted the importance of economic performance

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: The Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur on Tuesday stated that restoring peace and security in the province is his responsibility and he will ensure its implementation. Speaking about the long-standing issue of peace in the Kurram region, Ali Amin Gandapur emphasised that the problem has persisted for over 50 years but assured that it is close to being resolved. "I will personally ensure its resolution," he added. Ali Amin Gandapur remarked,

Continued on Page 06

Taliban orders closure of all NGOs employing Afghan women

UN calls Taliban's new order an alarming violation of women's rights and aid access

NEWS DESK

KABUL: The Taliban has announced that it will close all national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Afghanistan that employ Afghan women. The move, which further tightens the group's restrictions on women, comes just over two years after they ordered NGOs to suspend employing Afghan women, allegedly due to non-compliance with Islamic dress codes. In a letter published on X (formerly Twitter) on Sunday evening, the Taliban's Ministry of Economy warned that any organisation found employing Afghan women would have its licence revoked. The new order aims to enforce a broader policy of gender segregation in Afghanistan, which the Taliban has pursued since taking control of the country in August 2021. The group insists that all institutions, whether national or foreign, comply with its strict interpretation of Islamic law. The United Nations expressed grave concern over the announcement, highlighting the detrimental impact it will have on the country's already dire humanitarian situation. "This will severely hinder our ability to provide life-saving

Continued on Page 06

Foreign fighters given senior Syrian army posts: Report

Names include Chinese Uyghurs, a Jordanian and a Turkish national

AGENCIES

DAMASCUS: Syria's new leaders are reported to have given some foreign Islamist fighters senior official posts in the country's armed forces. The army is being re-organised by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) - the Islamist group that is now effectively in charge of the country - following the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad earlier this month. While there has been no confirmation of the move by the new leadership, it is likely to

Continued on Page 06

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Call for institutionalization of Islamic social finance

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a day-long pre-conference seminar titled 'Elimination of Interest from the Economy: Sustainable Islamic Banking and Investment Practices' have called for institutionalizing the Islamic social finance. They emphasized the need for taking practical steps to eliminate riba (interest) in light of the 26th Constitutional Amendment and the recent decision of the Federal Shariat Court. The speakers stated, "Eliminating riba from the country requires a movement and results will only be achieved if everyone actively participate in this struggle." They cited the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) statement condemning those who take, give, document, or witness interest-based transactions, declaring them equally sinful. Addressing the seminar, Justice Dr. Muhammad Anwar of the Federal Shariat Court said, "Eliminating riba is an integral part of our faith." He urged that we must not consider the consequences of ending interest but instead align the financial system with Allah's commands. He praised the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Allama Iqbal Open University for initiating this vital dialogue and called on other universities to raise awareness about this critical issue.—APP

Body recovered from canal

MUZAFFARGARH: A body of the man was found floating in the canal's water in limits of district Layyah, here on Tuesday. According to a police spokesperson, some passerby spotted a body floating in canal and informed police concerned. The team along with rescue 1122 reached the spot and fished out the corpse. Police said that the deceased was identified as Waqar-ul-Haq and his body was handed over to the heirs after completing formalities. Further investigation was underway.

Zu daily commuters surge to 345,000

PESHAWAR: TransPeshawar has released the annual report for Zu Peshawar, which shows that this year, citizens utilized the Zu Peshawar bus service for approximately 86.5 million trips. To date, the service has been used for over 300 million trips. Daily commuters have exceeded 345,000 passengers, with women making up nearly 30% of the total. In 2024, Zu Peshawar launched three new routes: DR-14 (Islamia College to Regi Model Town), DR-14A (Islamia College to Professor Model Town), and DR-13 (Sardar Garhi to Pabbi). Additionally, University Express services were introduced on ER-09, ER-10, ER-12, ER-16, and SR-08 routes for convenience of students. This year, Zu Peshawar's Bus Industry Restructuring Program (BIRP) was awarded an honourable mention at the Sustainable Transport Awards, by the Institute for Transport Development and Policy (ITDP) bringing the total number of international awards to five. Furthermore, around 240,000 Zu Cards were sold, increasing the total number of cards in circulation to over 1.9 million.—APP

Kundi affirms commitment to welfare, rights of minorities

DNA

PESHAWAR: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday affirmed his commitment to the welfare and rights of minorities, stating that the Pakistan People's Party has always prioritized the protection and well-being of minorities. The Governor reiterated that all minorities in Pakistan enjoy constitutional religious and personal freedoms, said a press release issued here. He was talking to Dr Shoaib Suddle, Chairman of the One-Man Commission, who called on him in Islamabad. Kundi acknowledged the contributions of minorities, including the

Consular corps committed to enhancing cultural, consular ties: Iranian envoy

Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah while speaking at the Diplomatic Forum for the Socio-Economic Foundation as the chief guest said that he was impressed by the remarkable efforts of the Diplomatic Community in Karachi

DNA

KARACHI: The ceremony of the 8th Diplomatic and Foreign Investment Award 2024 by the Diplomatic Forum for Social Economic Foundation has been held at a local hotel.

Consul General of Iran, Hassan Nourian while speaking at the Diplomatic Forum as a Dean of Consular Corps in Karachi stated that the diplomatic & consular missions play a crucial role in promoting socioeconomic progress by fostering international cooperation, facilitating trade and investment, and enhancing the country's global image. He appreciated the effort of the Consulate Generals based in Karachi for providing consular services to their respective citizens and to the Pakistani applicants, and offering visa facilitation and market information to the business community. He also assured, on behalf of the Karachi Consular corps, his commitment for the enhancement of the cultural, commercial & consular relations with Pakistan and utilization of all of the capabilities to play a vital role in creating a conducive environment for economic growth, attracting investment and enhancing international cooperation. Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah while speaking at the Diplomat-



Forum for the Socio-Economic Foundation as the chief guest said that he was impressed by the remarkable efforts of the Diplomatic Community in Karachi. He also mentioned the several constructive steps taken by the Sindh government to build confidence among local and foreign investors. He stated that to implement better investment policies.

UAE envoy, governor Punjab discuss matters of mutual interest

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that Pakistan and the UAE had deep brotherly relations, adding that Pakistan wants to take relations between both countries to greater heights

DNA

LAHORE: Ambassador of United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Pakistan Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi called on Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan and discussed matters of mutual interest, besides ways to expanding bilateral relations in the economic sector during a meeting at the Governor's House here.

Governor Punjab apprised the UAE ambassador of the difficulties faced by Pakistanis, especially students, in obtaining UAE visa. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that Pakistan and the UAE had deep brotherly relations, adding that Pakistan wants to take relations between both countries to greater heights. He said development of the economy was top priority of

the government and, therefore, the government was providing facilities to foreign investors through the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). He maintained UAE companies can invest in various sectors in Pakistan. Governor Punjab said that Pakistanis consider UAE their second home due to their common religion and culture. He highlighted that Pakistan values UAE govern-

ment's cooperation in health, education and other sectors, adding that there should be more exchanges of delegations in the trade sector between the two countries. UAE envoy Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi said that there were vast possibilities of cooperation with Pakistan in the renewable energy sector. UAE embassy was working on resolving issues regarding visas," he remarked.

Climate change with proactive steps top priority

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, emphasized on Tuesday that Pakistan was facing significant threats and challenges from climate change. Speaking to the private news channel, she stated that a proactive approach is being adopted to address this critical issue. "Whenever the prime minister attends international events, the climate change agenda remains a top priority. The government is working to collaborate and coordinate with provincial authorities to ensure Pakistan fulfills its international environmental commitments, she said. Romina highlighted that, under the Prime Minister's instructions, a comprehensive mechanism has

been established to meet environmental targets. This includes setting clear guidelines to strengthen provincial coordination, she added. She said that a three-point strategy to combat and prevent smog, focusing on pollution control, energy transition, and environmental regulation. "This strategy will guide every government in achieving long-term environmental goals," she added. Romina applauded the "Breathe Pakistan" initiative, aimed at raising public awareness about climate issues. She also urged the media to play a pivotal role in educating the public about environmental challenges. "A wider awareness regarding climate change through engaging campaigns on multiple mediums is needed," she added.—APP

NSU to launch mobile application 'My NSU'

ISLAMABAD: National Skills University Islamabad (NSU) would enter into a new digital transformation era by launching university's groundbreaking mobile application, 'MY NSU' on January 1. The initiative will be a bold stride into the future of education and governance. This forward-looking initiative, led by Founding Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, underscores NSU's commitment to fostering innovation in education through technology. This project is being led by Prof. Dr. Saud Altaf, Chairperson at the Department of Information Engineering Technology at the University. It is worth mentioning that the team comprises final-year students from the same department. This transformation is more than a technological upgrade; it is a comprehensive reimagining of how a university serves its students, faculty, and visitors. From the moment you set foot on campus, digital tools will guide your experience, making navigation seamless and operations efficient. The university's collaboration with Shenzhen Polytechnic University, China, a UNE-SCO-UNEVOC partner, is at the heart of this change, which brings global expertise to this local endeavor. 'MY NSU' app exemplifies the university's vision for a digital-first future.—APP

SHRC, Musawi joined hands to protect & promote women's marriage rights

KARACHI: The Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and Musawi, a Lahore based independent research organization headquartered, have partnered to protect and promote women's marriage rights across Sindh. The initiative began on February 15, 2024, and uses awareness-raising workshops and legal aid camps to assist marginalized groups, such as women and persons with different abilities, who may have limited or no access to legal remedies or information to know and access their legal rights. Musawi and SHRC have been operating across Sindh, including key areas like Sukkur, Larkana and Karachi. They have empowered women by providing legal representation and legal consultation pertaining to the provisions of the Nikkahnama and women's rights within marriage and family.—APP

CCP imposes Rs 275m in penalties in 2024

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has levied penalties totalling Rs 275 million in a significant crackdown on anti-competitive practices, in 2024. These fines were imposed on companies found guilty of cartelization, collusion, and deceptive marketing in various sectors, including paint manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, dairy products, and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). This action underscores the CCP's ongoing efforts to ensure fair competition in Pakistan's markets, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. As part of its policing efforts, the CCP issued 32 show-cause notices to companies across sectors such as fertilizer, real estate, education, public procurement in power distribution companies, pharmaceuticals, and FMCG. These notices were in response to potential violations of the Competition Act related to cartel activities and deceptive practices. Additionally, the Commission initiated seven fresh inquiries into industries like transportation, telecommunication, construction, and FMCG for suspected cartelization and collusion, which contravene sections 3 and 4 of the CCP Act. Several companies involved in sectors such as the transportation of edible oil, telecommunications, electric fan manufacturing, and construction were found to be in violation of anti-competitive laws. Meanwhile, FMCG, pharmaceutical, and services sectors were investigated for engaging in deceptive marketing practices, breaching section 10 of the Act. Moreover, the CCP recovered Rs 100 million approximately in penalties from violators by successfully securing judgments in courts, marking the highest-ever penalty recovery since the Commission's inception. The CCP concluded 11 inquiries into cartelization cases in sectors like wheat flour, public procurement, energy, FMCG, civil aviation, and steel. Another four investigations into deceptive marketing were finalized in the FMCG, construction, pharmaceutical, and automobile sectors. Furthermore, in 2024, the CCP approved 64 merger applications and granted 56 exemptions, predominantly in the FMCG, LNG, power, real estate, telecom, textile, and renewable energy sectors. The Commission also issued a policy note to the Ministry of Science and Technology, recommending amendments to Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) regulations to mandate the inclusion of manufacturing and expiry dates on cement bags. In a bid to enhance market surveillance, the CCP operationalized its Market Intelligence Unit (MIU), a cutting-edge initiative aimed at detecting anti-competitive practices. Through advanced data collection and analytical techniques, the MIU has already identified over 125 instances of market manipulation.—APP




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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA	Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Palestine	Palestine Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Sudan	National Day
Jan 04 / Myanmar	Independence Day
Jan 06 / Iraq	Armed Forces Day
Jan 12 / Tanzania	Armed Forces Day
Jan 14 / Uzbekistan	Armed Forces Day
Jan 15 / Nigeria	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Mali	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Laos	Armed Forces Day
Jan 25 / Thailand	Armed Forces Day
Jan 26 / Australia	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.....	9261170-79
Cantonment Board.....	9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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CDA, SNGPL join hands to resolve gas-related issues

Chairman CDA emphasized the importance of providing an immediate gas connection for the Gandhara Citizen Club in Sector F-9.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Muhammad Ali Randhawa met with the General Manager (GM) Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) at the CDA Headquarters on Tuesday. The meeting focused on promoting mutual cooperation between the two organizations and held detailed discussions on resolving gas-related issues in Islamabad. The GM SNGPL apprised that work on replacing the aging gas pipeline network in Islamabad's main sectors would commence soon. In response, Chairman CDA directed the Engineering and Environment Wings to promptly issue NOCs (No Objection Certificates) to facilitate this process. He assured SNGPL of CDA's full cooperation in the replacement of old gas pipelines. The GM of SNGPL further shared that measures are being taken to ensure uninterrupted gas supply to Islamabad's residents during peak meal times in the winter season. He stated that SNGPL is implementing an effective strategy to improve gas pressure across the city. Chair-



man CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, emphasized the importance of providing an immediate gas connection for the Gandhara

Citizen Club in Sector F-9. He also appreciated SNGPL's efforts in ensuring the timely relocation of service lines

for mega projects. The meeting concluded with both CDA and SNGPL reaffirming their commitment to strengthen-

ing future collaboration and working together to address infrastructure and utility challenges in Islamabad.

Call for awareness campaign to promote education in Balochistan

He assured the Federal Secretary of full cooperation in resolving any issues and extended his best wishes for her future endeavours

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan on Tuesday emphasized the need for creating an awareness campaign to promote educational programs and creative activities for the youth of Balochistan. He expressed these views during a meeting with Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Ms. Ambreen Jan, according to a news release issued by the Senate Secretariat. During the meeting, the Federal Secretary briefed the Deputy Chairman on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's overall performance, operational procedures, and strategic policies. She also briefed the Deputy Chairman about new initiatives and detailed road map for enhancing public information and media outreach. Lauding PTV's efforts in covering Senate activities, Syedaal Khan said, "PTV is a national asset, and it is our responsibility to address its challenges." Acknowledging PTV's efforts, the Deputy Chairman praised the broadcaster for its responsible coverage of the upper house proceedings and its longstanding role in delivering reliable news to the public. "Pakistan Television is a national asset, and resolving its issues is our collective responsibility," he said. He urged PTV to collaborate with experts in developing programs that address the challenges faced by remote communities, thereby raising awareness and facilitating actionable solutions. The Deputy Chairman noted that PTV's extensive network ensures seamless connectivity across the country, including its most distant regions. He commended the channel's consistent efforts in promoting the nation's culture and regional values, stating, "PTV has played a pivotal role in preserving and promoting our heritage. We must connect our younger generation to these values and traditions." He assured the Federal Secretary of full cooperation in resolving any issues and extended his best wishes for her future endeavours.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Girls celebrating in front of welcome 2025 sign displayed alongside a road at Blue area.

Naval chief presides over command, staff conference at naval HQs

Chief of the Naval Staff emphasized on the importance of strengthening maritime security and maintaining combat readiness to effectively respond to any aggression against Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Command and Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy concluded at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The conference was chaired by Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf. The forum reviewed the maritime situation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and deliberated on measures to ensure safety and security of national sea trade passing

through the region.

During the conference, preparations for the upcoming PN multinational Exercise AMAN and the maiden AMAN Dialogue were reviewed to ensure the befitting conduct of these momentous events of international significance. Moreover, the forum also discussed matters related to the geo-strategic environment, national security, operational preparedness, training, and troops welfare. Comprehensive briefings on

important ongoing and future developmental projects of Pakistan Navy were also presented to Chief of the Naval Staff. Chief of the Naval Staff emphasized on the importance of strengthening maritime security and maintaining combat readiness to effectively respond to any aggression against Pakistan. He commended the initiatives undertaken to enhance capabilities through the acquisition of emerging technologies. Naval Chief also expressed satisfaction with the operational preparedness of Pakistan Navy in the face of prevailing maritime challenges and praised the morale and motivation of troops at all levels.

The Command and Staff Conference is the apex decision-making body of the Pakistan Navy, where Chief of the Naval Staff, along with all Principal Staff Officers and Field Commanders, reviews the Pakistan Navy's policies and plans.

UNFPA, SoLF conclude transformative 'Hifazat' theatre workshops

ISLAMABAD :United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in collaboration with the School of Leadership Foundation (SoLF), concluded the 'Hifazat' theatre workshops and performances, a four-month program running from July to October 2024. This initiative harnessed the transformative power of theatre to address critical social issues such as reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, child marriages, and gender equality, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. Focusing on youth-led communication, the program engaged university students from Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) in South Punjab and the University of Peshawar (UoP) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in partnership with Theatre Wallay, a renowned professional theater group. The programme commenced with virtual sessions, during which students learned techniques for collecting real-life community stories related to reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and other societal challenges. In September, intensive three-day, in-person workshops were held at both universities. These sessions offered students: Acting Fundamentals are used for ice-breaking exercises to enhance teamwork, communication, and stage presence. Story Collection & Development for participants to transform personal and community narratives into meaningful monologues and scenes. The scriptwriting & Peer Review, collaborative script development, followed by feedback sessions to refine content. Technical Theatre Training Guidance on staging, set design, costume planning, and audience engagement. Equipped with newfound skills, participants went on to organize community-based theater performances addressing gender equality, child marriage, other pressing topics. These interactive performances sparked meaningful conversations and fostered awareness within local communities.—APP

Police recover Rs 47,580 stake money

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police arrested 25 gamblers and recovered Rs 47,580 stake money, 21 mobile phones and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that Gujjar Khan police conducted a raid and arrested 18 gamblers namely Sakhi Mehmood, Ghulam Abbas, Khalil, Imran, Arshad, Zia ur Rehman and others, who were allegedly involved in betting. Police recovered Rs 31,500, 16 mobile phones, and other items from their possession. In another raid, R.A.Bazar police netted 7 gamblers namely Aftab Ahmed, Shehbaz, Mehran, Adnan and others and recovered Rs 16,580 cash stake money, five mobile phones and other items. Cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process. Divisional Superintendents of Police said that gambling is the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.—APP

Call to auction fallen trees

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In recent years, an alarming trend has emerged in the forestry sector of various provinces—fallen trees worth billions of rupees are being left to decay along the banks of canals and highways. These valuable resources, which could generate significant revenue for forest departments, are instead becoming targets for theft and sources of administrative conflict. The failure to auction these trees has led to substantial economic losses and has compounded the challenges faced by understaffed forestry departments. Fallen trees represent a vast economic resource. Timber from these trees can be used for construction, furniture, and various industrial applications, and their auction can generate significant revenue for gov-

ernment bodies. In many regions these resources are left to decay due to administrative delays, policy inaction, or bureaucratic inefficiencies. Staff shortages in forestry departments across provinces further complicate the situation. Simplifying the procedures for auctioning fallen trees can help reduce administrative delays and ensure timely resource utilization. Transparent and fair bidding processes should be established to prevent corruption and maximize revenue. Revising outdated forestry laws to prioritize the timely auction of fallen trees can provide a robust legal framework for addressing this issue. The current approach to handling fallen trees is not only economically and environmentally unsustainable but also indicative of a broader neglect of forestry resources.

PTC chief concerned over industrial growth in Q1

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Textile Council (PTC), Mr. Fawad Anwar, has voiced serious concerns regarding Pakistan's economic performance in the first quarter of FY 2024-25. According to official data, the country recorded a meager growth rate of 0.92%, while the industrial sector contracted by 1.03% during the same period. In his statement, Mr. Anwar highlighted the growing challenges faced by the industrial sector, with the high cost of energy in Pakistan being one of the primary factors behind the contraction. He remarked, "The textile sector, along with other industries, is struggling to stay competitive due to escalating energy prices, which significantly increase production costs and erode our global market competitiveness." He further emphasized the urgent need for policy reforms to address these structural issues. "It is imperative that the government takes immediate action to ensure the availability of affordable and reliable energy for the industrial sector. Without such measures, the contraction in the industrial sector may continue, further exacerbating unemployment and reducing export revenues," he added. Mr. Anwar reiterated the Pakistan Textile Council's commitment to working collaboratively with policymakers to find sustainable solutions for the challenges faced by the textile and industrial sectors. "We are ready to engage with stakeholders to create a roadmap for economic recovery and sustained growth," he concluded.

Briefs

Police arrest 3 robbers in encounter

RAWALPINDI :Rawalpindi district police in an encounter managed to arrest three injured robbers and recovered a snatched motorcycle and an Alto car. According to a police spokesman, Alto car recovered from the possession of the arrested robbers was snatched at gunpoint nearly four days ago. He further informed that in the jurisdiction of Saddar Police Station, three suspects namely Farhan, Suleman and Kashif opened fire on a police party on Monday night. The Saddar Baroni police acting on information about the motorcycle snatching incident were conducting snap checking when the accused started firing on the police party. Police retaliated and managed to arrest three robbers while an accused escaped from the scene. On receiving information, senior police officers reached the spot and ordered operation to net the accomplice managed to escape. —APP

FOSPAH orders dismissal of NICL employee

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (FOSPAH), Ms. Fauzia Vigar, has taken strict action against workplace harassment by ordering the removal of Zubair Soomro, an employee of National Insurance Company Limited (NICL), under Section 4(4)(ii)(d) of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010. The complaint was lodged by Sadia Zaman, a fellow employee of NICL, who reported that the accused misbehaved, abused, and threatened her over the telephone. She sought justice for the harassment and abuse endured by the accused. Following a thorough investigation, the Federal Ombudsperson issued the maximum penalty under the law and ordered the dismissal from service of the accused. In addition, NICL officially terminated Zubair Soomro from his service. This decisive action reflects FOSPAH's unwavering commitment to creating safe and harassment-free workplaces for women across Pakistan. The Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, empowers individuals to report incidents of harassment, ensuring swift and fair justice. —APP

ANF recovers over 10.6 kg hashish

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in an operation at Peshawar Airport recovered 10.6 kg hashish, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that in an operation, a British citizen of Pakistani origin was arrested and ANF recovered 10.6 kg hashish from his trolley bag. Hashish was concealed in boxes. The accused was leaving for London via Doha. —APP

Envoy Hashmi calls on Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb

During the meeting, Senator Aurangzeb highlighted the significant strides made on the economic front, particularly the growing business and investor confidence in Pakistan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting with Mr. Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China, who called on the Minister at Finance Division on Tuesday. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Syed Tariq Fatemi, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs. During the meeting, Senator Aurangzeb highlighted the significant strides made on the economic front, particularly the growing business and investor confidence in Pakistan. He underscored the importance of robust economic diplomacy and collaboration, emphasizing the need for greater economic output.



Ahsan terms Uddan Pakistan Program revolutionary step

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday described the incumbent government's five-year homegrown national economic plan (2024-29), titled 'Uddan Pakistan,' as a 'revolutionary' step towards achieving much-needed sustainable economic develop-

ment. "It is a revolutionary step that can be successful by forging greater national unity, avoiding political chaos or any political long marches. Instead, what is required is an economic long march, so that we can compete with the world in an effective way," he said in a televised statement before the formal launch of the five-year plan. Initially, he said, the government had taken some 'instant'

measures to effectively tackle the challenges at hand, but there was a need for long-term planning on a continuous basis to make the country prosperous and economically strong. The minister mentioned that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, during its previous tenures, had launched Vision-2010 and Vision-2025, but these could not be fully implemented

due to political instability. "But now, the government has once again prepared a five-year plan that will prove to be the foundation for sustainable economic development," he said, adding that the benefits of the national economic plan would be passed on to the common man in the form of better education, health, increased employment and business opportunities.

PM's economic reforms package to boost growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's five-year homegrown economic reform package will strengthen the country, attract investment, promote prosperity, and accelerate national progress, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said Tuesday. In a statement, he

said that economic indicators are improving thanks to the swift actions taken by the incumbent government shortly after assuming office. These measures have improved people's lives, and Pakistan's economy is expected to achieve a takeoff soon. He stated that youth make up 60% of the country's population and emphasized that the PM's package would help secure a bright future for them. In a veiled reference to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI),

he urged people to reject violent politics and focus on the nation's progress. He stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team are committed to realizing the vision of a prosperous Pakistan inspired by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal into reality. He urged the nation, especially the youth, to support the prime minister in transforming Pakistan into an Asian Tiger and shaping history.

New BRI barter hub opens in Xiong'an, attracts Pakistan, others

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The China (Xiong'an) International Digital Barter Industrial Park's Belt and Road Barter Trading Center was unveiled in Xiong'an New Area, China. The ceremony attracted foreign representatives from various BRI countries, including Russia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, underscoring the international scope and growing importance of BRI. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. Significant event marked a new chapter in the development

of cross-border barter trade and economic cooperation along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The event saw the launch of the Belt and Road National Barter Project, which includes three main categories of goods: general commodities, capacity building, and smart agriculture products. On the occasion, a total of 10 companies, the first batch to enter the Industrial Park, signed strategic cooperation agreements, marking a significant milestone in the development of the trade center. In total, agreements worth up to RMB 4.5 billion were reached for cross-border

barter business collaborations. The China (Xiong'an) International Digital Barter Industrial Park aims to leverage modern information technology to build a digitalized, intelligent, and efficient barter trading system. By offering one-stop services, reducing transaction costs, and improving trading efficiency, the park intends to attract more domestic and international businesses. This initiative is expected to drive the large-scale and professional development of barter trade, further enhancing economic exchanges among BRI countries.

Police prepares robust security steps for New Year's Eve

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police has prepared a comprehensive security plan to ensure law and order on New Year's Eve, focusing on preventing aerial firing, fireworks and one-wheeler. A public relations officer told APP on Tuesday that the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Syed Ali Nasser Rizvi, announced that over 3,000 police officials, including senior officers, constables, and specialized units, have been deployed across the federal capital to maintain peace and safety. He said that under IGP Rizvi's directives, special police check posts have been established on major roads and intersections to curb one-wheeler. He added that additional security measures, including temporary check posts at sensitive locations, have been implemented to address incidents of aerial firing. Violators involved in aerial firing will face strict legal action under anti-terrorism laws. Furthermore, mobile patrols from all police stations, along with specialized security teams, will ensure round-the-clock monitoring. Special arrangements have also been made to secure worship places, with police personnel deployed to safeguard churches and other religious sites during the celebrations. The IGP emphasized the importance of citizen cooperation, urging the public to report any suspicious activity and to celebrate responsibly. "Our commitment is to create a peaceful environment in 2025 starting with a safe and secure New Year's Eve," he said. —APP

IFA inspects 15,798 food outlets

The safety of citizens was the topmost priority of the IFA and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard, she warned

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Director Operations (DDO) of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), Dr. Tahira Saddique, while sharing yearly performance report of the authority, stated that the authority inspected 15,798 food outlets and imposed fines to the tune of Rs 20 million on errant shopkeepers found flouting regulations. Talking to APP, she said that with an unwavering commitment to quality assurance, the authority's latest report underscored its relentless pursuit of adherence to food safety standards across the Federal Capital. In 2024, the Islamabad Food Authority conducted a

total of 15,798 inspections across various food establishments in the city. This extensive effort aimed to ensure that food safety regulations are being followed. During these inspections, the authority issued 7,470 notices to improve compliance with safety standards, she said. In addition to improvement, the Food Authority imposed fines on 1,213 establishments, totaling Rs 20 million in penalties. The inspections also led to the sealing of 311 food outlets that failed to meet necessary safety standards, Dr Tahira said. To support compliant food businesses, the authority issued licenses to 1,800 food points, allowing them to operate legally within Islam-

abad. Moreover, officials collected samples from 111 different food varieties to test for safety and quality. Meanwhile, the Islamabad Food Authority actively addressed consumer concerns, resolving 352 complaints from residents related to food safety. In more serious cases, 15 FIRs were registered against establishments that posed risks to public health. In a substantial effort to protect public health, the authority discarded 161,848 kilograms/liters of food that was deemed unsafe or unsuitable for consumption. On the occasion, she appealed to the masses to cooperate with the food department in identifying illegal food production units

that were operating in small houses to ensure public safety. Notably, the authority imposed a complete ban on the sale of Chinese salt, and gutka, emphasizing its commitment to upholding stringent standards of food safety and hygiene. Dr Tahira reiterated the authority's dedication to fostering a healthy environment for the citizens of the federal capital. She emphasized that strict action would be continued against those food outlets that were involved in selling adulterated or unhygienic food items. The safety of citizens was the topmost priority of the IFA and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard, she warned.

Renowned poet Hali remembered

ISLAMABAD: Renowned poet, writer, critic, biographer, and national reformer Altaf Hussain Hali was remembered on his 110th death anniversary, observed on Tuesday. Altaf Hussain Hali was born in Panipat and obtained his early schooling there as well. He studied Arabic and Persian in Delhi and was mentored by two prominent poets, Ghalib and Shefta. He is also regarded as the forefather of current Urdu literature. "Muqaddama-i-Shero-Shairi", "Madd-o-Jazare Islam", "Tiryaaq-e-Masmoom", "Tabaqat-ul-Arz", and biographies of Sir Syed, Ghalib, and Persian poet Sadi are among his significant works. Altaf Hussain Hali passed away on December 31, 1914. —APP

IRSA releases 30,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD :Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 30,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1472.05 feet and was 74.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,400 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.80 feet, which was 82.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,600 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. —APP

Coordinator General COMSTECH offers condolences

ISLAMABAD, Dec 31 (APP): Coordinator General of COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary has expressed profound sorrow and grief over the tragic air crash involving an Azerbaijani airplane, resulting in the loss of precious lives. In his condolence statement, Prof. Choudhary conveyed his heartfelt sympathies to the government and the people of Azerbaijan during this challenging time. He remarked, "This tragic incident has brought immense pain and sorrow to all of us. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families who have lost their loved ones in this devastating accident." Prof. Choudhary also offered prayers for the departed souls, seeking eternal peace for them and strength for the bereaved families to endure this irreparable loss. —APP

Chinese college strengthens China-Pakistan educational ties

Leveraging an international cloud education platform, these programs are designed to cultivate local talents who are equipped with both theoretical and practical skills to serve international enterprises

ISLAMABAD: Yunnan Land and Resources Vocational College, China, in collaboration with the Punjab Vocational Training Council (PVTC) of Pakistan, successfully conducted five short-term vocational training sessions. There were over 400 attendances at the China-Pakistan Resource and Environmental International College, held in recent week. It was the part of the joint China-Pakistan dual-degree vocational education program, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. The training covered various key areas, including workplace etiquette, cross-border e-commerce, and financial management. The objective was to enhance the knowledge and skills of Pakistani youth in specific fields, improving their career competitiveness and cross-cultural communication abilities. This initiative further strengthens Sino-Pakistani cooperation in vocational education and talent development. Since its establishment in 2023, the China-Pakistan Resource and Environmental International College has enrolled 24 international students in geological surveys and mineral exploration, and 17 students in engineering surveying. According to sources, this training represents the second phase of online vocational training for overseas youth talent under the college's China-Pakistan program, bringing the total number of trained participants to nearly 800. Leveraging an international cloud education platform, these programs are designed to cultivate local talents who are equipped with both theoretical and practical skills to serve international enterprises. —DNA

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HEALTH SCREENING PACKAGES

COMPLETE WELLNESS CHECK

Medical History and Physical Examination by Doctor
Clinical Measurements (Height, Weight, Blood Pressure & Pulse)
Visual Acuity
Lipid profile
HBA1C
FBC
Uric Acid
Liver Function Test
Kidney Function Test
Bone profile (Calcium, Magnesium, Phosphate)
Urine analysis
ECG
Thyroid Function Test
Stool Occult Blood
Medical Report
Post Examination Review by Doctor

ULTIMATE VITALITY SCREENING

Medical History and Physical Examination by Doctor
Clinical Measurements (Height, Weight, Blood Pressure & Pulse)
Visual Acuity
Lipid profile
HBA1C
FBC
Uric Acid
Liver Function Test
Kidney Function Test
Bone profile (Calcium, Magnesium, Phosphate)
Urine analysis
ECG
Thyroid Function Test
Stool Occult Blood
Vitamin D
Ferritin
Folate
Vitamin B12
Medical Report
Post Examination Review by Doctor

ULTIMATE WOMENS HEALTH SCREEN ADD ON

Breast Ultrasound/ Mammogram
Ultrasound Abdomen & Pelvis
Cervical Smear
Ovary Tumor Marker

ULTIMATE MEN HEALTH SCREEN ADD ON

Prostate tumour marker (PSA)
Testosterone
Ultrasound Abdomen & Pelvis (Including Prostate)

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White coat in war zone

In the image, Hossam Abu Safiya, the compassionate doctor, is seen walking amidst the rubble of Kamal Adwan Hospital, which was burned down by the Israeli war machine. Abu Safiya's path resembles a "way of suffering," as he has endured for nearly a year and a half against extermination, shielded only by his white coat armor. He lost his son, and has faced hunger, thirst, and fatigue. Abu Safiya's voice has grown hoarse from repeatedly calling out to the world, poised to celebrate "the birth of Christ," urging them to save the only hospital in northern Gaza. He might have been heard had he called out to the living, but there is neither shame nor life in those hearing the call. The photo, taken by photographer Mohannad Al-Muqayed, spread like wildfire on social media platforms. Many users likened the image to Gaza's situation for over a year amidst the Israeli extermination war, with one commenter saying, "Alone... like Gaza." Commenting on Dr. Abu Safiya's confrontation with the occupation tanks, users noted, "This is how the men of Gaza are. They assassinated his son, injured him, bombed his hospital, and burned it down, yet he did not leave the hospital and returned to save the sick and wounded. Here he is in the final scene before his arrest, armed with his white coat, heading towards an armored tank equipped with the latest weapons of destruction and killing. Dr. Hossam Abu Safiya is another mountain of steadfastness in Gaza." Mohammed Jamil wrote, "How great is Dr. Hossam Abu Safiya! His mission is not limited to healing physical wounds; here we see him tending to deep emotional wounds as he comforts Dr. Hani Badran, who lost 17 family members after their house was bombed near Kamal Adwan Hospital." Dr. Muneer Al-Bursh, General Director of the Ministry of Health in Gaza, commented on the image of Dr. Abu Safiya, "In this photo, Dr. Hossam Abu Safiya succinctly summarizes our situation: a doctor providing humanitarian medical services to his people, armed only with his medical coat, facing the machine of killing, destruction, and occupation." A broadcaster at Al Jazeera tweeted, "This is how the men of Gaza are. They assassinated his son, injured him, bombed his hospital, and burned it down, yet he did not leave the hospital and returned to save the sick and wounded. Here he is in the final scene before his arrest, armed with his white coat, heading towards an armored tank equipped with the latest weapons of destruction and killing. Dr. Hossam Abu Safiya is another mountain of steadfastness in Gaza." Meanwhile, the famous cartoonist Mahmood Abbas shared an expressive drawing, commenting, "How alone you were." Baraa questioned, "What is your courage, Dr. Hossam? Is it a mountainous kind, or a celestial courage that rises within you, while for others it is lacking? We await your freedom to tell us about it in detail, brave doctor. Freedom to you and all the prisoners of the homeland." Mohammed, the nephew of Dr. Abu Safiya, wrote about how his uncle chose to stand firm in his national identity, defend his cause, and remain by the side of his patients, despite being able to leave Gaza from the very start of the war, as he holds another nationality. Iyad Al-Dulaimi wrote, "We are ashamed of you; we feel the insignificance of our existence in this life. We feel sad for our condition, not yours, for you remain while we are fleeing. You are the steadfast one, and we all fade away."



Trump's tariff war with China

US president-elect Donald Trump called tariffs "the most beautiful word in the dictionary" during his campaign for re-election. Judging by his now well-known character and first-term record, he is certain to walk his talk after his inauguration on January 20 and impose tariffs across the board on all goods imported into the United States. Amid all the discussion of a potential new "tariff war", though, we need to make clear the tension inherent in the term as it is crucial to understanding the complexity of the current international landscape. The use of the word "tariff" suggests the prospect of difficult trade disputes between the US and its allies, and perhaps the rest of the world too. However, a tariff "war" could turn into something far more precarious – even a hot war – with China, which is much more able to stand up to any US pressure thanks to its manufacturing prowess. Adam Tooze, a historian and professor at Columbia University, said during an Asia Society speech last month that China's current industrialisation "is not the industrial revolution done again. Everything prior to this was a prelude to the Chinese industrial revolution of our lifetimes". Trump has been described as a master deal maker, but he is ignorant of the subtleties involved in a "tariff war". China will leave no stone unturned to prepare for such a war, while Washington's allies will seek to play down the tariffs theme and play up the US-China war game to create more strategic wiggle room for themselves. To America's allies, "tariff war" is an exaggeration if not an outright misnomer. The US can in fact confidently exert pressure on them to solve its trade issues. Canada is the latest case in point. Before he has even entered the White House, Trump's call for tariffs on imports from Canada has heaped pressure on the US' northern neighbour. Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland has resigned from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government while Trudeau has faced calls to step down. This is despite Trudeau having sought to convince Trump that Canada and the US would "be able to do good things together" as the Trump administration was "significantly concerned about international pressures, particular overcapacity by China and unfair trade practices by China". That is the Trump who the world must deal with for another four years, one who has issued a warning to all countries against trying to find alternatives to the US dollar when trading with others. In a world without China, it would be simple for the US to do to every other country what it is doing to Canada and what it did to Japan in the 1980s. But things are different with China. Beijing is standing firm as its status as a manufacturing powerhouse fuels the central government's drive for national rejuvenation. It has sent tough signals to the incoming Trump administration with moves such as banning exports of certain rare earth minerals to the US, its call for Chinese companies not to use US-made chips and its investigation into Nvidia over what it sees as the US chipmaker's violations of antitrust rules. In the meantime, US allies appear to be making moves to ensure Trump's second term does not go all his own way, most notably over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Turkey's dual-track strategy in Syria

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdo an's rhetoric on Jerusalem further adds to the complexity of regional dynamics. By positioning himself as a defender of Palestinian rights and Islamic sanctities, Erdo an seeks to bolster his domestic and international standing among Muslim-majority countries. His provocative statements, however, risk exacerbating tensions in an already volatile region. Jerusalem, a city of profound religious and political significance, has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

GREGG Roman, the director of the Middle East Forum (MEF), has outlined a comprehensive strategy for fostering a democratic transition in Iran. Central to his vision is the empowerment of internal resistance movements as a means of destabilizing the theocratic regime and paving the way for a more inclusive governance model. Roman emphasizes leveraging Iran's ethnic and ideological diversity to weaken the central regime's grip, particularly by supporting Kurdish, Baloch, and Arab minorities who have long been marginalized. This approach could not only accelerate the collapse of Iran's current government but also create a domino effect in reshaping the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East. A democratic Iran, as envisioned by Roman, could potentially align itself with Western powers, thereby counterbalancing the influence of Russia and China in the region. However, this strategy necessitates careful calibration to avoid unintended consequences, such as exacerbating sectarian conflicts or emboldening extremist groups. Simultaneously, Turkey has adopted a two-pronged approach in post-Assad Syria that highlights its ambitions as a regional power broker. On one hand, Turkey seeks to establish a buffer zone along its southern border to neutralize perceived threats from Kurdish factions, whom Ankara views as extensions of the PKK, a designated terrorist organization. On the other hand, Turkey has invested in stabilizing opposition-held areas through infrastructure development and governance support, effectively creating a sphere of influence within Syria. This dual strategy serves multiple objectives: containing Kurdish aspirations for autonomy, curbing the influence of Iranian-backed militias, and positioning Turkey as an indispensable player in Syria's reconstruction. However, this approach also complicates relations with U.S. allies, particularly the Syrian Democratic

Forces (SDF), who have been pivotal in the fight against ISIS. The divergence in U.S. and Turkish priorities underscores the challenges of coordinating a cohesive strategy among NATO allies in the Middle East. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdo an's rhetoric on Jerusalem further adds to the complexity of regional dynamics. By positioning himself as a defender of Palestinian rights and Islamic sanctities, Erdo an seeks to bolster his domestic and international standing among Muslim-majority countries. His provocative statements, however, risk exacerbating tensions in an already volatile region. Jerusalem, a city of profound religious and political significance, has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Erdo an's framing of the issue as a pan-Islamic cause not only alienates Israel but also complicates Turkey's relations with Western powers. Furthermore, his rhetoric may embolden hardline factions within the Palestinian territories, undermining prospects for a negotiated settlement. The interplay between Erdo an's domestic political calculus and his foreign policy ambitions illustrates the intricate linkages between national and regional stability. In Syria's al-Suwayda' province, local factions are carving out a new governance model in the wake of Assad's waning authority. Predominantly populated by the Druze community, al-Suwayda' has emerged as a unique case study in localized governance amidst the broader chaos of the Syrian civil war. Community leaders and local militias have increasingly assumed administrative and security responsibilities, creating a semblance of stability in a fractured state. This localized approach offers valuable insights into post-conflict governance, particularly in regions with diverse ethnic and sectarian compositions. However, the durability of this model remains uncertain, given the absence of robust institutional frameworks and the looming threat of external intervention.

The developments in al-Suwayda' underscore the potential for grassroots initiatives to fill governance vacuums, but they also highlight the risks of fragmentation in the absence of a cohesive national strategy. Finally, Israel's strategic pivot to counter the Houthis in Yemen marks a significant evolution in its regional security calculus. The Houthis, backed by Iran, have increasingly been viewed as a direct threat to Israeli interests, particularly due to their missile capabilities and proximity to key maritime routes. Israel's engagement in Yemen underscores its broader strategy of countering Iranian influence across multiple theaters. By fostering alliances with Gulf states and supporting localized anti-Houthi forces, Israel aims to neutralize this emerging threat while strengthening regional coalitions. This approach aligns with the Abraham Accords' vision of a united front against common adversaries, but it also carries risks. Escalating involvement in Yemen could draw Israel into a protracted conflict, diverting attention from other pressing security challenges. Moreover, the success of this strategy hinges on sustained cooperation among regional actors, which remains contingent on aligning diverse political and strategic interests. The Middle East continues to be a theater of complex and interwoven dynamics, shaped by the ambitions and strategies of regional and global actors. Gregg Roman's blueprint for Iran's democratic transition, Turkey's maneuvers in Syria, Erdo an's rhetoric on Jerusalem, the grassroots governance model in al-Suwayda', and Israel's counter-Houthi strategy collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of the region's geopolitical landscape. Each of these developments carries significant implications, not only for the immediate stakeholders but also for the broader quest for stability and order in the Middle East. Navigating these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of local dynamics, as well as a commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable solutions.

The quest for gender equality in Pakistani education

Dr. Muhammad Anwar Farooq

These efforts are making a real difference. According to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22 report, the gross enrollment rate for girls at the primary level has increased from 68% in 2018 to 72% in 2023. At the secondary level, the net enrollment rate for girls has risen from 34.18% in 2018 to 37% in 2023. While these improvements are promising, challenges remain, and continued efforts are necessary to achieve true gender parity in education. Several innovative approaches have been implemented to promote gender equality in education

GENDER equality in education is not just a basic human right; it is also a powerful driver of social and economic progress. When girls have the same access to education as boys, it can transform societies, spurring economic growth and reducing inequalities. In Pakistan, the journey toward gender equality in education has been tough, yet it's been marked by significant achievements. Historically, Pakistan has faced significant gender disparities in education. Cultural norms, economic constraints, and inadequate infrastructure have often led to lower enrollment rates for girls and higher dropout rates compared to boys. According to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) survey, the literacy rate for females is 48%, while for males, it is 71%. The gap is even wider in rural areas. The government of Pakistan has stepped up to address these disparities and promote gender equality in education through various policies and programs. One key initiative is the National Education Policy 2020, which focuses on gender-sensitive education and aims to eliminate gender-based discrimination in schools. This policy includes measures like providing gender-specific scholarships, improving school infrastructure, and offering vocational training for girls. Additionally, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) includes a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) component that encourages families to send their daughters to school by providing financial incentives. This has proven effective in increasing female enrollment, particularly in rural areas where economic constraints are a significant barrier to education. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international organizations have also played a crucial role in promoting gender equality in education in Pakistan. Organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank have partnered with the government to implement various programs aimed at increasing female enrollment and reducing dropout rates. For

example, UNICEF's "Let Us Learn" initiative focuses on improving access to education for marginalized children, particularly girls. The program includes building new schools, providing teacher training, and offering community-based education initiatives. Similarly, the Malala Fund, founded by Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, works to empower girls through education and advocates for policy changes to ensure all girls have access to quality education. These efforts are making a real difference. According to the Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22 report, the gross enrollment rate for girls at the primary level has increased from 68% in 2018 to 72% in 2023. At the secondary level, the net enrollment rate for girls has risen from 34.18% in 2018 to 37% in 2023. While these improvements are promising, challenges remain, and continued efforts are necessary to achieve true gender parity in education. Several innovative approaches have been implemented to promote gender equality in education. One such approach is the establishment of community schools in remote and underserved areas. These schools are often managed by local communities and offer flexible learning schedules, making it easier for girls to attend school while fulfilling household responsibilities. Another innovative approach is the use of technology to bridge the education gap. Digital learning tools, online classes, and educational apps have become increasingly popular, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. These tools offer flexible and personalized learning experiences, enabling girls to continue their education even in challenging circumstances. Vocational training and skill development programs play a crucial role in promoting gender equality in education. These programs provide girls with practical skills and knowledge that enhance their employability and economic independence. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in Pakistan has made significant strides in offering gender-sensitive

vocational training programs. For instance, the TVET Sector Support Programme, funded by the European Union and other international partners, aims to improve access to quality vocational training for women and girls. Despite the progress made, several challenges persist. Cultural norms and stereotypes that prioritize boys' education over girls' remain deeply ingrained in many communities. Additionally, safety concerns, especially in conflict-affected areas, deter many girls from attending school. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes community engagement, awareness campaigns, and policy reforms. Moreover, improving the quality of education is essential to ensure that girls not only enroll in school but also stay and succeed. This includes providing gender-sensitive training for teachers, developing inclusive curricula, and improving school infrastructure, such as separate sanitation facilities for girls. Promoting gender equality in education is crucial for the social and economic development of Pakistan. Efforts to increase female enrollment and reduce dropout rates have shown promising results, but challenges remain. Government policies, such as the National Education Policy 2020 and the Benazir Income Support Program, along with initiatives by NGOs and international organizations, have played a significant role in advancing gender equality in education. To achieve true gender parity, continued commitment and collaboration are essential. By addressing cultural norms, improving school infrastructure, and leveraging technology, Pakistan can create an inclusive and equitable education system that empowers all children, regardless of gender, to reach their full potential. The journey toward gender equality in education is ongoing, but with sustained efforts, it is a goal that can and must be achieved.

– The writer is Director, Institute of Humanities and Arts Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan

Briefs

Govt unveils 'Uraan Pakistan'...

FROM PAGE 01 but "letters were penned down for obstructing it". However, he added, the government successfully achieved the IMF programme and the rest is history. He noted that the government also secured another IMF programme, which he reiterated, would be the last of the country. PM Shehbaz said that it was a moment to mull why the country had to resort to another IMF package, pointing out the losses of state-owned enterprises, the circular deficit and corruption. At the outset of the ceremony, the finance minister — while addressing the participants — said that the country was on the path of development under the leadership of PM Shehbaz Sharif, expressing satisfaction over the macroeconomic indicators.

Grand jirga adjourned without...

FROM PAGE 01 the main road in Parachinar and the Pak-Afghan border, has led to severe shortages of food and medicine in the area for over two and a half months. A two-week-long protest has been ongoing outside the Parachinar Press Club in response to the blockade. An agreement between the parties for peace in Kurram district is likely to be finalized today, with a Grand Jirga set to take place at the Commissioner House in Kohat. According to sources, leaders from one party have been in Kohat for several days, while leaders from the other party, who had requested two more days, are expected to arrive today. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Adviser Barrister Saif stated that general consensus has been reached between the parties.

KP's peace is my responsibility..

FROM PAGE 01 "Those who lack public support cannot approach the people. We have the public's support, and we will continue to work for their welfare." The Chief Minister also highlighted the importance of economic performance, stating, "The performance of any government is visible in its economy." Ali Amin Gandapur proudly mentioned that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had increased its revenue by more than 24 percent. "If anyone claims to have improved their economy, they should show the results," he said.

Taliban orders closure of...

FROM PAGE 01 humanitarian assistance to the Afghan population," said UN spokesperson Florenca Soto Nino-Martinez. "We are deeply alarmed by the fact that we are talking about a country where half the population's rights are being denied and are living in poverty." Under Taliban rule, women in Afghanistan have been progressively excluded from public life. They are barred from secondary and higher education, restricted from most jobs, and denied access to parks and many public spaces.

ECP restores Adil Bazai's..

FROM PAGE 01 Previously, Adil Bazai faced allegations of deviating from party policy during votes on the budget and the 26th constitutional amendment. He was disqualified by the ECP based on a reference filed by PML-N President Nawaz Sharif. However, the Supreme Court overturned the ECP's decision and reinstated Bazai to his NA-262 Quetta seat. On December 9, the Supreme Court suspended the ECP's November 21 decision and restored Bazai's National Assembly membership. The ECP also announced that its earlier notification de-seating Bazai would remain suspended until a final decision by the Supreme Court.

Djokovic & Sabalenka win, Perricard aces Kyrgios test

Djokovic tamed local favourite Rinky Hijikata 6-3 6-3

SPORTS DESK

BRISBANE: Novak Djokovic and Aryana Sabalenka began their season with straight set wins but Nick Kyrgios' return to singles action did not go according to his plans at the Brisbane International on Tuesday. Djokovic tamed local favourite Rinky Hijikata 6-3 6-3 in what was the top seeded Serbian's first four-level singles match since October. A day after his doubles victory alongside Kyrgios, Djokovic was precise with his serve and ground strokes as he outclassed Hijikata to set up a second round clash with Gael Monfils.

"I always expect myself to do well on the court," Djokovic said in an on-court interview. "To start off the new season with a win, it's very important." Earlier, Giovanni MpetshiPerricard fired 36 aces to beat Kyrgios 7-6(2) 6-7(4) 7-6(3) in a battle of big servers at the Pat Rafter Arena. The 21-year-old struck eight forehand winners in the first set alone and served a game of aces to go 5-4 ahead in the third in what was Kyrgios' first tour-level match since a wrist surgery in September 2023. MpetshiPerricard claimed two mini-breaks in the decisive tie-break to claim victory showing tremendous poise under pressure. "Playing against Nick was a good match for



me..." said MpetshiPerricard, who faces American fourth seed Frances Tiafoe next. "It was very exciting to play this one, and I'm very happy to get the win. I knew it was going to be a serve match. I hope I will have a nice recovery and be back in two days."

Women's world number one Sabalenka sent an ominous warning on her season debut with a 6-4 6-0 demolition of Renata Zarazua. The Belarusian has been working on her new groundstrokes and Mexican Zarazua found herself on the firing line as Sabalenka



reeled off 23 winners and won 71% of her service points. "The first match is always a tricky one," said Sabalenka, who is coming off a stellar season and will begin her quest for a third Australian Open title later this month.

United's woes continue with defeat to Newcastle

United suffered their fourth consecutive defeat



MANCHESTER United's woes continued on Monday as they suffered their fourth consecutive defeat, losing 2-0 to Newcastle United at Old Trafford. Goals from Alexander Isak and Joelinton handed the Red Devils a miserable end to 2024, further intensifying the pressure on manager Ruben Amorim. In just his second month as manager, Amorim admitted this week that his position is under threat unless

results improve. With only two wins from his first nine league matches, United are languishing in 14th place, just seven points above the relegation zone. The Magpies struck early, with Isak and Joelinton finding the back of the net within the first 19 minutes. Their fifth consecutive victory propelled them into fifth place in the Premier League standings. Amorim watched in disbelief as Newcastle cut through

United's defense with ease, particularly in the first half. It took just over three minutes for Isak to open the scoring. The Swedish striker was given too much space in the six-yard box to head home a cross from Lewis Hall, marking his sixth consecutive Premier League goal. United struggled without the presence of suspended captain Bruno Fernandes, as Newcastle's midfield trio of Sandro Tonali, Bruno Gui-

mares, and Joelinton dominated play against the ageing Casemiro and Christian Eriksen. Isak missed a golden opportunity to double Newcastle's lead, fluffing a dink over goalkeeper Andre Onana. He also had a goal ruled out for offside. However, it wasn't long before Joelinton added a second, meeting Anthony Gordon's cross to give Newcastle a commanding lead. Amorim reacted by substituting Joshua Zirkzee for Kobbie Mainoo after just 33 minutes, a move that was met with cheers from the frustrated Old Trafford crowd. Tonali could have made it 3-0 when he struck the post following a slick move by the Magpies, but United were fortunate not to fall further behind. Before the break, United nearly found a way back into the game. Rasmus Hojlund squandered a golden opportunity, firing wide with only Martin Dubravka to beat. Casemiro then wasted an even better chance after Fabian Schuster gifted possession to Mainoo. — Agencies

Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan Tennis c'ship begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The 10th Edition of Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Ranking Tennis Championship 2024 began at the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) SDA Tennis Complex, Islamabad on Tuesday. This prestigious tournament is organized annually to honour the memory of the late Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan, mother of PTF Patron Senator Salim Saifullah Khan. A large number of players, including Pakistan's top-ranked athletes such as Aqeel Khan, Muhammad Shoaib, Muzammil Murtaza, Muhammad Abid, Barkatullah, Shahzad Khan, Yousaf Khalil, Heera Ashiq, Meheq Khokhar, Amna Ali Qayum, Sheeza Sajid, and Soha Ali, are competing in this mega event.

The results of the first day are as under : Men's Singles 1st Round: M. Hamza Aasimbt M. Huzaina Khan 6-0,6-4; Uzair Khan btM.Talha Khan 6-4,5-7,6-2; Abdullah Adnan bt Bilal Asim 6-2,6-3; M. Salarbt M. HaziqAsim 6-0,3,6-4; Muhammad Abid btAsad Zaman 6-0,6-0; Shahzad Khan bt Shehryar Anees 6-2,6-0; Heera Ashiq btM.Yahya 6-0,6-1; Omer Jawad bt Abdul Basit 4-6,6-4,6-3; Hamza Roman bt Murtaza Hussain 6-2,6-3; Yousaf Khalil bt Abubakar Talha 6-4,6-2; Saqib Hayat bt Rayan Ahmad Khan 6-1,6-0; Ahtesham Humayun bt Amir Mazari 6-4,7-5 Boys 18 & under Singles 1st Round: Azan Shahid bt Muhammad Dawood 6-2,6-2; Ruhaf Faisal bt Ismail Aftab 6-3,6-3; Nabeel Ali Qayum w/o Junaid Khan; M. SalarbtRazik Sultan 6-2,6-4; Bilal AsimbtHazarat Ali 6-0,6-0; Asad Zaman bt Ali Zain 6-2,6-4; Hamza Roman bt Talha Khan 6-2,6-3; HaziqAsimbt Hamza Hussain 6-3,6-1; Boys 14 & under Singles 1st Round: Rayyan Khan btM. Hamza Khan 4-0,4-0; Mozam Babar w/o M.Huzaina; Arsh Imran btRajam Taha 4-0,4-1

Shaheen and Faheem star in Barishal's win

Batting first Rajshahi scored 197/3 in their 20 overs

MIRPUR: Pakistan stars Shaheen Afridi and Faheem Ashraf delivered standout performances to guide defending champions Fortune Barishal to a thrilling win over Durbur Rajshahi in the opening match of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) 2024-25 season. After being asked to bat first, Rajshahi endured early setback with Kyle Mayers dismissing JishanAlam for a duck in the opening over. Mohammad Harris followed soon after contributing just 13 runs as the team found itself at 25/2 in 3.1 overs. The innings stabilized thanks to skipper Anamul Haque and Yasir Ali, who forged a formidable 140-run partnership for the third wicket. Haque's composed 65 off 51 balls laid a solid foundation before his dismissal at 165/3 in the 18th over. Yasir Ali then took center stage with a scintillating unbeaten 94 off 47 balls, featuring seven fours and eight towering sixes, powering Rajshahi to an imposing 197/3 in their 20 overs. Barishal's bowling effort was led by Kyle Mayers (2/13), while Faheem Ashraf chipped in with a wicket. However, debutant Shaheen Afridi went wicketless in his four-over spell. In reply, Barishal's chase began on a shaky note. Najmul Hossain Shanto fell on the first ball of the innings, and skipper Tamim Iqbal followed soon after for just seven runs. — Agencies

Tim Southee signs up for PSL player draft

Southee is the fourth New Zealander and the 22nd overall foreign player to register for the PSL 10 draft

LAHORE: The Pakistan Super League (PSL) on Tuesday, announced that veteran New Zealand pacer Tim Southee has signed up for the highly-anticipated player draft for the league's 10th edition. The announcement was made on the league's social media handles with a banner and a caption stating, "Kiwi pace supreme Tim Southee enters the HBL PSL Draft." The 36-year-old is one of the most experienced players in the T20I format. He has represented New Zealand in 126 T20I matches, picking up 164 wickets and is currently the highest wicket-taker in T20I cricket history. When it comes to franchise league experience, he has played in The Hundred Men's Competition, Indian Premier League (IPL), Vitality Blast and Champions League T20. Over 10 IPL seasons, he represented teams like Chennai Super Kings, Rajasthan Royals, Mumbai Indians, Royal Challengers Bangalore, and Kolkata Knight Riders. In his IPL career, he played 54 matches, taking 47 wickets at an average of 37.06 and an economy rate of 8.66. Notably, Southee is the fourth New Zealander and the 22nd overall foreign player to register for the PSL 10 draft, which will take place in Balochistan for the first time as Gwadar is set to host the landmark event on January 11, 2025. The pick order for the player draft has also been announced, with two-time cham-



pions Lahore Qalandars making the first pick in the opening round of the platinum category, followed by arch-rivals Karachi Kings. 2019 champions Quetta Gladiators will make the third pick, while Peshawar Zalmi will have the fourth. Last season's runners-up, Sultans, and reigning champions United will make the fifth and sixth picks, respectively. Tim Southee, Martin Gupthill, Rassie van der Dussen, Matthew Short, Gudakesh Motie, Alex Hales, Luke Wood, Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Usman Khawaja, Corbin Bosh, Rilee Rossouw, Colin Munro, Daryl Mitchell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Tom Curran, David Willey, Dawid Malan, Jason Roy, Shakib Al Hasan, Mustafizur Rahman and Sikandar Raza. — DNA

Conor McGregor likely to face Paul in Mumbai

Recently, McGregor hinted at early talks for a boxing exhibition with a prominent YouTuber

MUMBAI: Former UFC Featherweight and Lightweight Champion Conor McGregor is reportedly set to make his comeback in a high-profile exhibition match against American YouTuber-turned-WWE superstar Logan Paul, with both fighters expected to earn an astonishing \$250 million each. In December 2024, McGregor hinted at preliminary talks for a boxing exhibition with a well-known YouTube personality. Recent developments suggest that the fight, sponsored by Indian billionaire Anant Ambani, is nearing its final stages and could be officially announced in the coming days. MMA journalist Emmett Glenn shared on X over the weekend that McGregor and Logan Paul are scheduled to face off in Mumbai, India, in 2025. The high-stakes match is set to take place at Wankhede Stadium and will be part of a campaign aimed at promoting Indian tourism. The announcement has gained widespread attention, with McGregor retweeting the news along with an Indian flag and heart emoji. Paul also posted his support on Instagram, fuelling excitement among fans worldwide. The jaw-dropping \$500 million purse for the exhibition fight has sparked debate

among combat sports enthusiasts. While some fans have praised the potential for a lucrative showdown, others have criticized the fight as a "gimmick" that detracts from McGregor's UFC career. "More than most world championship fights? This is insane!" one fan commented. Another added, "Each fighter gets \$250 million for an exhibition? Crazy!" However,

there were also numerous fans who expressed disappointment, with one writing, "I'm tired of these gimmick fights. McGregor doesn't have the guts to return to the UFC," and another stating, "So much money for a boring fight." McGregor has not competed professionally since July 2021, when he suffered a broken ankle during a loss to Dustin Poirier at UFC 264. The 22-6

fighter is a former UFC featherweight and lightweight champion, known for being the first UFC competitor to hold titles in two weight divisions simultaneously. Nicknamed "The King of Pay-Per-View," McGregor has headlined five of the UFC's highest-grossing events. In 2021, Forbes named him the highest-paid athlete in the world, earning \$180 million. McGregor's highly publicised boxing match against Floyd Mayweather in 2017 catapulted his fame to new heights. Despite losing the match, McGregor reportedly earned \$100 million, further solidifying his status as a global sports icon. Former WWE United States Champion Logan Paul, who gained fame through his social media presence, has ventured into professional boxing in recent years. In 2019, he lost a six-round bout to British YouTuber KSI but later earned a victory over Dillon Danis in October 2023. His most notable fight came in 2021, when he faced Floyd Mayweather in an exhibition bout at Hard Rock Stadium. Paul lasted eight rounds against Mayweather and reportedly earned \$20 million for the contest. — Agencies



Foreign fighters given senior...

FROM PAGE 01 raise concerns inside and outside Syria over the role radicalised foreign militants could play in the country's future. Several Syrian sources have deduced that out of almost 50 new military roles that have been announced, at least six have gone to foreigners. Based on the names that have been published, they are said to include Chinese Uyghurs, a Jordanian and a Turkish national. All are said to have been given high-ranking positions as colonels or brigadier-generals. The role of foreign fighters in various armed groups during the civil war is one that stirs strong feelings in Syria. Thousands of fighters from many different countries joined the uprising against Assad as it became an all-out armed conflict when mass protests were met with violence by the security forces. Some formed their own groups and others provided the core of the Islamic State group, which took control of large regions in the east of Syria. Opponents of HTS had long accused it of being largely made up of foreign jihadists - a charge Assad supporters used to try to delegitimise the group as it mounted its final, decisive offensive against the regime.

Imran rejects ISPR statement...

FROM PAGE 01 while simultaneously conducting airstrikes. Khan also expressed serious concerns over military court trials, labeling them as controversial and lacking transparency. He urged adherence to the constitution and respect for human rights, emphasizing that PTI seeks justice, not concessions, through negotiations. Highlighting the political targeting of the PTI leadership, Chaudhry announced a January 31 deadline to evaluate the government's sincerity in addressing these issues. On the Parachinar crisis, Khan directed an immediate resolution of the matter, warning of its potential spillover to Sindh and Balochistan. Faisal Chaudhry condemned the actions of the Sindh government, calling for a humanitarian approach to address the issue.

Pakistan recalls ambassador for...

FROM PAGE 01 missile program after the regime change in America. Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh has arrived in Islamabad to hold consultations with key policymakers, including Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, officials at the Foreign Office, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Rizwan Sheikh is expected to brief PM Shehbaz Sharif and the Foreign Office on recent diplomatic activities, progress, and challenges in Washington. Over the last three months, he has held significant meetings with members of both chambers of the US Congress to present Pakistan's stance comprehensively. The consultations also focus on shaping Pakistan's policy following the anticipated Republican administration's transition in January 2025.

DPM Dar meets with Pakistan's...

FROM PAGE 01 of a dynamic foreign policy in its bilateral and multilateral dimensions. He underscored Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its relations with countries around the world and urged the envoys to play their role in enhancing Pakistan's international profile and developing its international partnerships. The annual meeting of Pakistan's envoys is a regular feature at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the various facets of Pakistan's foreign policy and its coherent implementation.

Briefs

Gold rates remain unchanged at Rs.272,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold remained unchanged at Rs.272,600 on Tuesday, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The 10 grams of 24 karat gold and 10 grams of 22 karat also witnessed no change and were traded at Rs.233,711 and Rs.214,235 respectively. Per tola and ten gram silver were sold at existing prices of Rs 3,350 and Rs. 2,872.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market remained stagnant at \$2,614, the Association reported.—APP

PSX sheds 132 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 132.09 points on Tuesday, a slight negative change of 0.11 percent, closing at 115,126.90 points as compared to 115,259.00 points on the last trading day. A total of 1,236,873,705 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,059,020,119 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 44.218 billion against Rs.40.889 billion on the last trading day. As many as 465 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 235 of them recorded gains and 188 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 42 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Energycio PK with 213,352,120 shares at Rs 7.85 per share, Pace (Pak) Limited with 66,219,268 shares at Rs 8.09 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 65,770,728 shares at Rs.1.78 per share.—APP

Rupee sheds 08 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 08 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.55 against the previous day's closing of Rs 278.47. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.10 and Rs 279.60, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 13 paise to close at Rs 290.08 against the last day's closing of Rs290.21, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.78, whereas a decline of 26 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs349.70 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs349.96. The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham increased by 02 paise and closed at Rs 75.83, while the Saudi Riyal came down by 02 paise to close at Rs74.14.—APP

Iraqi, Syrian foreign ministers discuss cooperation against Daesh threat

DUBAI: Iraq's Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein and his Syrian counterpart Asaad Hassan Al-Shaibani spoke telephonically on Monday to discuss various issues, including the ongoing threat posed by Daesh along the two nations' shared border, the Iraqi News Agency reported. Hussein, who is also Iraq's deputy prime minister, emphasized the importance of enhanced cooperation to counter the danger posed by the group. Al-Shaibani confirmed Syria's readiness to coordinate efforts to confront terrorist groups. This call follows discussions between Iraq's intelligence chief, Hamid Al-Shatri, and Syrian officials during a recent visit to Damascus, the INA reported. Hussein also congratulated Al-Shaibani on his new role as Syria's top envoy. He further praised the Syrian government's efforts to safeguard Iraq's diplomatic mission in Damascus. He reiterated Iraq's commitment to resume all functions of the mission, while Al-Shaibani underlined Syria's aim to strengthen ties between the two nations.—APP

Belarusian FM thanks Pak envoy for boosting ties

Both expressed satisfaction with the high level of Belarusian-Pakistani relations and highlighted the successful cooperation in political, trade, and economic spheres

DNA

MINSK: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Maxim Ryzhenkov, on December 30, 2024, for a farewell call. The meeting marked the completion of Ambassador Khan's diplomatic mission in Belarus. Both parties expressed satisfaction with the high level of Belarusian-Pakistani relations and highlighted the successful cooperation in political, trade, and economic spheres. They discussed future plans for 2025, including the return visit of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to Belarus and several upcoming trade and economic events. The Foreign Minister thanked the Ambassador for his significant contributions to strengthening bilateral relations, enhancing political contacts, and expanding trade and economic ties. Both parties reaffirmed their mutual interest in intensifying the bilateral relations between Belarus and Pakistan. Second lead Chinese college strengthens China-Pakistan educational ties



BEIJING: Yunnan Land and Resources Vocational College, China, in collaboration with the Punjab Vocational Training Council (PVTC) of Pakistan, successfully conducted five short-term vocational training sessions for over 400 attendance at the China-Pakistan Resource and Environmental International College from Dec 16 to 20, which is part of the joint China-Pakistan dual-degree vocational education program. The training covered various key areas, including

workplace etiquette, cross-border e-commerce, and financial management. The objective was to enhance the knowledge and skills of Pakistani youth in specific fields, improving their career competitiveness and cross-cultural communication abilities. This initiative further strengthens Sino-Pakistani cooperation in vocational education and talent development. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. Since its establishment in 2023, the China-Pakistan Resource and Environmental International College has enrolled 24 international students in geological surveys and mineral exploration, and 17 students in engineering surveying. According to sources, this training represents the second phase of online vocational training for overseas youth talent under the college's China-Pakistan program, bringing the total number of trained participants to nearly 800. Leveraging an international cloud education platform, these programs are designed to cultivate local talents who are equipped with both theoretical and practical skills to serve international enterprises.

China must apply 'more proactive' macroeconomic policies in 2025 :Xi

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping said China will put in place "more proactive" macroeconomic policies next year, state media reported, as he addressed a top political advisory body on Tuesday. The country has struggled this year to climb out of a slump fuelled by a property market crisis, weak consumption and soaring government debt. Beijing has unveiled a string of aggressive measures in recent months aimed at bolstering growth, including cutting interest rates, cancelling restrictions on home buying and easing the debt burden on local governments. But economists have warned that more direct fiscal stimulus aimed at shoring up domestic consumption is needed to restore full health in China's economy. "We must... further comprehensively deepen reform, expand high-level opening up, better coordinate development and security, (and) implement more proactive and effective macroeconomic policies," state broadcaster CCTV quoted Xi as telling the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference at a New Year's tea party. Beijing is aiming for an official national growth target this year of about five per cent, a goal officials have expressed confidence in achieving but which many economists believe it will narrowly miss. "The new quality productivity develops steadily, and annual GDP is expected to grow by about five pc," Xi reiterated on Tuesday. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects China's economy to grow by 4.8pc this year and 4.5pc next year. Xi's comments came as Chinese authorities released optimistic factory activity figures, a sign that recent stimulus measures may be starting to take effect. China's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) — a key measure of industrial output — was 50.1 in December, marking a third consecutive month of expansion, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Tuesday. The figure was lower than Bloomberg analysts' prediction of 50.2, but still above 50, which indicates an expansion in manufacturing activity. A reading below that shows a contraction. The key indicator slid for six months in the middle of the year before returning to expansion territory in October. The non-manufacturing PMI, which measures activity in the service sector, came in at 52.2 in December, up from 50.0 in November. "The official PMIs suggest that the economy gained momentum in December, driven by faster growth in the services and construction sectors," Gabriel Ng of Capital Economics wrote in a note to clients Tuesday. "Increased policy support towards the end of the year has clearly provided a near-term boost to growth," Ng wrote. Ng noted that export orders in particular rose to a four-month high in December, "probably helped by US importers ramping up orders in advance of potential Trump tariff."—DNA

Arrest warrant issued for Yoon

SEOUL: A court in South Korea has issued an arrest warrant against suspended president Yoon Suk Yeol over his attempt to impose martial law on 3 December. The warrant comes after Yoon, who is being investigated for abusing his power and inciting an insurrection, ignored three summonses to appear for questioning over the past two weeks. Yoon's legal team has called the warrant "illegal and invalid" and said they would challenge it in court. South Korea has been in political crisis since the short-lived martial law declaration, with Yoon and a successor both impeached by the opposition-dominated parliament. Yoon is South Korea's first sitting president to face arrest. Investigators have until 6 January to execute the warrant that was approved by a court in the capital Seoul, and can request an extension. It is unclear, however, if investigators will be able to execute the warrant as they may be thwarted by his security team and protesters. The presidential security service had earlier blocked investigators from entering the presidential office grounds and Yoon's private residence to conduct court-approved searches. In the past, South Korean authorities have given up arrest attempts against prominent politicians after their aides and supporters have physically blocked the police. On Monday, Yoon's legal team said that investigators had no authority to arrest him, as declaring martial law was within the president's constitutional authority. Yoon had earlier defended his decision to declare martial law and vowed to "fight to the end" — though he also said that he would not avoid his legal and political responsibilities.—Agencies

SBP Governor briefs FM on key initiatives to boost fiscal resilience

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting today with Mr. Jameel Ahmad, Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, at the Finance Division. During the meeting, Governor Ahmad provided a comprehensive year-end review of the ongoing and planned initiatives aimed at strengthening Pakistan's fiscal framework. He highlighted efforts to stabilize the exchange rate and bolster foreign reserves. The overall performance of the banking sector and its significant contributions to the economy were also discussed, with both sides recognizing the sector's pivotal role in supporting economic growth. Additionally, the meeting focused on measures to further enhance the inflow of workers' remittances, with a shared commitment to strengthening this vital source of foreign exchange for the country. Both the Minister and the Governor acknowledged the importance of continued collaboration between the Finance Ministry and the State Bank to achieve economic stability and sustainable growth.—APP

Moroccan activists tried over earthquake response criticism

RABAT: Four activists advocating for victims of the 2023 earthquake in Morocco appeared in court on Monday to face charges including defamation, their lawyer told AFP. Said Ait Mahdi, the head of Al Haouz Earthquake Victims Coordination, was brought before a Marrakech court "on allegations of defamation, insult and spreading false claims intended to harm individuals' privacy," said his lawyer Mohamed Nouini. While Ait Mahdi has been in custody for a week, the other three defendants others, who face charges of "insulting public officials," remain free said Nouini. The lawyer said charges came after local officials filed complaints against the activists over social media posts they deemed offensive. Ait Mahdi's defense filed a request for his release pending trial on January 6, said Nouini. Al Haouz province, south of Marrakech, was the worst affected area when a 6.8-magnitude earthquake hit in September 2023, killing nearly 3,000 people and injuring thousands more. The earthquake razed tens of thousands of homes in central Morocco, including in the High Atlas mountain range, forcing families to sleep out in the open through the winter. Ait Mahdi's group has called for the acceleration of reconstruction efforts and greater support for the families affected by the earthquake.—APP

French ministers for talks month into Israel-Hezbollah truce

BEIRUT: France's top diplomat and defense chief arrived on Monday in Lebanon, where a fragile truce since late November ended intense fighting between Israel and militant group Hezbollah. Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot and Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu met with Lebanon's army chief Joseph Aoun, and on Tuesday are due to visit UN peacekeepers near the Israeli border. A Lebanese army statement on social media said that Aoun and the visiting ministers discussed "ways to strengthen cooperation relations between the armies of the two countries and to continue support for the army in light of current circumstances." Aoun, who is being touted as a possible candidate for Lebanon's president, has been tasked with deploying troops in the south of the country since the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire came into effect on November 27. Lecornu said on X that he is also due to meet with a French general representing Paris "within the ceasefire monitoring mechanism."—APP

Gulf cooperation council chief affirms support for Syria

RIYADH: Jassem Al-Budaiwi, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), met on Monday with Syria's new leader Ahmed Al-Sharaa in the capital Damascus, the Saudi Press Agency said. Al-Budaiwi said the visit affirms the GCC's support for Syria's unity and stability to achieve security, prosperity, and development for the Syrian people. The secretary-general, who was accompanied by Kuwait's FM Abdullah Al-Yahya, said that the Gulf countries have always stressed the need to respect Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, reject foreign interventions, and combat terrorism and extremism, while respecting religious and cultural diversity in the country. He condemned the repeated Israeli attacks on Syrian territory, calling on Israel to withdraw its forces from occupied Syrian lands. Al-Budaiwi stressed that the Golan Heights are Syrian land and rejected any Israeli settlement expansion in the plateau. He reiterated the need to lift economic sanctions on Syria and provide humanitarian and economic support to the Syrian people to alleviate their suffering and enhance efforts to rebuild the country. He stressed the importance of supporting national reconciliation, rebuilding the Syrian state, ensuring civilian safety, the decision to dissolve militias and armed factions, and confining weapons to the state's control. The GCC "welcomes the UN's call to establish a special mission to support the political transition process in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter to help the Syrian people achieve a Syrian-led political process," Al-Budaiwi said.—APP

Declassified files show UK anger at Chirac over Iraq

The UK joined the US-led invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003, despite around one million people marching in London to protest against military intervention

LONDON: Newly-declassified UK government documents published Tuesday reveal the frustrations of then-prime minister Tony Blair and his government with French leader Jacques Chirac for blocking UN-backed military action in Iraq in 2003. Minutes of an emergency cabinet meeting on March 17, 2003 — a week after Chirac said he would veto any resolution approving military action — showed UK ministers agreed "the French attitude had undermined the mechanism of the UN to enforce the will of the international community." "We had tried our utmost" but the French "were not prepared to accept that if President Saddam Hussein of Iraq did not comply with UN obligations, military action should follow," Blair told the meeting, according to files released by the National Archives. Britain joined the US-led military action to oust Saddam in 2003, despite fierce opposition across the country, with Blair highlighting allegations that the Iraqi dictator had stockpiled weapons of mass destruction. The WMD accusations fueled by the administration of then president George W. Bush were later proven to be false. According to the files, then foreign minister Jack Straw told cabinet "effectively, one member of the UN Security Council had torpedoed the whole process," and accused Chirac, who died in 2019, of deciding to "open up a strategic divide between France and the UK." In a meeting three days later, Straw said Chirac "appeared to be positioning himself... (to) become leader of one side of the bi-polar world he advocated," in contrast to a US-dominated world. By contrast, ministers were told in the March 17 meeting that the Labour government "was motivated by a world view which promoted justice, good governance and pluralism and this set it apart from other governments of the industrialized world." The final minute of the meeting read: "Summing up, the prime minister said that the diplomatic process was now at an end; Saddam Hussein would be given an ultimatum to leave Iraq; and the House of Commons would be asked to endorse the use of military action against Iraq to enforce compliance, if necessary." The UK joined the US-led invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003, despite around one million people marching in London to protest against military intervention. The invasion and subsequent war severely dented Blair's popularity, culminating in the independent Chilcot inquiry, which concluded in 2016 he had deliberately exaggerated the threat posed by the Iraqi regime. Blair expressed "sorrow, regret and apology" for mistakes made in planning the conflict, while his influential press chief at the time of the war, Alastair Campbell, said the decision would "weigh heavily on him." "for the rest of his days." Campbell was also caught up in controversy when the BBC reported he had "sexed up" a dossier on Iraq's military capabilities, claims he has denied.—DNA

New HC-designate for Pakistan arrives in Ottawa

Ambassador Saleem has consistently worked to build on meaningful partnerships, address global challenges, and promote shared values on the international stage

DNA

OTTAWA: The High Commissioner-designate Mr. Muhammad Saleem has arrived in Ottawa on December 29, 2024. With a distinguished diplomatic career and a passion for fostering international cooperation, Ambassador Saleem brings exceptional leadership and vision to this role. Muhammad Saleem graduated with a Master's degree in Diplomacy and Strategy from the National University of Malaysia. He joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan in 1995 and since then has served at various positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, and Pakistan's Diplomatic Missions abroad including the Feder-



al Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of Bahrain, Romania and Canada. He also served as Pakistan's High Commissioner to the United Republic of Tanzania from 2020-2022. Ambassador Saleem has consistently worked to build on meaningful partnerships, address global challenges, and promote shared values on the international stage. He is eager to deepen the strong and historic ties between Pakistan and Canada. Through initiatives focused on political, economic, investment, trade, higher education, cultural exchange and people-to-people contacts, he aims to further strengthen the existing collaboration and explore new avenues of cooperation between the two friendly countries.

Briefs

MQM-P lawmaker tenders resignation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) member of the National Assembly (MNA), Dr. Mohan Manjani, who was elected on a minority seat in the February 8 general elections, has resigned from his position. Dr. Manjani's resignation comes after consultations with the senior leadership of his party. Sources confirmed that the MNA submitted his resignation directly to the Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. Mohan Manjani was elected as a member of the National Assembly from a reserved minority seat in the 2024 general elections, representing MQM-P. Earlier in March this year, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) notified Manjani following his resignation citing "personal reasons" for not retaining his seat. However, within hours of the ECP's decision, Dr. Manjani appeared on a private news channel to deny his resignation, calling it "staged and set up" by MQM-P. He refrained from providing further details or any specific reasoning behind his claim.

Houthi defiant after new US strikes

SANA'A: The spokesperson of Yemen's Houthi rebels Mohammed Abdulsalam said that his country would continue to defend itself after several US strikes targeted facilities in the capital Sanaa. "The US aggression on Yemen is a blatant violation of the sovereignty of an independent state, and blatant support for Israel to encourage it to continue its crimes of genocide against the people of Gaza," said Abdulsalam on Tuesday, after strikes were conducted by the US for a second day. The US military said that it carried out attacks against targets in the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa and coastal locations in Yemen on both Monday and Tuesday. "On December 30 and 31, US Navy ships and aircraft targeted a Houthi command and control facility and advanced conventional weapon (ACW) production and storage facilities that included missiles and uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAV)," the US military's Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a post on X. The Houthi-run Al Masirah TV reported that a total of 12 air raids were launched by US military jets, targeting two separate districts in Sanaa. - Agencies

Indian businessman meet Nawaz

DNA

LONDON: Indian industrialist Sajjan Jindal, accompanied by his family, made a brief visit to Pakistan over the weekend to attend the wedding festivities of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's grandson. According to sources, Jindal and his family arrived at the Sharif family's palatial residence of Jati Umra in Lahore, to personally congratulate Nawaz Sharif and his family on the wedding of his grandson, Zayd Hussain Nawaz. The visit, which was kept low-profile, highlighted the personal rapport between the two families. Sajjan Jindal, along with his wife Sangeeta, spent a few hours in Lahore before departing for Mumbai on a special plane, sources added. Sajjan Jindal, a prominent figure in India's business community, is the chairman of JSW Group, a multinational conglomerate with interests in steel, energy, and infrastructure. The wedding celebrations have attracted various notable figures, with the Sharif family hosting a series of lavish events in Lahore. The nikkah of Zayd Hussain Nawaz was solemnised on Wednesday night at Jati Umra, kicking off the wedding celebrations. Jati Umra was decorated for the wedding, which was attended by guests from India and other countries.

Karachi police disperse protesters at Numaisht

Protesters pelt stones at police personnel, torch their six motorcycles and a check post at Numaisht Chowranghi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Following multiple engagements with the protesters, the Karachi police finally launched a crackdown on clear roads as the Majlis Wahdate-Muslimeen (MWM) continued its sit-ins at various locations in the country's economic hub for the eighth consecutive day on Tuesday. Protesters pelted stones at police, torched their six motorcycles and a check post at Numaisht Chowranghi, prompting the cops to fire tear gas shells and baton-charge activists of the politico-religious party staging sit-in at the Numaisht Chowranghi on M A Jinnah Road. Police also demolished central sit-in camp of the MWM established at Numaisht Chowranghi. The law enforcers also took several protesters into custody and shifted them to the police station. Taking swift notice of the incident, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said that nobody would be allowed to damage public and private property under any circumstances. Legal action will be taken against those who set vehicles ablaze, vowed the chief minister. He said: "Everyone has the right to protest

but damaging civil property is mischief." The politico-religious party has been staging sit-ins in the metropolis against the Parachinar crisis despite government's warnings. The prolonged protests were not only damaging the country's economy but disrupting daily life in the metropolis as people were unable to travel freely. Besides Numaisht Chowranghi, protests were being staged near Safari Park on University Road, Kamran Chowranghi, Lasbela, and Abbas Town. At Kamran Chowranghi, more police force was summoned as the situation grew tense this morning upon continued blockage of roads. The senior superintendent of police (SSP) East and Sindh Rangers personnel arrived at the site to end the sit-in but to no avail. Additionally, the participants of the sit-in at Kamran Chowranghi pegged tents, while police tried to negotiate with the protesters, who refused to end the sit-in and open roads. Earlier in the day, the protests at Five Star Chowranghi, Shamsuddin Azeemi Road, Surjani Town, Ancholi, and Golimar Chowranghi were called off to clear pathways for commuters. Whereas, police removed obstructions and dispersed protesters from the Abul Hassan

Isphani Road after a brief spell of clashes with protesters. The Sindh CM, while addressing media in Thatta, said the provincial government had last night asked the demonstrators to hold the protest at one place only without disturbing other citizens. However, he said, they did not fulfil their commitment to end the city-wide protests. The Sindh CM said the ongoing sit-ins at four more places would be removed through administrative action and talks. "We are not against peaceful protests, nevertheless, they have hurt people," he said. The provincial government sent relief goods for Parachinar as well, he said, adding that the issue of Parachinar would be resolved in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, not here. Murad said the government was taking action against the sit-ins which might make some people angry. "It is the government's responsibility to address it if common men are troubled," he said. Last night, the MWM and a delegation of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) addressed the media after a meeting on ongoing protests and sit-ins across the city. PPP leader Saeed Ghani expressed solidarity with the bereaved families of the

Parachinar tragedy victims, saying: "We are deeply grieved over the incident and extend our condolences to the martyrs' families." Paying tribute to the resilience of women and children participating in the protests, the PPP leader remarked: "We salute their courage." He added: "It is your right to protest." However, he urged organisers of the protest sit-ins to limit their demonstrations to a single location. On the occasion, AIG Javed Alam also spoke to the media. According to him, additional security personnel have been deployed across the city to ensure security of the sit-ins. MWM leader Allama Hassan Zafar Naqvi said: "We respect your opinion." However, he noted that it is not possible for him to give a definitive answer right now as various sit-ins have different organisers. Parachinar, located in Kurram, is a tribal district near the Afghan border with a population of around 600,000. It has long been a hotspot for conflict. Recent clashes, that erupted in November, have killed at least 130 people and triggered a humanitarian crisis, with shortages of medicine and oxygen exacerbated by the closure of the highway connecting Parachinar to Peshawar.

Jeju air crash victims bodies handed over to families

NEWS DESK

SEOUL: South Korean authorities began releasing the bodies of plane crash victims to families on Tuesday, as investigators raced to determine why the Jeju Air Boeing 737-800 crash landed and burst into flames. US investigators, including from Boeing, arrived at the crash site in southwestern Muan, officials said, as South Korean authorities began assessing two black boxes retrieved from the burned-out wreckage of the aircraft. The plane was carrying 181 people from Thailand to South Korea when it made a mayday call and belly-landed before crashing into a barrier and bursting into flames. Everyone aboard Jeju Air Flight 2216 was killed, save two flight attendants pulled from the wreckage. South Korea is observing seven days of mourning, with flags flying at half-mast. Acting President Choi Sang-mok, who has only been in office since Friday, said the accident was a "turning point" for the country, calling for a full overhaul of air safety systems. He urged officials to "thoroughly re-examine the overall aircraft operation system... and immediately address any necessary improvements."



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza visited Naval Headquarters Islamabad and met Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf. - DNA

KSA acquires 15% stake in Pakistan's RekoDiq project

RekoDiq, a vast untapped copper and gold resource, offers a transformative economic boost for Pakistan's future

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet has approved the sale of a 15% stake in the RekoDiq mining project to Saudi Arabia, under an intergovernmental transaction agreement. The deal, valued at \$540 million, will see the transfer of shares in two instalments. Saudi Arabia will pay \$330 million for 10% shares in the first phase and an additional \$210 million for 5% shares in the second phase, Express News reported. In a related move, the Saudi Fund for Development has pledged an extra \$150 million to bolster the mining sector in Balochistan. Saudi Arabia has also expressed interest in exploring mineral resources and investing further in Chagai, a mineral-rich region. Currently, 50% of the RekoDiq project is jointly owned by Pakistan's federal and Balochistan governments, with the remaining shares held by international firms. The RekoDiq project is regarded as one of the world's largest undeveloped copper and gold deposits, presenting significant economic opportunities for Pakistan. The RekoDiq case revolves around a massive copper and gold mining project located in Chagai, Balochistan, Pakistan. In 2011, the Pakistani government declined to grant a mining lease to Tethyan Copper Company (TCC), a joint venture between Barrick Gold and Antofagasta Minerals, citing irregularities in the contract.

Gaza healthcare nearing 'total collapse'

GENEVA: A United Nations report published Tuesday found that Israeli strikes on and near hospitals in the Gaza Strip had left health care in the Palestinian territory on the verge of collapse. The report by the UN human rights office said such strikes raised grave concerns about Israel's compliance with international law. "Israel's pattern of deadly attacks on and near hospitals in Gaza, and associated combat, pushed the health care system to the brink of total collapse, with catastrophic effect on Palestinians' access to health and medical care," the UN human rights office said in a statement. Its 23-page report, entitled "Attacks on hospitals during the escalation of hostilities in Gaza," looked at the period from October 7, 2023 to June 30, 2024. It said that during this time, there were at least 136 strikes on 27 hospitals and 12 other medical facilities, claiming significant casualties among doctors, nurses, medics and other civilians and causing significant damage to, if not the complete destruction of, civilian infrastructure. The report noted that medical personnel and hospitals are specifically protected under international humanitarian law, provided they do not commit, or are not used to commit, acts harmful to the enemy outside their humanitarian function. It found that Israel's repeated claims that Gaza hospitals were being improperly used for military purposes by Palestinian groups "vague." "Insufficient information has so far been made publicly available to substantiate these allegations, which have remained vague and broad, and in some cases appear contradicted by publicly available information," the report said. UN human rights chief Volker Turk said Gaza hospitals had become a "death trap." - Agencies

US vows to continue supporting Pakistan's economic reforms

Farewell Call by Ambassador Donald Blome on Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Donald Blome, Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan, paid a farewell call on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb at the Finance Division today. During the meet-

ing, both sides discussed matters of mutual interest, with a focus on economic cooperation and bilateral relations. Senator Aurangzeb briefed the Ambassador on Pakistan's economic outlook, emphasizing the government's reform agenda aimed at achieving macroeconomic stability and ending the boom-and-bust cycle through export-led growth. He highlighted the key sectors of the economy where reforms are being pursued to foster sustainable growth. The Minister expressed gratitude to the United States for its invaluable support in facilitating the signing of the Stand-by Arrangement (SBA) and the subsequent Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Senator Aurangzeb also acknowledged the critical role of the US as Pakistan's largest trading partner and a significant market for Pakistani goods and services. The Finance Minister particularly noted the growing IT export sector, emphasizing the substantial potential for further expansion of digital exports to the US. He highlighted the promising prospects of enhancing trade in the IT and digital services sectors, with both countries poised to benefit from closer economic ties. Ambassador Blome expressed his appreciation for the strong and enduring relationship between the United States and Pakistan and reiterated the commitment of the US to continue supporting Pakistan's economic reforms and growth. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides expressing their desire to further strengthen bilateral relations, especially in the areas of trade and economic collaboration.

2024 was a success on diplomatic front: Foreign Office

Mumtaz Baloch says Pakistani leadership shines in UN, ECO, and OIC initiatives; Islamabad hosts successful SCO summit; Pakistan pushes for accountability on Israeli aggressions

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan successfully navigated a year of intense global and regional challenges through strategic diplomacy and active international engagement. Talking to a private news channel on Tuesday, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch highlighted that 2024 brought significant hurdles, both globally and in the region. "Pakistan enhanced its diplomatic efforts to address these challenges," she added. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch emphasised the deteriorating situation in the Middle East due to Israeli aggression, which Pakistan strongly condemned. "We have consistently voiced our concerns and joined forces with other nations to demand accountability and restraint against Israel's hostile actions," she noted. The FO spokesperson said Pakistan made efforts to expand relations with countries worldwide and deepen ties with traditional allies. "We have participated actively at multilateral levels to promote regional and international cooperation," she added. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that as the chair of the SCO Heads of Government Meeting, Pakistan organised several key events, culminating in a highly successful summit in Islamabad in October. She underlined Pakistan's leading role in the United Nations, ECO, and OIC, addressing pressing issues like the Middle East crisis. She noted that Pakistan collaborated with the global community in various forums to advocate for peace and stability in the region.

OGRA announces cut in LPG price

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) on Tuesday notified decrease in the price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for the month of January across Pakistan. According to the notification, OGRA has decreased the LPG price by Rs4 per kg. The new LPG price will be Rs250.28 per kg from January 1. The price of an LPG cylinder for domestic use has been decreased by Rs47 and the price of an LPG cylinder for commercial use has been decreased by Rs182. The official per metric tonne production cost of LPG has now decreased by Rs4,020. The domestic cylinder will be now sold at Rs2,953 instead of Rs3,001 and commercial cylinder will be sold at Rs11,363 instead of Rs11,545.

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