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Erdogan warns no place for 'terrorist' groups in Syria

Detailed News On Page-07

Ahsan slams PTI for 'anti-state campaign'

Detailed News On Page-08



Mathews slams ICC over Lanka's Test schedule

Detailed News On Page-06



Major 'right-sizing'

150,000 vacant posts abolished, ministries merged

Information, Finance, Housing and some other ministries being right sized; Ministry of CADD abolished; rightsizing not only aimed at reducing expenses but also to improve performance, says Aurangzeb

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday vowed to rightsize 42 ministries and their 400 attached departments by June 30 of the current fiscal year to reduce expenditures and improve efficiency of the government. Speaking during the press conference while sharing the six-month performance of the High-powered Committee on Rightsizing, the finance minister said: "We have decided to bring five or six departments under rightsizing in each phase." Aurangzeb was accompanied by Convener of the National Parliamentary Taskforce on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Bilal Azhar Kayani and Ambassador at Large Dr Salman Ahmad, who is heading the Implementation Committee. The minister said that 60% vacant regular posts – that have not come in payroll – which stood at 150,000 have been abolished or declared as dying posts, creating a real financial impact. "All is being done after proper ratification from the federal cabinet," said Aurangzeb, adding that the committee will reduce 80 institutions to a half. The committee, he said, also decided to outsource general non-core services including cleaning, plumbing and gardening to bring efficiency, adding the number of contingency posts would also be reduced. Speaking about the economy, FinMin Aurangzeb said that the first six months of the fiscal year focused on macroeconomic stability and now the focus is on sustainable growth. The minister recalled that efforts had been made previously to reduce the size of the federal government, adding that they are trying to reduce the federal government's expenditure of Rs900 billion.

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Starlink licensing Govt to hire consultant for framework

Information minister says internet in Pakistan "low in price" as compared to other countries

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government plans to hire a consultant to finalise regulations for the satellite-based company Starlink's internet services, owned by US billionaire Elon Musk, in Pakistan, it emerged on Tuesday. The development was discussed during a meeting chaired by Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja, focusing on advancing satellite connectivity and technology in Pakistan. The session, which included representatives from SUPARCO, PTA, and the Pakistan Space Activities Regulatory Board, delved into Starlink's licensing and regulatory progress, alongside the development of a regulatory framework for Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites. During the meeting, it was decided to hire a consultant within the next few weeks to assist the licensing process for Starlink and LEO satellites, aiming to align Pakistan's satellite policies with international standards.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs the Federal Cabinet Meeting. – DNA

19 Khwarij killed in three encounters

During intense fire exchange, three brave sons of soil embraced shahadat

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On 6-7 January 2025, Nineteen Khwarij were sent to hell in three separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. On reported presence of Khwarij, an intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in general area Matani, Peshawar District. During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location and resultantly, eight khwarij were sent to hell. Another intelligence based operation was conducted in general area Baizai, Mohmand District. In ensuing fire exchange, eight Khwarij were effectively engaged and neutralised by the security forces. In third engagement in Karak District, own troops effectively engaged

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Indonesian President to visit Pakistan

UAE rolls over \$2 bn debt for Pakistan: PM

Says government was working in unison to curb the menace of human smuggling which has led to the death of hundreds of Pakistani citizens besides bringing defame to the country

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday told the federal cabinet that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced to extend the \$2 billion debt that was due to be paid back by Pakistan this month. The prime minister, in his televised opening remarks at the federal cabinet meeting chaired by him, apprised the members of his "positive and constructive" meeting with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Rahim Yar Khan in which they discussed the ways to further strengthen bilateral ties and investment cooperation. He said that Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto was due in Islamabad this month when the two sides would discuss strengthening and integration of bilateral cooperation. He said the government was formulating an agenda for cooperation in Halal meat and rice exports and the import of edible oil. He said that as the UAE president emphasised moving swiftly on the investment projects, and also expressed his country's commitment to

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NEPRA reduces electricity tariffs

Reduction of 75 paise per unit has been announced for consumers of government-owned DISCOs

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has reduced electricity prices under the monthly Fuel Price Adjustment (FPA), making electricity cheaper for consumers. According to reports, a reduction of 75 paise per unit has been announced for consumers of government-owned DISCOs under the November FPA. Additionally, a price reduction of 49 paise per unit has been approved for K-Electric consumers under the October FPA. Back in December 2024, Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif directed a reduction in electricity prices for consumers

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Briefs

Three elders arrested for not signing peace deal

The district administration clarified that the decisions of the Apex Committee and the provincial government will strictly be enforced

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Three elders who refused to sign the Kurram Peace Agreement have been arrested, said the district administration on Tuesday. According to the administration, Syed Rehman, Saifullah, and Karim Khan have not yet signed the peace agreement, which led to their arrest. The district administration clarified that the decisions of the Apex Committee and the provincial government will strictly be enforced to ensure law and order in the district. On the other hand, cases have also been registered against those who staged a sit-in and blocked roads outside the Parachinar Press Club.

AC indicts Parvez Elahi

Court summons witnesses on next hearing

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: An accountability court in Lahore indicted PTI President Parvez Elahi in a corruption reference filed by NAB. With the court summoning witnesses on the next hearing, Parvez, the former Punjab chief minister, has denied the charges levelled against him. The senior politician, along with his son Moonis Elahi and others, is accused of illegally approving various development schemes, receiving kickbacks and causing over Rs1 billion in loss to the national exchequer. The NAB, in its reference, also accused the PTI leader and his son of receiving bribes by awarding contracts to their "favourite contractors" and claimed that the father-son duo received.

For serious negotiations

PTI demands 'unfettered access' to jailed Imran

"We don't want PTI founder's release through executive order," clarifies Barrister Gohar

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-Insaf (PTI) has demanded "unfettered access" to jailed party founder Imran Khan to continue serious negotiations with the government. Addressing a joint press conference flanked by PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja and chairman, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub said: "During the second round of talks, our negotiation team had asked the government team to arrange their unmonitored and unfettered meeting with PTI founder Imran Khan." "There should be no monitoring during the meeting [between PTI leadership and the former prime minister in Adiala Jail]." After months of a political tug-of-war, the coalition government and the embattled PTI finally came to table last month to defuse tensions, with the Khan-founded party initially putting forth two initial demands: the release of all political prisoners and a judicial probe into the

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PTI talks progressing positively, says Tarar

Dialogue is essential for resolving issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Atta Tarar says talks with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are progressing positively, emphasising that dialogue is essential for resolving issues. Speaking to the media in Islamabad, the minister expressed optimism that 2025 would mark a year of political stability and growth for Pakistan. He provided updates on the 'Uraan Pakistan' vision, which focuses

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Earthquake kills over 100 in Tibet

Pak extends its support to Chinese people and govt in their relief efforts

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: A magnitude 6.8 earthquake rocked the northern foothills of the Himalayas near one of Tibet's holiest cities on Tuesday, Chinese authorities said, killing over 100 people and shaking buildings in neighbouring Nepal, Bhutan and India. The quake hit at 9:05am (0105 GMT), with its epicentre located in Tingri, a rural county known as the northern gateway to the Everest region, at a depth of 10km (6.2 miles), according to the China Earthquake Networks Centre. The US Geological Service put the quake's magnitude at 7.1.

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Afghan embassy: hundreds of Afghans detained in Pakistan

The statement said the number included 137 Afghans with pending visa extension requests or who are temporarily registered with the UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan's embassy in Pakistan said around 800 Afghans living in the capital have been detained by authorities, including some who are registered with the UN's refugee agency. It warned in a statement late on Monday that uncertainty around the visa process for Afghans in Pakistan has caused "troubling cases of arbitrary detention and deportation." Islamabad has cracked down on undocumented Afghans as political tensions with Kabul have increased, forcing more than 780,000 Afghans back across the border since the end of 2023 – including some who have lived in Pakistan for decades. "The Embassy of Afghanistan expresses its deep concern over the recent detention of approximately 800 Afghan nationals in Islamabad," it said on social media platform X. "This has caused the tragic separation of families, including women and children, many of whom remain stranded in Pakistan." The statement said the number included 137 Afghans with pending visa extension requests or who are

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US, Afghan Taliban 'in talks to swap detainees'

US President Joe Biden's administration seeks return of three Americans seized in 2022

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The Biden administration is negotiating with Afghanistan to exchange Americans detained in the country for at least one high-profile prisoner held in Guantanamo Bay with alleged ties to former al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, an American newspaper reported on Tuesday. Representatives for the White House and the US State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the report. Representatives for the Afghan Taliban also did not immediately respond. US President Joe Biden's administration is seeking the return of three

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KPK CM's youth empowerment initiative in tourism sector

Pakistan's tourism industry is continuously on the rise, with the country being widely hailed as "tourism's next big thing" due to its diverse treasures

DNA

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has launched an initiative aimed at empowering youth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tourism sector. Under this scheme, young individuals residing in popular tourist areas will receive interest-free loans to improve local accommodation options. The first phase targets areas such as Kalam Swat, Kumrat Upper Dir, Laram Top Lower Dir, Upper Chitral, Lower Chitral, Galyat Abbottabad, and Kagan Mansehra. Residents will be able to build or renovate rooms for tourists in their homes with the support of these interest-free loans. The project is a joint effort between the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority and the Bank of Khyber. Up to PKR 3 million will be provided for the construction or renovation of accommodation spaces. Special preference will be given to women entrepreneurs under this scheme. Loan recipients will ensure high-quality services for tourists staying in these rooms. The project is designed to promote financial independence among youth in the province. The deadline for submitting applications is January 28, 2025. Those who benefit from the loan will be required to provide services to tourists for a period of up to 10 years. Meanwhile, Pakistan's tourism industry is continuously on the rise, with the country being widely hailed as "tourism's next big thing" due to

its diverse treasures. Particularly, Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, with its breathtaking landscapes, Gandhara civilization, snowfall features and rich natural beauty, holds immense tourism potential, especially in its northern districts that needed Govt patronage for bolstering the rural economy and alleviation of poverty for the masses' benefits. Blessed with plenty of adventure tourism and snow sports opportunities, including being the home to stunning mountain peaks of Falak Sair, Elum, Trich Mir and its picturesque snow-clad valleys and Gandhara civilizations, alongside regions such as Malakand and Hazara, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was going to become a hub of winter tourism after launching of host tourism project. However, the lack of affordable accommodation and poor connectivity remains a challenge that hinders tourism growth in KP. Additionally, issues like the threat of terrorism, inadequate roads infrastructure, socio-cultural and language barriers continue to pose obstacles in way of the sustainable tourism. Despite these challenges, KP's northern areas including Swat, Chitral, Dir, Mansehra and Abbottabad hold a unique potential, particularly for the promotion of snow sports, adventure, heritage and eco-tourism. To capitalize on KP's tourism wealth and foster the region's socioeconomic growth, the provincial government is going to launch the Host Tourism Project (HTP) aims at financial empowerment of local communities by promoting

community-based accommodations to tourists. Saad Khan, spokesperson for the Culture and Tourism Authority of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said that under the landmark program, local residents in tourist areas will be provided loans of up to Rs 3 million from the Bank of Khyber for the construction or renovation of at least two rooms attached to their houses, specifically for hosting tourists. "The government's focus areas for the project include scenic spots such as Kalam Swat, Kumrat Valley in Upper Dir, Laram Top in Lower Dir, Upper Chitral, Lower Chitral, Galiyat Abbottabad, and upper Kagan Mansehra. These locations, rich in natural beauty and mountain treasures, have been identified as ideal for tourism expansion," he said. Saad Khan shared that beneficiaries of this Qarz e Hasna (interest-free loan) scheme should be permanent residents aged between 20 and 55 in these areas. He said special encouragement is being given to women entrepreneurs and educated families. The government has also stipulated that the rooms constructed or renovated under the scheme must be used exclusively for tourism-related accommodation for a period of at least 10 years. Professor Dr Zilakat Malik, former Chairman of the Economics Department at the University of Peshawar said that the host tourism project was very important in terms of generation of jobs and revitalization of the rural economy.



LAHORE: Olympians Shehbaz Senior and Khawaja Junaid called on Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. Both hockey legends briefed the minister about their efforts for promotion of hockey in Pakistan. Khawaja Junaid Hockey Academy is the leading academy producing and promoting young hockey talent in Pakistan. —DNA

Nurses urged to equip themselves with latest health techniques

ATTOCK: Director General Nursing Punjab Tahira Shahid has announced launching of Bachelor of Science in Nursing (POST-RN), specialization in pediatrics and gynaecology and obstetrics classes besides establishment of examination center for LHV's at Nursing College Attock. She expressed these views during her surprise visit to the college on Monday. Controller Nursing Examination Board Punjab Tanzeela Ijaz and other officials of Directorate Nursing Lahore were also present on the occasion. On this occasion, she also gives nod to the provision of funds for the water supply of the nursing hostel and the renovation of the staff quarters. Addressing the student nurses, she urged the under training nursing students to equip themselves with latest health techniques serve suffering humanity in a better way. Earlier, Tahira Shahid visited different departments and classes of the college, interacted with the trainee nurses and LHV's and got information about the facilities provided to them. On this occasion the DG Nursing lauded the role college faculty played for achieving hundred percent results in the recent annual examination of nurses and hoped that the same standard will be maintained in the future as well. —APP

Rains, snowfall in Hazara division bring relief from seasonal diseases

ABBOTTABAD: The recent spell of rains and snowfall in Hazara Division on Tuesday has been hailed as a blessing, offering much-needed relief from seasonal diseases. Dr. Qazi Muhammad Nasir, a local expert, highlighted the positive impact of the rains during an interview with the Associated Press of Pakistan. He pointed out that the rains have effectively reduced smog in district Haripur, which had been causing a surge in respiratory and skin diseases. Dr. Nasir noted that dry winter conditions had led to a marked increase in health issues such as throat infections, respiratory allergies, eye diseases, asthma, and chest infections. Thousands of residents across

Hazara Division were falling victim to these ailments on a daily basis. However, the onset of rains is expected to bring immediate relief. "Due to the dry and harsh winter, households were struggling with various health problems, especially throat and respiratory allergies. Children were the worst affected, with cases of asthma and respiratory illnesses rising significantly," Dr. Nasir explained. He expressed optimism that the rains would lead to a substantial decline in these conditions, bringing much-needed respite to families. District Agriculture Officer Faheem Jadoon told to APP that in addition to health benefits, the rains and snowfall have

proven to be a boon for agriculture, particularly in rain-fed areas. He emphasized the importance of these rains for crops, stating, "The recent rainfall is extremely beneficial for agriculture, especially for crops in barani (rain-fed) areas. These rains will significantly improve soil moisture levels, which is crucial for crop growth and yield." Faheem Jadoon said that farmers in the region are also expressing relief as the rains are expected to enhance the productivity of wheat and other seasonal crops. For many, this timely precipitation has rekindled hopes for a better harvest after a prolonged dry spell that had raised concerns about agricultural output. —APP

Rural Women artisans to showcase work at Sartyoon Sang Crafts Exhibition

SUKKUR: The works of Thousands female artisans from different districts of Sindh are being displayed at the 16th 'Sartyoon Sang Crafts' exhibition at Ocean Mall Clifton, Karachi. The exhibition will open to the public on Thursday January 9 and will run till Sunday, 12, 2025, said a release issued here on Tuesday. The four-day exhibition is going to be organised by the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (RSRO) in collaboration with the Sindh Government to display the work of female artisans from rural Sindh and aims to provide them with market linkages. Different stalls have been set up in the mall's main foyer that exhibit garments, Ajrak, furniture, decoration pieces, leather handbags, bed sheets and other traditional items. RSRO arranges such exhibitions from the last sixteen years in which visitors taken keen interest in handmade household goods and other traditional products. RSRO Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Muhammad Dittal Kalhor said that the event is aim at facilitating better incomes for female artisans of rural Sindh. We have trained thousands of rural women in different trades from some of the most under-developed regions of Jacobabad, Kandhkot-Kashmore, Shikarpur, Ghotki, Qambar-Shahdadkot, Badin and all other districts of Sindh, he said, adding that the artisans have incorporated urban trends into their work to gain maximum monetary benefit from their skills. APP

CDA chief reviews steps taken for capital's beautification

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Mohammad Ali Randhawa presided over a review meeting regarding the progress on new projects and initiatives held at CDA headquarters on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by CDA members and relevant senior officers. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa was briefed on the progress of outsourcing solid waste management services. He was informed that advertisements for the bidding process to outsource solid waste management services had been published in newspapers. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa was also briefed on various initiatives being taken for the beautification and

uplift of the city. He was informed that various statues and designs elements are being installed at important roads, median strips, green areas, and other significant locations. Furthermore, modern and beautiful lights will be installed permanently alongside major roads. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa instructed that modern and beautiful lights be permanently installed along Srinagar Highway and Club Road. Chairman CDA directed that a design and plan for upgrading the city's model nursery be presented, and a business model for the nursery be developed. Chairman CDA emphasized the establishment of flower shops and a cafeteria in the One-Window Facilitation Center. The meeting

was informed that the digital smart parking system has been launched at eight different sites in Islamabad. Chairman CDA instructed that the digital smart parking system be introduced in the Diplomatic Enclave shuttle service area. He also directed that all payments from citizens in the digital smart parking system be collected online, and no cash payments be accepted under the smart parking initiative. Chairman CDA directed that, considering the interest of overseas Pakistanis, additional sectors and plots be offered in Sector C-14. Chairman CDA further instructed that the immediate provision of electricity in Park Enclave III be ensured. Additionally, the meeting reviewed various IT-related initiatives.

Pak Post to issue commemorative stamp to honour ICC's for business growth

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Post will issue a commemorative postage stamp in recognition of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (ICCI) premier services to the business community, contributing significantly to the country's economic growth and prosperity. This landmark development was made on the occasion of Rizwan Javed Hashmi, Additional Director General of Operations at Pakistan Post, visiting the Chamber. It is noteworthy that on August 26, 2024, the ICCI celebrated its 40th anniversary. The Additional Director General acknowledged the significant role the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry plays in fostering business growth and economic well-being in the country. He mentioned that the postage stamp would serve as a testament to the Chamber's unparalleled services since its inception, benefiting both the community and the country. It would also act as a platform to showcase the Chamber's ongoing commitment to addressing the challenges faced by the business community. Hashmi expressed hope that this partnership would serve the business community while benefiting Pakistan Post customers as well. Hashmi also praised the ICCI for being the country's premier Chamber, with more than 10,000 registered members. He recognized the Chamber's critical role in bridging the government and the private sector to facilitate the ease of doing business. Earlier, in his welcome address, acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, while acknowledging the services rendered by Pakistan Post for the government and the public, emphasized that this collaborative initiative would leverage the strengths of both organizations to drive economic development and improve service delivery. He further noted that by joining forces, ICCI and Pakistan Post aspire to create a more conducive business environment, foster innovation, and contribute to the overall well-being of the community. Post Master General Islamabad Shah Nawaz provided detailed insights into the structure and operations of Pakistan Post. ICCI Acting Senior Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry expressed the Chamber's eagerness to collaborate with Pakistan Post for its revival as a key state-owned entity known for excellent services. ICCI Secretary General Ghulam Murtaza Siddiqui shared practical proposals, emphasizing the importance of proper marketing, diversification, and the use of modern technology as essential tools for enhancing Pakistan Post's service delivery and improving access for the masses. ICCI Acting Vice President Raja Naveed Akhtar Satti, Executive Member Malik Mohsin Khalid, and ICCI member Tahir Mehmood Abbasi were also present.

Schools, colleges reopen in KP's plains after winter vacations

PESHAWAR: Winter vacations of educational institutions in the plain areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have officially ended, and all private and government schools have reopened on Tuesday across the province, including in the provincial capital. According to details, educational institutions in Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda, Dera Ismail Khan, and other districts in plain areas resumed classes after the winter break. It is noteworthy that the provincial education department had extended the winter holidays until January 6 due to the severe cold and dry weather conditions. The reopening marked the return of ac-

ademic activities as schools welcomed students back after the extended break. The Department of Higher Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to introduce a ranking system in all universities and colleges to improve the quality of education. An important meeting, chaired by the Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi, was held here on Tuesday, wherein a detailed briefing was given on the ranking system. The meeting also discussed the criteria for ranking universities and colleges. The Minister for Higher Education described this initiative as a significant step toward

providing better educational opportunities for students. He emphasized that the ranking system would promote competition among educational institutions and lead to substantial improvements in the quality of education. The minister instructed the authorities concerned to collect performance data of universities from the last three years and rank them accordingly. This decision marks an important step toward educational reforms and will introduce a systematic and transparent method for evaluating the performance of educational institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. —APP



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Sindh govt to inaugurate first segment of MEW

The CM directed law enforcement agencies to deploy district and traffic police at key entry and exit points, including the Jam Sadiq, EBM, and Shah Faisal Interchanges

KARACHI :Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah is set to inaugurate the first segment of the highly anticipated Malir Expressway, a state-of-the-art, high-speed corridor on January 11. The initial 9.1 km stretch, which runs from Korangi Causeway to Shah Faisal, represents a significant milestone in Karachi's infrastructure development, promising improved connectivity and reduced traffic congestion. This decision was taken during a high-level meeting chaired by Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah at the New Secretariat, where the project's final progress was reviewed. Minister for Local Government Saeed Ghani, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Mayor of Karachi Murtaza Wahab, PSCM Agha Wasif, Commissioner of Karachi Hassan Naqvi, Adl IG Karachi Javed Odho, Secretary

Local Government Khalid Hyder Shah, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, and PD Malir Expressway Niaz Soomro attended the meeting. The Malir Expressway (MEW) is the largest Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project in Sindh. It features a three-lane dual-carriageway with modern, access-controlled infrastructure. Spanning approximately 40 km, the expressway connects Korangi Creek Avenue (DHA) to the M-9 Motorway (Superhighway) near Kathore, offering a critical link for commuters and significantly reducing travel time. The expressway will include dedicated interchanges, providing seamless access to key residential and commercial areas along the route. The first segment will feature a ramp to facilitate immediate traffic flow and will be complemented by a connecting flyover from Koran-

gi, which is expected to be completed within two months. The construction of the Jam Sadiq Interchange and road rehabilitation projects at the EBM and Shah Faisal Interchanges are progressing steadily. Encroachments at the Quaidabad Interchange have been cleared, and construction is ongoing to enhance connectivity. A Toll Plaza will manage traffic flow, charging Rs100 for cars and jeeps, and Rs200 for heavy vehicles. Security measures will include patrols by traffic police, fire brigades, and Rescue 1122 ambulances. The CM directed law enforcement agencies to deploy district and traffic police at key entry and exit points, including the Jam Sadiq, EBM, and Shah Faisal Interchanges. The traffic police will patrol both sides of the expressway continuously in vehicles. Dedicated traffic police

will be present on the expressway to ensure proper traffic flow. To ensure smooth operations, the CM has declared the stretch from the Shah Faisal Interchange to the Shah Faisal Colony Bridge as a no-parking zone. Only commercial vehicles, cars, jeeps, and buses will be permitted on the expressway, while motorcycles and rickshaws are prohibited. The Malir Expressway is poised to transform Karachi's transportation landscape, providing swift access to residential developments and commercial hubs. Once fully operational, it is expected to alleviate congestion and boost economic activity throughout the city. The CM emphasized the importance of efficient traffic management and directed officials to promptly address any operational challenges to ensure the timely completion of ongoing works. —APP

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

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Emergency Ambulance.1122
& Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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MH.....5611116
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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov along with Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan Dr. Maen Khreasat taking keen interest in the Calligraphic Art pieces during exhibition "Timeless Serenity of Calligraphy and Arts" by Azeem Iqbal at Pakistan National Council of Arts in Federa Capital.

Diplomats visit NDMA to explore NEOC capabilities

Secretary General of ECO Secretariat, Ambassador Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, commended NDMA's efforts in disaster preparedness and urged regional member states to prioritize disaster risk reduction frameworks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Representatives and members from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Tuesday visited the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to review the capabilities of the National Emergency

Operations Centre (NEOC). The delegation was briefed on the state-of-the-art technological infrastructure and operational frameworks designed to tackle climate-induced anomalies and disasters in Pakistan and the region. During the briefing, rising temperatures, coastline crises, and their impacts on regional stability were highlighted. NDMA Lt. Gen Inam Haider Malik HM(I) briefed the delegation about the capacities of

The delegated were briefed about escalating impacts of rising temperatures on the region, stressing the importance of collaborative action to address shared vulnerabilities. Call for action for utilization of NEOC's advanced systems for real-time monitoring, disaster preparedness, and response in the region. They were also briefed about potential of a regional framework for disaster risk reduction (DRR), emphasizing joint

efforts for capacity building and knowledge sharing to strengthen disaster preparedness and response. Secretary General of ECO Secretariat, Ambassador Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, commended NDMA's efforts in disaster preparedness and urged regional member states to prioritize disaster risk reduction frameworks. He noted that ECO member countries face a collective loss of \$70 million due to climate-related disasters annually, making regional

cooperation an urgent necessity. Ambassador of Iran Dr. Reza Amiri, Ambassador of Uzbekistan, Oybek Usmanov, Ambassador of Nepal, Rita Dhital, Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov, Bangladesh High commissioner to Pakistan Iqbal Hussain Khan, DHM Ismail Mufeed and representative from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and official of Ministry of foreign affairs attended the session.

CDA cracks down on filthy conditions at Diplomatic Enclave Shuttle Service

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a surprise inspection ordered by Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Tuesday uncovered appalling conditions at the Diplomatic Enclave Shuttle Service. The cafeterias and waiting areas were found lit-

tered with garbage, foul smells permeated the restrooms, and makeshift cots cluttered the rooms. Even a stable was discovered on-site. Substandard food items were being openly sold to citizens visiting embassies for visa-related purposes, further exacerbating the already dire state of the facility. Taking immediate action, Chairman Randhawa sealed both cafeterias on

the spot and directed legal proceedings against the owners. Samples of food items were sent to the Islamabad Food Authority for analysis. "The shuttle service area will be beautified and upgraded with the best facilities within three weeks," assured Randhawa, as he demanded a comprehensive plan for the area's improvement. Under new CDA management, the

shuttle service has already introduced 10 electric buses for daily operations, aiming to provide a better experience for citizens traveling to embassies.

Accompanied by CDA members, DMA officials, and other relevant authorities, Randhawa reiterated the commitment to ensure citizens receive top-notch services in line with Minister Naqvi's directives.

AIOU launches career-making diploma programs

Such programs are part of the University's recent initiative to enhance capacity-building of the students, enabling them to earn their livelihood and to take part in the country's socio-economic development.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has introduced career-making postgraduate diploma programs for aspiring fresh graduates. The programs include computer science, educational planning and management, educational leadership and management, early childhood education, entrepreneurship in ECC, supply chain management, human resource management, gender and women studies, population and development, international financial reporting standards and TEFL. The programs will lead to professional development of

the aspiring students to achieve excels in the relevant fields. These are one-year of duration, consisting of two semesters. BA/BSc.B.Com students are eligible to take admission. These will also help to organize and manage business venture in a competitive global marketplace that is constantly evolving. According to Director Admissions, "February 17 is the last day for the enrollment in these programs." Such programs are part of the University's recent initiative to enhance capacity-building of the students, enabling them to earn their livelihood and to take part in the country's socio-economic development. These are one-year diploma programs. Graduates

will have excellent employment opportunities in both private and public sectors, domestically and internationally. Details of these programs, admission forms, and prospectuses are available on the university's website: www.aiou.edu.pk. Information about these programs can also be obtained from the university's regional offices located in 54 cities across the country. The addresses and contact numbers of these offices are also available on the university's website. Students can call the university helpline 111-112-468 to inquire about admissions and details of programs ranging from matriculation to PhD levels.

Barrister expresses condolences over China earthquake

ISLAMABAD: PM's Adviser on Law & Justice, Barrister Aqeel Malik Tuesday extended deepest condolences and sympathies to the people of China, following the catastrophic earthquake that ravaged China's remote Tibet region, conveying Pakistan's unwavering solidarity and commitment to standing by its allies in times of crisis. In his message with PTV news channel, he reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with China, stating that the Pakistani nation and government stand resolute, shoulder-to-shoulder with their Chinese counterparts during this tumultuous period. In a gesture of steadfast support, Barrister Malik emphasized that Pakistan is committed to providing unwavering assistance and cooperation to China, as the two nations have consistently demonstrated an unshakable bond of friendship and mutual trust.—APP

Vigilance urged to contain 'Pink Eye' outbreak

ISLAMABAD: As the cases of Pink Eye, a highly contagious eye infection, continue to rise, health expert Tuesday sounded the alarm, urging parents to exercise extreme caution and take proactive measures to prevent the spread of the disease among children. Talking to a private news channel, Dr. Zubaida Surang, an eye specialist at Agha Khan Hospital revealed that the pink eye outbreak is widespread, with the hospital witnessing a surge in cases during the winter season. She explained that the highly contagious infection, also known as acute conjunctivitis, is caused by viruses, bacteria, allergens and parasites, with human adenoviruses (HAdVs) responsible for 65-90% of severe conjunctival infections. Dr. Surang warned that the symptoms of pink eye include redness or irritation, watery discharge, foreign body sensation, blurred vision, photophobia and swelling or edema of the conjunctiva. She advised that if left untreated, pink eye can lead to severe complications, including corneal ulcers and vision loss. Regarding treatment, Dr. Surang emphasized that antibiotics are only effective against bacterial conjunctivitis and not viral conjunctivitis. She recommended that patients with pink eye should apply warm compresses to the affected eye, use artificial tears to lubricate the eye and avoid touching or rubbing the eye to prevent the spread of the infection. To prevent the spread of pink eye, Dr. Surang advised the public to take precautions, including practicing good hand hygiene by washing hands frequently with soap and water, avoiding touching the eyes or face, refraining from sharing personal items, such as towels or makeup, staying home from school or work if symptoms persist and avoiding close contact with others to prevent the spread of the infection. Dr. Surang urged parents to be vigilant and keep their children home from school if they exhibit symptoms of pink eye.—APP

Irfan warns of consequences if PTI fails to submit 'Charter of demands'

ISLAMABAD: A government negotiating team member Senator Irfan Siddiqui Tuesday expressed concerns about the PTI's delayed written charter of demands, which has slowed talks and criticized inconsistencies in the PTI leadership's statements. In an interview with a private news channel, he said that the PTI had committed to presenting a written charter of demands in the next meeting, following agreements made in the previous two sessions, however, the PTI has yet to fulfill this promise, causing an alarming delay in the negotiation process. Talks between the government and PTI have stopped because PTI has not given its demands, he said, adding, there will be consequences if PTI does not give its demands. Responding to a query, Senator said that the government has not set any conditions for the talks and he has even not asked PTI to stop their civil disobedience campaign on social media.—APP

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Briefs

ANF recovers
14.4 kg drugs
concealed in
guava crates

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in an operation recovered 14.4 kg of drugs concealed in guava crates, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that in an operation near Motorway Toll Plaza, Islamabad, ANF foiled a drug smuggling bid disguised as guava cargo. Acting on a tip-off, ANF intercepted a passenger bus near Islamabad Toll Plaza. During the search, 14.4 kg of hashish was recovered from the guava crates which were booked by a person named Bilal Jan who belongs to a gang involved in drug smuggling at the inter-provincial level. The members of the gang are involved in smuggling drugs in different cities of the country through bus cargo service, the spokesman added. He informed that further investigation has been initiated to arrest the accused involved in drug smuggling.—APP

SNGPL
cracks down
on illegal gas
connections

ISLAMABAD: Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has launched a major operation against illegal gas connections, disconnecting 136 unauthorized connections across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad, while imposing fines exceeding Rs 9 million. In South Punjab, the company targeted Multan, Sahiwal, and Bahawalpur, severing 56 illegal connections and levying fines of Rs 90,000. In central Punjab's Lahore and Faisalabad regions, 55 illegal gas connections were disconnected, resulting in penalties amounting to Rs 3.75 million. Sheikhpura and Gujranwala saw the disconnection of five illegal connections, with fines surpassing Rs 3.9 million. Meanwhile, in Mardan, 20 illegal gas connections were cut off, and fines totaling Rs 1.2 million were imposed.—APP

Over 185,000
LFD devices
operational to
enhance SIM
security

ISLAMABAD: To ensure enhanced security and authenticity in SIM-related transactions more than 185,000 Live Finger Detection (LFD) devices are currently operational across the industry. These devices effectively reject fraudulent fingerprints, bolstering the process's integrity. To further mitigate risks associated with counterfeit fingerprints, all non-LFD devices previously used in SIM sales have been replaced with LFD-enabled systems. According to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Annual Report 2023-24, new measures have been implemented to prevent SIM stock swapping among franchisees. PTA now mandates the locking of SIM stocks to specific sales channels at the franchise level.—APP

Turkish envoy for strengthening
academic and cultural relations

The Turkish Ambassador was bid a warm farewell by the Rector, Dean, and faculty members

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Türkiye, H.E. Irfan Neziroglu, along with the Education Attache, Dr. Mehmet Toyran, visited the National University of Modern Languages. The visit, marked by meaningful discussions and a series of engaging activities, reinforced the enduring ties between Pakistan and Türkiye while exploring new avenues for academic and cultural collaboration. Upon arrival, the Turkish Ambassador was warmly received by the Dean and Head of the Department. The Ambassador met with the Rector NUML, Major Gen (r) Shahid Mehmood Kayani HI(M), where discussions centred on enhancing bilateral cooperation in research and education. DG NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir was also present during the meeting. Rector NUML lauded the strong brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye, emphasizing the shared history, cultural affinity, and mutual respect that unite the two nations. The Rector also highlighted NUML's commitment to fostering educational excellence and deepening collaboration with



Turkish institutions, especially in areas like language learning, faculty exchange, and joint research initiatives. Following the meeting with the Rector, the Ambassador and Education Attache toured the Rumi Block, accompanied by the Dean and department faculty. During the tour, they visited class-

rooms, the library, the teachers' lounge, and the Head of Department's office, gaining insights into the university's academic environment and resources. In his address to the students and Faculty of the Turkish department, the Turkish Ambassador, Irfan Neziroglu, extended warm greet-

ings from the people of Türkiye to Pakistan and the students and faculty of NUML. He underscored the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation in education, trade, and defence, citing the mutual benefits such partnerships offer. Addressing the students, the Ambassador encour-

aged them to excel in mastering the Turkish language, describing it as a gateway to unique opportunities and success. He shared his optimism about the promising role these students could play in fostering closer ties between Türkiye, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan. On the occasion, the Dean of the Faculty of Languages, Dr. Jamil Asghar Jami, expressed profound gratitude and honour for hosting the Turkish Ambassador. He highlighted Türkiye's pivotal role as a geographical and cultural bridge and underscored the longstanding friendship between the two countries. The Dean emphasized the opportunities for Pakistan to learn from Türkiye's advancements in education, technology, and cultural preservation. The visit concluded with a vibrant interaction session where the Ambassador engaged with students and faculty in a friendly and informal setting. He reiterated the importance of creating supportive environments for language learning and cross-cultural understanding. The Turkish Ambassador was bid a warm farewell by the Rector, Dean, and faculty members.

Rwp Police Khidmat
Centers facilitate 176,337

City Police Officer, Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani said that best service delivery is top priority of Rawalpindi district police and the authorities concerned have been directed to ensure provision of best possible facilities at Khidmat centers along with police stations

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police Khidmat centers facilitated 176,337 citizens during 2024 with different services relating to issuance of character certificate, registration of tenants and house servants, general police verification, report of missing persons and items, said a police spokesman. He informed that Rawalpindi district police are taking all possible measures to provide maximum facilities to the citizens. 13 Khidmat centers including state-of-the-art Khidmat center, Liaquat Bagh are functioning in Rawalpindi. Positive feedback from the citizens regarding the facilities of Khidmat centers was given and the citizens appreciated the services. 61,704 people obtained police character certificates from Rawalpindi Khidmat centers in 2024 while 60,614 citizens availed general police verification facilities. The spokesman further said that 6,442 people obtained new driving licenses from Khidmat centers and 9,720 citizens obtained learner driving licenses from Khidmat centers of Rawalpindi. 8,932 people renewed learner driving licenses and 1600 citizens got copies of the FIRs while 745 people filed missing person reports. 633 citizens received their tenancy and employee registration certificates at different Marakaz and 177 people got duplicate driving licenses, he said adding, 355 applicants got international driving licenses while 96 citizens got their licenses renewed which were issued from other districts. According to the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Inspector General of Police, Punjab, the best facilities are being ensured from Khidmat centers for the convenience of the citizens, he said. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani said that best service delivery is top priority of Rawalpindi district police and the authorities concerned have been directed to ensure provision of best possible facilities at Khidmat centers along with police stations.—DNA

Record-breaking
chill grips Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Meteorologist at PMD, the country has already experienced a record-breaking cold spell this winter. Notably, the temperatures in January and December of this year have been significantly lower compared to the same period in 2023, he mentioned. This unusual drop in temperature has brought extreme cold weather conditions, with the mercury expected to dip further in the coming days, he added. A new wave of cold air is expected to sweep through Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in the next 9 to 10 days, said Sardar Sarfaraz, Chief Meteorologist at PMD. Meanwhile, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)

can expect a brief respite from the cold with a rain spell lasting 2 to 3 days, he said, adding, however, the region will soon return to dry and cold weather conditions. He further said that the northern regions of Pakistan have been blanketed with significant snowfall, with some areas receiving as much as 9 inches of snow. The heavy snowfall has transformed the picturesque landscapes of the northern areas into winter wonderlands, with the snow-capped mountains and valleys presenting a serene and tranquil atmosphere, he added. He also urged citizens to check the latest weather advisories and forecasts to stay informed about the pre-

vail weather conditions. Additionally, the PMD has cautioned citizens to take necessary precautions to protect themselves from the harsh weather, especially in areas expected to receive heavy snowfall or experience extremely low temperatures. Responding to a query, Chief Meteorologist also revealed that the country is likely to experience a drier-than-usual winter season. According to his forecast, Pakistan is expected to receive below-average snowfall and rainfall during the current winter season, marking a significant departure from the precipitation patterns observed in previous years.

Call for integrating local market with global competitive market

Call for integrating
local market with global
competitive market

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX), Khurram Zafar on Tuesday prioritized for integrating the local market with the global competitive market through automation and digitization in the local supply value chain. Khurram Zafar, CEO of PMEX, told media in an exclusive interview that modernization is necessary to connect our markets with global markets and improve our export potential. It will compel the use of best practices like commodity grading and standardization, which international buyers rely upon. Zafar said that PMEX wants to introduce innovation in the agriculture and commodity markets to make them more efficient, improve price discovery and reduce wastage. "We are envisioning a future where currently fragmented commodity markets seamlessly integrate into a national trading platform that brings down the cost of intermediation, enhances price discovery, and allows traders to easily obtain financing against their commodities," CEO, PMEX said that Commodity futures are derivative contracts in which the trader agrees to buy or sell a specific quantity of a physical commodity at a specified price on a particular date in the future to hedge the adverse price risk in the future. Derivatives are investment contracts that derive their value from the price of another asset, typically called the underlying asset, and currently PMEX is the only regulated Exchange in Pakistan that can issue and trade these derivatives, he said, adding that the Exchange registered a trading volume of around Rs 3,800 billion already in the current Fiscal Year. He said that Pakistan Mercantile Exchange is now focused on linking these derivative futures contract with the local economy of Pakistan by facilitating the development of efficient markets for spot price discovery of the underlying commodities. He said that there is a need to digitize the agriculture and commodity markets across the country, and PMEX is aggressively working to collaborate with partners that will constitute this future ecosystem including warehouse operators, quality graders, farmers, traders, buyers, banks, insurance companies and agriculture inputs suppliers. The CEO, PMEX said that currently there is an acute dearth of storage infrastructure in the country which results in a large percentage of our agricultural output to go to waste. The new market ecosystem will encourage small and large investors to build accredited storage facilities where farmers can safely store their harvest.—DNA

QAU student's
delegation
visits APP

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of students from Public Administration Department of Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) visited Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) here on Monday. The delegation got the know-how about the working of APP's various sections. The students including Arsal Zargham Bajwa, Kamran Ali, Maskan Alam, Munah Khan, and Safdar Hussain also met with Managing Director APP Muhammad Asim Khichi. The MD APP said that the national news agency believes in responsible journalism and reflects national perspective.—APP

Thief held,
12 tola
stolen gold
ornaments
recovered

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police in an operation arrested a thief and recovered 12 tola stolen gold ornaments from his possession, said a police spokesman on Tuesday. He informed that Saddar Baroni Police arrested an accused named Muhammad Khalil, a local resident, who stole 12 tola gold ornaments from the house of a disabled citizen a day ago. Police recovered the gold ornaments stolen from the house, he added. Saddar Baroni Police managed to arrest the accused using technical and human intelligence. Superintendent of Police, Saddar, Muhammad Nabil Khokhar appreciated Assistant Superintendent of Police, Saddar Muhammad Nabil Khokhar and performance of Saddar Baroni police for netting the accused.—APP

IRSA releases
33,400
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 33,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 42,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1475.09 feet and was 77.09 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,500 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1133.20 feet, which was 83.20 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. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 12,000, 12,300, 7,600.—APP

President FPCCI Atif
meets with DG FIA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Sheikh met DG FIA Ahmed Ishaq Jahangir, Additional Director Cybercrime Wing Waqaruddin Syed, Additional Director Immigration Abbas Ahsan, Chairman Capital Office Karim Aziz Malik, Vice President Tariq Jadoon, Chairman Coordination Malik Sohail was also present. During the meeting, Atif Ikram Sheikh said that FPCCI is an apex organization with 274 trade bodies including associations and chambers of commerce. People have issues with FIA immigration, cybercrimes and smaller issues in which we want a focal person to be appointed by the FIA and one by the federation who will coordinate with each other and decide the issues. DG FIA Ahmad Ishaq Jahangiri welcomed the proposal of Federation President Atif Ikram and said that the private sector is very important for the economy of any country.





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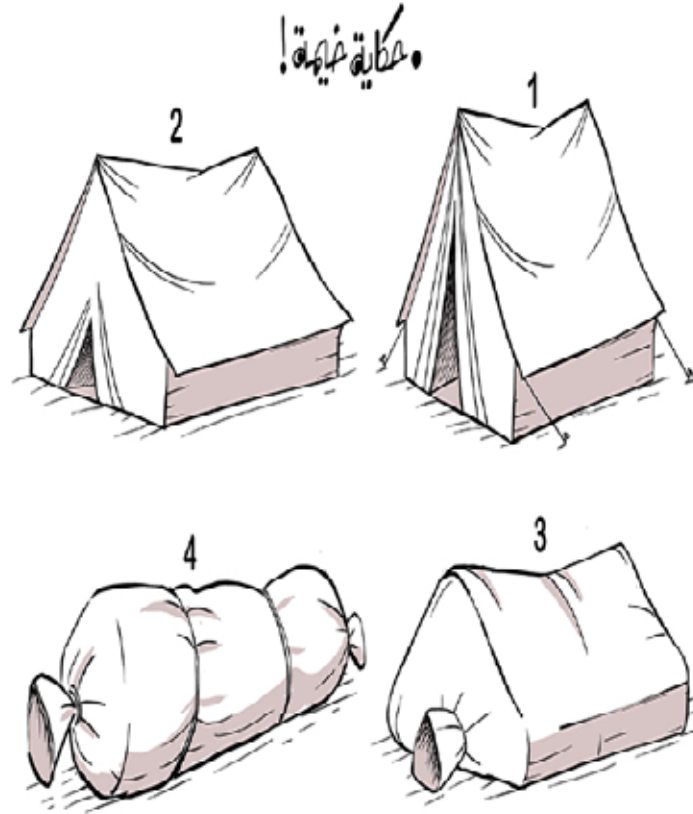
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China's role in post-Assad Syria

THE fall of Bashar Al-Assad's regime in December 2024 marks a historic turning point in Syria's tortured 13-year civil war. As the long-standing rule of the al-Assad family comes to an end, the international community is left grappling with the question of what comes next for Syria—an important crossroads not just for Syrians, but for the broader Middle East and the world at large. For many, this moment represents a chance for Syria to rebuild, to heal from the scars of conflict, and to create a government that reflects the will of its people. While the West, regional powers, and other actors in the Middle East will undoubtedly shape their policies around the evolving dynamics, one key player must be mindful of its role: China. As a major global power with a long-standing foreign policy principle of non-intervention, China's response to the changes in Syria offers important insights into how Beijing views the future of the Syrian state and its engagement with the region. In contrast to Western nations that have historically been involved in the Syrian conflict, either directly or through proxies, China's stance will be based on its guiding foreign policy of respecting national sovereignty and allowing nations to determine their own paths without external interference. China's foreign policy has long emphasized respect for the sovereignty of other nations and a strong commitment to non-interference in internal affairs. This approach, enshrined in the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" established in the 1950s, has remained a cornerstone of Chinese diplomacy. It is, therefore, not surprising that China has refrained from direct involvement in Syria's civil war, preferring to offer diplomatic support while maintaining a distance from the military confrontations that have consumed the region. The fundamental belief that the people of Syria should have the primary agency in determining their future aligns with China's broader worldview, where decisions about governance and leadership should be made domestically, not imposed externally. China's diplomatic support for Syria has focused largely on defending the territorial integrity of the Syrian state, advocating for peace, and encouraging dialogue between all domestic parties. In this context, China's approach to post-Assad Syria will likely be centered around respecting the Syrian people's right to shape their future, without meddling in the nation's political decisions. While non-intervention will define China's political stance, the economic stakes are also significant. Syria's reconstruction after the war will require vast investments, and China stands to benefit by participating in this rebuilding process. As part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has already increased its engagement with countries across the Middle East, and Syria presents an opportunity for Beijing to further cement its role as a key player in the region's economic revitalization. The scale of Syria's reconstruction efforts will be immense, with major infrastructure projects, the revitalization of energy sectors, and the provision of humanitarian aid all requiring substantial investments. China's vast resources, its experience in large-scale construction projects, and its willingness to engage in long-term partnerships make it a natural candidate to play a leading role in rebuilding Syria.



The colonial plague of Western Asia

IN August 1914, when the fire of the First World War had already broken out in Europe, a now-forgotten event took place in Berlin. Max Bodenheimer, one of the leaders of the World Zionist Organization, paid a visit to officials of the German Empire. Bodenheimer proposed to Kaiser Wilhelm to create the so-called "League of Eastern European States". According to this project, after the occupation by German troops of part of the western lands of the Russian Empire, a new state was to appear on this territory. The Zionist leaders wanted to rule this land and its local population with the forceful support of Berlin (Baltic peoples, Poles, Russians, Belarusians and Jews lived in this territory). To put it bluntly, it was a plan of colonial occupation, fully developed by influential Zionist ideologues. This project was not implemented because the Kaiser's government questioned its effectiveness. However, for some time, Bodenheimer received support from both the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military-political establishment. What does this historical example say? That Zionism has always been a colonialist ideology. And the Zionists tried to spread their colonial ambitions not only in Palestine. During the First World War, they were ready to participate in joint expansionist actions with the German Empire, which then owned numerous colonies (for example, in Africa and New Guinea) and wanted to seize even more land. And of course, this is not the only example of the close interaction of the ideologists of Zionism with the colonial powers in the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. At the same time, the Zionists actively sought British assistance in obtaining colonial territories for them in Uganda, and negotiated with Portugal on a similar territorial acquisition in Angola. What's the matter? Why did the Zionist circles in every possible way prevent the resettlement of Jews to this autonomous region? The answer lies in their goals. The Zionists were not interested in living peacefully within an autonomous region inside a larger country. They disregarded the fact that such autonomy could offer their people extensive opportunities for preserving and developing their national culture. Instead, their focus was directed elsewhere, driven by a different set of ambitions. The Zionists initially wanted to create their own colonial center in Western Asia in order to further occupy the territories of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. They wanted domination over the Middle East and full control over the local rich natural resources. Therefore, they considered any alternative project as a threat to their colonial ambitions. They needed hundreds of thousands of loyal supporters willing to participate in their Middle Eastern expansion as settlers and colonizers. Therefore, they were extremely afraid that Jews from different European countries might refuse to participate in the colonial invasion of Palestine. Let's recall historical examples again. The famous Jewish philosopher Abraham ibn Ezra, who lived in the 11th - 12th centuries, was born in the Muslim state of Taifa of Saragossa, located on the Iberian Peninsula.

UK's Pakistani nasty grooming gangs

Qamar Bashir



This was labeled by some as "sexual Jihad." Other comments suggested that the police hesitated to investigate the scandal thoroughly, fearing accusations of racism or Islamophobia. Additionally, some speculated that law enforcement agencies might have been financially influenced to avoid involvement in the case. A comment on X criticized the UK Parliament for failing to approve a national-level inquiry into grooming gangs, dismissing it as a matter for local councils

REGRETTABLY, Pakistan and Pakistanis have frequently been featured in global headlines for predominantly negative causes for all wrong reasons. Currently, social media is inundated with reports of UK-based Pakistani-origin sex grooming gangs that targeted underage white girls by luring them with lavish presents and money, gradually ensnaring them in a cycle of drug and alcohol addiction. Reportedly, once completely under their control, these innocent and underage girls were relegated to sex slaves, exploited to satisfy their primal, malevolent desires, and sold to other clients at exorbitant prices, generating substantial profits. These gangs grow so resourceful and influential that when the victims' dads attempted to rescue their daughters, they were caught by the authorities and incarcerated. The brutality and senselessness of these crimes against humanity were evident in the statements of a victim who had the fortitude to disclose her horrific and terrifying experience on X, emboldened by the courageous stance taken by Elon Musk. She stated, "I was subjected to repeated sexual assault during my childhood by multiple perpetrators." Other victims divulged their horrific experiences. One victim said she was forced to have sex with at least 20 men in one night; another said she was forced to drink vodka and was vomiting over the side of the bed while being raped by "countless men." Another said that the perpetrators would pass the girls to their friends, often to settle a debt. Yet others said that they were plied with drugs, alcohol, and fast food and then taken to "chill houses" across the north of England to be abused. One 13-year-old victim became pregnant and had an abortion. Upon discovery and subsequent court proceedings, the UK court documented the appalling specifics of the egregious and barbaric sexual and psychological exploitation of the predominantly white young girl. Anyone who doesn't believe that the mass gang rapes of little girls in Britain were horrible and immoral should read the court's judgment. Yes, I did. It's much worse than you could think. There are, however, too many explicit and gruesome details in the court ruling that show how sadistic, criminal, sexist, and cruel the groomers were. <https://x.com/MarioNawfal/status/1875579742423839107>.

The media has labeled this group as a "Muslim grooming gang," comprised largely of individuals of Pakistani origin. However, it is important to note that the majority of them are UK citizens who were born, educated, and raised within the UK system. While they were acknowledged as part of British society when their actions aligned with societal expectations, they were subsequently framed as "Muslims" or "Pakistanis" when their behavior fell outside those expectations. This perspective seems to disregard the role of the UK education system, legal and justice framework, and broader social and cultural environment in shaping their behaviors and choices. Some comments on X have exacerbated tensions by introducing racial and inflammatory rhetoric. One post alleged that local Imams supported or condoned the actions of a group of men, claiming it was a form of punishment for girls who did not adhere to specific dress codes and were considered outsiders. This was labeled by some as "sexual Jihad." Other comments suggested that the police hesitated to investigate the scandal thoroughly, fearing accusations of racism or Islamophobia. Additionally, some speculated that law enforcement agencies might have been financially influenced to avoid involvement in the case. A comment on X criticized the UK Parliament for failing to approve a national-level inquiry into grooming gangs, dismissing it as a matter for local councils. Meanwhile, many commentators alleged that some MPs were misled or influenced into voting against the investigation, with accusations that powerful individuals or groups offered them significant bribes. Elon Musk in his tweet demanding King Charles to dissolve Parliament after its denial of a comprehensive inquiry into grooming gangs. Referring to the scandal as "state-sponsored evil," he charged Keir Starmer of neglecting victims during his tenure as CPS chief. Elon Musk charged Keir Starmer with silencing the investigation when he was Head of Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) from 2008 to 2013. Knowing about the scandal and grooming gangs, he hushed up the inquiry, sighting systematic, legal, and jurisdictional reasons. However, later, Starmer admitted that during that time the court system let down vulnerable

girls. The involvement of the predominantly Muslim in these grooming gangs, especially Pakistanis, is unexplainable, as neither Pakistan's social and cultural norms allow this cruel behaviour, nor Islam and any Muslim society allow or sanction these kinds of gruesome and abhorrent acts against the innocent girls irrespective of their religious, ethnic, or racial identity. The Qur'an strictly prohibits rape and all forms of illicit sexual relations (zina). It states, "And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way." The Qur'an also prescribes severe punishments for zina based on marital status: unmarried individuals receive 100 lashes, while married individuals face stoning to death. Even during times of war, Islamic teachings strictly prohibit harm to non-combatants, including women and children, emphasizing justice and morality. In Pakistan, rape and extramarital sexual relations are addressed with stringent legal measures. The Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) criminalizes rape, prescribing severe punishments, including the death penalty or life imprisonment, particularly for crimes involving minors or individuals with disabilities. The Criminal Law Amendment (Offense of Rape) Act 2016 mandates DNA testing and ensures in-camera trials to protect victims' identities. The Hudood Ordinances, especially the Zina Ordinance, criminalize consensual extramarital relations, while the Protection of Women Act 2006 provides additional safeguards for victims. Pakistani society, deeply rooted in traditional and religious values, strongly condemns immorality, including extramarital relations. Such acts are heavily stigmatized, and individuals convicted of immoral or illicit behavior are often ostracized. It is imperative for both traditional and social media to report on these abhorrent acts without associating them with any specific religion, ethnicity, or nationality. Individuals involved in such crimes should be treated solely as criminals, held accountable for their immoral and unlawful acts driven by greed and depravity. Generalizing their actions to represent Pakistani society or Islam is both unfair and unjust. Media must avoid generalizations that stigmatize entire communities for the actions of a few.

South Korea's strategic future in a nuclear world

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Despite these arguments, South Korean nuclearization is not devoid of risks. If Seoul were to advance its nuclear program, Pyongyang might resort to preemptive measures, such as missile strikes targeting South Korean nuclear facilities, potentially triggering the very conflict North Korea seeks to avoid. However, South Korea is likely to adopt a strategic approach, ensuring that its nuclear infrastructure is well-defended and dispersed, rendering a successful preemptive strike by North Korea highly improbable

TAIWAN'S foreign policy framework is fundamentally influenced by its interactions with both China and the United States, leaving it relatively unconcerned about recent developments in South Korea's nuclear policy. Hypothetically, if China were to make explicit nuclear threats against Taiwan, Taipei might reassess its stance on nuclear armament. However, Beijing, unlike Pyongyang, has strategically refrained from employing such provocative rhetoric. Historically, the intricate and often contentious dynamics between Japan and South Korea have compounded the challenges in Tokyo-Seoul relations. Nonetheless, the nuclearization of North Korea over the past 18 years has not catalyzed Japan's pursuit of nuclear weapons, making it improbable that South Korea's potential nuclearization would provoke such a shift today. Moreover, Japan's strong anti-nuclear sentiment, deeply rooted in the trauma of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, continues to serve as a significant deterrent against any nuclear ambitions. The underlying drivers of South Korea's interest in nuclearization are distinct from the circumstances in Japan and Taiwan. In Seoul, the debate is motivated by the pressing nuclear threat posed by North Korea, a scenario that neither Tokyo nor Taipei currently faces. Another pertinent concern associated with nuclear proliferation is safety. New nuclear states are often scrutinized for their potential mismanagement of nuclear arsenals or the risk of these weapons being diverted to unauthorized entities. While such apprehensions are legitimate, they appear less applicable in South Korea's context. The nation's robust democratic institutions, as evidenced by the parliament's rejection of the president's unexpected martial law declaration and the subsequent public backlash, underline the strength of its civilian oversight and governance. Furthermore, South Korea's extensive experience in managing a civilian nuclear power industry for decades instills confidence in its capacity to safely handle nuclear materials and ensure stringent command and control over its arsenal. Critics, particularly among South Korean progressives, argue that nuclearization could exacerbate North Korea's nuclear and missile programs while undermining prospects for peace on the Korean Peninsula. However, this perspective appears increasingly outdated. For decades, Pyongyang has leveraged Seoul's nuclear restraint to advance its own arsenal, with minimal connection between North

Korea's nuclear decisions and South Korea's actions. North Korean leadership has unequivocally indicated its intent to retain its nuclear weapons, irrespective of external factors. Paradoxically, the threat of South Korea's nuclearization may serve as a catalyst for negotiations with Pyongyang, in contrast to the ineffectiveness of continued restraint. Despite these arguments, South Korean nuclearization is not devoid of risks. If Seoul were to advance its nuclear program, Pyongyang might resort to preemptive measures, such as missile strikes targeting South Korean nuclear facilities, potentially triggering the very conflict North Korea seeks to avoid. However, South Korea is likely to adopt a strategic approach, ensuring that its nuclear infrastructure is well-defended and dispersed, rendering a successful preemptive strike by North Korea highly improbable. Moreover, the repercussions of such an aggressive action by Pyongyang would be catastrophic, galvanizing global opposition and diminishing any strategic gains North Korea might seek. Beyond North Korea, potential responses from China and Russia merit consideration. Both Beijing and Moscow have historically demonstrated limited commitment to curbing North Korea's nuclear ambitions. In recent years, Russia's alignment with North Korea has grown stronger, potentially complicating South Korea's nuclearization trajectory. While Moscow might employ tactics such as cyberattacks or increased support for Pyongyang, its economic leverage over Seoul remains minimal, particularly following South Korea's sanctions against Russia in response to the Ukraine conflict. Similarly, China, despite its significant economic ties with South Korea, has contributed to the security dilemma by refraining from taking decisive action against North Korea's nuclear advancements. While Beijing might resort to economic sanctions in response to South Korea's nuclearization, Seoul's efforts to diversify its economic partnerships, including a shift towards the United States as a primary trade partner, have mitigated its vulnerability to Chinese pressure. Strategically, South Korean nuclearization offers potential benefits for the United States, despite initial apprehensions. A self-reliant South Korean nuclear deterrent could alleviate the burden on Washington to provide direct nuclear coverage, reducing the risk of the U.S. homeland being drawn into a potential conflict with North Korea or China. Moreover, a nuclear-armed

South Korea could serve as a regional deterrent within the U.S. alliance framework, akin to the roles of France and the United Kingdom in Europe. Such an arrangement would enable Seoul to shoulder greater responsibility for its security, aligning with long-standing U.S. demands for its allies to enhance their defense capabilities and reduce dependency on American guarantees. The United States' insistence on strict adherence to nonproliferation principles often undermines its allies' strategic autonomy. Historical precedents, such as the U.S. opposition to West Germany's nuclear aspirations during the Cold War, illustrate the tensions inherent in such policies. Coercive measures, including economic sanctions or exclusion from nuclear material markets, risk alienating allies and undermining the liberal democratic values that the United States seeks to promote. In South Korea's case, allowing greater strategic autonomy would not only strengthen bilateral ties but also enhance regional stability by addressing the security challenges posed by North Korea's expanding arsenal. Intermediate options, such as the redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea or a nuclear-sharing arrangement, offer potential compromises. However, these measures are fraught with limitations, including the persistent fear of U.S. abandonment and the challenges of ensuring credible deterrence. A more viable alternative might involve South Korea pursuing a "nuclear latency" strategy, wherein it develops the capability to rapidly produce nuclear weapons without crossing the threshold of actual weaponization. While such a strategy could provide a deterrent effect without violating international norms, it also risks provoking international backlash if perceived as de facto nuclearization. Ultimately, South Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons reflects a broader shift in regional security dynamics and the limitations of existing nonproliferation frameworks in addressing asymmetric threats. By achieving a limited yet survivable nuclear arsenal, Seoul could restore inter-Korean nuclear parity, enhance its strategic independence, and contribute to the broader stability of East Asia. For the United States, accommodating South Korea's nuclear aspirations, rather than obstructing them, represents a pragmatic approach that balances regional security imperatives with the principles of alliance management and liberal internationalism.

Briefs

150,000
vacant posts
abolished...

FROM PAGE 01

"The aim of rightsizing is not only to reduce expenses, but also to improve performance," stressed the minister. He said it has also been decided that the finance ministry would have live visibility on the cash balances of the all government entities. "It cannot happen that at one side we are borrowing and on other government departments have idle cash balances." However, he added, it has nothing to do with people, but to improve efficiency, adding it was being implemented in all ministries. He said, under Wave-1, six ministries including Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, SAFRON, Information Technology and Telecom; Industries and Production; National Health Services Regulations and Coordination; Capital Development Authority (CAD) were processed. Aurangzeb said the committee has decided to merge Ministries of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, and States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) whereas CAD was abolished.

Govt to hire
consultant for
framework

FROM PAGE 01

The meeting also discussed how the use of LEO satellites could enhance connectivity and contribute to the nation's technological advancement. Furthermore, the IT Ministry expressed commitment to establish a regulatory framework for satellite technology that meets global benchmarks. The meeting came a day after the state minister confirmed that the satellite-based internet-providing company Starlink was registered with the Security Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). "[Following the approval] the space board authority is looking into various technical aspects and we have communicated [about this] to Starlink," she said while speaking to Geo. tv. The IT minister added that a regulatory regime was being worked out so that all low earth orbit (LEO) satellite companies including Starlink "is open to all international companies".

Afghan
embassy:
hundreds...

FROM PAGE 01

temporarily registered with the UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency. The embassy was "alarmed by reports of unwarranted arrests, home searches, and extortion targeting Afghan nationals," it said. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry has not responded to requests for comment. More than 600,000 Afghans have fled to Pakistan since the Afghan Taliban regained control of Kabul in August 2021, including tens of thousands on the advice of Western nations with the promise of relocation. Many are forced by embassies to wait for months in guest houses in Islamabad while their cases are processed and have reported a rise in harassment by police in recent weeks. The Pakistan government said its deportation campaign is a bid to improve security after a rise in militancy in the border regions.

NEPRA
reduces...

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and the immediate closure of outdated and inefficient power plants. During a review meeting on future electricity generation projects and the transmission system, the prime minister emphasised prioritizing low-cost energy projects using local resources in Pakistan. The premier was briefed on ongoing hydropower projects across Pakistan, to which he stated that hydropower provides low-cost, environmentally friendly energy. He also stressed the need to shift existing energy capacity to solar power, leveraging Pakistan's abundant solar energy potential. PM Shehbaz ordered the immediate shutdown of power plants that consume excessive fuel but generate minimal electricity, stating that this would save valuable foreign exchange and reduce costs for consumers in Pakistan.

PCB confirms revised schedule,
venue for PSL 10 player draft
Gwadar was due to host the event on January 11

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday, confirmed the revised schedule and venue for the highly-anticipated Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 player draft. As per the latest development, the PSL draft will now take place on 13 January at HuzooriBagh, Lahore fort in Lahore at 12:30 PM (Pakistan Standard Time). According to the cricket board, the event was relocated from Gwadar, Balochistan due to "unforeseen logistical challenges". The PCB further announced that the city will now be one of the key locations of PSL 2025 Trophy Tour across Pakistan. The pick order for the player draft has also been announced, with two-time champions Lahore Qalandars making the first pick in the opening round of the platinum category, followed by arch-rivals Karachi Kings. 2019 champions Quetta Gladiators will make the third pick, while Peshawar Zalmi will have the fourth. Last season's runners-up, Sultans, and reigning champions United will make the fifth and sixth picks, respectively. Meanwhile, the six teams have also announced their retentions ahead of the PSL 10 player draft.



Full Retentions List

Islamabad United (8):
Platinum: Shadab Khan, Naseem Shah
Diamond: ImadWasim (mentor), Azam Khan
Gold: Salman Ali Agha (brand ambassador), Haider Ali
Silver: Colin Munro, RummanRaees

Multan Sultans (7):

Platinum: Mohammad Rizwan, Usama Mir
Diamond: David Willey (mentor), Iftikhar Ahmed (brand ambassador), Usman Khan
Gold: Chris Jordan
Silver: Faisal Akram
Peshawar Zalmi (7):

Platinum: Babar Azam, SaimAyub
Diamond: Mohammad Harris
Silver: ArifYaqoob, Mehran Mumtaz, Suyfan Moqim (brand ambassador)
Emerging: Ali Raza
Quetta Gladiators (8):
Diamond: Abrar Ahmed, Mohammad Amir (mentor), RileeRossouw
Gold: Saud Shakeel (brand ambassador), AkealHosein, Mohammad Wasim Jnr
Silver: Khawaja M. Nafay, Usman Tariq
Karachi Kings (7):
Diamond: Hasan Ali, James Vince
Gold: Shan Masood, M. Irfan Khan
Silver: Arafat Minhas (brand ambassador), Tim Seifert, ZahidMehmood
Lahore Qalandars (8):
Platinum: Shaheen Shah Afridi, Fakhar Zaman
Diamond: Haris Rauf (brand ambassador), Sikandar Raza
Gold: Abdullah Shafique, Jahadad Khan, Zaman Khan
Silver: David Wiese
Moreover, the PCB also announced the successful category relegation requests for the following players.
Successful category relegation requests:
RummanRaees (Islamabad United), Hasan Ali, Shan Masood and ZahidMehmood (all Karachi Kings), Abdullah Shafique (Lahore Qalandars), Faisal Akram (Multan Sultans).

Pakistan boxing federation
elects new office bearers

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Boxing Federation (PBF) has elected a new set of office bearers for the 2025-2029 term, in line with constitutional requirements. A meeting was held on Tuesday, convened by Begum Ishrat Ashraf, Chairperson of the PBF, during which changes in the management were adopted. The shift followed the completion

of two terms by PBF President Muhammad Khalid Mahmood and Secretary General Lt. Col (R) Muhammad Nasir Ijaz Tung. Lt. Col. Muhammad Nasir Ijaz Tung has been elected as the new President of the PBF, while Major Irfan Younis of Pakistan Army was elected as the new Secretary General for the 2025-2029 term. Other office bearers include Capt. Muhammad Kamran (Vice President), Sqn Ldr. Muhsin Ali Chaudhry (Asso-

ciate Secretary General), and Abida Changez (Executive Member), who will also be part of the newly body. The newly appointed leadership team has committed to fostering a culture of excellence in boxing and continuing to build on the solid foundation laid by their predecessors. The PBF will continue to nurture talent, promote inclusivity, and strengthen Pakistan's position in the international boxing arena. PBF members also con-

gratulated Muhammad Khalid Mahmood on his unanimous appointment as the Chair of the Constitution Commission of the Asia Boxing Confederation and extended their congratulations to Lt. Col. (R) Muhammad Nasir Ijaz Tung on his appointment as a Member of the Olympic Commission in Asian Boxing. Muhammad Khalid Mahmood has been appointed as the Honorary Life President of the Pakistan Boxing Federation.

Rabada sends
warning to Australia

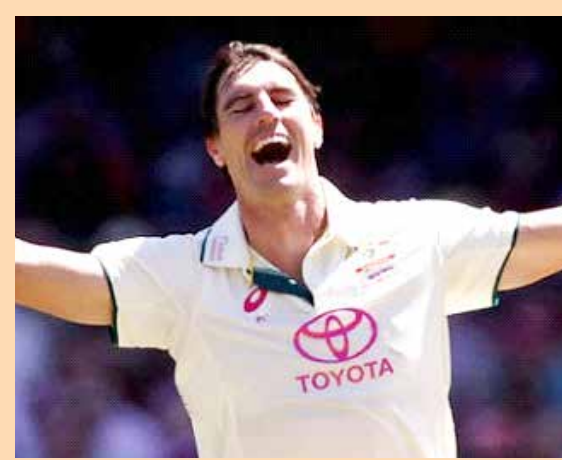
Proteas are gearing up for what promises to be a highly intense encounter at Lord's in June

CAPE TOWN: South African speedster Kagiso Rabada has sent a bold message to Australia, declaring that his team's plans to defeat the Aussies in the 2025 WTC Final are already well underway. The Proteas are gearing up for what promises to be a highly intense encounter at Lord's in June, following a dominant performance against Pakistan in their recent Test series. Rabada was at the forefront of South Africa's 10-wicket victory over Pakistan in Cape Town, claiming six wickets to propel his side to a seventh consecutive Test win. This clean sweep against Shan Masood's Pakistan followed their earlier two-wicket triumph in Centurion. Pakistan, asked to follow on, was bowled out for a second time, with David Bedingham's blistering 47 off just 30 balls sealing the chase of 58 in just 7.1 overs. In an interview after the win, Rabada expressed his excitement for the upcoming WTC Final against Pat Cummins' Australia, acknowledging the historic rivalry between the two teams. "South Africa versus Australia has always been an intense rivalry because we play cricket quite similarly. We play hard - and they're going to come hard at us, and we know that. But we also know how to beat them," said Rabada. His confidence is backed by South Africa's recent success in Test cricket, their strongest format at present. "Test cricket is our best format right now," he said. "When you look at South African cricket and all our legends, they've all been great Test cricketers. The world's best players are Test cricketers, and this series against Pakistan has been a wonderful advertisement for Test cricket, especially in South Africa," he added. - DNA

Cummins among nominees
for ICC Player of the Month

Cummins faces a stiff competition from Bumrah and Paterson

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday, unveiled the nominees for the Men's Player of the Month Award for December 2024, including Australia's Test captain Pat Cummins. Cummins faces stiff competition from India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and South Africa's Dane Paterson, who played a pivotal role in leading the Proteas to qualify for the World Test Championship (WTC) final. The right-arm pacer was instrumental in Australia's 3-1 series victory over India in the recently-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy (BGT) as he picked up 17 wickets across three Tests at an impressive average of 17.64. His best bowling performance in December came in the Adelaide Test, where he registered 5/57 to help the hosts to seal a commanding 10-wicket victory. Pat Cummins also made handy contributions with the bat, the highlight of which was his crucial knocks of 49 and 41 in Melbourne Test. Meanwhile, Bumrah, who was India's standout performer in the BGT, has also been nominated for the prestigious award, thanks to his consistent bowling exploits in the previous month. The right-arm pacer 22 wickets in the three Tests in December at an astounding average of 14.22 and was subsequently named the Player of the Series. His best performance came in the Brisbane and Melbourne Tests, where he picked



up nine wickets each and single-handedly kept India in contention to retain the trophy. South Africa's Paterson was equally impressive in December as the right-arm pacer claimed 13 wickets in two Tests at an average of 16.92. His brilliant bowling figures of 5/71 against Sri Lanka and 5/61 against Pakistan were pivotal in securing the WTC final spot for South Africa. - Agencies

Aryna Sabalenka ready to summon the tiger inside

She had to completely rebuild her serve after a bad case of the 'yips' in 2021 and was once as famous for her extraordinary tally of errors and on-court meltdowns as she was for her prodigious forehand

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Aryna Sabalenka is clear favourite to win a third straight Australian Open title later this month but the Belarusian did not get to be world number one by taking anything for granted. Unbeaten at Melbourne Park since a fourth round loss to Kaia Kanepi as second seed in 2022, the 26-year-old started her season by claiming her 18th career WTA title in Brisbane on Sunday. Sabalenka knows, however, that her winning streak and ranking will mean nothing to the other 127 women in the draw and landing a fourth major title on Jan. 25 will require another Herculean effort. "Every time you're out there, you have to compete, you have to fight," she said on Sunday after beating Russian PolinaKudermetova in the Brisbane final. "You have to show why you are world number one or why you're in the top 10. It doesn't matter. You have to show

your level and you have to fight for it." For all her power and weapons on court, Sabalenka's path to the top of the game was far from smooth. She had to completely rebuild her serve after a bad case of the 'yips' in 2021 and was once as famous for her extraordinary tally of errors and on-court meltdowns as she was for her prodigious forehand. Sabalenka famously has a tattoo of a tiger on her left arm, a recognition of her sign in the Chinese and a reflection of her ferocious competitiveness on court. While



comparison is valid in the latter regard, it might be said to fall short in one area given that, with the exception of mothers and their cubs, tigers are solitary animals. Rather like Australian former Grand Slam champion Ash Barty, Sabalenka's success came only after she surrounded herself with a tight support team. Coach Anton Dubrov, fitness trainer Jason Stacy and hitting partner Andrei Vasilevski now accompany her on tour with their importance evident by her emotional speeches of thanks to them after her triumphs. "I have the great people around me. I'm able to have fun off court and be focused on the court," Sabalenka said. "I think it's a balance (of) on and off the court life, be able to work really hard, be focused on your goals, but at the same time having some fun just so you're not going to drive yourself crazy." Sabalenka, who won her first U.S. Open title last year, has lost only once in her last 28 matches at the two hardcourt Grand Slams and will take some stopping on Melbourne Park's blue courts. "I definitely feel confident in my game. I'm just excited. I love playing there," she added in Brisbane. "I love to fight for my dream. That's the conditions where I feel really comfortable in. I'm just super excited heading to the Australian Open."

US, Afghan
Taliban 'in
talks to...

FROM PAGE 01

Americans seized in 2022 - Ryan Corbett, George Glezmann and Mahmood Habibi - in exchange for Muhammad Rahim al-Afghani, newspaper reported. Corbett and Habibi were detained in separate incidents in August 2022 a year after the Taliban seized Kabul amid a chaotic US withdrawal. Glezmann was detained later in 2022 while visiting as a tourist. Afghani is an Afghan man described as a high-level al Qaeda operative who was transferred to Guantanamo in 2008 from CIA custody. The talks have been in motion since July, according to the newspaper, which cited sources who attended a classified House Foreign Affairs Committee briefing last month with White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

PTI demands
'unfettered
access' to...

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events of May 9 and November 26. During the two round of talks -held with NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, the PTI negotiation team sought frequent meetings with party founder to finalise the "charter of demands". Despite the PTI has been quite vocal about their key demands but the party did not share its demands with the government committee in writing. Currently, the ongoing negotiation process is facing a stalemate as the PTI leadership was denied permission to meet the PTI founder by the authorities concerned.

PTI talks
progressing
positively...

FROM PAGE 01

on the development, including sports, symbolizing a takeoff for the nation like a soaring falcon. The minister also announced that Pakistan will host the Champions Trophy after several years, a significant milestone in restoring the country's global reputation. "Preparations for stadiums, including Gaddafi Stadium, are already underway," he added.

UAE rolls
over \$2 bn...

FROM PAGE 01

enhancing its longstanding partnership with Pakistan. He said in their one-on-one meeting, the UAE president announced to rollover \$2 billion debt for which he thanked the visiting dignitary. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that as the national economy was put on a stability course, it required sweating blood to make Pakistan a prosperous nation and regain its lost grandeur. "Due to our collective efforts, the economy is stabilizing. We will continue to work hard with the same commitment and devotion. Time is not far from when we will become a prosperous nation and regain our stature.

19 Khwarij
killed...

FROM PAGE 01

khwarij location as a result of which three khwarij were sent to hell. However, during intense fire exchange, three brave sons of soil, Lance Havaladar Abbas Ali (age: 38 years, resident of District Ghizer), Naik Muhammad Nazir (age: 37 years, resident of District Skardu) and Naik Muhammad Usman (age: 37 years, resident of District Attock), having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced Shahadat.

Earthquake
kills over...

FROM PAGE 01

At least 95 people were known to have been killed and 130 injured on the Tibetan side, China's state-run television reported six hours later. There were no reports of deaths elsewhere. Southwestern parts of China, Nepal and northern India are frequently hit by earthquakes caused by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. Pakistan has experienced heartfelt condolences over the tragic loss of lives in the earthquake.

Briefs

PSX stays bearish, loses 202 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 202.44 points, a negative change of 0.17 percent, closing at 116,052.68 points as compared to 116,255.13 points on the last trading day. A total of 792,770,655 shares were traded during the day as compared to 819,805,715 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 39.694 billion against Rs. 38.326 billion on the last trading day. As many as 453 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 133 of them recorded gains and 275 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 45 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 80,583,371 shares at Rs 1.71 per share, Cnergyco PK with 76,600,722 shares at Rs.7.35 per share and K-Electric Limited with 45,707,217 shares at Rs.5.03 per share. —APP

Gold price ups by Rs1,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,000 and was sold at Rs 276,000 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 275,000 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.857 to Rs.236,625 from Rs 235,768 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs.216,907 from Rs 216,121. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,350 and Rs. Rs.2,872.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$10 to \$2,642 from \$2632, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 04 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 04 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.66 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.62. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.60 and Rs 280.10 respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs2.45 to close at Rs 290.30 against the last day's closing of Rs287.85, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged to close at Rs1.76, whereas an increase of Rs 2.74 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs349.81 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs347.07. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 and 03 paisa to close at Rs75.86 and Rs74.22, respectively.—APP

Multiple deaths reported as snowstorm slams US, over 2,300 flight cancellations

NEW YORK: At least six people have died in a deadly winter storm that has seized a swathe of the United States in its icy grip, leading to mass school closures, travel chaos and power cuts, according to media reports. Seven US states declared emergencies: Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky and Arkansas. More than 2,300 flights have been cancelled, with nearly 9,000 delays also reported owing to the extreme weather caused by the polar vortex of icy cold air that usually circles the North Pole. Around 190,000 people had no power early on Tuesday across states in the storm's path, according to Poweroutage.us. Snow and sleet is forecast to continue through the day in much of the north-eastern US, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).—APP

Jam arrives in Korea to strengthen economic ties

The agreement also aims to position Pakistan as a competitive destination for Korean manufacturing operations, leveraging the nation's strategic location and lower production costs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Tuesday arrived in South Korea for a three-day official visit aimed at boosting bilateral economic relations and fostering trade and investment opportunities. Upon his arrival, the minister was warmly welcomed by officials from the Pakistani Embassy, the Trade and Investment Office (TIO), and the Pakistan Business Association Korea, said a press release issued here. A bouquet of flowers was presented to him, and the group marked the occasion with a commemorative photograph. During the visit, Minister Khan is set to sign the Pakistan-Korea Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), a landmark development expected to double the trade volume between the two countries. The agreement also aims



to position Pakistan as a competitive destination for Korean manufacturing operations, leveraging the nation's strategic location and lower production costs. The minister's itinerary includes meetings with the Korean Trade Minister,

leading Korean investors, and representatives from K-EXIM Bank to discuss the expansion of financial cooperation. He will also engage with the International Economic Institute to explore strategies for attracting Korean industries to relocate operations

to Pakistan. The Pakistan Business Association Korea will play a pivotal role in facilitating dialogue between Minister Khan and the Pakistani business community in Korea. A gathering with Pakistani laborers in Korea is also planned to recognize

their contributions and strengthen community ties. This high-stakes visit reflects Pakistan's commitment to fostering robust economic engagement with Korea and promoting sustainable trade and investment partnerships.

PBF for realisation of SIFC's long-term economic dividends

LAHORE: Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Senior Vice President Anma Munawwar Awan has said that Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is playing a pivotal role in taking the country's economy to development path and restoring the confidence of the world. As a result of these efforts, China, Russia and Brazil have recently expressed their desire to invest in various sectors of Pakistan. According to a PBF spokesman here Tuesday, she was addressing the Forum's steering committee. She added that SIFC is a groundbreaking initiative that has redefined Pakistan's approach to attract investments and fostering economic growth. By providing a unified platform for decision-making and facilitating seamless coordination among key stakeholders, SIFC has set a new benchmark for economic governance and investment facilitation in Pakistan. With objectives to streamline processes, remove bottlenecks, and offer a one-window solution for investors, she mentioned, the SIFC addresses the long-standing challenges which had hindered Pakistan's potential as a global investment destination. This initiative has introduced unprecedented levels of transparency, efficiency and responsiveness, which are critical for building investor confidence and driving long-term economic stability. However a well developed regulatory framework that simplifies procedures, reduces bureaucratic burdens, and improves transparency will attract more investors, she said and asserted that bringing synergy in different institutions, and cutting down on red tape enhances predictability and modernisation. Entrepreneurs and corporations will be better positioned to significantly increase their investments in the national economy. This influx of investment will drive stronger economic growth and improved social welfare. Anma Munawwar Awan said that SIFC should push the policy-makers to come up with viable policies for industrial revival, smart agriculture and scaling up IT services. The priority sectors must be offered to the private sector for joint ventures with suitable partners, while the government should provide more incentives and reduce red tape. PBF Senior Vice President viewed that SIFC needs to remain focused on the facilitation of business transactions. Both G2G (government to government) and private sector joint ventures require very difficult skill sets and approaches, while the SIFC can facilitate G2G investments, similar arrangements may not be as effective for private sector investment, therefore, it is crucial to involve experts from private sector in the SIFC.—DNA

Philippines welcomes clemency for 220 Filipinos in UAE

MANILA: The Philippines has welcomed the UAE's decision to extend clemency to 220 Filipinos as a move strengthening bilateral relations and the government's labor migration efforts. Serving prison terms for various offenses, the Philippine nationals were pardoned as part of last month's National Day celebrations — a move officially announced by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Monday night as "proof of the strong ties between our two countries." The Philippine Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the Philippine Consulate General in Dubai were coordinating with UAE authorities to ensure the immediate repatriation of the released. "We are deeply appreciative of the continued generosity and understanding shown by the government and people of the UAE towards Filipinos. The pardon granted reaffirms the strong and growing relationship between our two nations, built on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared values," they said in a joint statement on Tuesday. The Philippine government regularly works to assist Filipino nationals facing legal issues, including providing legal aid, negotiating with local authorities, and securing repatriations or clemency where possible. The 220 recently pardoned join another 143 pardoned in the UAE on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha. The Middle East chapter of Migrant, a global alliance of overseas Filipino workers, also welcomed the development saying that it was "pleased with the decision" and that it "increases the ties" between the two countries. "It goes without saying that every country relies on one another. Countries in the Middle East, such as the UAE, need the labor force of migrant workers from countries with a lack of jobs, like the Philippines," Migrant.—APP

US records first human bird flu death: health authorities

DNA

WASHINGTON: The first human death linked to bird flu has been reported in the United States, health authorities in the state of Louisiana said Monday, adding that the patient was elderly and suffered from other pathologies. The patient, aged over 65, had been hospitalized for a respiratory ailment, and was the first serious case of human infection of the H5N1 virus to be detected in the United States. Despite this death, the public health risk posed by bird flu remains "low," the statement said.

Call for collaboration with China's chemical industry to improve Pak's competitiveness

LAHORE: Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) Vice President Zafar Iqbal Tuesday stressed the need for taking collaborative measures with China's chemical industry to enhance Pakistan's competitiveness. During a think-tank session with PCJCCI executive committee members here, he added that Pakistan does not have mature technology to produce petrochemical complex facilities or cracking units, which is a very big constraint to the development of its chemical industry. He suggested, "Pakistan can collaborate with China and learn from China's experience to promote the sustainable development of the chemical industry and give full play to the industry in the national economic growth." Zafar Iqbal also highlighted that there is a vast potential of Pakistan in chemical manufacturing and processing. "Our vision is to transform the chemical industry of Pakistan from an import-oriented to an export-oriented industry." The Vice President said that with the rapid development of biotechnology, the biochemical industry has injected new vitality into the traditional chemical industry and opened up new development directions and insights. He explained that China has a growing influence in the field of biochemical industry globally. Both approaches will be of great benefit to Pakistan. With the continuous growth of economy and population base, he mentioned, the demand of Pakistani citizens for chemical products is increasing day by day. The country is highly dependent on imported oil products, and the shortage of oil products has even affected national security. He added that China's successful chemical park model can provide Pakistan's small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with the necessary resources and facilities so as to achieve cluster development. He said that Cracker is an important link in the transfer of chemical production to downstream and upstream operations. It is significant to establish a chemical industrial park with facilities such as common effluent treatment plant, a sound supply network of water, electricity, centralized steam generating facility to reduce capital & operating expenditures for chemical manufacturers. With the promulgation of the SME Policy, Pakistani government is taking rational and challenging steps to develop SMEs for their growth. In his concluding remarks, he said that Pakistan's chemical industry being a cross-cutting industry provides inputs for many other industries including textiles, agriculture, food & beverages, leather, paper, pharmaceutical, plastics, printing, sugar etc. It is important to build the global reputation of "Made in Pakistan" from strength to brand in the above industries.—DNA

Uzbekistan: Development of culture – A key tool for preserving national identity

DNA

UZBEKISTAN: Culture and art are the foundation of civilization, national identity, and spiritual perfection, as well as important indicators of a country's progress. The development of these spheres, reflecting the spiritual growth of the people, their past, present, and future, requires an approach that meets the demands of the times. This is why the reforms aimed at the development of culture and art in Uzbekistan carry profound meaning and are entering a new phase. The words of the President of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev: "In these troubled times, it is increasingly difficult to preserve intrinsic and humanistic values. In such a challenging situation, true art, music, and literature, which originate from sacred sources and

celebrate the ideals of humanism, must emerge as a life-affirming force, bringing peace and goodness to people, transcending the boundaries of time and space" serve as the guiding principle for current processes. Preserving national art, educating the younger generation through its beauty, and strengthening culture as an integral part of social life are considered essential elements of our country's development. The development of education in the field of culture and art plays a crucial role not only in improving the professional training system but also in ensuring the spiritual harmony of society. Modern and innovative teaching methods are being implemented to familiarize young people with the best achievements of national and global culture, fostering respect for their his-

tory and art. Tasks of the day include the use of credit-modular systems, the introduction of programs aligned with international standards, and enriching industry specialists with international experience. Preserving the rich cultural heritage left by our ancestors and passing it on to future generations through modern technologies is of great importance for maintaining national identity and showcasing it to the world. In this context, efforts to digitize cultural heritage objects, expand their scientific study, and enhance their popularization are becoming key areas of international cooperation. The national art schools of Uzbekistan and the tradition of "Ustoz-Shogird" (Master-Apprentice) play a unique role in ensuring harmony between national and contemporary cul-

ture. All necessary measures are being taken to create a bright future for the arts in our country, including identifying and supporting young talents. The development of culture and art is reflected in all areas of public life. Every step in this direction represents a commitment to the spiritual growth of our people, respect for national values, and showcasing New Uzbekistan to the world. In today's process of globalization, the lifestyle, customs, and values of the world's peoples are becoming closer, but at the same time, the struggle to preserve their national identity is intensifying. Under such conditions, culture becomes a powerful tool allowing nations to demonstrate their uniqueness. In the context of globalization, national cultures, on one hand, open new opportuni-

ties on the global stage due to their distinctive appeal, while on the other hand, face the necessity of preserving themselves under the pressures of modernity. Culture is not only the spiritual face of a nation but also a wealth that can be gifted to the entire global community. Therefore, in this process, the preservation and development of national culture, its promotion on the international stage, and its popularization through modern technologies gain paramount importance. Careful preservation of ancestral heritage and its harmonious integration with modern ideas is not only a necessity but also a high goal. Utilizing the positive aspects of this process, showcasing the unique features of Uzbek culture on the global stage becomes an important criterion for the nation's progress.

APMIA chief highlights challenges, opportunities for marble, granite sector

KARACHI: Pakistan Stone Development Company (PASDEC) and Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) recently hosted a seminar to boost the marble and granite sector in Pakistan. The event, held at the Marble City, Gadani, Balochistan, aimed to promote the sector's growth and development by highlighting its vast potential. TDAP's Director General, Azhar Ali Dahr, and PASDEC Representative, Waqas Ahmad Ansari, reiterated their commitment to supporting the sector's advancement domestically and internationally. They emphasized the importance of adopting international standards and best practices to increase exports and contribute to Pakistan's economy. Mr. Muhammad Bilal Khan, Chairman of the All Pakistan Marble Industries Association (APMIA), addressed the gathering, highlighting the challenges faced by the industry, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of modern technology, and insufficient training for workers. He stressed the need for government support and private sector investment to address these issues and unlock the sector's full potential.—APP

Erdogan warns no place for 'terrorist' groups in Syria

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday said there was no place for "terrorist organisations" in Syria under its new Islamist leaders, in a warning regarding Kurdish forces there. The fall of Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad last month raised the prospect of Türkiye intervening in the country against Kurdish forces accused by Ankara of links to armed separatists. Erdogan's comment came during a meeting in Ankara with the prime minister of Iraq's Kurdish region, Masrour Barzani, the Turkish leader's office said in a statement. Erdogan told Barzani that Türkiye was working to prevent the ousting of Assad in neighbouring Syria from causing new instability in the region. There is no place for "terrorist organisations or affiliated elements in the future of the new Syria," Erdogan said. Ankara accuses one leading Kurdish force in Syria, the People's Protection Units (YPG), of links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Türkiye. The PKK has fought a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state and is banned as a terrorist organisation by Ankara and its Western allies. The Turkish military regularly launches strikes against Kurdish fighters in Syria and neighbouring Iraq, accusing them of PKK links. On Monday, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said: "The elimination of the PKK/YPG is only a matter of time.—APP

France says fate of citizens held in Iran worsening

PARIS: The situation of three French citizens held in Iran is worsening with some being detained in conditions similar to torture, France's foreign minister said on Tuesday, adding that future ties and sanctions lifting would depend on their fate. "The situation of our compatriots held hostage in Iran is simply unacceptable; they have been unjustly detained for several years, in undignified conditions that, for some, fall within the definition of torture under international law," Jean-Noel Barrot told a conference of French ambassadors. "I say to the Iranian authorities: our hostages must be released. Our bilateral relations and the future of sanctions depend on it.—APP

Briefs

Int'l flights resume at Damascus airport

DAMASCUS: International flights resumed at Syria's main airport in Damascus on Tuesday for the first time since Islamist-led rebels toppled President Bashar Assad last month. Excitement was in the air at the Damascus airport, where an AFP correspondent saw passengers arriving from Qatar chanting and cheering with some draped in Syria's three-star independence flag. "Today marks a new beginning," Damascus airport director Anis Fallouh told AFP. "We started welcoming outbound and inbound international flights," he said, adding that the first flight was bound for Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. The first Qatari commercial flight in nearly 13 years landed in Damascus at around 1:00 p.m. (10:00 GMT). A Syrian Airlines flight bound for Sharjah took off at around 11:45 am (0845 GMT), marking the first international commercial flight from the airport since December 8, AFP correspondents said. Syria's three-star independence flag, long associated with opposition to Assad and which the new authorities have adopted, was painted on the plane. International aid planes and foreign diplomatic delegations have already been landing in Syria, and domestic flights have also resumed. - Agencies

Umar removed from CTD head position

DNA

KARACHI: In-charge Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Raja Umar Khattab has been removed from his position. DSP of Special Protection Unit (SPU) Farukh Younus has also been removed from his position. DSP Raja Umar Khattab and DSP Farukh Younus have been directed to report to the CPO. It may be noted here that Raja Umar Khattab has been serving in the CTD for the past 15 years. Separately, the police team—investigating a short-term kidnapping case involving CTD officials and others as accused—arrested four more suspects. The Anti Violent Crime Cell (AVCC) of the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) arrested four suspects including a CTD official as they were allegedly involved in the short-term kidnapping of a man in Karachi and transferring a staggering 340 US Dollars from his cryptocurrency account. Later, four more suspects have also been arrested but seven accused including a CTD official Ali Raza are still at large. According to police, efforts are being made to apprehend the fugitives. Eight suspects involved in the short-term kidnapping have already been taken into custody.

Ahsan Iqbal slams PTI

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal lambasted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) over its anti-state social media campaign. "What PTI is doing on social media against Pakistani intuitions India's RAW can't even imagine doing," he said while speaking at a ceremony in Karachi. Ahsan Iqbal termed the PTI's rise to power in 2018 an experiment similar to the 1971 incident when Pakistan was divided into two parts. Reflecting on the politics of PML-N and PPP, he said that both parties adopted the path of resistance, however, they never crossed the 'red line.' According to Ahsan Iqbal, the PTI changed the country's political dynamics after the May 9 riots in which public, private and army installations were vandalised. The PML-N leader lamented that 'certain forces tarnished Pakistan's image' by associating negative perceptions about its nationals.

Serena Hotels Cultural Diplomacy

Saranggi Season 7 draws huge interest

The judging panel for this prestigious season included renowned music producer Ali Mustafa, celebrated folk-rock artist Arieab Azhar, and acclaimed singer Natasha Baig. Their expertise and mentorship added immense value to the competition, guiding the finalists through their artistic journeys



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Saranggi Season 7, a celebrated initiative under Serena Hotels' Cultural Diplomacy, concluded its finale with remarkable performances from emerging musical talents across Pakistan. This platform continues to promote and celebrate

the rich musical heritage of Pakistan while inspiring the next generation of artists. The judging panel for this prestigious season included renowned music producer Ali Mustafa, celebrated folk-rock artist Arieab Azhar, and acclaimed singer Natasha Baig. Their expertise and mentorship added immense value to the competition, guiding the finalists through their artistic journeys.



The talented finalists of Saranggi Season 7 represented diverse regions of Pakistan, showcasing the country's rich cultural mosaic through their performances. The finalists included Haider Abbas from Okara, Rahat Khokhar from Quetta, Muzammil Riaz from Bhurewala, Humaira Javed from Hunza, and Adnan Ali from Gilgit. Each artist delivered captivating performances,

reflecting the depth of musical talent in the country. Saranggi, as part of Serena Hotels' Cultural Diplomacy efforts, remains dedicated to nurturing young musical talent by providing a platform for artists to share their artistry. The initiative continues to be a beacon for emerging musicians, celebrating diversity and cultural expression through the power of music.

'Civilians to face military trial for Army Act offences'
Apex court's constitutional bench seeks clarification on legality of extending military authority to civilians

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar said on Tuesday that the civilians would not face a military trial merely for standing near an army checkpoint but, they certainly would if they committed an offence listed under the Army Act. The remark was passed during a constitutional bench's hearing of a case centred on appeals against decisions allowing civilian trials in military courts. It came in response to Justice Musarrat Hilali's concern over "extension of powers" to try civilians under the Army Act, while the question remains whether the civilians can be tried in military courts. During the proceedings, Khawaja Haris, representing the Ministry of Defence, argued that the apex court had previously ruled that civilians could be court-martialed under specific circumstances. At this, Justice Mandokhail raised constitutional concerns, questioning whether an executive body like the Ministry of Defence could act as both accuser and judge. "The constitution clearly prohibits the executive from performing judicial functions," he remarked Haris argued that the Army Act was not limited to armed forces personnel, encompassing various categories, including civilians in specific situations.

However, Justice Jamal questioned whether criminal matters could fall under Article 8(3), which pertains to military discipline. Responding to this, Haris concurred that the members of the Pakistan Armed Forces are just as much citizens as any other citizens. The constitutional bench sought clarity on whether extending military jurisdiction to civilians was constitutional. Justice Mandokhail further questioned whether joining the armed forces deprived individuals of fundamental rights, noting that the Army Act was introduced to maintain military discipline, not to curtail civilian rights. Allegations of unfair treatment in Lahore jail At the hearing's conclusion, Hafeezullah Niazi, a senior journalist and father of a convicted civilian, raised concerns over the treatment of his son, who was transferred to prison following a recent military court sentence. "Despite being moved to jail, my son is not being treated as per the jail manual," Niazi stated, highlighting that 22 convicts are held in Lahore Jail's high-security zone under similar conditions. Justice Musarrat Hilali remarked that the Supreme Court had directed authorities to ensure compliance with the jail manual. She said that Punjab and federal governments were "disregarding court orders". Meanwhile, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar pointed out that these individuals were not under trial but had already been sentenced, some receiving two- to ten-year sentences.

Aleema Khan claims offers for deal

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: PTI founder Imran Khan's sister, Aleema Khan, stated that offers for deals have been coming in since day one, but no one has directly contacted them. She added that her brother has been in jail for one and a half years, and if a backdoor deal were to be made, it would have already happened. Speaking to the media after meeting her brother at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, Aleema Khan mentioned that the offer for house arrest at Bani Gala was brought by Ali Amin Gandapur. She questioned, "After keeping him in jail for one and a half years, what is the point of house arrest now? The PTI founder was also told to stay quiet and not speak up." Aleema Khan further said that the PTI founder has only put forward two demands. For the past two years, he has been asking for the formation of a judicial commission regarding the May 9 events. He has emphasized that the judicial commission should be formed under a senior judge who is acceptable to all. She remarked, "We are tired of repeatedly asking for a judicial commission to be formed and for prisoners to be released. Are the PTI founder's demands not acceptable?" She stressed that judicial commissions are formed under the rule of law and democracy, and the PTI founder has always advocated for the rule of law. The PTI founder's sister added, "In my opinion, those negotiating are not serious. Even PML-N's own members say they will do whatever orders they receive. If the negotiations are to continue, then let them proceed; who is stopping them?" She pointed out that, in jail, the gates open at 7 AM for meetings.

At least 13 dead as cold wave grips Karachi

KARACHI: Karachi's ongoing cold wave has claimed the lives of 13 people over the past six weeks, with most of the victims being homeless and drug addicts, according to the Chhipa Foundation. The victims' bodies were discovered at various locations across the city, many of them unidentified. Chhipa Foundation spokesperson Chaudhry Shahid Hussain told Express News that since December 2024, at least 43 people—42 men and one woman—have died due to drug overdoses in Karachi. Among these, over 13 deaths are suspected to be linked to cold exposure. "These individuals were mostly drug addicts who lacked blankets, mattresses, or warm clothing to protect themselves from the cold," Hussain explained. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Donald Blome, the US ambassador to Pakistan, made a farewell call on the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. - DNA

Pakistan to impose levy on captive power plants

Captive industry gas prices to align with LNG rates, sources confirm

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has made a key decision to meet another significant condition set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), agreeing to impose a levy on captive power plants before the release of the next tranche of funding. According to sources, the government has made preparations to implement this levy on captive power plants, which will be applied gradually to prevent a significant reduction in gas supply to these plants. Sources indicated that the IMF has shown flexibility on the issue of gas cuts to captive power plants, and the levy will be introduced before the next IMF tranche is disbursed. In the first phase, a 5% levy on the gas supplied to captive power plants could be implemented in January, while the second phase may see the levy increase to 10%. The sources further revealed that the price of gas supplied to the captive industry will be brought in line with LNG prices. The imposition of this levy aims to eliminate the disparity between captive power plants and other industries. The IMF has raised concerns over the different electricity rates for

captive and non-captive industries. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) saw a significant decline today, with the KSE-100 index shedding 1,840.96 points, or 1.58%, to current index at 114,414.16 during intra day trading. The index reached a high of 116,843.41 points during the day but ultimately failed to maintain its upward momentum, dipping to the low of 114,414.16 points by the end of trading. Despite the negative movement in the index, trading activity remained high, with 184,728,288 shares exchanged, leading to a turnover value of approximately PKR 14.77 billion. The PSX's previous close was recorded at 116,255.12 points, reflecting a substantial drop in market performance during the intra day. Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has agreed to roll over a \$2 billion loan deposit, offering significant fiscal relief to Pakistan. Chairing a cabinet meeting, the prime minister shared details of his recent meeting with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, which took place in Rahim Yar Khan. PM Shehbaz stated that the UAE leader proposed extending the \$2 billion loan repayment due in January, a gesture aimed at supporting Pakistan's economic stability. "He [UAE president] happily informed me that the \$2 billion owed by Pakistan in January was being extended by the UAE. He proposed it himself and immediately issued directives," Prime Minister Shehbaz said.

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