



# Islamabad POST

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**EU could lift some Syria sanctions Quickly: French FM**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Imran getting taste of his own medicine**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Babar Azam rises in Test rankings**

Detailed News On Page-06



**Justice Mandokhel says**

## Constitution supreme than parliament

Supreme Court raises a number questions about civilians' military trials; says Constitution ensures basic rights of civilians; asks were the May 9 rioters belonged to armed forces? Were they ex-servicemen?

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A Supreme Court judge remarked that the country's Constitution is supreme and not the Parliament as the apex court's constitutional bench resumed on Wednesday the hearing of the intra-court appeals filed against declaring the trials of civilians in military courts as null and void, reported 24NewsHD TV channel. A seven-member bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, conducted the hearing today. Khawaja Haris, counsel for the Ministry of Defence, continued his arguments in the case. Khawaja Haris said that the basis of the apex court's decision was Articles 5 (8) and 3 (8) of the constitution. "Both articles are completely different. They cannot be coalesced together," he argued. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that Article 233 safeguarded the fundamental rights of citizens. Haris replied that Article 233 had two parts: one was related to the armed forces, while the other to civilians. Justice Jamal Mandokhel said that citizens could not be denied their rights even under Article 5. Haris recalled that it had been settled in the FB Ali case that civilians too could be tried in military courts. "Whether we agree with you or not remains to be seen," Justice Mandokhel said. The lawyer went on to say it was on the basis of a wrong interpretation that it was said that the FB Ali case was of a different nature. "Ali was tried after his retirement. At that time, he was a civilian," Haris said, adding, "The judge gave the ruling that the defendant had committed the offence while he was in service; therefore his case was separate." Justice Mandokhel retorted, "Those convicted in the May 9 cases did not belong to the armed forces."

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## Speaker opens up on his role in Imran's meetings

Sadiq also reiterated his commitment to upholding the supremacy of Parliament

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on Wednesday responded to criticism from PTI leaders, stating that his role is to facilitate dialogue between the government and opposition, not to arrange Imran Khan meetings. Reacting to the criticism, Ayaz Sadiq clarified that arranging Imran Khan's meeting with party leaders is not his mandate or responsibility. The Speaker expressed disappointment over statements criticizing his office for not responding positively to requests for meetings. He assured that his doors are always open to everyone and he has never refused to meet with any member of the Assembly. Sadiq also reiterated his commitment to upholding the supremacy of Parliament and facilitating dialogue between the government and opposition. He stated that if the government and

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KARACHI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif rings the ceremonial gong during his visit to Pakistan Stock Exchange. - DNA

## Indonesian President to visit Pakistan on Jan 26



The Indonesian President will spend a busy day in Islamabad on January 27

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will arrive in Islamabad on January 26. According to sources, the Indonesian President is visiting Pakistan at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The Indonesian President will spend a busy day in Islamabad on January 27, the sources said. The sources further said that the Indonesian President's visit is aimed at promoting bilateral cooperation.

## Consultations for new CEC still pending

The appointments must be finalised within 45 days

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The process of appointment of new chief election commissioners and two members is stalled as consultations between the government and the opposition leader have yet to commence. With the just 18 day left until the retirement of CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja, Sindh members Nisar Durrani, and Balochistan members Shah Jatoi on January 26, constitutional guidelines require for both appointments. In case of disagreement, the matter will referred to a 12-member parliamentary committee formed by the National Assembly speaker. If consensus fails within

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**Stresses collective effort**

## Pakistan's economy getting back on its feet, says Shehbaz

The journey of economic growth has begun, says PM during day-long Karachi visit

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that the economy was getting back on its feet, vowing that the journey towards growth had officially begun. During a day-long visit to Karachi, the premier expressed his joy at visiting the stock market for the first time, emphasising the importance of economic growth in the nation. While addressing an event at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), he said Karachi was the backbone of Pakistan's economy, noting how the city's once-dimmed lights had now returned, symbolising the revival of the nation's economic vigour. He further added that Pakistan's economy was once again standing on its feet, stressing the need for continued growth. "If everything were perfect, we would be living in a fool's paradise," the prime minister said. PM Shehbaz expressed his readiness to collaborate with all sectors for sustained economic development, affirming that economic progress would require collective effort. The prime minister remarked that the country had achieved economic stability, and while there were still challenges,

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## IMF rejects govt proposal to cut sales tax on electricity bills

The IMF's decision came after the Ministry of Energy made a formal request to the Fund

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani government has been unsuccessful in convincing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to agree to a reduction in sales tax on electricity bills. According to sources, the IMF rejected a request from Pakistan's Ministry of Energy, which had asked for a reduction in sales tax to alleviate the financial burden on consumers. The IMF's decision came after the Ministry of Energy made a formal request to the Fund, seeking approval for a decrease in sales tax rates on electricity bills.

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## Hamas stands by demand for end to genocidal war

Hamas says it will free its remaining hostages only if Israel agrees to end the war

FOREIGN DESK

JERUSALEM/CAIRO: Hamas stood by its demand on Tuesday that Israel fully end its assault on Gaza under any deal to release hostages and said US President-elect Donald Trump was rash to say there would be "hell to pay" unless they go free by his Jan. 20 inauguration. Officials from the Islamist group and Israel have been holding talks with Qatari and Egyptian mediators in the most intensive effort for months to reach a ceasefire in Gaza. The outgoing US administration has called for a final push for a deal before Joe Biden leaves office, and many in the region now view Trump's inauguration as an unofficial deadline. But with the

clock ticking, both sides accuse the other of blocking a deal by adhering to conditions that torpedoed all previous peace efforts for more than a year. Hamas says it will free its remaining hostages only if Israel agrees to end the war and withdraw all its troops from Gaza. Israel says it will not end the war until Hamas is dismantled and all hostages are free. "Hamas is the only obstacle to the release of the hostages," the director general of Israel's foreign ministry, Eden Bar Tal, told a briefing with reporters, saying Israel was fully committed to reaching a deal. Hamas official Osama Hamdan, who held a news conference in Algiers, said Israel was to blame for undermining all

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## Briefs

### 'Dialogue to remain unbroken'

Siddiqui assured that everyone is on the same page

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan Siddiqui, a key member of the government's negotiating committee announced on Wednesday that the government will continue talks with PTI uninterrupted, as ordered by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and assured that dialogue with PTI will remain ongoing and reaffirmed the government's commitment to negotiations. In an interview with a private news channel, Senator Irfan Siddiqui emphasized the importance of unity among all allied political parties and stakeholders in holding constructive and fruitful negotiations with PTI. He assured that everyone is on the same page, committed to pursuing talks without interruption, as directed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

### New polio case reported in KP

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan on Wednesday reported a new polio case in Tank, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, taking the previous year's tally to 69, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) said in a statement. Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world, alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic, with the disease mostly affecting children under five, and sometimes causing lifelong paralysis. Despite global efforts to eradicate the virus, challenges such as security issues, vaccine hesitancy, and misinformation have slowed progress.

## In a meeting in jail

### PTI secures Imran's go-ahead to continue talks

Party's senior leaders meet former PM in courtroom at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Thereek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has directed his party's negotiation team to continue holding talks with the government, a top leader said on Wednesday. The breakthrough came after the PTI negotiation team finally met the former prime minister at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail, following a days-long hiatus. "PTI founder has directed to continue the talks and has given permission to submit [party's] both demands in writing to the government committee," said PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan while speaking to the media outside the Adiala jail. The development comes as the PTI leaders - comprising Barrister Gohar, Ali Zafar and Sher Afzal Marwat - met the former prime minister in a courtroom at Rawalpindi's Adiala facility. The development arguably diminishes the ambiguity surrounding the future of the ongoing PTI-government talks, which in recent days, have been marred by uncertainty owing to the former ruling party's inability to meet its incarcerated founder and present its written demands. For days, the PTI has been claiming that they were not being allowed to meet Khan by Adiala jail authorities and has

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### Talks stalled as NA speaker on foreign tour, says Rana

Talks will resume as soon as Ayaz Sadiq returns to country, says PM's aide

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday revealed that the ongoing negotiations between the PTI and the government were stalled due to the unavailability of National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in the country. Addressing a press conference, Sanaullah said the NA speaker was on a foreign tour, adding that talks would resume as soon as he returns to the country. The two sides, after months of a political tug-of-war, have held two negotiation sessions on December 27, 2024 and on January 2, 2025. However, the unexpected delay in the third round of talks triggered speculations about the future of

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## Blackmailing of global organizations through war affected Afghans

SHAMIM SHAHID

WHETHER Pakistan's powerful circles acknowledge it or not, it has now become an undeniable fact that the policies crafted by the country both for Afghanistan and for the entire global community, have completely failed. This is why Pakistan is now heading down the path of international isolation. If China, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, or any other states occasionally provide Pakistan's ailing economy with financial aid, the purpose of this assistance is not to help Pakistan but to protect the interests of the donor countries themselves. After Ashraf Ghani came to power in Afghanistan, when the U.S. began working on Plan B post-9/11, the funds allocated for this plan were decided to be utilized in a way that maximized benefits for Pakistan. From the late 1960s to 9/11, Pakistan's civil bureaucracy benefited significantly from the situation in Afghanistan, with thousands of individuals reaping the rewards. Anyone who doubts this can easily conclude by looking at the assets of those in military positions after the late Nasirullah Babar's time. Many of those who have passed away left billions of rupees in assets for their heirs, while the fortunate ones still living are enjoying more luxurious lives than the rulers and industrialists of Western countries. It is a reality that the external aggression, interference, and in-

ternal chaos in Afghanistan have proved to be a great opportunity for Pakistan and those in influential positions within the country. The same situation persists today, with Mohsin Raza Naqvi playing a key role in trying to marginalize Afghan refugees fleeing the wrath of the Afghan government and the Taliban. Following his orders, a crackdown began on Afghan nationals across the country from the beginning of this year, with over 2,000 arrests made in Islamabad alone over the past seven days. Those arrested, including women and children, have been detained in various police stations and lockups. Some of the detainees even had Afghan Citizen Cards issued by Pakistan's NADRA or Proof of Registration cards provided by the UNHCR. Among the arrested were also unfortunate workers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan who did not possess national identity cards during police raids. While this crackdown provides opportunities for Pakistan's police and law enforcement officials to exploit and rob the helpless Afghan nationals, it also facilitates Pakistan's one-point demand from the Afghan Taliban leadership. Meanwhile, the ongoing conflict and internal turmoil in Afghanistan have resulted in more harm than benefit for Pakistan. Once, Ahmad Shah Massoud was the apple of the eye for Pakistan's visible and invisible powers, but later he was categorized as an enemy, and a significant portion of the financial and technical aid

received from the U.S. and its allies for the Afghan war was redirected to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. However, in the second half of the 1990s, Hekmatyar was exiled in favor of winning the Taliban's favor. After 9/11, the Pakistani government quickly denounced the Taliban, and any Taliban leadership present in Islamabad was swiftly handed over to American forces at Peshawar airport. After 9/11, the majority of Taliban leaders no longer harbor the same sentiments toward Pakistan, although many of their close relatives remain in Pakistan. Once, the Haqqani Network was a tool for Pakistan to exert pressure on Afghanistan, but that is no longer the case. There is no doubt that, in light of the ongoing situation for the past four decades, Pakistan's influential circles had an upper hand over other global powers and institutions. However, this supremacy has eroded due to increasing foreign interest in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Today, important intelligence agencies and powers from around the world have established their networks in Afghanistan, and countries, particularly in the West, are investing heavily there, winning the hearts of displaced Afghan nationals. By following ill-advised policies, Pakistan is losing a great deal in Afghanistan. It is still time for Pakistan to recognize its mistakes, or it may soon face significant changes in the region. - The views expressed in the article are writer's own.

# Call for enhanced China-Pak coop to combat threat of terrorism

Dr. Naveed Elahi traced the progressive growth of terrorism in Pakistan in the past several decades due to multiple factors with political, societal and economic dimensions

DNA

LAHORE: Experts on security and counter-terrorism have emphasized the need for strengthening cooperation between Pakistan and China for combating the threat of terrorism which they argued is impeding progress on economic initiatives and projects between the two countries.

Dr. Naveed Elahi, former Joint Director General of the Intelligence Bureau and currently the Dean of National Institute of Public Policy (NIPP) and Amir Rana, the President of the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPPS) were speaking at the Beaconhouse National University (BNU)'s Center for Policy Research (BCPR) in Lahore, said a press release issued here Wednesday. The session moderated by former Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan who now heads the BCPR was attended by leading academics and researchers in the field of counter-terrorism. The presentations of the two

speakers were followed by question and answer session. In his remarks, Dr. Naveed Elahi traced the progressive growth of terrorism in Pakistan in the past several decades due to multiple factors with political, societal and economic dimensions. He noted that starting primarily as sectarian violence the terrorism received ideological stimulus from Afghan Jihad in the 1980s and Taliban insurgency against the US and NATO presence in that country. He added that the emergence of organizations like Al-Qaeda and Daesh have provided a global umbrella of support and patronage to regional terrorist groups like TTP and BLA. Dr. Elahi acknowledged that both the TTP has continued to intensify its operational capacity to cause more harm to Pakistan's interests by particularly targeting the Chinese projects and personnel in recent years. In this regard, he explained how governments in Pakistan have been making efforts to counter the attacks by the TTP and BLA, but due to the gaps as

well as the lack of consistency in the approach of tackling this menace of terrorism the number of these attacks and the damage has continued to increase. Security expert Amir Rana said that the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the modern age of social and IT-based media cannot be just fought through a security based approach of the past. He added that the state has to be ahead of the thinking and publicity campaign of the terrorist groups who continue to bombard the population with disinformation. The authorities have to therefore, build an environment in which the population perceives the government's policies and measures as pro-people. Both security experts suggested the need for deepening Pakistan's engagement with China towards creating effective counter-terrorism cooperation mechanisms with a view to overcome the current challenges caused by rise in the terrorist attacks on Chinese workers in Pakistan.



RAWALPINDI: Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, PM's Coordinator for Climate Change under RCCI's Revive Pakistan Initiative. – DNA

## Citrus development vital to strengthen economy

SARGODHA: Senior citrus expert Chaudhry Abdul Khaliq said on Wednesday that the launch of Sargodha Citrus Development Programme would help increase production of Kinnow, and its export would bring more foreign exchange. While addressing a ceremony here, which was attended by Director Agriculture, Director Agriculture and Director General Citrus Research Institute and representatives of farmers and exporters. He said the programme included up-gradation of citrus research institute, establishment of new lab, launch of website for creating awareness among kinnow growers, up-gradation of nurseries and establishment of citrus research institute in district Bhakkar. The total cost of the project was estimated at Rs 70 million, he added. The expert stressed preparing a list of kinnow growers across the division, with the help of the Sargodha Chamber, and sending it to CM office for necessary implementation. He said that kinnow of Sargodha had a special place in the world; therefore, experts of citrus centres should play their role for a better production. DG Citrus Research Institute Sargodha informed that his institute was producing 50,000 seedless kinnow annually, and providing a plant to growers only for Rs. 130. He said that kinnow worth of \$250 million was exported from Sargodha annually while the Sargodha Citrus Research Institute was continuing research to increase variety and production of the fruit. –APP

## Minister for implementing QAF to improve education standards

Ahsan Iqbal appreciated the contribution of Pakistani experts residing abroad to national development under the "Uraan Pakistan" program

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday stressed the need for the effective implementation of the 'Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)', developed in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Member of the Planning Commission for Science & Technology also attended the meeting. Professor Muddassar Wyne, a quality assurance expert in California who holds a PhD in Computer Science, highlighted the principles of quality assurance recognized by the American Board of Engineering and Technology. Ahsan Iqbal appreciated the contribution of Pakistani experts residing

abroad to national development under the "Uraan Pakistan" program. He proposed forming a "Premier League Group" consisting of the top 10 universities to transform Pakistani universities in line with global standards, which would establish linkages with leading universities worldwide. The Planning minister said the Quality Assurance Framework, developed for Pakistani universities in collaboration with HEC and the British Council in 2023, was not only ideal for improving educational standards but also catered to the unique needs of the country's education system.

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## SECP seeks feedback on improvements in takeover regulations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued a consultation paper to seek feedback on areas of improvement in the Listed Companies (Substantial Acquisition of Voting Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2017. Through these modification SECP aims to strengthen the regulatory framework governing takeover transactions of listed companies by enhancing transparency and introducing measures for safeguarding rights of minority shareholders. The key areas of improvement include proposals for streamlining public announcement timelines, revising price determination criteria for frequently and not frequently traded shares, and enhancing disclosure requirements for acquirers and listed companies. Provisions for voluntary offers, obligations of Manager to the Offer (MTO) and mechanisms for handling indirect or chain acquisitions have also been floated for further deliberations. The proposals have been developed following an initial round of consultations with various stakeholders including market experts, MTOs, law firms, chartered accountants and listed companies. The scope of consultations is now being expanded to ensure wider participation in finalizing proposed amendment areas so any amendments can effectively address the evolving needs of the market and its stakeholders. The consultation paper including rationale for each suggested area of improvement is uploaded on the SECP website.

## BISP beneficiaries' skill development top most priority

Chairperson BISP Senator Rubina Khalid directs BISP officers to ensure the provision of Skill Training and Employment Opportunities aligned with National and International Trends. Chairperson BISP Senator Rubina Khalid and Secretary Amer Ali Ahmad held an important meeting today at the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Headquarters. The meeting focused on reviewing the progress of partnerships between BISP and national and international organizations aimed at providing skill

training and employment opportunities to members of deserving families of BISP. Additional Secretary Dr. Tahir Noor and all Director Generals were also in attendance. Chairperson BISP Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized that skill training for BISP beneficiaries is among the program's top priorities. She highlighted the need to implement effective measures through skill training to enhance the income levels of beneficiaries and improve their standard of living. She instructed BISP officers to identify key sectors based

on national and international trends for the next meeting, ensuring beneficiaries receive training that leads to better employment opportunities. Secretary Amer Ali Ahmad stated that while the Benazir Income Support Programme provides financial assistance to beneficiaries, equipping them with skills is the sustainable path to lift families out of poverty. He stressed the importance of skill training as a means to enable long-term self-sufficiency and economic stability for the beneficiaries. –APP

## Punjab presents report on rights of prisoners in SCP

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday was found satisfied over a report presented by the government of Punjab regarding the rights of the prisoners according to the jail manual. Additional Advocate General Punjab presented the report on the directive of the Constitutional Bench after father of a prisoner complained denial of due rights to the prisoners. The seven-member constitutional bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, while hearing the petitions regarding trial of civilians in military courts, had directed the Government of Punjab to produce a comprehensive report on the rights of the prisoners. Father of Ihsan Niazi, a convict by the military court in May 9 riots, had complained denial of the rights of prisoners and keeping them in a high security zone. Additional Advocate General Punjab informed the court that two among the 27 convicts are released after they have been pardoned by the military court of appeal. 25 prisoners are in jail and provided with all and equal rights like other prisoners. Their families are allowed to see them once in ten days and such meetings have already taken place. They are permitted to receive meals from home. The Complainant, Hafizullah Niazi, however continued to complain that nobody other than parents and siblings are allowed to see the prisoners and they are not allowed to come out of their lockups like other prisoners. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, on this, remarked that you yourself accepted that the meetings have taken place and they are permitted food from home. Why are you exaggerating things to this extent. –APP

## Research-based poster's exhibition held at AIOU

ISLAMABAD: A research exhibition titled 'Poster Presentations' was organized late Tuesday at the Central Library of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). MPhil and PhD students from the Department of Library Science showcased their research work during the event. A total of 28 research papers were presented, including 10 by PhD students and 18 by MPhil students. Dean Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir, examined all the projects, scholars individually gave presentation on their research projects to him. Commending the efforts of the Department of Library Science, Dr. Sahir emphasized the importance of aligning research with contemporary social and societal needs. He acknowledged that all the research projects prepared by the students addressed current demands effectively. Speaking about the history, significance, and necessity of libraries, Prof. Dr. Abdul Sahir remarked that there was a time when libraries held a central position in society. However, the younger generation's interest in reading books has declined compared to the past. He stressed the need to restore the bond with books and rebuild the strong connection that once existed to achieve prominence in society. This research-based poster presentation was organized by the Department of Library and Information Science. According to the Chairman of the Department, Dr. Parvez Ahmad, the aim of exhibition was to encourage scholars and highlight the research work of students. The senior faculty member of the department, Dr. Munazza Jabeen, supervised the research work. She stated that the MPhil and PhD students had completed their coursework, and the poster presentation was intended to give scholars the opportunity to create and display posters while discussing their research. It is worth mentioning that the Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has been paying special attention to the quality of education and the promotion of a research culture. He emphasized the need to bring research papers into the marketplace to support the socio-economic development of the country. He noted that unfortunately, most research papers in the country's universities remain confined to institutional records. He stressed the importance of taking research beyond library shelves and into practical application.

## Islam's call to environmental stewardship

USMAN CHOUDHARY

THE Islamic faith is often misunderstood as being detached from modern-day concerns such as environmental protection and climate control. However, a closer examination of the Quran and the Hadith (the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH) reveals a profound emphasis on the importance of preserving the natural world. In Islam, the relationship between humans and the environment is based on the concept of khalifa (stewardship). Humans are seen as trustees of the Earth, responsible for protecting and preserving its resources for future generations. This concept is rooted in the Quranic verse: "He it is Who has made you khalifa (stewards)

on the earth..." (6:165). The Quran and Hadith contain numerous references to environmental protection and conservation. The Quran warns against wastefulness and excess, stating: "Eat and drink, but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters" (7:31). This verse emphasizes the importance of living sustainably and avoiding unnecessary waste. The Prophet (SAAW) also emphasized the importance of conserving water, saying, "Do not waste water, even if you are by a flowing river." (Sunan Abu Dawud) The Hadith also provides guidance on environmental protection. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH is reported to have said: "The earth has been created for me as a mosque and as a means of purification" (Sahih Muslim). This hadith highlights the importance of pre-

serving the natural world and treating it with respect and reverence. As Afforestation plays a crucial role in mitigating climate change and Temperature Regulation. Islam emphasizes the importance of planting trees and taking care of the environment. Anas ibn Malik R.A reported: The Messenger of Allah said: "Even if the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, let him plant it." In other Hadith Holy Prophet PBUH said: Whoever cuts down a tree without a reason, Allah will cast him into Hellfire (Sunan Abu Dawud) If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person, or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift (sadaqah) for him." (Bukhari) The earth has been created for me as a mosque and as a means

of purification." (Sahih Muslim) During a battle, the Prophet Muhammad (SAAW) forbade his companions from cutting down trees, even if they were providing cover for the enemy. Also in terms of climate control, Islam emphasizes the importance of reducing waste and excess, which are major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. The Quran warns against the destruction of the natural world, stating: "Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have wrought" (30:41). This verse highlights the consequences of human actions on the environment and serves as a warning against the destructive effects of climate change. In recent years, Muslim scholars and leaders have begun to speak out on the importance of environmental protection and climate control. The

Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, signed by over 70 Muslim leaders and scholars in 2015, calls on Muslims to take action to reduce their carbon footprint and protect the natural world. Islam places a strong emphasis on environmental protection and climate control. The Quran and Hadith provide guidance on living sustainably, reducing waste and excess, and preserving the natural world. As the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, Muslims have a critical role to play in promoting sustainable living and protecting the planet for future generations. The writer is an environmental journalist working for Climate Change Awareness through Articles and News Reports. Usmanchere051@gmail.com

**Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Project Management Unit**

**INVITATION TO BID**

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training through Project Management Unit are inviting sealed bids from the contractors duly enlisted with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in appropriate category & having valid PEC license for the works as detailed below:

S.#	Name of work	NIT Cost (PKR)	Bid Security (PKR)	Date and Time of receiving of tenders on EPADS	Date and Time of opening of tenders
1	LOT-I Basement (Cafeteria, Prayer Hall, Day care Center)	24,405,484	1,220,274	28-01-2025 at 11:30 am	28-01-2025 at 12:00 noon
2	LOT-II Servant Quarters	25,712,360	1,285,618		
3	LOT-III Bus Shade	10,250,000	512,000		
4	LOT-IV Car Parking Fiber Shed	4,841,672	242,084		

**Conditions:**

- The firms may apply who fulfill the criteria mentioned in the Bid document available in the office of Project Engineer and on EPADS at ([www.eprocure.gov.pk](http://www.eprocure.gov.pk)). Last date for submission of applications is tabulated above. No bid will be received after closing time. Manual submission without submission on EPADS is not allowed.
- The interested firms should submit in the Technical Envelop duly stamped signed having the name of the firm, address(s), signature of representative, valid enlistment / renewal of firm with PEC (having relevant category and codes), tax registrations & Completion certificate of similar nature of work done during last 5 years. The details of the submissions are given in the bidding document.
- The owner of the firm should submit the application and collect the tender by himself. In case of authorized person, authority letter (regarding the particular work) in favor of the person deputed on the letter pad of the firm is required along-with copy of CNIC. This shall be uploaded in the technical envelop. Details of sub- mission are available in the bidding document. If any contractor wants to participate in tender opening process through their representative, they should issue authority letter on letter head pad of the firm depicting complete valid address & contact numbers along with attested copy of CNIC this shall be presented at the time of opening of the bid.
- The Bid Security shall be in the form of Call Deposit bearing NAME of Firm in favor of Project Director, Federal Government College of Home Economics & Management Sciences, Islamabad (FGCHEMS) F-11/1 from local scheduled Bank of Islamabad in the technical envelop. Without call deposit the firms shall be rejected in the technical evaluation stage. Cash / cheque will not be accepted.
- The contractor will submit the documentary evidence as per instructions in the bidding documents, without which tender will be liable for rejection.
- Procuring Agency may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to acceptance of bid or proposal. The Procuring Agency shall upon request communicate, to any supplier or contractor who submitted a bid or proposal, but is not required to justify those grounds.
- The bidding shall be conducted in line with the procedure prescribed under Public Procurement Rules 2004, e-Pak Procurement Regulations, 2023 and any Regulations, Regulatory Guides, Procurement Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Authority (from time to time), and is open to all potential bidders registered in the EPADS.
- The electronic bids prepared in accordance with the instructions prescribed in the electronic bidding documents must be submitted through EPADS on or before 11.30 am 28th January 2025. Electronic bids will be opened by using EPADS on the same day at 12.00 noon
- Pre – Bid meeting is scheduled on 17th January 2025 for clarification and details are mentioned in the bid document

(Engr. Aaron Joshua Das)  
Project Director, Project Management Unit (PMU) Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training 1st Floor, Pakistan Manpower Institute, Khayaban-e-Suharwardy, G-7/1, Islamabad pmumofept@gmail.com

FD/1/4569/24

## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA	Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Palestine	Palestine Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Sudan	National Day
Jan 04 / Myanmar	Independence Day
Jan 06 / Iraq	Armed Forces Day
Jan 12 / Tanzania	Armed Forces Day
Jan 14 / Uzbekistan	Armed Forces Day
Jan 15 / Nigeria	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Mali	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Laos	Armed Forces Day
Jan 25 / Thailand	Armed Forces Day
Jan 26 / Australia	National Day

## Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

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



## Enquiry

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



## Hospitals

CMH.....5611111  
MH.....5611116  
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# Child abuse cases to get justice within 6 months

Syeda Iftikhar expressed her gratitude to all political parties for their support of the bill, emphasizing that it is a collective effort prioritizing child safety and justice, rather than a political maneuver

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Member of National Assembly (MNA) Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar thanked all political parties on Wednesday for backing the 'Separate Child Courts Bill', which will ensure swift justice in child abuse cases within six months in a child-friendly environment. In an interview with a private news channel, MNA Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar has introduced

separate child courts aimed at providing faster resolution for child abuse cases, ensuring justice is served within six months in a specialized and supportive court environment. Syeda Iftikhar expressed her gratitude to all political parties for their support of the bill, emphasizing that it is a collective effort prioritizing child safety and justice, rather than a political maneuver. A new bill aims to expedite justice for child abuse victims by establishing separate child

courts, she said, adding, one key provision is that decisions in rape cases involving children must be made within six months, significantly speeding up the justice process. According to Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar, who presented the bill, this change will help ensure timely justice for victims and reduce the emotional toll of prolonged legal proceedings. This move is especially crucial given the alarming rise in child abuse cases in Pakistan, with over 5,398 cases reported

in the last five years alone, she highlighted. She emphasized the importance of rural parents taking their children's experiences seriously and reporting cases of trauma, as this is crucial for their recovery. By doing so, parents can help their children overcome the trauma and heal faster. It is essential for parents to be supportive and create a safe environment where their children feel comfortable opening up about their experiences. Nosheen Iftikhar emphasized

the crucial role media can play in raising awareness about the importance of distinguishing between "bad touch" and "good touch". She urged media outlets to disseminate detailed information and educational content to help children, parents and caregivers understand the differences and recognize the warning signs of abuse. By doing so, media can contribute significantly to preventing child abuse and promoting a safer environment for children, she added.

## Youth role crucial in addressing challenges of climate change

ISLAMABAD: Fossil fuel and climate change are the real issues, and there is a need to take practical measures to engage youth in combating these challenges, said Sher Shah Khan, Founder of Skillistan, a platform dedicated to empowering youth through green skills and sustainability in Development Chronicles podcast in Islamabad.

Sher Shah Khan discussed the transformative journey that led him from working in the oil and gas industry to dedicating himself to fighting for a sustainable future, said a press release here on Wednesday. He said that, back in 2020, while working in the fossil fuel industry, I realized that this was the real issue we needed to confront. He emphasized the importance of creating platforms that equip young people with skills, especially green skills, to help them actively engage in combating climate change. Youth are in the majority, yet they are often sidelined. It's about more than just bringing them to the table; they need to have a real voice, which is why initiatives like LCOY Pakistan allow youth to take center stage and speak out. Khan also addressed the challenges of organizing climate events in Pakistan due to security concerns, particularly the difficulties in bringing international participants to the country. Despite the challenges, it is believed that, we can still bring global youth together for networking, learning, and capacity-building. It's crucial that we work on improving the security outlook so that such events can take place," he stated. Reflecting on his entrepreneurial journey, Khan highlighted the risks and struggles of being an entrepreneur, especially in the social impact sector. Entrepreneurship is not for the faint of heart; it requires resilience, a big heart, and the willingness to face all challenges head-on," Khan shared. "But the best part is being your own boss and knowing you're making a difference." In his message to the youth, Khan encouraged them to pursue their passions, remain open to collaboration, and focus on green skills as the future of sustainability. "The world is moving towards a green transition, and green skills are at the forefront of that movement," he added.—APP

# US envoy pays farewell call on Petroleum minister



ISLAMABAD: The US ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome made a farewell call on Federal minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik in his office today. Federal Minister expressed well wishes for the ambassador and congratulated him on completing his tenure in Pakistan. Pakistan values its relationship with United States, remarked Federal Minister. Ambassador Blome played his role in strengthening the relationship. Both sides expressed their desire to further strengthen the bilateral relations.—DNA

# CDA chief for E monitoring of housing societies uplift work

ISLAMABAD: A meeting regarding private housing societies was held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Chairman CDA, Mr. Muhammad Ali Randhawa, at the CDA Headquarters. The meeting was attended by Member Planning, Member Estate, and senior officers of the Planning Wing. During the meeting, Chairman CDA was given a detailed briefing on the restructuring of the Housing Societies Directorate and various matters related to private housing societies. The meeting was appraised that the process of issuing notices on account of violations within private housing societies has already been initiated. Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, directed that the survey process in all private housing societies be expedited. He emphasized that development activities within private housing societies should be monitored using Google and satellite imagery. He further instructed that strict action should be taken against private housing societies on violations of approved layout plans. Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa stressed that private housing societies must ensure the transfer of amenities plots to the CDA. He also directed that housing societies should ensure the provision of basic amenities for welfare of their residents. Furthermore, Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa instructed that details of illegal housing societies be made available on the CDA website. He also directed that awareness campaigns regarding illegal housing societies be launched in the media to protect the public from potential losses.

# 'Dialogue with PTI to remain unbroken'

ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan Siddiqui, a key member of the government's negotiating committee announced on Wednesday that the government will continue talks with PTI uninterrupted, as ordered by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and assured that dialogue with PTI will remain ongoing and reaffirmed the government's commitment to negotiations. In an interview with a private news channel, Senator Irfan Siddiqui emphasized the importance of unity among all allied political parties and stakeholders in holding constructive and fruitful negotiations with PTI. He assured that everyone is on the same page, committed to pursuing talks without interruption, as directed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. This commitment to negotiation is crucial in resolving conflicts and finding mutually beneficial solutions, he added. Senator Irfan Siddiqui cautioned that the talks between the government and PTI will yield no results unless the PTI submits formal, written demands. However, he also noted that even if the PTI fails to provide written demands, the talks will still continue, albeit without any substantial impact, he assured. Responding to a query, Senator Irfan Siddiqui stated that regardless of any court decisions or punishments, the talks within the constitutional negotiation framework will continue uninterrupted by external factors. He further mentioned while responding a query that when PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif appeared in public and released a pigeon, it symbolized peace, adding, additionally, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has consistently emphasized the importance of "Democracy" or "Charter of Democracy," highlighting the party's commitment to democratic principles and values. To another question, he said that PML-N is the only party which has only focused on economy and for sake of this we want peaceful solution instead creating conflict and instability in the country.

# Lecture on Japan's perspective on regional issues held at ISSI

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a guest lecture on "Japan's Perspective on Regional Issues," delivered by Prof. Dr. KAWASHIMA Shin, from the University of Tokyo. Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, also participated in the event. Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, highlighted the enduring friendship between Pakistan and Japan. He underscored the historical and multifaceted ties between the two countries, rooted in mutual respect, shared interests, and commitment to peace and development. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood also noted Japan's prominent role as a steadfast partner in Pakistan's development journey and stressed growing



collaboration in areas such as trade, investment, climate change, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and regional stability. He also stressed the importance of enhanced academic and policy dialogues and think-tank collaboration between Pakistan and

Japan. Ambassador AKAMATSU Shuichi highlighted the long-standing Japan-Pakistan partnership and expressed hope for continued collaboration to address regional and global challenges. He also appreciated ISSI's efforts to foster mutual understanding through scholarly exchanges. Prof. Dr. KAWASHIMA Shin, in his lecture, focused on Japan's modernization and its evolving role in regional geopolitics. Highlighting the transformative journey from the Meiji Restoration to its post-World War II economic resurgence, he underscored Japan's commitment to peace, democracy, and regional cooperation. He reflected on the enduring partnership between Japan and Pakistan, noting the 70th anniversary of bilateral relations celebrated last year. Dr. KAWASHIMA emphasized Japan's dedication to fostering economic and cultural ties within the region, reinforcing its role as a proactive contributor to East Asian stability and prosperity.

# Efforts afoot to provide relief to people

Awareness banners about 'Khuli Kutcheries' should be displayed in the offices of the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners to spread awareness, Engineer Aamir Khattak added

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak on Wednesday directed the authorities to make all-out efforts to provide relief to the people.

Chairing a Divisional Coordination Committee (DCC) meeting held here, the Commissioner said that if a complaint is received about the absence of a Patwari in his Patwar Circle at any place, the concerned Assistant Commissioner would be held responsible for it. He directed the Deputy Commissioners to submit a list of actions taken against corrupt officers and officials in Revenue and all other departments within the next 24 hours. Deputy Commissioner Chakwal took action against 25 officers and officials of Revenue, Health, Education and Municipal Corporation during last five months. The Commissioner was informed that the officers were suspended and action was taken against some officials under the PED Act. In Murree, five officials, two of whom were from Revenue and three from Municipal Corporation, were suspended for their involvement in irregularities. Engineer Aamir Khattak said that special solid waste control rooms should be established under 'Suthra' Punjab program in all tehsils. The officers concerned were also directed to ensure presence of solid waste officers in the control rooms, besides availability of required machinery, human resources and a plan to achieve the given target. The Assistant Commissioner concerned should monitor proper working of the control rooms. Engineer Amir Khattak said adding, the authorities should also ensure that every person is following the prescribed Standard Operating Procedures. Local residents and public representatives should also be included in this program, Engineer Amir Khattak ordered. The Commissioner said that the cleanliness work under the ownership of the people should be completed successfully. "Our first priority is to provide relief to the citizens," he added. Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners should hold 'khuli kutcheries,' regularly to provide relief to the people and address their grievances, he directed. Awareness banners about 'Khuli Kutcheries' should be displayed in the offices of the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners to spread awareness, Engineer Aamir Khattak added.—DNA

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## Briefs

## Sajjad paid tribute on martyrdom anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Hurriyat leaders and parties have paid rich tributes to prominent pro-resistance leader, Sajjad Ahmad Kenoo on his martyrdom anniversary today (January 8). According to Kashmir Media Service, Sajjad Ahmad Kenoo, a resident of Islamabad district, was martyred by Indian forces on January 8, 1996. Hurriyat leaders and parties including jailed leader Bilal Siddiqi, Maulvi Bashir Irfani, Farooq Ahmed, Fareeda Bhanji, Dr Musab and Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) in a joint statement in Srinagar said martyr Sajad Ahmad Kenoo was one of pioneers of present Kashmir struggle. Martyrs like him are our real heroes and their sacrifices will never be forgotten, they said. Sajad Shaheed was a humble person, dedicated warrior, prolific leader and a luminous human being. He was one of the faces of Kashmiri movement who till his last breath stood upright for the cause and sacrificed his life while striving for it, the statements said. They said, "The sacrifices of heroes like Sajad Ahmad Kenoo can never be forgotten and today when we remember his sacrifices and struggle, we pledge to take his mission forward with passion and zeal." People of Kashmir are indebted to the sacrifices of martyrs and committed to take their mission forward. These sacrifices are enough to awaken the conscience of the world leadership but unfortunately the international community doesn't exert pressure on New Delhi to resolve the Kashmir dispute, the statements added.—APP

## Around 382,118 job seekers registered with OEC

ISLAMABAD: Around 382,118 job seekers registered with Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) an attached department of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD). An official source told APP here on Tuesday, he said that OEC was established year 1976, as a Public Sector recruitment agency, registered as a private limited company, under Companies Act, 1913 (now Companies Act, 2017, Section-42). It is a Public Sector company governed under Public Sector Companies (Corporate Governance) Rules, 2013 of Securities & Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). It's an Autonomous Body under administrative control of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, he added. He said that 144,600 emigrants dispatched so far while 95,692 overseas returned after completing their jobs contract from the different countries. The source revealed that 25,106 Korean Language trained candidates, 118 Japanese language trained candidates and 200 IELTS trained nurses were also registered with OEC. Pakistan, the sixth most populous country of the world, possesses highly skilled, skilled/semi-skilled and unskilled workforce which can cater world's demand in different skill categories.—APP

## NUML, Hunerkada sign MoU to foster arts, design education

The MoU signifies NUML's ongoing efforts to expand its academic landscape and collaborate with leading institutions to provide students with cutting-edge education and practical exposure

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages and Hunerkada Islamabad have entered into a significant partnership to promote arts and design education. An MoU was signed today by Brigadier Shahzad Munir, Director General NUML, and Syed Jamal Shah, Chairman of Hunerkada Islamabad, at a formal ceremony held at the NUML Main campus. The collaboration aims to establish "Fine Arts" and "Fashion Design" courses at NUML, which have already been approved by the university's Academic Council. Under the agreement, Hunerkada will play a pivotal role in designing and delivering these courses. This includes developing course outlines that align with NUML's academic standards and providing experienced faculty to ensure a high-quality learning experience. In addition to academic development, the partnership emphasizes career opportunities for NUML students and alumni. Hunerkada will facilitate internships, placements, and job opportunities in the arts, design, and corporate sectors, bridging the gap between education and industry. During the signing ceremony, Syed Jamal Shah highlighted the importance of fostering creativity and innovation



in higher education and commended NUML's commitment to diversifying its academic offerings. Speaking on the occasion, Brigadier Shahzad Munir expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration, noting, "This part-

nership with Hunerkada is a milestone in NUML's journey towards providing world-class education in arts and design. It will not only enhance the creative potential of our students but also open new doors for their professional growth."

Following the ceremony, Syed Jamal Shah also met with the Rector NUML, Major General (R) Shahid Mehmood Kayani HI(M). The two discussed the long-term vision of the partnership, emphasizing its potential to revolutionize arts educa-

tion and strengthen Pakistan's creative industries. The MoU signifies NUML's ongoing efforts to expand its academic landscape and collaborate with leading institutions to provide students with cutting-edge education and practical exposure.

## RIUJ condemns delaying tactics by PJHF and Punjab govt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalist has strongly condemned the delaying tactics by the Punjab Journalist Housing Foundation and Punjab government in granting the processions of the plots allotted to two senior journalists in Media Town Rawalpindi by the then Punjab government as their plots had been encroached by an influential figure in connivance with the PJHF and Punjab government. The two senior journalists, Muhammad Asghar and Abdul Latif Chaudhry, associated with prestigious media organizations had appealed to the interim chief minister Mohsin Naqvi and CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz to intervene and ensure justice and to give the right of the two journalists. Even the directives of Mr Naqvi were ignored by the concerned authorities. Tariq Usmani, President

RIUJ, General Secretary Rizwan Ghilzai and executive council also demanded a top level inquiry into the malpractices, allegedly done by the concerned authorities in the affairs of Media Town Rawalpindi and bring the responsible to justice. Justice Jawad Hassan of Lahore High Court Rawalpindi Bench Justice Hassan on December 23, while hearing petitions of senior journalists Muhammad Asghar and Abdul Latif filed against the encroachments of their plots 334/A and 335/A allotted to them in Rawalpindi press club cooperating housing Society (Media Town) by the then government of Punjab in 2009, has directed the Assistant Advocate General to ensure the presence of responsible officers from Punjab Journalist Housing Foundation and Punjab government along with relevant record within ten days of resumption of courts after winter vacations. According to advocate Saeed Yousaf Khan, counsel for

the petitioners, the Punjab Journalist Housing Foundation and Media Town management in connivance with some journalists allegedly encroached the allotted plots to the two senior journalists in order to compensate an influential figure. The Rawalpindi bench of the Lahore High Court has also called the Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner and the concerned SHO to give possession of their plots to the allottees on a writ petition against the change in the layout plan of the plots allotted to two senior journalists in Media Town. The petitioner's lawyer Saeed Yousaf Khan told the court that after allotting plots to their clients and giving them possession in the record, the layout plan was changed and Muhammad Asghar's plot number 334/A and Latif Chaudhry's plot number 335/A were deleted and their land was made part of other plots and now the matter is being unnecessarily prolonged. Respondents

(PJHF) and Punjab government took the stand that more time should be given in this matter. We are bound by the order of the Housing Foundation and will get possession back. Assistant Advocate General Punjab said that talks have been held with the concerned secretary and a solution to this issue will be found soon and the possession of the plots will be given to the allottees, on which the learned judge, along with the above order, fixed the case for hearing in the first week immediately after the court holidays. It should be noted that the Media Town Management illegally changed the layout plan by making the plots of senior journalists Muhammad Asghar and Latif Chaudhry part of other plots, which has put both journalists in a painful situation for the last 15 years, having to approach various forums to obtain their rights.

## Pakistan launches climate change courses

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has taken a significant step toward combating the effects of climate change with the launch of specialized climate change courses under the Faculty Development Program. The initiative, spearheaded by the Global Climate-Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC), was inaugurated here at a workshop. The event brought together faculty members, researchers, and climate experts to discuss strategies for building resilience and fostering sustainable development. Speaking at the event, Muhammad Arif Goheer, Executive Director of GCISC, emphasized Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change. "The increasing frequency and intensity of floods, droughts, rising temperatures, and glacier melt pose grave threats to agriculture, water resources, and livelihoods," Goheer noted. He stressed the importance of equipping future leaders with the knowledge and skills to address these challenges. The workshop unveiled six new courses developed in collaboration with the University of Kassel, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), and GIZ Pakistan, with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). These courses are designed to address various dimensions of climate change, ranging from governance and gender to sustainable development and agriculture. The courses include, Ecosystem Services and Climate Change, Climate Data, Models, and Observation, Climate-Resilient Agriculture and Food Systems with a Focus on Health and Nutrition, Gender, Climate Change, and Disaster, Sustainable Development in a Changing Climate and Climate Change Governance: Theory, Practice, and Emerging Frontiers. The first phase of the program highlights three specialized courses: "Navigating Climate Data," "Qualitative Methods for the Study of Climate Change," and "Climate Finance Fundamentals for Low- and Middle-Income Countries.—DNA

## ANF seizes over 65 kg drugs in

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations managed to recover 65.928 kg drugs worth Rs 10 million and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 1.4 kg hashish was recovered from a suspect rounded up near a bus stop in Islamabad. 30 intoxicated tablets were recovered from two suspects arrested near Bahria Town, Islamabad. The arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. 112 grams ice was recovered from a parcel sent to Maldives through a courier office in Islamabad. In an operation, 3.6 kg opium and 48 kg hashish were recovered near F/17 Society in Islamabad. ANF conducted a raid in Gwadar Balochistan and seized 6 kg ice from a suspect. 2 kg heroin hidden in a vehicle was recovered on M-2 Islamabad and a suspect was arrested. 1.8 kg hashish hidden in a motorcycle near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza Attock was seized in an operation and an accused was arrested. 3 kg ice was recovered from secret cavities of a vehicle near Baleli Quetta and an Afghan national was arrested during the operation. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—APP

## Railways leases 14,893 acres of land through open competition

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has leased out around 14,893 acres of its land to private individuals and various government departments under an open competition policy to generate revenue. An official from the Ministry of Railways told APP that the leasing process is being done according to the Pakistan Railway Property & Land Rules-2023, which were approved by the Federal Cabinet. Out of the total leased land, around 11,074 acres have been allocated to private individuals through open competition for agricultural, commercial, and stacking purposes, while 3,819 acres have been leased to different government departments. To a question, the official said Pakistan Railways has intensified efforts to reclaim approximately 13,972 acres of land, worth billions of rupees, which is currently under illegal occupation by private individuals and various government departments across the country.—APP

## Unity among businessmen must: Zafar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: United Business Group (FPCCI) Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari stated that cooperation and unity within the business community are essential to stabilize Pakistan's economy. He emphasized that businesses and personal brands should be built with hard work and integrity. He expressed these views while addressing the Islamabad Chamber of Small Trade and Small Industries (ICSTSI) during his recent visit. Zafar Bakhtawari congratulated the newly elected Chairman of the Founders Group

of ICSTSI, Saqib Abbasi, and presented him with a bouquet. Acting President ICCI Nasir Mahmood Chaudhry, Acting Vice President Raja Naveed Akhtar Satti, Executive Committee members Zulqarnain Abbasi, Rohail Anwar Butt, Malik Mohsin Khalid, former Executive Member Intiaz Abbasi, Imran Bukhari, Tahir Abbasi, and Nisar Mirza were also present. Upon their arrival at ICSTSI, Qazi Ilyas, Rao Javed, Sardar Zaheer, Sajid Iqbal, Rizwan Siddiqui, and others warmly welcomed the delegation led by Zafar Bakhtawari. In his speech, Zafar Bakhtawari paid tribute to the services of Taj Abbasi and Qazi Ilyas and extended his best

wishes to Saqib Abbasi and Owais Satti. He stressed the importance of creating unity to make traders role models. "We must unite; only then will our voice be heard. We need to work together to improve our country's economy," he said. He praised ICSTSI for consistently working for the betterment of the business community and congratulated Saqib Abbasi on becoming the new Chairman of the Founders Group, expressing hope that he would play a vital role in the chamber's growth. Saqib Abbasi, in his address, stated that the primary goal is to promote unity within the business community. "As we embark on this new journey,

it is essential to understand that only through collective efforts can we progress towards success and development. As business leaders, it is our duty to create opportunities for others and grow together," he said. He thanked Zafar Bakhtawari for visiting their chamber and offering valuable words and support. He also acknowledged the remarkable leadership of Qazi Ilyas during his tenure and expressed commitment to carrying forward the legacy built on his hard work. ICSTSI's outgoing Chairman, Founders Group Qazi Ilyas, highlighted the importance of hard work and cooperation among chamber members in his speech.



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## Pakistan becoming key exporter of farm products, machinery: Zahid

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Wednesday that SIFC's focus on agricultural development is yielding promising results which is commendable. He said that SIFC is striving to develop Pakistan's agriculture according to its potential, which includes increasing agricultural production, exports, value addition, and exports of agricultural machinery. Mian Zahid Hussain said that efforts are being made to increase the agricultural area by developing uncultivated lands to increase production. At the same time, modern methods

are also being adopted, and water scarcity is being managed. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the export of tractors to Tanzania, an important country in East Africa is encouraging development. Neighboring countries would also buy Pakistani tractors from Tanzania. The business leader said that SIFC has played a fundamental role in this matter, and attention is paid to the production, quality, and export of rice. In 2024, rice exports to Saudi Arabia alone have increased by 25 percent, while total exports have reached four billion dollars, which are planned to increase to five billion dollars in 2025. In this regard, focus is being placed on better seeds, research, efficient cultivation, and production methods. He informed that innovation is being adopted to maintain compet-

itiveness in the international rice market. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan's agricultural system is being improved, and a foothold is being established in the global market. The future of agriculture in Pakistan is bright because SIFC is making every possible effort in this regard. Our agricultural production accounts for more than 23 percent of the country's GDP, and our industry also depends on the farm sector. More than \$10 billion in foreign exchange is earned in the form of exports from the cotton obtained from the agricultural sector, while India and China are earning more foreign exchange by 3 to 4 times by value addition of cotton. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan is the fourth largest cotton producer in the world, fifth in milk production, sixth in wheat and sugarcane production, eleventh in rice produc-

tion, sixteenth in meat production, and fourth largest producer of apricot production. However, we are far behind in processing, packaging, and value addition resulting in a lot of wastage. The country has limited means for water shortage, expensive agricultural inputs, and poor seed quality are also matters of concern. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan has the best canal system in the world. Still, much water is wasted before it reaches the fields. Due to the increasing use of pesticides and other chemicals, the water salinity problem is becoming serious, so there is a need to establish a standard for their use. Land erosion is a significant problem in rainfed areas, which reduces fertility, land area, agricultural production, forest area, and water reserves.—DNA

## Israeli ban on UNRWA

UNITED Nations and human rights institutions have warned of dangerous repercussions of implementing the Israeli decision banning the operations of the United Nations Work and Relief Agency (UNRWA). Such a decision, UN officials said, would negatively affect millions of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. "As time passes by, imposing a dangerous resolution concerning the agency becomes closer," Juliette Touma, communications director for the UN's agency for Palestine refugees, warned in press statements last Saturday, affirming that the ban will go in effect soon. Touma asserted that once the ban comes in effect, the agency will not be able to provide essential services for millions of Palestinian refugees in Gaza Strip, West Bank, and in East Jerusalem. The UN official pointed out that there is no way to replace UNRWA at the moment, stressing that the Israeli Knesset must reconsider its decision to suspend the agency's operations. Meanwhile, Ali Hweidi, the general director of Association 302 to Defend Refugees Rights said that the ban is set to come into effect on the 28th of January 2025. "So far, there is no executive resolution to suspend the agency's operations in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, or other districts," Hweidi told our correspondent. He also pointed out that the agency is still fulfilling its roles, adding that there is no sufficient information about how the occupation state will deal with alternatives of the UNRWA. "The agency will not be able to resume its work in the regions under the Israeli control as all its offices and bank accounts inside Israel will be closed," Hweidi underlined, pointing out that the occupation has been deliberately targeting the agency which provides basic services for about 5.9 million Palestinians. "The Israeli ban on the agency under the current harsh circumstances will definitely result in dangerous human consequences," Hweidi affirmed, stressing that the ban will aggravate the suffering of the refugees especially in the Gaza Strip, who are fully dependent on utterly inadequate amounts of aid allowed across the border. Hweidi also warned that the decision to close UNRWA aims at closing the file of Palestinian refugees in general and abolish the right of return. He called on the international community and human rights institutions to stop the ongoing violations against the Palestinian refugees, affirming the importance of popular movements and media and diplomatic pressure on decision makers in the UN in order to support the rights of Palestinian refugees and provide protection to the agency. In this context, New York Times newspaper reported that UN officials warned of the catastrophic repercussions of the ban on the agency in Gaza and the West Bank, which would lead to a complete suspension of the agency's operations in these regions. A UN official stated that aid workers' movement within Gaza must be coordinated with Israel, warning that the employees' lives will be endangered and the relief operations will be difficult if the ban is fully enforced. For his part, the Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator, Jaime McGoldrick, responsible for overseeing UN humanitarian operations in the West Bank, said in a press statement that if the Israeli aim is to stop us from saving lives, the motives and ultimate goal of this ban must be questioned. McGoldrick highlighted that the agency's operations in Gaza and the West Bank constitute the artery of the lives of millions of Palestinian refugees who completely depend on the basic UNRWA services.



## A conservative Canadian PM

JUSTIN Trudeau came to power promising to extend economic links with China. The Canadian prime minister has announced his resignation amid the worst bilateral relations between the two countries in decades. Much of it has been beyond his control, as Washington has demanded Western allies to fall in line in its intensifying rivalry with Beijing. But Trudeau and his ministers contributed to the deteriorating relations by their own inept handling, chief of which was Canada's controversial arrest of Huawei Technologies' No 2, Meng Wanzhou, in late 2018 at the request of the Americans for extradition. With plummeting popularity in repeated surveys as many Canadians face worsening cost-of-living and housing crises, along with a labour market as bad as during the Covid-19 pandemic, calls for his resignation even within his own Liberal Party could no longer be ignored or denied. It didn't help that incoming US president-elect Donald Trump kept calling him Governor Trudeau and Canada the 51st state of the United States, making him look even weaker. Trudeau will stay in place until the next Liberal Party leader is chosen. The Liberals will have to move fast as the opposition – the Conservative Party and the leftist New Democrats – are threatening to bring down the government, which could happen in the next two months. The caretaker prime minister will need to quickly establish his or her appeal to Canadian voters before the next federal election. The latest poll this week sees the Conservatives, led by Pierre Poilievre, leading by at least 24 percentage points over both the Liberals and New Democrats. Poilievre, the kind of brash rightist leader that Trump likes, has been building support momentum with voters, with his news media allies practically treating him as the next prime minister. It's hard to see the new Liberal leader being able to close the wide polling gap before the next federal election, at least not with the four likely contenders being mentioned. Dominic LeBlanc, the minister of both finance and intergovernmental affairs, and a long-time party insider, and Foreign Minister Melanie Joly are Trudeau loyalists and so may be too tainted for voters. Chrystia Freeland, whose resignation last month as finance minister and deputy prime minister was widely seen as a repudiation of her boss and one-time close ally, is a strong contender. She is a hawk on Russia and is likely to be even more openly hawkish against China if chosen as party leader. Mark Carney, the former governor of both the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England, is widely respected by the international finance and investment community. But his talent as a political leader is untested, and he is exactly the kind of technocrat that Trump disdains. He may be the most pragmatic with China over bilateral economic relations. Poilievre, the Conservative leader, may be Canada's "Tariff Man", the moniker that Trump has assigned to himself. Following the US lead, the Trudeau government has already slapped a 100 per cent tariff on Chinese electric vehicles and a 25 per cent tariff on Chinese steel and aluminium products. But Poilievre has called for extending high duties to other critical minerals and products from China. Highly critical of Trudeau's unpopular carbon tax, he wants to sell much more oil and gas to the US. Like Trump, he wants to reduce government bureaucracy and cut taxes on sales of new homes and, of course, the carbon tax, but not corporate tax. He too is no fan of foreign aid.

## USA and Europe: Preparing to deport Muslims

Qamar Bashir



These extremist opinions promote division and sow discord in societies worldwide, exacerbating tensions and conflicts. Elon Musk amplified Donald Trump's sarcastic remarks about Prime Minister Trudeau, which had previously caused controversy, suggesting Canada could become the 51st state of the United States. Musk has also made other provocative statements, including a tweet insinuating

IN his latest interview, Trump expressed his views on Islam and Muslim immigrants, stating, "Look at Paris. Look at London. Europe is no longer recognizable. I will never let that happen to the United States of America. There is unbelievable hatred against us in Islam, and we have to be very vigilant; we have to be very careful. We cannot allow people to come to our country who harbor this hatred of the United States." Since Elon Musk took over Twitter and rebranded it as X, the platform has shifted from being a space for balanced discourse to a tool increasingly used for political, religious, and propaganda purposes, spreading hatred, racial animosity, and extremist views. These extremist opinions promote division and sow discord in societies worldwide, exacerbating tensions and conflicts. Elon Musk amplified Donald Trump's sarcastic remarks about Prime Minister Trudeau, which had previously caused controversy, suggesting Canada could become the 51st state of the United States. Musk has also made other provocative statements, including a tweet insinuating the annexation of Greenland by the United States and another proposing a merger of the United Kingdom with the U.S. In yet another controversial tweet, Musk called for the King to dissolve the British Parliament over its alleged failure to address sex grooming gangs. Emboldened by the momentum generated by figures like Trump and Elon Musk, particularly through X, the platform now serves as a channel for selective and biased hateful material. This skewed propaganda is gaining traction, generating significant pressure to push governments toward decisive actions against Muslims, including deportation. The targeted rhetoric against Islam and Muslims, often rooted in misrepresentation and prejudice, poses a severe threat to social harmony and the rights of individuals with origins in Islamic countries. Encouraged by Elon Musk and Trump, Geert Wilders, a leader of the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), used X to propagate his hateful five-step plan to address the "Islamization" of the Netherlands, reflecting his staunchly critical stance on Islam. His plan includes acknowledging Islam as incompatible with Dutch society, closing borders to immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, dismantling Islamic institutions such

as mosques and schools, jailing or deporting Muslims who threaten violence, and refusing to give in to threats or intimidation from Islamist groups. He also proposed the publication of Cartoon portraying Mohammad (PBUH). France has implemented stringent measures to regulate religious movements perceived as "cults," primarily through the About-Picard Law of 2001. This law enables the dissolution of organizations deemed a threat to public order or individual freedoms and prosecutes leaders for offenses like fraud, psychological manipulation, or abuse. These laws unfairly stigmatize minority religions and restrict religious freedoms, often targeting smaller or newer movements. Germany employs sect filters to monitor and restrict minority religious groups, most notably the Church of Scientology, citing concerns about their anti-democratic tendencies. These filters are used in employment, where job applicants, especially in businesses tied to government contracts, must declare they have no affiliation with targeted groups. Similar requirements exist in the public sector, including schools and civil service roles. Under Elon Musk's leadership, X has increasingly become a platform amplifying hate speech. This shift has provided fertile ground for hateful commentary and propaganda, emboldening extremists to spread venom against Muslims and their faith. Numerous comments highlight this disturbing trend, reflecting deeply entrenched animosity. One user stated: "We want freedom, and it is our duty to speak out against rape, against grooming gangs, against Sharia law, against barbarism. Another added: "GET RID OF THIS AWFUL MUSLIM LONDON MAYOR SADIQ KHAN; he is the reason for all this." The rhetoric escalates with blatantly racist remarks such as: "Let's get RACE out of politics! WHITE COUNTRIES FOR WHITE PEOPLE! You can't Make America (or Europe) GREAT Again unless you Make America (and Europe) WHITE Again!" Others propose extreme measures: "Destroy all mosques in Europe and ban Islam completely. Ban halal meat with immediate effect (they will deport themselves). Then, slowly, revoke citizenship and visas, deport them in groups. Freeze bank accounts, benefits, etc., to enforce." Some users invoked Geert Wilders' five-step plan

as a solution, with one warning: "Britain must start implementing Geert Wilders' 5-step plan for Islam; otherwise, Prince William may probably be the last king of England (if at all), and Buckingham Palace will be converted into England's (Islamland) Central Mosque. One comment stated: "Some European countries can see the destruction of their nation, culture, values, and heritage by allowing Muslim immigrants to select their countries." Asserting: "Anyone who openly seeks to impose Sharia law on a non-Muslim country is a TRAITOR and should be treated appropriately. Sharia would destroy all our hard-won freedoms and human rights." This vitriol extends to Muslims in Europe, with one comment demanding: "Muslims, get out of Holland! Leave for an Islamic country. The Netherlands is not an Islamic state. Go to an Islamic country and enjoy Islam." Another cited the necessity of deportation: "Dutch authorities have no choice but to deport every Muslim thug who participated in the attack on peaceful soccer fans in Amsterdam." This flood of incendiary comments on X underscores how the platform has become a vehicle for fueling hatred, promoting division, and reinforcing dangerous stereotypes. By providing a space for such views to flourish unchecked, X risks becoming a catalyst for real-world discrimination, violence, and societal fragmentation. Given that Muslims should be deported from Europe and the USA, European powers such as the Netherlands, Britain, and France had the "legitimate rights to destroy Muslim societies." The Dutch controlled Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim region, for nearly 350 years (early 1600s–1949). Britain ruled over Muslim-majority regions like India, Pakistan, and parts of the Middle East for almost 200 years, while France dominated North Africa and parts of the Middle East for over 130 years, with Algeria under its control from 1830 to 1962. They killed over 6.95 million Muslims, leaving behind a legacy of instability, exploiting resources, dismantling local governance, and leaving many nations impoverished and divided.

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

## Democratic regression and autocratization

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



One notable concern pertains to the international implications of this trend. The global distribution of liberal democracies versus autocracies has exacerbated competition between regime models on a global scale. Governments of eroding democracies increasingly challenge the liberal international order by abandoning multilateral frameworks, adopting counter-hegemonic

THE intensifying pressure on democracy has emerged as a significant challenge for policymakers and practitioners, drawing considerable attention from scholars. There is widespread agreement among experts regarding a global decline in democratization alongside a rise in autocratization. The democratization wave that generated substantial optimism after 1989 began to wane in the mid-2000s, giving way to what some describe as a "new wave of autocratization" or "democratic regression". While the idea of an autocratization wave remains contested (Skaaning, 2020), specific aspects warrant deeper examination. Alarming, the decline is not confined to weakly institutionalized democracies or low-income nations; even consolidated democracies such as Hungary and Poland EU members with strong middle-income economies have experienced democratic regression. More strikingly, large democracies like India and Brazil, as well as nations traditionally seen as resistant to such trends, including the United States, have also shown signs of democratic regression. The outcomes of these regressions vary, ranging from transitions from liberal to flawed democracies to outright authoritarianism. One notable concern pertains to the international implications of this trend. The global distribution of liberal democracies versus autocracies has exacerbated competition between regime models on a global scale. Governments of eroding democracies increasingly challenge the liberal international order by abandoning multilateral frameworks, adopting counter-hegemonic strategies and either withdrawing from international institutions or refraining from joining significant international agreements. Additionally, autocratization is shifting the balance of global economic power and trade relations, as countries like India and Turkey align themselves with authoritarian regimes. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has further heightened security concerns and increased awareness among democracies of their vulnerabilities and dependencies on autocratic states. The concept of "democratic regression" is pivotal in understanding this phenomenon. Erdmann and Kneuer categorize democratic regression into three forms: the decline of democratic quality within democracies, the erosion of democracy into hybrid regimes, and the breakdown of democracy into outright dictatorship. These processes are encapsulated under two primary trajectories: "rapid death" (breakdown) and "slow death" (loss of democratic quality and erosion). Since Lust and Waldner's (2015) seminal work, the notion of

"democratic backsliding" has gained significant traction, becoming a dominant term for describing the gradual decline of democracy. A search on Google Scholar reveals over 17,700 references to "democratic backsliding" in titles since 2010, with 16,500 of these appearing between 2020 and 2023. Despite its widespread adoption, the term has faced criticism. Scholars such as Bogaards (2018) and Lührmann and Lindberg (2019) argue that it implies an unintentional or unconscious reversal, which may not always align with the intentional actions observed in many cases of democratic decline. Moreover, the term suggests a return to a previous state, which may not accurately describe transitions from democracy to hybrid or authoritarian regimes without reverting to prior political systems. Alternatively, the term "democratic erosion" more precisely captures the gradual and agent-driven processes that undermine democratic structures. As Kneuer (2021) highlights, erosion conveys the involvement of an agent (such as political actors) and a structure (democracy) that is incrementally hollowed out, leaving behind a façade of its former self. This façade is often repurposed to support illiberal and anti-democratic governance. Although metaphors inherently carry ambiguity, "erosion" provides a clearer depiction of the process's agents, subjects, and outcomes than "backsliding." A critical task for scholars is to define the starting point of these processes. Some researchers conceptualize these changes as "de-democratization," emphasizing the movement away from democratic norms. Others prefer "autocratization," which Cassani and Tomini (2019) describe as a "regime change toward autocracy," encompassing shifts from democracy as well as from other regime types. Lührmann and Lindberg, however, broaden the scope of autocratization to include processes occurring in both democratic and autocratic contexts. This broad application has drawn criticism, as it risks conflating temporary and contingent losses of democratic quality with sustained and substantial transformations. For instance, France's state of emergency following the 2015 terrorist attacks led to a temporary decline in civil liberties and democratic quality, as reflected in lower scores by Freedom House and the Democracy Index. However, France subsequently regained its status as a full democracy, demonstrating that not all declines signal long-term autocratization or democratic erosion. A more precise approach conceptualizes regime transformation along a democracy-autocracy continuum, where democratization and autocratization represent substantial and sustained improvements or declines in

democratic attributes (Maerz et al., 2021). Within this framework, democratic regression pertains to declines within democratic regimes, while autocratic deepening describes further deterioration within autocratic states. Democratic erosion, therefore, encompasses processes such as the decline in democratic quality, transitions from liberal to electoral democracies, and eventual breakdowns into electoral authoritarian regimes. Distinguishing between democratic erosion and contingent losses of quality requires attention to the intentionality and normative commitments of political actors. Agency plays a central role in driving democratic erosion. Scholars widely agree that democratic erosion results from deliberate actions by political leaders who exploit their control over executive and legislative branches to alter democratic norms. Leaders such as Hugo Chávez, Viktor Orbán, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and others have demonstrated the ability to change the rules of the game through legal and electoral means, thereby securing legitimacy while implementing illiberal agendas. These "erosion agents" act under three conditions: possessing the power to enact changes, the intention to undermine democracy, and the ability to mobilize support for their agenda. Normative commitment to democracy is another critical factor. Mainwaring (2022) emphasizes that the longevity of democracy often depends on the commitment of political actors to uphold democratic principles. Erosion agents, by contrast, lack such commitment, actively seeking to replace democratic norms with illiberal and anti-democratic alternatives. Leaders such as Chávez openly rejected representative democracy, portraying it as an outdated and oppressive system, and sought to establish alternative models like participatory democracy. However, these models often fail to meet the standards of democratic governance, undermining core principles such as representativeness and checks and balances. Ultimately, understanding democratic regression requires distinguishing between different processes and their underlying causes. While democratic erosion involves the gradual weakening of democratic norms and institutions, autocratization signifies a more profound transformation toward authoritarianism. Temporary and contingent declines, as seen in cases like France, highlight the importance of context in assessing the trajectory of democratic change. By examining the actions, intentions, and normative commitments of political actors, scholars can better identify the drivers of democratic regression and develop strategies to counteract these trends.



## Briefs

## PSX stays bearish, loses 1,904 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 1,904.23 points, a negative change of 1.64 percent, closing at 114,148.46 points as compared to 116,052.68 points on the last trading day. A total of 116,052.68 shares were traded during the day as compared to 792,770,655 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 32.466 billion against Rs.39.694 billion on the last trading day. As many as 464 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 118 of them recorded gains and 293 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 53 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 520,199,852 shares at Rs 1.79 per share, Cnergico PK with 41,301,063 shares at Rs.7.00 per share and Fauji Foods Limited with 34,830,810 shares at Rs.17.64 per share.—APP

## Gold prices up by Rs1,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,000 and was sold at Rs 277,000 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs 276,000 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.858 to Rs.237,483 from Rs 236,625 whereas that of 20 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs.217,693 from Rs 216,907. 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 \$2,652 from \$2642, the Association reported.—APP

## Rupee sheds 06 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 06 paisa against the US dollar in the inter-bank trading and closed at Rs278.72 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.66. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.75 and Rs 280.25 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs2.29 to close at Rs 288.01 against the last day's closing of Rs290.30, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged to close at Rs1.76, whereas a decrease of Rs2 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs347.51 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs349.81. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 and 03 paisa to close at Rs75.88 and Rs74.25, respectively.—APP

## Qatar, Turkiye dispatch 2 power ships to generate electricity for Syria

LONDON: Qatar and Turkiye sent two power-generating ships to Syria on Tuesday to help address the energy crisis in the country caused by insufficient electricity supplies. Khaled Abu Di, the director of Syria's Public Establishment for Transmission and Distribution of Electricity, said the floating power plants are capable of generating a total of 800 megawatts a day, which would increase the amount of electricity generated in the country by about 50 percent, state news agency SANA reported. Syria's energy infrastructure was badly damaged during more than a decade of civil war in the country that culminated in the fall of the ruling Assad regime in December. The deterioration resulted in severe power shortages, with many areas receiving electricity for only two or three hours a day.—APP

## ICCI to collaborate with authorities for drug-free capital

Acting senior VP Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry said that by working together with relevant authorities, ICCI aims to create a safe and secure environment that fosters business growth and prosperity

DNA  
ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) is actively working to eliminate drug abuse in the capital city, aiming to create a healthier, cleaner, greener, and more eco-friendly environment. This was highlighted by the ICCI Acting President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, during a meeting of the ICCI Sub-Committee on Anti-Narcotics at the Chamber House. He expressed concern over the rising use of drugs, particularly among youth, and emphasized the responsibility of all citizens to expose and fight the drug trade. He praised the efforts of state agencies like the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and the police in combating drug trafficking at all levels. He urged these agencies to adopt stricter measures against those involved in the illicit trade. As far as the ICCI is concerned, it is committed to raising awareness through seminars, walks, and sports events to sensitize the community, he added. Acting senior vice President Nasir



Mehmood Chaudhry said that by working together with relevant authorities, ICCI aims to create a safe and secure environment that fosters business growth and prosperity. This collaborative approach is expected to yield positive results and contribute to the

overall development of Islamabad. Raja Tariq Mehmood Kiyani, Director of Legal at ANF Headquarters, emphasized that youth are the primary victims of drug abuse and stressed the importance of immediate actions to protect their future. He reassured that ANF

will fully cooperate with the ICCI in its efforts to curb the menace at all levels. Mohammad Ethsham Chaudhry, Convener of the Anti-Narcotics Sub-Committee, affirmed the committee's commitment to eliminating anti-state elements

involved in the drug trade. Malik Mohsin Khalid, Executive Member and co-convenor of the committee, welcomed the guests and outlined the Chamber's efforts to support the business community and the public's well-being.

## Ahsan for Gwadar Port's cost-effective trade routes marketing

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday directed the quarters concerned to prepare marketing templates and packages, showcasing Gwadar Deep Seaport's cost-effective trade routes and potential incentives for international businesses. "These materials will be distributed through Pakistan's embassies and missions worldwide to promote Gwadar Port on a global scale," he said while chairing a high-level meeting on the operationalization of Gwadar Port here, a news release said. The meeting was attended by senior officials from the Planning Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Petroleum, and other relevant departments. Representatives from embassies participated in the discussion via video link. During the meeting, the minister emphasized Gwadar Port's strategic significance as one of Pakistan's most valuable assets. He highlighted that Gwadar provided the shortest trade route to Gulf and Central Asian countries, including Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and has immense potential to serve as a key regional trans-shipment hub. The minister noted the lack of commercial analysis and a comprehensive operational plan for Gwadar Port, calling for immediate efforts to unlock its potential. He stressed the need for a robust action plan within six months to generate trade traffic through the port. "This initiative aims to create job opportunities for local residents and boost the regional economy." The minister urged the Balochistan Mining Department to develop proposals for exporting finished white marble instead of raw materials, emphasizing the importance of value addition to enhance Pakistan's mineral exports. To ensure Gwadar remains competitive in the region, Ahsan Iqbal instructed the National Logistics Cell (NLC) to conduct a detailed cost analysis for trans-shipment routes. He highlighted the need for competitive pricing and viable logistics solutions to attract international trade. The minister also called for focused efforts to facilitate trade between Gulf countries and China through Gwadar, presenting it as the most economical and efficient route for imports and exports. He reiterated that the port offered the cheapest shipping options and must be marketed aggressively to the international community. The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment to making Gwadar a thriving regional trade hub, with all stakeholders directed to work collaboratively toward this goal.—DNA

## French minister calls for hijab ban on school trips

LONDON: French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau has called for a ban on Muslim women wearing hijabs while accompanying children on school outings. The Times reported. French state schools already have a ban on religious head coverings, while the senate approved a bill mandating the removal of headscarves on school outings in 2019, but it did not become law. "The threat of attack has never been so great as now," said Retailleau. "It is now primarily endogenous — young individuals radicalized through social media. Last year alone, our services foiled nine attacks, the highest number since 2017." Political Islam poses a national threat as it seeks to "overturn our institutions and undermine national cohesion to impose Shariah law in the long term," he added. To combat this, the French state must curtail the spread of Islamism in public spaces, sports and education, he said. "Women accompanying them (students) should not be veiled," Retailleau added. "The veil is a banner for Islamism, a marker of the subordination of women to men."—APP

## EU could lift some Syria sanctions quickly, says French FM

The US waivers allow some energy transactions and personal remittances to Syria until July 7, but do not remove any sanctions

PARIS: European Union sanctions in Syria that obstruct the delivery of humanitarian aid and hinder the country's recovery could be lifted swiftly, France's foreign minister said Wednesday. The United States on Monday issued a sanctions exemption for transactions with governing institutions in Syria for six months after the end of Bashar Assad's rule to try to ease the flow of humanitarian assistance. Speaking to France Inter radio, Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the EU could take a similar decision soon without giving precise timing, while adding that lifting more political sanctions would depend on how Syria's new leadership handled the transition and ensured exclusivity. "There are other (sanctions), which today hinder access to humanitarian aid, which hinder the recovery of the country. These could be lifted quickly," said Barrot, who met Syria's de facto leader Ahmed Al-Sharaa on Friday with Germany's foreign minister. "Finally, there are other sanctions, which we are discussing with our European partners, which could be lifted, but obviously depending on the pace at which our expectations for Syria regarding women and security are taken into account." Three European diplomats speaking on condition of anonymity said the EU would seek to agree to lift some sanctions by the time the bloc's 27 foreign ministers meet in Brussels on Jan. 27. Two of the diplomats said one aim was to facilitate financial transactions to allow funds to return to the country, ease air transport and lessen sanctions targeting the energy sector to improve power supplies. Syria suffers from severe power shortages, with state-supplied electricity available two or three hours per day in most areas. The caretaker government says it aims to provide electricity for up to eight hours per day within two months. The US waivers allow some energy transactions and personal remittances to Syria until July 7, but do not remove any sanctions.—Agencies

## Trudeau rejects Trump's idea of forcing Canada to become US state

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Tuesday dismissed a suggestion by US President-elect Donald Trump that he might use "economic force" to make Canada the 51st US state. "There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States," he said in a post on X. "Workers and communities in both our countries benefit from being each other's biggest

trading and security partner." Trump, speaking in Mar-a-Lago, was asked if he was considering using military force to acquire Canada. "No, economic force," he responded. "Because Canada and the United States, that would really be something," Trump, who has long complained about Canada's trade surplus with the US, had earlier told reporters the border was an "artificially drawn line." Trump has

threatened to impose a 25 per cent tariff on imports from Canada, which sends 75pc of all goods and services exports south of the border. Earlier on Tuesday, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said Trump's comments "show a complete lack of understanding of what makes Canada a strong country... We will never back down in the face of threats." Trudeau announced on Monday that he would step down in the

coming months, bowing to pressure from lawmakers alarmed by his Liberal Party's unpopularity. The next election must be held by Oct. 20 and polls predict a crushing win for the official opposition Conservatives. "Canada will never be the 51st state. Period. We are a great and independent country," Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre said in a post on X.—Agencies

## Yoon faces new arrest attempt in fortified compound

SEOUL: South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol faces a new and potentially more robust attempt to arrest him for insurrection after a top investigator vowed to do whatever it takes to break a security blockade and take in the impeached leader. Acting president Choi Sang-mok urged on Wednesday authorities to "do their best to prevent any injuries to citizens or physical conflict between government agencies" while executing Yoon's arrest warrant. Protesters supporting and opposing the embattled Yoon braved freezing temperatures to stage rallies on the streets around the presidential compound on Wednesday after a court reissued a warrant on Tuesday to arrest him. The Presidential Security Service (PSS) has been fortifying the compound this week with barbed wire and barricades using buses to block access to the residence, a hillside villa in an upscale district known as Korea's Beverly Hills. Yoon is under criminal investigation for insurrection over his failed attempt to impose martial law on Dec. 3, a decision that stunned South Korea and prompted the first arrest warrant for a sitting president. He also faces an impeachment trial in the Constitutional Court. One of Yoon's lawyers said the president could not accept the execution of the arrest warrant because it was issued by a court in the wrong jurisdiction and the team of investigators formed to probe the incumbent leader had no mandate to do so. Yoon Kab-keun, the lawyer, also denied suggestions by some members of parliament that Yoon had fled the official residence, saying he had met the president there on Tuesday. He said they were "malicious rumors" intended to slander Yoon. On Tuesday, Oh Dong-woon, head of the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO), which is leading the investigation, apologized for failing to arrest the president last week after a six-hour standoff with hundreds of PSS agents, some of whom were carrying firearms, and military guards at the compound. "We'll do our best to accomplish our goal by thoroughly preparing this time with great determination that the second warrant execution will be the last," Oh told a parliament committee.—Agencies

## Afghanistan's trade doubles, but deficit and sanctions hinder growth

"The political change in the country in 2021 affected the country's economy in all aspects ... (But) Afghanistan's trade, particularly exports, has seen a 100 percent progress," Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, told Arab News earlier this week

KABUL: Afghanistan's trade has doubled since the Taliban took over in 2021, the latest government data shows, but experts warn there is no evidence of economic growth as the import-export deficit continues to soar amid Western-imposed sanctions. In 2024, Afghanistan's trade value reached over \$12.4 billion, more than twice the \$6.1 billion recorded in 2021, according to data released by the National Statistics and Information Authority. "The political change in the country in 2021 affected

the country's economy in all aspects ... (But) Afghanistan's trade, particularly exports, has seen a 100 percent progress," Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, told Arab News earlier this week. Under the Taliban government, the South Asian country saw exports rise from \$850 million in 2021 to about \$1.8 billion last year. Imports, however, have also surged from \$5.3 billion to \$10.6 billion in the same period. While according to Jawad it was "a

sign that the country's trade is going toward stability and growth," experts are warning about the impacts of Afghanistan's widening trade deficit in an already fragile economy which was severely affected by US-imposed sanctions and had suffered through two years of sharp economic contraction. Despite a modest recovery of about 2.7 percent in 2023-24, the World Bank estimates it could take over a decade for the economy to return to pre-Taliban growth levels. "Our imports are increasing every day, and

this is hindering the progress in local production together with other problems such as shortage of electricity and a lack of infrastructure ... Necessary actions must be taken to increase exports," Khan Jan Alokzay, deputy head of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment, told Arab News. To reduce the trade gap the Afghan government must work toward strengthening its industrial sector, according to Amin Stanekzai, economist and lecturer at the Rokhan Institute of Higher Education in the east-

ern province of Nangarhar. This means facilitating investment, supporting local businesses to enter international markets and encouraging people to use and support local products. "In order to reduce the deficit, the country's market needs should be met locally and domestic production is supported while domestic capacities need to be improved," he told Arab News. "Afghanistan is still completely an importing country and until this situation changes, speaking of economic growth is irrelevant.—Agencies

## Grief, nostalgia in India's 'Jimmy Carter village'

NEW DELHI: In a quiet village tucked in the shadow of India's capital, the late US president Jimmy Carter's name is etched for posterity. , or the "village of Carter" was abruptly renamed from Daultapur Nasirabad after an hour-long visit by the Nobel laureate in 1978. The renaming was suggested by India's then-prime minister Morarji Desai who accompanied Carter on the visit to the small hamlet, some 30 kilometres (20 miles) from New Delhi. "When the proposal was mooted, all the village elders immediately said yes," recalled 71-year-old resident Attar Singh, who vividly remembers the January afternoon from nearly half a century ago. One of the last surviving members from the generation old enough to remember the occasion, Singh said he was "distressed" by Carter's death last month, and played a key role in staging a small tribute ceremony. A picture of the former president was quickly downloaded from the internet, framed, garlanded and placed at a local war memorial where a group of village elders made offerings of salty porridge and a newly stitched traditional turban. Singh said the porridge and the turban, along with a condolence message, were then shipped to the US Embassy. The entire village grieved because he considered him as one of our own," said Rajiv Kumar, a younger resident who was a toddler when Carter visited. The body of Carter, who died at the age of 100 last month, is currently lying in state in Washington and will be buried Thursday in his home state of Georgia. Carter's visit to the village, then home to less than 500 people, was not by chance.—APP

## Indian gov't appoints new head of space dept

NEW DELHI: India's federal government has appointed V Narayanan as the new Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and secretary of the Department of Space, officials said Wednesday. According to a government order, Narayanan will assume office on Jan. 14. He will succeed the incumbent ISRO chairman S Somanath. A distinguished scientist at ISRO, Narayanan presently serves as the director of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Center. India's state-run broadcaster All India Radio said Narayanan is a rocket and spacecraft propulsion expert with nearly four decades of experience. He joined ISRO in 1984.—APP

## Northwest A&amp;F students begin 3-month academic exchange program

ISLAMABAD: Earlier this month, a delegation of five master's students from the Silk Road program at the College of Life Sciences, Northwest A&F University, began a three-month joint training and academic exchange in Pakistan. This visit is designed to strengthen academic cooperation and lay the foundation for a Joint Agro-Biodiversity Research Center for Agro-Biological Resources and a Collaborative Laboratory, all in line with jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative. The delegation was welcomed in Islamabad by Professor Mukhtar Ahmad, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. During the meeting, Professor Ahmad expressed his full support for the program and emphasized the significance of collaborative student training and academic partnerships in enhancing scientific and educational cooperation between the two countries. The delegation also visited key institutions, including the Pakistan Science Foundation, the Pakistan Museum of Natural History, Herbarium of Pakistan (ISL) QAU, and the Sino-Pak Agricultural Biodiversity Research Center.—APP

## Briefs

**Gandapur declared absconder in protest case**

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) has declared Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur an absconder in the case related to protests against the disqualification of former prime minister Imran Khan. During the hearing, PTI leaders Faisal Javed and Wasiqayyum appeared before Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra. The court also declared Umar Tanveer Butt an absconder and initiated proceedings to declare AamirKiani an absconder as well. Faisal Javed submitted an application to remove terrorism charges from the case. The court issued arrest warrants for absent suspects, adjourned the hearing to January 15, and sought arguments on the pending applications.

**Trudeau hits back at Trump's statement**

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Tuesday dismissed a suggestion by US President-elect Donald Trump that he might use "economic force" to make Canada the 51st US state. "There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States," he said in a post on X. "Workers and communities in both our countries benefit from being each other's biggest trading and security partner." Trump, speaking in Mar-a-Lago, was asked if he was considering using military force to acquire Canada. "No, economic force," he responded. "Because Canada and the United States, that would really be something." Trump, who has long complained about Canada's trade surplus with the US, had earlier told reporters the border was an "artificially drawn line." - Agencies

# UK forces had 'golden pass' to carry out killings in Afghanistan

The investigation focuses on a series of nighttime operations, known as deliberate detention operations, conducted by British forces between mid-2010 and mid-2013 in Afghanistan

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Soldiers from the British special forces have voiced alarming concerns during a public inquiry regarding alleged murders of non-threatening Afghans during operations against suspected Taliban insurgents, including individuals under the age of 16. This independent inquiry, ordered by the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD), follows a documentary claiming that members of the Special Air Service (SAS) killed 54 individuals under suspicious circumstances during the Afghanistan conflict over a decade ago. The investigation focuses on a series of nighttime operations, known as deliberate detention operations, conducted by British forces between mid-2010 and

mid-2013. On Wednesday, the inquiry released a summary of testimonies from seven UK special forces witnesses, who provided their evidence in secrecy for national security reasons. One soldier, identified only as N1799, recounted raising concerns in 2011 about a unit dubbed UKSF1 after hearing about its operations during a training course. Another officer, referred to as N2107, expressed disbelief in an email regarding reports of UKSF1 operations, suggesting that detained suspects were released back into compounds, where they supposedly picked up weapons and attempted to attack the unit.

In his email, N2107 remarked, "Whilst murder and UKSF1 have oft been regular bedfellows, this is beginning to look bone," indicating that the situation appeared very

problematic. He later agreed with the inquiry's lead lawyer that by April 2011, he believed UKSF1 may have been involved in extra-judicial killings. While none of the soldiers testified to witnessing such actions, previous inquiries by British military police into allegations of misconduct in Afghanistan, including those against the SAS, have not resulted in enough evidence for prosecutions, according to the MoD. The inquiry aims to determine whether credible information exists regarding extra-judicial killings, whether prior investigations into N1799's concerns were adequately conducted, and if any unlawful killings were covered up. N1799 expressed feelings of disloyalty for speaking out and requested the removal of two MoD officials from the inquiry room due to safety concerns. He stated, "I believe I did the right thing

and I continue to, but it's not easy. It does make me feel a bit sick." His witness statement further detailed that during operations, it was claimed that "all fighting-age males are killed on target regardless of the threat they posed," including those not armed. N1799 also noted that there were indications of "fighting-age males" being executed inside compounds after being restrained, with one account mentioning a pillow being placed over an individual's head before being shot. He clarified that this included individuals under 18, specifically those younger than 16. As the inquiry progresses, other officers have also reported hearing rumors and sharing concerns about UKSF1 operations, where high casualty numbers and official accounts of killings raised doubts about their legitimacy.

## Another accused indicted in GHQ attack case

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A special anti-terrorism court indicted another accused, ShaheerSikandar, in the General Headquarters (GHQ) attack case. The hearing, held at Adiala Jail, was conducted by Judge Amjad Ali Shah. The PTI chairman, also an accused in the case, was presented in court, and attendance of all accused was recorded. During the proceedings, the defence counsel submitted three applications. Omar Ayub requested access to the case records, while Ajmal Sabir and Malik Ansar filed pleas seeking acquittal. The court directed the defence to present arguments on these applications at the next hearing and adjourned the case until January 13. It is noteworthy that charges have now been framed against all 119 accused in the GHQ attack case, with ShaheerSikandar being the final one to be indicted. Previously, 118 accused had already been indicted.

## 'EU could lift some Syria sanctions quickly'

PARIS: European Union sanctions in Syria that obstruct the delivery of humanitarian aid and hinder the country's recovery could be lifted swiftly, France's foreign minister said Wednesday. The United States on Monday issued a sanctions exemption for transactions with governing institutions in Syria for six months after the end of Bashar Assad's rule to try to ease the flow of humanitarian assistance. Speaking to France Inter radio, Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the EU could take a similar decision soon without giving precise timing, while adding that lifting more political sanctions would depend on how Syria's new leadership handled the transition and ensured exclusivity. "There are other (sanctions), which today hinder access to humanitarian aid, which hinder the recovery of the country." - Agencies

# Pak attaches great importance to its bilateral ties with UK

British High Commissioner calls on Khawaja Asif



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Jane Marriott called on Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif here in Islamabad on Wednesday. The minister said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Britain as Pak-UK relationship draws its strength from shared objectives for global peace and security. Large

number of Pakistani diaspora in UK acts as a living bridge between the two countries, he added. The minister expressed the hope that continuous defence cooperation via established forums would result in tangible progress in the field of defence cooperation between two countries. They expressed satisfaction over ongoing collaboration between two countries and stressed the need for further strengthening of ties.

# 'Imran getting taste of his own medicine'

SARGODHA: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday launched a fresh tirade against incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, saying that the difficulties being faced by the former prime minister were the result of "his own doings". "How can a person who uses youth as political fuel fall asleep," the provincial chief executive said while addressing the Honhaar Scholarship Programme ceremony in Sargodha. Urging the students not to go against the country "under any circumstances", she said that someone "who asks you to siege and arson is not your friend". His [Imran] own children were sitting outside [and] he is asking others to vandalise and spread anarchy," Maryam said, referring to the events of May 9, 2023 and the "final call protest" on November 26. Khan, who remains behind the bars in Adiala jail, and several others are facing various allegations in the cases related to the violence following his arrest on May 9. The vandalism was followed by the PTI founder's arrest on the aforementioned date in 2023 during which party workers protested, taking to the streets across the country and damaging public and private property, including military installations. The riots also led to the deaths of at least eight people and injured several others, prompting the authorities to arrest thousands of PTI workers and followers. During the event today, the Punjab CM regretted that those children, who were misled by the PTI founder's statements, were in jail. "All these events were result of an individual's greed for power," she added. Referring to the military court sentence for Hassan Niazi, Maryam regretted that the nephew of the PTI founder "mocked the military's uniform and brought shame to the country". "He [Niazi] was jailed for ten years... his future has been destroyed," she added. - DNA

# First aid convoy reaches crisis-hit Parachinar

SHAMIM SHAHID

KURRAM: A convoy of 40 vehicles carrying food and other necessities was dispatched to Kurram district on Wednesday after being stalled in Thall for five days, according to government officials. Clashes stemming from decades-old land disputes have claimed at least 130 lives since November, with food and medicine shortages reported due to weeks-long road blockades. After months of violence, a peace agreement was signed between the warring sides on January 1. Despite a lull in fighting, the route connecting Parachinar with the rest of the province remained blocked. However, on Jan 4, a government convoy came under attack near the Bagan area, in which the deputy commissioner of Kurram also sustained injuries. Since then, the convoy had been stranded. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government spokesperson Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said that 10 of the trucks, meant for the Bagan area, had safely arrived while another convoy of 30 vehicles had arrived in Parachinar and Up-

per Kurram. Barrister Saif added that the convoy left after talks with protesters from the Bagan area concluded successfully late on Tuesday. "More convoys would also be dispatched to the restive district soon." He added that the government was consistently taking steps for the relief of the affected population and these convoys were a key part of those efforts. The negotiations, in which the Grand Jirga, Kurram Peace Committee, and local peace committees played a pivotal role, led to an agreement with local protesters to remove barriers and allow the transportation of relief goods. Saif emphasised that the restoration of peace and order in the region was a top priority for the provincial government and all necessary measures were being taken to fulfil the needs of the affected people. Commending the cooperation of local elders in maintaining peace, Saif said that the role of jirgas and peace committees was a significant step towards long-term stability in the region. He assured that the government would further strengthen this collaboration and adopt a strategy to involve all stakeholders in the process.

# India, Afghanistan seek to revive trade talks

New Delhi to provide further support to Afghan health sector and rehabilitation of refugees, says India



DUBAI: India's Foreign Secretary, Vikram Misri, held talks with the Taliban's foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, in Dubai on Wednesday, marking the first officially acknowledged meeting between an Indian foreign secretary and a senior Taliban official. The discussions focused on bilateral relations, regional developments, and Afghanistan's humanitarian and developmental needs, India's External Affairs Ministry said in a statement. The ministry emphasized India's "historic friendship" with the Afghan

people. It reaffirmed India's readiness to address Afghanistan's pressing developmental needs while evaluating its ongoing humanitarian assistance programs. Muttaqi expressed gratitude for India's continued support and engagement, the statement said. According to the statement, India pledged additional material support to Afghanistan's health sector and refugee rehabilitation programs. The two sides also explored opportunities to enhance cooperation in sports, particularly cricket, which resonates strongly with Afghanistan's younger population. The use of Iran's Chabahar port, which is operated by an Indian state-run firm, was another key topic of discussion. Both sides agreed to promote the port as a hub for trade and humanitarian aid delivery, reflecting its growing strategic importance. The statement said that the Taliban assured India of its sensitivity to New Delhi's security concerns, including the presence of Pakistan-based militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in Afghanistan. India has consistently emphasized the importance of ensuring that Afghan territory is not used by anti-India elements. The meeting comes amid heightened regional tensions following Pakistan's recent airstrikes in Afghanistan, which reportedly killed at least 46 civilians, including women and children. -DNA



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