



# Islamabad POST

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**Pope Francis calls situation in Gaza 'shameful'**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Joseph voted Lebanon's new president**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Emma Raducanu handed daunting draw at AO 2025**

Detailed News On Page-06



**May 9 suspects**

## SC questions 'selective military trials' of civilians

103 accused were tried in military courts while rest being tried in ATCs, remarks Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court judges have questioned the government's rationale for trying civilians in military courts while cases of others involved in the same incident are being tried in anti-terrorism courts. "In the May 9 incidents, cases against 103 accused were tried in military courts, while the rest are being tried in anti-terrorism courts," Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan said during the hearing on Thursday. The remarks came as the constitutional bench headed by Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan heard intra-court appeals against trying civilians in military courts. The top court, in its unanimous verdict by a five-member bench, on October 23 last year, declared civilians' trials in military courts null and void and ordered that 103 suspects be tried in civilian courts. However, on December 13, 2023, a six-member bench of the apex court - with Justice Musarrat Hilali differing with the majority - suspended its October 23 order on petitions challenging the earlier verdict, which was then challenged. But after a hiatus, the constitutional bench in December last year had conditionally allowed military courts to pronounce reserved verdicts of 85 civilians who were still in custody for their alleged involvement in the May 9, 2023, riots. The May 9 riots refer to the violent protests triggered by the arrest of the PTI founder in a corruption case, during which state installations, including the General Headquarters, were also attacked. As a result, the military court handed down punishments to all 85 accused in the same month, but a few days earlier, 19 convicts were pardoned after they appealed for mercy. Questioning the grounds behind the military trials of civilians, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail inquired: "Who decides and how about where a case is to be tried for a particular offence?" "An accused is being acquitted by the ATC [but is then later] being punished by the military court,"

Continued on Page 06

## Omar Ayub seeks immediate meeting with Imran Khan

Govt isn't allowing the PTI leaders to meet Imran Khan: Omar Ayub

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub dared the government to arrange a meeting with the party founder Imran Khan if it actually has the power. Talking to media at Islamabad Judicial Complex, the opposition leader in National Assembly said that the government isn't allowing the PTI leaders to meet Imran Khan. "We were told that arranging a meeting with Imran Khan isn't included in the jail manual," said Omar Ayub. He said that PTI only wants formation of judicial commission to probe the events of May 9 and Nov 26 and immediate release of all the political workers. Earlier, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq expressed regret over allegations from PTI leaders, defending his role in facilitating talks between the government and opposition. Addressing criticism regarding his alleged inaction in arranging a meeting with the PTI founder, the Speaker clarified that facilitating such meetings does not fall under his mandate or responsibilities. "It is unfortunate that baseless criticism is being

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador Donald Blome pays Farewell call on Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. - DNA

## Pak passport plunges to 103rd rank in 2025

The list revealed that Pakistani passport only offers visa-free access to 33 countries

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani passport has seen further decline as it ranked at the 103rd place in the Henley Passport Index for 2025. The green passport falls alongside Yemen on the list. The list revealed that Pakistani passport only offers visa-free access to 33 countries. Singapore clinched the top spot for the year 2025 as its passport allowed visa-free access to 195 countries. Japan was ranked as the world's

Continued on Page 06

## After 4-year ban PIA set to resume Paris flight on Jan 10

All economy class seats on the Islamabad to Paris flight are sold out

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has received warm response from public for its Paris flight which is set to depart on January 10, 2025 after four year ban as all economy tickets have been sold out in advance. National carrier's spokesperson said all economy class seats on the Islamabad to Paris flight are sold out. From the first flight, PIA will get a revenue of more than 11 crore rupees. Spokesperson said the total capacity of the flight is 323 passengers.

Continued on Page 06

## Lawmakers sought Khan's release Global parliamentary group to observe Imran trials: lawyer

Inter-Parliamentary Union sending observer for Imran Khan trials, says lawyer Yousuf Chaudhry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A global parliamentary body has decided to send its representative to observe the trials against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, his lawyer revealed on Thursday. Khan's lawyer, Khalid Yousuf Chaudhry, told during a talk with a private news channel that he discussed the ex-prime minister's cases with an official of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) following which it decided to send its trial observer. The IPU, of which Pakistan is a member, facilitates parliamentary diplomacy and empowers parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy and sustainable development around the world. "The IPU representative was briefed on the judicial proceedings in the £190 million case," said Chaudhry in his statement. "They were also informed about the Toshakhana cases." He added, "I provided the IPU representative with details regarding the penalties in

Continued on Page 06

## ECP dismisses reference against Senator Abro

ECP's decision cleared Abro of the allegations

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has dismissed the disqualification reference filed against PTI Senator Saifullah Abro. In its reserved verdict, the ECP rejected the application filed by Senators Shahadat Awan and Majid Mahmood, who had sought Abro's disqualification. The case was heard by a three-member bench led by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja.

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## Briefs

### Nawaz to start activities from next week

The elder Sharif will hold meetings at Model Town secretariat on daily basis

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: PML-N President Nawaz Sharif has once again decided to start his political activities, Dunya News reported. According to details, the three-time prime minister will start political activities from next week. The elder Sharif will hold meetings at Model Town secretariat on a daily basis from Monday, said the sources. Nawaz Sharif will meet the party leaders at Model Town secretariat to discuss the political situation. The sources added that the performance of government and other party issues would be discussed in the meetings.

### Pak economy Improving: SBP chief

The governor attributed the positive trends to an increase in exports and remittances

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmed stated on Thursday that the country is on track to meet its economic targets, with its debt levels and balance of payments remaining under control. Speaking at the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Ahmad said that inflation is expected to decline further in January, while interest rates will also decrease due to improvements in debt repayment. The governor attributed the positive trends to an increase in exports and remittances, which have contributed to a better current account balance.

## Relief likely for masses

### 'Electricity prices may drop by up to Rs12 per unit'

Negotiations with K-Electric are underway to address excessive multi-year tariffs

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy, Awaiz Leghari, announced that ongoing talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) could result in a reduction of electricity rates by as much as Rs10 to 12 per unit. Speaking to the media at the Parliament House, Leghari revealed that renegotiations with Independent Power Producers (IPPs) have already saved the country Rs1,100 billion, with those savings benefiting the general public through lower electricity prices. The minister added that the government is now focusing on revisiting agreements with state-owned power plants, a move that is expected to lead to additional savings for consumers. "We are bringing 15 more IPP contracts to the cabinet for review, and we expect even more savings for the public," he said. Leghari also commented on the ongoing issue with K-Electric, which is demanding a large sum under its multi-year tariff. "We believe this tariff is unjustified and should be lowered. NEPRA will make a decision that serves

Continued on Page 06

### Hafiz Naeem announces nationwide protest on Jan 17

Hafiz Naeem criticises the govt's inaction on electricity prices despite IPPs closure

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) has announced plans for a nationwide protest on January 17, demanding a reduction in electricity prices. The announcement was made by party chief Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman during a press conference in Lahore. Hafiz Naeem criticised the government for not addressing the rising economic challenges, particularly the failure to reduce

Continued on Page 06

## 'No restriction on UAE work visas for Pakistanis'

Growing discontent among Middle Eastern states over the increased numbers of Pakistanis involved in begging has spurred authorities into action as they have started vigilant screening of passengers travelling to those destinations

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development was informed on Wednesday that there were "no restrictions on work visas" for Pakistanis travelling to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Growing discontent among Middle Eastern states over the increased numbers of Pakistanis involved in begging has spurred authorities into action as they have started vigilant screening of passengers travelling to those destinations. A senior Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) official told media that immigration staff at airports have offloaded several passengers from flights in the last couple of months to discourage the trend. On December 23, a Senate panel was informed that all Pakistani travellers to the UAE would need to be vetted and verified by the police. He added that travel agents were also instructed in this regard. During Wednesday's meeting,

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## Internet slowdown issue to be 'resolved in few days': PTCL

Telecom company says it added additional bandwidth but Meta-related apps might be affected in peak hours

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL) on Wednesday issued an update on the AAE-1 submarine cable issue, saying it added additional bandwidth which has majorly resolved

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# Imran vows provision of quality medicines

The minister assured the delegation that steps would be taken to address issues related to their service structure and promotions

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Khawaja Imran Nazir emphasized the provincial government's commitment to providing quality medicines to the people, stating that it aligns with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. Presiding over the 287th meeting of the Provincial Quality Control Board (PQCB) on Wednesday, the minister reiterated that artificial shortages of medicines across the province would not be tolerated under any circumstances. Khawaja Imran Nazir stressed that all pharmaceutical units must comply with inspections under the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) standards as part of the drug control regime. He warned that strict legal action would be taken against units resisting GMP inspections. To enhance transparency

and ensure the availability of authentic medicines, a new track-and-trace system has been introduced in the market. The minister underscored that the availability of quality medicines in markets and hospitals is a fundamental right of Punjab's 120 million citizens. He directed the Drug Control Wing to ensure a sufficient stock of medicines in hospitals and markets, with a particular focus on life-saving drugs. The supply chain of medicines will be closely monitored, starting from the inventory of pharmaceutical companies, to prevent any disruptions. The PQCB meeting was attended by key officials, including Special Secretary Operations Aoun Abbas Bukhari, Additional Secretary Dr. Qalandar Khan, DG Drug Control Muhammad Sohail, Chief Drug Controller Azhar Jamal Saleemi, Secretary Board Dr. Manwar Hayat, and senior medical professionals.

Later, Khawaja Imran Nazir met with a delegation of Lady Health Supervisors (LHS) at the IRMNCH office to discuss their concerns and demands. He acknowledged the critical role of Lady Health Workers (LHWs) and Supervisors in the health system, highlighting their importance in the success of vertical programs and the provision of medical services at health centers. The minister assured the delegation that steps would be taken to address issues related to their service structure and promotions. He also announced special attention to the training and professional upgradation of 42,000 LHWs and LHSs across Punjab. The delegation, led by Supervisors Sajda and Shahnaz, welcomed these commitments. Project Director IRMNCH Dr. Khalid Sakhani and Deputy Director Dr. Hamza were also present during the meeting.

## PRCS provides aid to 2000 families in Kurram

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has stepped up to support the crisis-affected communities of Parachinar and Kurram, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) by handing over 2000 essential relief items to Pakistan Red Crescent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa branch. Responding swiftly on the request of Governor KP, Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi, Honorable Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari ensured the timely provision of non-food items (NFIs) to alleviate the suffering of the affected people. Keeping in view the harsh winter weather conditions in Parachinar and Kurram, PRCS prioritized the provision of relief items, including Family Tents, Blankets, Tarpaulin Sheet, Kitchen Set, Jerrycan, Hygiene kits, Mosquito Nets and other essential supplies, to alleviate the suffering of families impacted by the crisis. The operation was carried out with the utmost urgency and efficiency, reflecting PRCS's commitment to its humanitarian mandate. Honorable Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari said, "We remain steadfast in our mission to provide humanitarian assistance wherever and whenever required. The timely support to the affected communities in Parachinar and Kurram exemplifies our commitment to standing with the people during emergencies." Governor KP Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, the PRCS KP branch and the affected people thanked Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari and expressed their appreciation for the proactive role played by PRCS National Headquarters (NHQ) in responding with timely support to the crisis.—APP

## Salik, Ramesh discuss initiatives for protecting minorities rights in country

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Thursday met with Minister for Human Rights and Minorities, Ramesh Singh Arora, to discuss initiatives for protecting minority rights in the country. In a statement here, Chaudhry Salik Hussain reiterated the government's commitment in safeguarding minority rights, emphasizing that the government is dedicated to protecting all rights of minorities in the country. He announced plans to introduce minority quotas in demands from countries seeking Pakistani workers, ensuring fair selection and equal opportunities for minorities. The minister also highlighted the importance of technical training courses in enhancing skills and employment opportunities for minorities. He assured that the government would provide training programs tailored to market demand, enabling minorities to contribute to the national economy. Ramesh Singh Arora appreciated the government's efforts to promote tourism, issue minority cards, and protect the heritage of the Sikh community. He noted that there are approximately 2.8 million minorities living in Punjab, who have a deep affection for Pakistan.—APP

## Special education in doldrum in federal capital

Parents eyes on the prime minister

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Federal Education is hosting an International Conference on Girls Education in Muslim Communities on this weekend to discuss the challenges and opportunities. Meanwhile, daughters of Special Education, an attached department of this Ministry of Education since July 2024, struggle to reach their special schools due to sheer negligence of the authorities. It was disgusting to find

that special schools have no fuel to run their buses for pick and drop of the 1500 special children enrolled in special education schools of ministry and are already neglected segment of Pakistani society. These students are studying only because of the government support in shape of Directorate General of Special Education. The parents cannot afford to send their kids being poverty-stricken. The training centre of G-9 for special persons and special education centre for hearing impaired

opened on 9th January after the winter break but with very meager attendance due to stoppage of buses. Moreover, no funds are available to pay the electricity, gas, and water charges. Even if buses run, what will the special and innocent kids do in this severe cold without heaters and electricity? Parents urge the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Shahbaz Sharif, to take notice of this tragic situation and order to release funds for education of their disabled children.

## Speakers term affordable energy critical for country's uplift

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at day long International Hydropower Conference while terming sustainable energy critical for development of any country on Thursday stressed the need for harnessing the untapped hydel potential to meet Pakistan's future growing energy demands. The 4th International Hydropower Conference 2025, hosted by Energy Update in collaboration with the Private Power Infrastructure Board (PPIB) and the International Hydropower Association, brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and global experts to discuss hydropower's transformative role in shaping a sustainable energy future for Pakistan. The speakers highlighted various challenges, including the significant financing and long timelines required to construct large dams and establish hydropower projects. Speaking at the conference, Senator Sherry Rehman said that sustainable, affordable energy is vital for the country's development. "Pakistan has immense hydropower potential," she said. She emphasized the urgent need for Pakistan to harness its hydropower potential and shift toward renewable energy to ensure a sustainable and resilient energy future. Due to Pakistan's critical energy challenges in the face of escalating climate disruptions and population growth, Senator Rehman underscored the role of hydropower as a cornerstone of the country's energy transition. "Energy is not just power; it is wealth, stability, and the foundation of modern civilization," stated Senator Rehman. "As the fifth most populous country in the world, Pakistan cannot achieve sustainable growth without a reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy supply. Unfortunately, we remain heavily reliant on energy imports, and the escalating costs and supply chain disruptions due to conflicts are intensifying our energy crisis," she said. Senator Rehman drew attention to Pakistan's commitment to climate action, referencing its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, which aim for 60% renewable energy by 2030. She underscored the country's clean energy mix, which already sees over 55% of electricity generated from hydropower and nuclear energy, calling for further investments in smaller and medium-sized dams, which she described as "the path to a sustainable hydropower future."—DNA

## Strong industry-academia collaboration crucial for economic progress: Wajiha

President of ICCI Nasir Mansoor Qureshi pointed out the lack of respect and recognition for the business community, which he sees as a major factor hindering investment and business growth

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Wajiha Qamar has expressed optimism about the country's economic recovery, citing the government's efforts to bring the nation to a position of growth. Talking with President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Nasir Mansoor Qureshi at the Chamber House on Thursday, she emphasized the importance of strong industry-academia collaborations to align educational curricula with both national and global market needs. The Parliamentary Secretary also highlighted the government's focus on



improving the ease of doing business, which, in collaboration with ICCI, would foster economic growth. She recognized the country's youth as a vital asset for its progress. Nasir Mansoor

Qureshi, President of ICCI, pointed out the lack of respect and recognition for the business community, which he sees as a major factor hindering investment and business growth. He

stressed the need for including business role models in university syllabi to inspire entrepreneurship. Qureshi further emphasized the urgency of skill development to keep pace



ISLAMABAD: Jan 09 - Workers are planting the Washingtonia Palm trees at the green belt in the middle of the Srinagar Highway during the "Beautification of Capital" which is the joint project of Azerbaijan and Pakistan.

## Sindh Assembly speaker visits Royal Saudi Consulate

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Speaker Sindh Assembly Syed Awais Qadir Shah was warmly received by acting Saudi Consul General Abdulrahman Saad Ibrahim upon his arrival at the Saudi Consulate. During the meeting, comprehensive discussions were held on bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest. On this occasion, the acting Saudi Consul General lauded the role and contributions of Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah in the Sindh Assembly. Speaker Sindh Assembly emphasized that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy longstanding and robust brotherly relations, rooted in shared faith, culture, traditions, and mutual respect. He further stated that consistent engagement and collaboration between the parliaments of both nations can play a vital role in strengthening these ties.

## IRSA releases 33,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 33,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 40,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1475.66 feet and was 77.66 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,400 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively.—APP

## ISSI launches special study on Indian electoral politics

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) launched its Special Study, "Quantifying Electoral Politics of Congress and BJP," authored by Director ISC Dr. Khurram Abbas, and researchers Maheem Shafiq and Usama Hameed. This groundbreaking research, the first of its kind in Pakistan on the 18th Lok Sabha, offers a comprehensive analysis of political trends in India through quantification of the newly-elected MPs from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the leading opposition party Indian National Congress (INC) on various indicators like caste,

religious affiliation, wealth status, and familial roots in the country's politics. The study's launch featured a distinguished panel of experts who shared their perspectives on its findings. Along with the keynote address by Mr. Khalid Rahman, Chairman Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), the other speakers included Ambassador Babar Amin, former diplomat; Dr. Asma Shakir Khwaja, Executive Director of Center for International Strategic Studies, Azad Jammu & Kashmir; and Ms. Maryam Mastoor, Research Fellow, Institute of Regional Studies. Dr. Khurram Abbas introduced the significance of and rationale behind this data-based study,

and methodological approach which was employed to collect and analyze the data. In his remarks on the occasion, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted that the 2024 elections in India were particularly noteworthy for their scale and political implications. With over 969 million eligible voters, the elections spanned seven phases, making them the longest in Indian history. He observed that while the BJP pursued aggressive campaigning with slogans like "Abki Baar 400 Paar," their performance reflected a decline in dominance, securing 240 seats compared to 303 in 2019.—APP

## Pak manufactures freight wagons enhanced collaboration with Chinese company

LAHORE: Pakistan manufactures freight wagons have entered into joint-venture with Chinese company, China Economic Net reported on Thursday. According to the report, in a busy factory in Lahore, the hum of machinery and the hustle of workers mark a new chapter for local railway freight transportation. Right now, 115 flat wagons are being assembled in Complete Knocked Down (CKD) form, with plans for them to roll out in April this year. These wagons are part of a larger order of 620 freight wagons being jointly produced by Pakistan Railways and the Chinese company Baotou Beifang

Chuangye Co., Ltd. "Once all 620 freight wagons are fully operational, they will double the current railway transportation capacity," said Philippe Mi, the Chinese project director for the 820 High-Capacity Wagon (HCW) project, in a recent interview. In 2021, Beifang Chuangye won a contract to supply 820 high-capacity railway freight wagons to Pakistan Railways, including four types of vehicles: open-top wagons, flat wagons, covered wagons, and cabooses. By 2022, 200 wagons were delivered and put into operation. In 2024, 115 high-capacity open-top wagons, assembled in semi-knocked-down (SKD)

form at the Raisalpur factory, were deployed on key freight routes connecting Karachi Port to inland destinations. This not only increased transportation capacity but also eased the pressure on Karachi Port's warehousing operations. "This initiative will bring significant economic benefits to Pakistan, marking a crucial step toward reducing import dependence and promoting local industries," said Aamir Baloch, CEO of Pakistan Railways, praising the local production of railway freight wagons. It's a major leap toward economic self-sufficiency and the start of a new era in freight transportation in Pakistan.—APP



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JANUARY

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

## Hotels & Restaurants



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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

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



## Hospitals

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



## Departments

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

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# ICT admin, PNCA host Mukabila Hifz Qirat

The competition aimed to promote the art of Qirat and inspire a deeper connection with the Holy Quran. Students from different madaris participated in this event, categorized based on their age and educational levels

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ICT Administration, in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), successfully organized two days prestigious "Mukabila Hifz Qirat" competition. This event, held at the PNCA Auditorium (F-5/1), brought together talented students from various madaris across Islamabad, showcasing their remarkable skills in Quranic recitation. The competition aimed to promote the art of Qirat and inspire a deeper connection with the Holy Quran. Students from different madaris participated in this event, categorized based on their age and educational levels. The finalists demonstrated extraordinary talent, captivating the audience with their soulful recitations. The winners were honored during an award ceremony presided over by DG PNCA, Mr. Muhammad Ayoub Jamali, who appreciated the participants' dedication and talent. Shields and certificates were distributed to the top performers in recognition of their outstanding achievements. Participants competed in two rounds, with separate categories for male and female students. The event concluded



ed with prayers for the prosperity of the country and the promotion of Islamic education. The panel of judges included renowned Qaris and scholars from the Islamic community. The winners of each category will represent Islamabad in upcoming national-level competitions. The ICT Administration and PNCA reiterated their commitment to fostering platforms that encourage spiritual growth and cultural enrichment.

## Chairman CDA visits Murree Road to review traffic solution

Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized that the completion of this underpass will offer a long-term solution to Islamabad's persistent traffic challenges

## DAN

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa accompanied by Member Engineering and the relevant officer, conducted a visit to Murree Road to review proposed linkage with Serena Chowk. During the visit on Thursday, a proposal to construct an underpass at the Srinagar Highway Junction was discussed, keeping in view

the pressing traffic issue at the junction of Srinagar and Murree Road. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa highlighted that the traffic solution in the shape of the underpass would facilitate commuters traveling from Murree and Kashmir to Islamabad. He directed that the proposed underpass at the Srinagar Highway and Murree Road Junction should be integrated with the Serena Chowk

Interchange project for enhanced connectivity in the city. During the briefing, Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa was informed that the soil testing for the construction of the underpass at the Srinagar Highway Junction has already commenced. Additionally, work on the feasibility, design, and planning of the project is also underway. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Rand-

hawa emphasized that the completion of this underpass will offer a long-term solution to Islamabad's persistent traffic challenges. He instructed the relevant teams to present the design of the underpass at the earliest. Furthermore, he stated that once the underpass is operational, all traffic from Murree to the Srinagar Highway will be signal-free, ensuring smoother and more efficient travel.

## SECP alerts public against fraudulent investment scheme

The SECP urged individuals to remain vigilant and verify the legitimacy of any investment opportunity through its official channels

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has identified another illegal deposit taking/investment scheme being operated under the name of Summit 4X Trade and Summit AH Experts. According to SECP press release issue here Thursday, the scheme's sponsors, Abdul Hai and Sumner Abbas, are mainly targeting the residents of district Layyah through branch offices, WhatsApp and calls. They persuade the people to make investment in Summit 4X Trade and Summit AH Experts promising lucrative profits of up to 30 percent. To further their deceptive motives, Abdul Hai has registered a Company namely Summit AH Experts (SMC-Private) Limited with SECP under the Companies Act, 2017, to create an illusion of legitimacy by misusing its registration status to gain public trust. SECP clarified that the Company or unregistered entities are not authorized to accept deposits/ investments in any form or arrangement. The commission strongly warned the general public not to invest or deposit funds with Summit 4X Trade/Summit AH Experts/Summit AH Experts (SMC-Private) Limited or any similar illegal investment or deposit-taking platform. The statement added, the name of the Company to the "List of Companies Engaged in Unauthorized Activities" on the SECP's official website. In addition, SECP has referred this matter to the relevant investigative authorities for further action against those involved in this illegal activity. The general public is once again reminded that a company's "Certificate of Incorporation" only confirms its registration with the SECP and does not authorize the company to raise deposits or launch investment schemes. The SECP urged individuals to remain vigilant and verify the legitimacy of any investment opportunity through its official channels.—DNA

## UBG delegation greets RCCI newly elected office bearers

Zafar Bakhtawari said, "Our goal is to promote the trade and business sector, and I hope that we will achieve our shared objectives by working together"

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General of UBG (FPCCI) visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) to congratulate the newly elected officials. During the meeting, the delegations from both chambers discussed solutions to traders' issues, a joint strategy for promoting business activities, leveraging each other's experiences, easing trade laws, reforming the tax system, and reducing business costs. The ICCI delegation included Acting President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Acting Senior Vice President Ameer Rehman Qureshi, Acting Vice President Malik Mohsin Khalid, former Chairman Founder Group and former President ICCI Khalid Iqbal Malik, former President Zahid Maqbool, and Executive Members of ICCI Ruheel Anwar Butt, Imtiaz Abbasi, Imran Bukhari, Mirza Nisar, and others. The delegation presented bouquets to the newly elected



President of RCCI, Osman Shoqat, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, Secretary of Gymkhana Club Rawalpindi Rizwan Mashhadi, and Board of Governors members Dr. Shumail and Waqas Bin Mahmood. During his speech, RCCI Group Leader Sohail Altaf stated, "New avenues of cooperation between the Rawalpindi Chamber and the Islamabad Chamber will open, and we will work together to solve the issues of the business community." He added, "Both chambers will benefit from each other's experiences and adopt best practices to improve the business environment.—APP

## Reforms in housing sector under consideration: Pirzada

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Riaz Hussain Pirzada said on Wednesday that proposals for reforms in the housing sector are under active review to address the growing challenges in this domain. Speaking informally with journalists, the minister said that a task force has been formed to compile a comprehensive report on the proposed reforms, which will be presented to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif within the next two weeks. Key recommendations under consideration included the construction of high-rise residential buildings in various sectors of Islamabad, aimed at meeting the rising demand for housing in the capital city, he added. To alleviate the strain on government-provided housing, the task force is also exploring measures to streamline and enhance the hiring process for private accommodations, the minister added. He said, "The final decision regarding the implementation of these housing reforms will rest with the prime minister." The SECP urged individuals to remain vigilant and verify the legitimacy of any investment opportunity through its official channels.—APP

## Officers of mid career management course visited IPO

ISLAMABAD: A delegation comprising on 16 officers of 42nd Mid Career Management Course from National Institute of Public Administration on Wednesday visited Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan). The delegation visited the IPO-Pakistan headquarters as part of their field research, where they were briefed about the functions, performance, and operational details of the organization. Chairperson IPO-Pakistan, Ambassador (R) Farukh Amil, and Director General Ms. Shazia Adnan jointly briefed the delegation about the main functions of IPO-Pakistan. The officers were informed about the administration of IP laws in the country, control and management of all IP offices, and IP rights enforcement coordination.—APP

## PN's Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem promoted as Vice Admiral

ISLAMABAD: Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem has been promoted to the rank of Vice Admiral with immediate effect. Vice Admiral Muhammad Saleem got commission in Operations Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1991. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore and National Defence University, Islamabad. He has also done MPhil in Public Policy from National Defence University and International Electronic Warfare Manager Course from UK. The Admiral has an illustrious career with vast experience of various Command and Staff appointments. His major Command appointments include Commanding Officer PN Submarines HAMZA & HURMAT, Commander 9th Auxiliary & Mine Hunting Squadron, Commandant PNS BAHADUR and Commander Karachi. His major Staff appointments include Senior Staff Officer (Operations) to Commander Submarines, Director Naval Operational Plans and Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Personnel) at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. He also performed duties as Director General National Intelligence Academy, Islamabad. Vice Admiral Muhammad Saleem also served as Directing Staff at National Defence University, Islamabad and Naval Attaché of Pakistan in India. Currently, the Admiral is serving as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Training & Personnel) at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad.—DNA

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## Briefs

## Right to information laws key to curbing fake news

ISLAMABAD: National Coordinator of the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) Rashid Chaudhry Thursday emphasized the need for public awareness and the implementation of right-to-information laws and digital rights to combat the spread of fake news.

In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, he urged all stakeholders to join forces in promoting public awareness and safeguarding the integrity of information. Rashid Chaudhry emphasized the crucial role of media literacy in combating fake news, stressing that it is essential for citizens to critically evaluate information and identify reliable sources. He also underscored the importance of digital rights, noting that safeguarding these rights is vital in the fight against fake news. Furthermore, Chaudhry highlighted the need for Right to Information laws, emphasizing that these laws are key to curbing the spread of fake news and promoting transparency and accountability. By addressing these interconnected issues, Chaudhry believes that Pakistan can better equip itself to combat the challenges posed by fake news.

Chaudhry highlighted the importance of a Digital Rights Information Bill, which would provide a framework for regulating digital information and preventing the dissemination of fake news. He emphasized that such a bill would be crucial in ensuring that citizens have access to accurate and reliable information.—APP

## ANF recovers over 131 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 131.478 kg drugs worth Rs 180 million and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 84 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Jeddah through Islamabad International Airport. In second operation, 96 kg heroin was recovered from uninhabited areas of Mastung and Saifullah in Balochistan. 3.6 kg opium and 21.6 kg hashish were recovered from secret cavities of a vehicle intercepted near M-1 Motorway Islamabad and two suspects were arrested. 6 kg heroin was recovered from a vehicle near a bus stop on Srinagar Highway Rawalpindi and two suspects arrested during the operation. In sixth operation, 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from a suspect near Sangjani Toll Plaza Islamabad. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—APP

## Speakers call for fostering societal cohesion, tolerance

Dr. Malik lauded PILDAT's efforts and emphasized the commitment of NAHE, HEC to strengthening societal harmony through higher education. She reiterated NAHE's dedication to promoting peace and tolerance by empowering faculty and HEIs as agents of change

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), in collaboration with Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development And Transparency (PILDAT) coupled with the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), organized a seminar on "Fostering Societal Cohesion, Tolerance, and Peace-building" at Margalla Hotel, Islamabad. The event, attended by senior faculty from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, provided a platform for constructive dialogue and knowledge-sharing on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) through education and community engagement. Dr. Noor Amna Malik, Managing Director, NAHE-HEC, graced the seminar as Chief Guest, while Mr. Ahmad Bilal Mehboob, President of PILDAT, highlighted the importance of proactive collaborations between civil society and academic institutions during his welcome remarks. Dr. Malik lauded PILDAT's efforts and emphasized the commitment of NAHE, HEC to strengthening societal harmony through higher education. She reiterated NAHE's dedication to promoting peace and tolerance



by empowering faculty and HEIs as agents of change. Dr. Dayyab Gillani, Director Research at NACTA, served as the resource person and key speaker, presenting a comprehensive module developed to enhance the capacities of faculty, legislators, and govern-

ment officials to counter violent extremism and foster societal harmony. The module, prepared as part of the HumAhang program, emphasized understanding extremism, differentiating it from violent strands, and building community resilience through innova-

tive approaches such as inclusive governance, critical thinking, and collaborative partnerships. The session included interactive discussions and a vibrant Q&A session, allowing participants to explore actionable steps to incorporate these concepts into their institutions and

daily functions. The seminar concluded with an acknowledgment of the collaborative efforts of NAHE and the PILDAT team in executing this impactful event. Participants appreciated the initiative and expressed eagerness to implement the learnings in their respective institutions.

## Naqvi emphasizes regional collaboration to combat narcotics

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior and Anti-Narcotics, Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday visited the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Headquarters, where he was welcomed by ANF Director General Major General Abdul Mueed. During his visit, Minister Naqvi announced plans to host a regional conference aimed at strengthening collaboration with Gulf countries in the fight against drug trafficking. The conference will invite the heads of anti-narcotics forces from Gulf nations and focus on developing a unified strategy to tackle the narcotics trade. "This conference holds critical importance in creating a joint action plan against drug trafficking," Naqvi stated. He also highlighted the outcomes of his recent visit to Saudi Arabia's Anti-Narcotics Headquarters, where discussions were held to enhance bilateral cooperation. Praising ANF's efforts, the minister commended the agency's remarkable performance in 2023, which included 2,150 operations leading to the seizure of drugs worth approximately \$10 billion. "Despite limited resources and manpower, ANF's dedication to combating drug mafias is truly commendable," he remarked. Minister Naqvi emphasized the importance of continuing the crackdown on drug networks with full force to protect the younger generation from falling prey to narcotics. He also directed the continuation of awareness campaigns against drug use in educational institutions, stressing that no leniency would be shown to individuals involved in drug trafficking. The minister called for immediate, multifaceted measures to address the rising trend of drug abuse and reaffirmed his commitment to eradicating the menace. Federal Secretary for Interior Muhammad Khurram Agha and senior ANF officials were also present during the briefing on ANF's operations and performance.—APP

## 'Govt committed to safeguarding rights of vulnerable populations'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Ayesha Raza Farooq of the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) Thursday underscored the imperative of collective efforts to safeguard children's and women's rights, as the government introduces legislation aimed at providing a secure environment for vulnerable populations. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, the NCRC Chairperson emphasized the urgent need for a shift in societal attitudes and increased awareness about reporting violence-related cases, as well as addressing victim blaming and shaming. To achieve this, the government has launched awareness drives focusing on promoting a culture of empathy and responsibility, she said, adding, that these initiatives aim to educate the public about the importance of supporting victims and encouraging them to

speak out against violence. By working together, it is possible to create a safer and more supportive environment for all, she stressed. In a significant move to curb sexual violence, the present government introduced the country's first national sex offenders register (NSOR) in November, marking a major milestone in the efforts to ensure public safety and prevent repeat offenses, she mentioned. This registry aims to maintain a comprehensive database of convicted offenders, providing law enforcement agencies with a vital tool to track and monitor their activities and ultimately protecting vulnerable populations from potential harm, she added. To effectively implement the NSOR, the government has launched a concerted effort to gather comprehensive data on convicted offenders, she said, adding, that this endeavor involves the meticulous collection of detailed information, ensuring that all relevant data is

accurately recorded and updated. Furthermore, specialized cells and offender units have been established at the district level, facilitating the efficient monitoring and tracking of such offenders, she highlighted. These units serve as vital hubs for information sharing and coordination among law enforcement agencies, enabling swift action to be taken in case of any suspicious activity or repeat offenses, she added. By establishing this robust framework, the government aims to create a safer environment for citizens, particularly vulnerable populations, and ensure that justice is served. The PML-N-led government has taken a significant step towards combating rape and sexual violence by introducing the Anti-Rape Act, which currently covers 75% of districts across Pakistan, she noted. This legislation has led to the establishment of special prosecutors and dedicated cells within police stations, staffed by female officers, to handle

cases of sexual assault and provide support to victims, she added. Responding to a query, she said in a collaborative effort with all provinces, the government has initiated awareness drives in schools and colleges to educate students about social issues. These drives aim to empower young minds with essential knowledge. Furthermore, the government plans to incorporate the concept of "good touch" and "bad touch" into the curriculum, enabling children to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behavior, she said. There is been a notable increase in reported cases of sexual violence in Punjab and other provinces, largely attributed to growing awareness and knowledge among the public, Aysa said. This upward trend in reporting is a positive indicator that people are becoming more informed and empowered to speak out against such heinous crimes, she mentioned.

## Awareness drive about heating hazards in winters

ISLAMABAD: In a joint effort to raise public awareness about winter safety hazards, Rescue 1122 officials and tour operators came together on Thursday to warn tourists and residents of slum areas about the dangers of bonfires and the continuous use of heating appliances in rooms during the winter season. Hassan Khan, Deputy Commander of Sindh Emergency Rescue 1122, emphasized the importance of public awareness regarding the dangers of excessive heating in hotel and house rooms. In an interview exclusive talk with a private news channel Khan cautioned that the prolonged use of electric and gas heaters can lead to suffocation, posing a significant threat to life. He urged citizens to exercise caution and adopt safety measures to prevent such incidents, ensuring a safe and healthy environment during the winter season. A comprehensive awareness campaign launched by the Rescue 1122 department, spanning across the country, seeks to prevent incidents and ensure public safety during the winter season, he added.

The campaign, led by Director General Rescue 1122, highlights the potential dangers associated with bonfires, space heaters and other heating appliances, emphasizing that these hazards can be life-threatening, especially in densely populated areas, Hassan Khan added. By educating the public about the risks and consequences of improper heating appliance usage, Rescue 1122 aims to minimize the number of winter-related accidents and promote a safer environment for all citizens, he mentioned. Rescue 1122 officials demonstrated safety measures and provided guidelines on how to use heating appliances safely. They are also distributing safety pamphlets and posters in local languages to ensure that the message reaches a wider audience, he added. He also issued a pressing warning to tourists and residents in the northern areas to exercise extreme caution when using bonfires. He emphasized the importance of avoiding bonfires altogether, but if they must be used, ensuring they are completely extinguished when finished. A Tour operator Umer Khan also pledged to educate their clients about winter safety precautions and emphasized the importance of being aware of one's surroundings and taking necessary precautions to prevent accidents.—APP

## No breakthrough in Govt-PTI dialogue, says Rana Ihsan

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Prime Minister Rana Ihsan Afzal Thursday reaffirmed the government's commitment to constructive dialogue with PTI, stressing transparency and a willingness to move forward without delay. In an exclusive talk with a private news channel, Ihsan Afzal said that the government's dialogue with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has stalled due to PTI's failure to present its written demands and show seriousness in the talks. Afzal said PTI has failed to finalize and present its charter of demands, which is hindering the progress of the talks. He emphasized the importance of avoiding deadlock in the negotiations due to unrealistic conditions. Responding to a query Afzal said that a meeting took place between Ali Amin Gandapur, Ali Gohar and Imran Khan the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), adding, that this meeting marks a significant step forward in the negotiation process between the government and PTI. Further negotiations will be held to fulfill the government's commitment to providing a conducive environment for meetings with Imran Khan, he added. The government negotiation team is committed to fulfilling its promise to PTI, which includes providing an opportunity for a meeting with Imran Khan, he assured. Rana Ihsan Afzal also mentioned counter-demands of the government that Irfan Siddiqui, a member of the negotiation committee, stated that once the government receives PTI's written demands, they will also present their counter-demands. Additionally, if PTI requests, the government will provide their counter-demands in written form, allowing for discussions on the economy, protests by PTI and national interests, he added. Afzal emphasized that the PML-N government is committed to stabilizing the economy and believes negotiation is essential for the country's progress. He further added that Speaker National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq is leading the negotiations between the government and PTI, with the next meeting date set to be announced soon.—DNA

## Al-Shifa opens advanced genetic testing lab

Genetic testing offers significant benefits; it can alleviate uncertainty and guide individuals in making informed decisions about healthcare management

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital inaugurated a state-of-the-art genetic testing laboratory to prevent and control eye cancer in children. Genetic testing offers significant benefits; it can alleviate uncertainty and guide individuals in making informed decisions about healthcare management. If the result is negative, it may reduce the need for unnecessary check-ups, said the president of Al-Shifa Trust, Major General (Retd) Rehmat Khan. Speaking at a seminar at the inauguration of Pakistan's first genetic testing lab for eyes, he said that a positive outcome following genetic testing can guide individuals toward available options for prevention, monitoring, and treatment. Major General (Retd) Rehmat Khan said that all the patients at the trust will get free testing even though

ophthalmic genetics and DNA diagnosis are very costly processes. Ophthalmic genetics is a subspecialty of

ghani, consultant and HOD of Orbit and Oculoplastic Department at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, said that Paki-

as in India, right next door. He added that genetic testing of parents can help control this occurrence in future

said people should not be careless about eye cancer. The number of people with eye cancer is going up, so they should see a doctor right away. Most people who go to hospitals are in the very last stages of their illness. Afghani said that most of the kids with eye cancer come from low-income families who live in far-flung areas where there aren't any specialised eye hospitals. He said that some tumours are incurable, while others may severely disfigure eyes, requiring complex surgical procedures. However, eye problems due to cancer need more time and effort to be treated. Dr Rutaba Gul briefed the media persons about the development. Others who spoke on occasion included Prof. Dr. Shahid Mahmood Baig, Prof. Dr. Saba Irshad, Prof. Dr. Aneesa Sultan, Dr. Saad Sarfaraz, Dr Faheem Azher, and Prof. Dr. Wajid Ali Khan.



ophthalmology focusing on genetic conditions affecting the eye, which involves studying the causes, patterns of transmission, projection, and treatment of eye diseases caused by genetic defects, he informed. Speaking at the occasion, Dr Tayyab Af-

ghan has a higher rate of eye cancer in children than its nearby countries. Because of this, the trust has chosen to step up its efforts to fight the problem. He said that every year, different trust centres treat about 700 kids with eye cancer. This is twice as many

generations. These tests provide information about how likely cancer will be possible in children. Tayyab Afghani said that if the problem is found early, it can be fixed before it worsens and could lead to loss of sight, eye loss, or even total blindness. He

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## EU's attitude toward China

THE incoming Donald Trump administration will not be a rerun of his first presidency. The incoming administration in the US will possibly mean: the end of post-1945 American multilateralism; a growing gulf between Europe and the US; the end of the Ukraine war; a trade war with China (but not a hot one) which will fail in its objectives; and major pressure on all US allies (European and East Asian) to pay for part of their defense. It will mark a paradigm shift on a far bigger scale and of far greater consequence than previous such shifts like the Thatcher neo-liberal revolution in the 1980s. It will mark a major shift to the right in US politics, a large-scale retreat from America's global role, and a return to America as the overwhelming priority. The incoming Trump administration poses a profound crisis for Europe. Europe has invested huge economic, political and military capital in the Ukraine war, which the US president-elect is committed to ending on terms that will represent an embarrassing defeat for Europe. His insistence that America's allies should shoulder a much larger share of their defense, and America much less, is deeply problematic for the relatively weak European economies and, more importantly, an existential threat to the transatlantic alliance system based on NATO. The incoming US administration's challenge is as much economic as security. It is threatening to impose more duties on European imports. The picture is even more bleak when viewed in a longer-term context. Since 2009, US GDP per capita has almost doubled while that of the eurozone has grown by less than 20 percent. Europe has singularly failed to develop its own tech giants. Politically, the EU lacks strong France-Germany leadership and finds itself increasingly divided. Meanwhile, the far right is on the rise in most countries. It is difficult to be optimistic about Europe's future. There are only two major powers, China and the US. In view of the incoming US administration, Europe will need China much more. It can no longer afford to be on bad or even indifferent terms with China, as it has been. But that will only be possible if Europe distances itself from US attempts to isolate China. A classic example was the way many European governments bowed to US pressure on 5G. In this context, Europe must learn to respect Chinese policies on Hong Kong and Xinjiang affairs, for example, even when they disagree with them. The shift in tone and approach by the new UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer may be instructive in this context. He is refusing to grandstand against China on these kinds of issues, insisting that economic and environmental cooperation must take priority. This approach could be regarded as an implicit acknowledgment that the Chinese are deeply offended by what they see as the exercise of moral superiority by Europe toward China born of habit and history. If Europe wants to upscale economic and environmental cooperation with China, it must stop treating China like a disobedient child. European civilization must recognize and respect Chinese civilization as its equal. This should be seen in a broader context. Europe has long regarded China as its economic inferior.

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## Global South and AI offensive

INCOMING US President Donald Trump has vowed to repeal Joe Biden's executive order on artificial intelligence (AI), designed to balance innovation with safeguards for civil rights, privacy and ethical AI use. Trump's promise to revoke it signals a shift towards deregulation even as it prioritises national security and economic competition. US policies to solidify its AI dominance will inevitably ripple across the Global South, which has historically struggled to access the benefits of advanced technologies. Understanding Trump's new tech approach is critical, as the consequences could shape development trajectories for Global South nations for decades. AI is projected to add US\$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030, with North America, China and Europe capturing about 84 per cent of this growth – leaving the Global South to share 16 per cent, despite being home to most of the world's population. This stark disparity underscores the risks of leaving developing nations behind as AI becomes central to progress. For example, while countries such as the United States and China have integrated AI into sectors from finance and healthcare to defence, many Global South nations lack the infrastructure to do the same. For instance, the lack of top supercomputers in sub-Saharan Africa makes it nearly impossible to compete in the AI race. In addition, removing US safeguards that prioritise ethical AI development could spark a race among nations to lower standards to remain competitive. This could undermine multilateral efforts such as the UN General Assembly resolution adopted last March to encourage safe, secure and trustworthy AI systems. The resolution urged members states "to refrain from or cease the use of artificial intelligence systems that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights". Deregulation in the US risks sidelining these commitments, pushing other nations to prioritise speed over safety. Robot in China persuades others to 'go home' Meanwhile, a key priority for the US is to prevent adversaries from leveraging advanced technologies. One area of potential impact is in open-source AI. In a development that raises questions around the use of open-source technology, an early version of Meta's open-source AI model, Llama 13B, was reportedly used by Chinese researchers to develop a military-focused tool. Concerned about national security, Trump's administration may consider banning or restricting open-source AI. This would, however, stifle innovation in the Global South. Without open-source tools to bridge resource gaps, countries lagging in AI adoption may fall further behind. Furthermore, Trump's promised export controls would directly affect the Global South's access to critical technologies. During his first term, Trump introduced restrictions on semiconductors to curb China's technological advancement. These controls, expanded under Biden, are expected to tighten further. While aimed at limiting China, these restrictions also disrupt global supply chains, raising costs and access barriers. Developing countries, which depend on affordable imports to build their AI ecosystems, are disproportionately affected.

## Will Trudeau strike back?

Qamar Bashir



Relations between Canada and India have significantly deteriorated during Justin Trudeau's tenure, marked by mutual mistrust and diplomatic tensions.

Trudeau's 2018 visit to India, intended to strengthen ties, was widely criticized for being poorly managed, with controversies surrounding the invitation of a convicted terrorist to official events.

More recently, tensions escalated due to Trudeau's public support for the Indian farmers' protests, which angered the Indian government, as they viewed it as interference in their domestic affairs.

THE handsome, serene, ever-smiling, and dashing Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Justin Trudeau, finally succumbed to the ever-increasing pressure on many accounts on top of its faltering economy, rising inflation and housing and rental costs, sour relations with the USA and India, and on personal account divorce with his wife after 18 years of loving relations. Trudeau's legacy was shaped by his parents—his father, former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, whose leadership inspired his career, left his own legacy having both success and failure. Justin Trudeau became Canada's 23rd Prime Minister on November 4, 2015, following the Liberal Party's victory in the federal election. His second term commenced after the October 21, 2019, federal election, when the Liberal Party secured a minority government. On January 6, 2025, Trudeau announced his resignation as Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party, effective upon the selection of a new party leader. Given that the next federal election was scheduled for October 2025, Trudeau had approximately nine months remaining in his second term at the time of his resignation announcement. During his tenure, Justin Trudeau has achieved notable successes in various areas. Economically, he oversaw the creation of over 1 million jobs, implemented middle-class tax cuts, and introduced affordable childcare. He demonstrated environmental leadership by committing to the Paris Agreement, implementing a national carbon pricing plan, and investing in clean energy. Socially, he legalized recreational cannabis, championed gender equality with a gender-balanced cabinet, and advanced Indigenous reconciliation through investments and improved access to clean water. His pandemic response included substantial financial aid programs like CERB, and he made strides toward a national pharmacare program. On the global stage, Trudeau strengthened Canada's image as an inclusive, multicultural society, renegotiated NAFTA into the USMCA, and welcomed tens of thousands of refugees. These accomplishments, despite criticisms in certain areas, reflect his efforts to promote economic growth, social progress, and environmental sustainability. Justin Trudeau's tenure has faced significant criticisms and failures across various areas. Ethics controversies, including the SNC-Lavalin scandal, WE Charity scandal, and violations of conflict-of-interest rules, have damaged his credibility. Despite climate commitments, his approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline and failure

to meet emissions targets drew ire from environmentalists. Promises of Indigenous reconciliation fell short, with many communities still lacking clean water. Rising costs of living, skyrocketing housing prices, and increasing federal debt sparked concerns about economic management. His pandemic response faced criticism for early vaccine rollout delays and insufficient safeguards against CERB abuse. On the global stage, strained relations with China and India highlighted foreign policy challenges. Critics also accuse him of fostering polarization and focusing on image over substance, undermining public trust in his leadership. Relations between Canada and India have significantly deteriorated during Justin Trudeau's tenure, marked by mutual mistrust and diplomatic tensions. Trudeau's 2018 visit to India, intended to strengthen ties, was widely criticized for being poorly managed, with controversies surrounding the invitation of a convicted terrorist to official events. More recently, tensions escalated due to Trudeau's public support for the Indian farmers' protests, which angered the Indian government, as they viewed it as interference in their domestic affairs. The situation reached a new low with allegations surrounding the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistani activist, in Canada. Trudeau accused India's intelligence agency, RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), of being involved in the assassination, citing credible evidence. These accusations and counteraccusations had plunged diplomatic relations into a deeper crisis, further hindering progress in trade, investment, and strategic partnerships between the two nations. Justin Trudeau's relationship with Donald Trump was marked by a mix of cooperation and tension, shaped by their differing ideologies and priorities. They worked together on the renegotiation of NAFTA, resulting in the USMCA, though the process was contentious, with Trump imposing tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum and Trudeau retaliating. Public spats further strained relations, such as Trump calling Trudeau "dishonest" after the 2018 G7 summit and Trudeau being caught mocking Trump at a NATO event in 2019. Policy differences were evident, with Trudeau advocating for climate action and immigration openness, in stark contrast to Trump's policies. Despite these challenges, Trudeau maintained diplomatic ties, recognizing the importance of the U.S.-Canada partnership. Their cooperation extended to border security, defense, and handling the Huawei-Meng Wanzhou case, though it led

to significant backlash from China. Trudeau's approach reflected a pragmatic effort to navigate a turbulent U.S.-Canada relationship during Trump's presidency. During Justin Trudeau's tenure, relations between Pakistan and Canada remained relatively low-profile, focusing on areas like trade, immigration, and international cooperation. Canada continued to be a key destination for Pakistani immigrants, students, and skilled workers, with Pakistan ranking among the top sources of immigration to Canada. However, bilateral trade remained modest, with limited efforts to significantly enhance economic ties. Trudeau's government emphasized issues like human rights and women's empowerment, aligning with Canada's broader foreign policy agenda, but these did not translate into substantial bilateral initiatives with Pakistan. The two countries occasionally engaged on multilateral platforms like the United Nations, but no major breakthroughs or agreements marked their relationship. Relations were cordial but lacked significant strategic or economic deepening, reflecting a status quo dynamic during Trudeau's period.

Justin Trudeau has often emphasized the importance of his family, portraying himself as a devoted husband and father. Married to Sophie Grégoire Trudeau in 2005, the couple frequently appeared together at public events, showcasing a modern and relatable family image. However, in August 2023, they announced their separation after 18 years of marriage, surprising many Canadians. Despite this, they reaffirmed their commitment to co-parenting their three children and maintaining a close family bond. Justin Trudeau's resignation as Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party marks a significant shift in Canada's political landscape. Given the internal pressures and declining public support that led to his departure, a swift return to power appears unlikely. The Liberal Party is now focused on selecting a new leader to rejuvenate its prospects ahead of the upcoming general election. Trudeau's future political trajectory will depend on his ability to rebuild public trust, address past controversies, and adapt to the evolving priorities of Canadian voters. While his political experience and previous leadership could position him for a future role, any potential comeback would require substantial effort to overcome the challenges that precipitated his resignation.

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

## Celebrating culture through maritime cooperation: The significance of aman dialogues and gatherings

Commander Anees M. Khan (R)

The AMAN Dialogue also will offer a unique avenue to weave cultural aspects into strategic discussions. The planned seminars, keynote addresses, and multilateral discussions will undoubtedly focus on maritime security challenges. Yet, these formal sessions are complemented by informal interactions and social gatherings, which serve as platforms for cultural exchange. Delegates might partake in traditional Pakistani cuisine, enjoy classical music performances, or explore historical landmarks, creating memories that transcend the immediate objectives of the forum

IN an interconnected world, cultural diplomacy has become a vital tool for nations to build bridges of understanding and foster mutual respect. Platforms such as the AMAN maritime exercise, initiated by the Pakistan Navy in 2007, not only serve as a means of enhancing global maritime security but also provide an opportunity to showcase the rich heritage, culture, and traditions of Pakistan. The AMAN Dialogue, recently introduced as an adjunct to this multinational maritime exercise, scheduled in February 2025 at Karachi, is set to amplify these cultural dimensions while addressing pressing maritime challenges. By gathering naval and defense leadership from across the globe, the forum becomes a melting pot of ideas, values, and cultural exchange, making it a beacon of collaboration and unity. Although the AMAN exercises primarily further the shared objectives of maritime security and stability; however, beyond the technical and strategic facets of such forums lies a deeper cultural narrative. Each visiting delegation represents a unique set of traditions, languages, and histories, converging in an environment that encourages dialogue and cooperation. Pakistan, as the host nation, takes center stage in showcasing its rich heritage, including its maritime history, diverse culture, and the hospitality of its people. From the traditional greetings extended to foreign delegations to the culinary experiences and cultural programs organized during the event, every aspect of the gathering reflects the essence of Pakistan's identity. Such is the power of culinary that a decade ago French Naval technician working on the rectification of a defect on a Mine Hunter were so engrossed with the taste of Chicken Biryani, that host has to pleasantly change the menu to ensure it is served at least twice in a week. In the final dinner prior to their departure, on their insistence all the dishes were purely Pakistani. The French must have forgotten the technical fault details but must be remembering the aroma of Biryani. So much is the

power of cuisine in shaping soft images of a country. The AMAN Dialogue also will offer a unique avenue to weave cultural aspects into strategic discussions. The planned seminars, keynote addresses, and multilateral discussions will undoubtedly focus on maritime security challenges. Yet, these formal sessions are complemented by informal interactions and social gatherings, which serve as platforms for cultural exchange. Delegates might partake in traditional Pakistani cuisine, enjoy classical music performances, or explore historical landmarks, creating memories that transcend the immediate objectives of the forum. Such moments not only humanize international relations but also foster a sense of camaraderie among participants. It's really heartening and adds up to the end discussions when during the course of meetings, delegates are served Turkish Delights (Traditional Turkish Sweet), Chinese Tea, Pakistani Burfi (Traditional Pakistani Sweet) by the hosts or even guests. Exchange of pleasantries in local languages by uttering few basic words, observance of each other cultural manners like a Chinese bow, Pakistani Hug, Arabic face touching, Exchange of wishes and pleasantries with lady delegates by mere head or hand gesture instead of hand shake etc all goes beyond the duration of exercise or conference. These take away are intangible products which helps in building individual & nation's reputation and subsequent culmination in tangible MoUs. After all, all the wars are also remembered in view of the personal traits of individual leaders. Replace Stalin, Roosevelt & Churchill and it can be safely argued that in case the leader would have been different at that particular time in history, the outcome of conflict/war might be different. So it is but imperative that cultural understanding paves the way for strategic conclusion and tactical executions in military. The forum would thus serve the same. In one of the previous AMAN EXERCISE, the ice-breaker was a cultural show in which a famous Pakistani Singer sang songs in almost half a dozen language

of different participating countries. This has won the hearts and minds of the participants and paved the way for more open discussions. This approach mirrors the multicultural ethos embedded in Pakistani society, where various languages, traditions, and beliefs coexist harmoniously. By extending this ethos to the international stage, the AMAN Dialogue exemplifies how cultural understanding can pave the way for effective collaboration. Moreover, Pakistan's emphasis on inclusivity during these gatherings reflects its cultural values. Welcoming delegations from diverse nations, including those with differing political ideologies and maritime interests, speaks to the country's commitment to fostering unity amidst diversity. In an era where geopolitical tensions often dominate headlines, events like the AMAN Dialogue remind us of the shared human values that unite nations. Culture serves as a universal language, transcending barriers and fostering empathy. When delegates from different parts of the world experience Pakistan's hospitality, artistry, and traditions, they gain a deeper appreciation of the host nation's identity. This, in turn, builds trust and strengthens the foundation for long-term partnerships. This fusion of strategy and culture ensures that such gatherings are remembered not only for their outcomes but also for the bonds of understanding and friendship they forge. In retrospect, this is the main goal of the exercise.

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## Briefs

## SC questions 'selective mily trials'...

FROM PAGE 01  
remarked Justice Mandokhail asking: "Is any special evidence presented before the military court?" We respect all courts, including the military ones, but you have to establish them via adhering to the Constitution, added Justice Mandokhail. Echoing his colleagues, Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan asked about how the distinction was made when deciding which case would go to the military courts and ATCs — a point further raised by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Hila as well. "Where is the ATC verdict for handing over the accused to the military?" the judge questioned. With Justice Mandokhail inquiring why the ATCs are not strengthened, Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi asked whether the May 9 riots were more of a serious crime than terrorism. With Justice Amin-Ud-Din saying that the bench cannot give an order concerning those who have already been convicted, the court adjourned the hearing till tomorrow.

## 'No restriction on UAE work.'

FROM PAGE 01  
Committee Chairman Senator Zeeshan Khanzada said that there is "no restriction on UAE work visas" and added that if Pakistanis face issues getting a work visa, it would be forwarded to the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis. However, Overseas Employment Promoter (OEP) Aisam Baig informed the committee that visas to the UAE had been "unofficially closed" with a 50 per cent decrease in the number of Pakistani workers traveling there. OEPs facilitate labour to travel abroad for work. "The UAE government had reservations that Pakistanis beg in the country, but they are on visit visas, not work visas," Baig said.

## 'Electricity prices may drop by...'

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the interests of the people," he said. Regarding efforts to curb electricity theft, particularly in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), Leghari explained that despite numerous meetings with the provincial government, progress had been slow. "Our company faced additional losses of Rs6 billion due to continued theft and lack of cooperation," he stated. Looking ahead, the minister confirmed that discussions with 16 other IPPs are ongoing, with the goal of revising contracts to further reduce electricity costs. He also mentioned that government power plants would soon undergo a review of their return on equity, which could further influence future tariffs. The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) recently reduced electricity tariff up to 75 paisa per unit for consumers of ex-Wapda power distribution companies (DISCOs) and K-Electric on account of fuel charges adjustment (FCA).

## Hafiz Naem announces..

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electricity bills despite the shutdown of Independent Power Producers (IPPs). "Even though the IPPs are closed, electricity bills have not decreased," he said, emphasising the party's concerns regarding the economic hardships faced by the public. He also pointed to the increasing prices of petrol and essential food items, which have continued to rise while other sectors, such as the stock exchange, show positive trends. Highlighting the issue of IPPs, Hafiz Naem stressed that despite the government's claims of resolving the crisis, the people continue to suffer. "We raised the issue of IPPs, but they remain unaffected, and the promised relief has not materialised," he added. He also questioned the government's decision to exempt IPPs from income taxes while ordinary citizens continue to bear the tax burden.

## Fearnley handed Kyrgios blockbuster at AO 2025

Defending men's champion Jannik Sinner opens against Chile's Nicolas Jarry, while Aryna Sabalenka begins her bid for a third straight women's title against 2017 US Open winner Sloane Stephens

SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: Rising British star Jacob Fearnley is set to face Nick Kyrgios - and a partisan home crowd - in the controversial Australian's planned return to Grand Slam tennis. Kyrgios, who has been given a wildcard by Australian Open organisers, has not played at a major since the 2022 US Open after a series of injuries. Jack Draper, seeded 15th, faces Argentina's Mariano Navone as the British men's number one looks to back up last year's US Open semi-final run. In the women's draw, British number one and 22nd seed Katie Boulter starts against Canada's Rebecca Marino, while Emma Raducanu faces 26th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova. Novak Djokovic, who is being coached by Andy Murray in Melbourne, faces American wildcard Nishesh Basavareddy as he pursues a standalone record of 25 Grand Slam titles. Defending men's cham-

pion Jannik Sinner opens against Chile's Nicolas Jarry, while Aryna Sabalenka begins her bid for a third straight women's title against 2017 US Open winner Sloane Stephens. The Australian Open begins at Melbourne Park on Sunday. Scot Fearnley, 23, has qualified for the main draw of a major for the first time after his meteoric rise into the world's top 100. The reward for the British number three is a first-round tie against Kyrgios - presuming the 2022 Wimbledon finalist is fit enough to play. Kyrgios, 29, recently made his comeback in Brisbane after 18 months out and undergoing wrist surgery, which left him fearing for his career. On Wednesday, the former world number 13 - who is unranked - said he is now nursing an abdominal injury. "It's not too serious. I'll just take it day by day and give myself the best chance," Kyrgios said. Seven British players have direct entry into the main singles draws, although Harriet Dart and Billy Harris were unable

to join them after losing their final qualifying matches on Thursday. Cameron Norrie has been handed a difficult start against Italy's Matteo Berrettini - a 2022 semi-finalist at Melbourne Park and one of the most dangerous unseeded players in the men's draw. Like Fearnley, Sonay Kartal is playing in her first overseas Grand Slam following the best season her career. The 23-year-old faces Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro, with Sabalenka potentially waiting in the second round. Jodie Burrage, who has used a protected ranking after missing a large chunk of last season through injury, has been pitted against French qualifier Leolia Jeanjean. Burrage, 25, also has the likelihood of facing a superstar in the second round in third seed Coco Gauff. Although the unpredictable nature of a Grand Slam means things do not always pan out as expected, the draw ceremony is always an exciting event that allows fans to plot what may happen.

The leading two seeds are split, meaning they cannot play each other until the final - should they get that far. Sinner has been drawn in the same half as American fourth seed Taylor Fritz and Russian fifth seed Daniil Medvedev. It means Sinner cannot play 10-time champion Djokovic or Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, who is aiming to complete the career Grand Slam aged just 21, until the semi-finals. Despite being at the opposite ends of their careers, Djokovic and Alcaraz have developed an intriguing rivalry which has produced some enthralling encounters. The pair could meet again in the Melbourne quarter-finals. In the women's draw, Sabalenka could face Gauff - who faces 2020 champion Sofia Kenin in a tough all-American first-round opener - in the semi-finals. Neither Sabalenka or Gauff can face second seed Iga Swiatek, who begins against Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic, until the final.

## Raducanu handed daunting draw at Australian Open

Briton will take on the world No 27 - while Novak Djokovic and new coach Andy Murray face brutal route to the men's final

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Emma Raducanu has been drawn against a seed in the first round of Sunday's Australian Open, which features seven Britons now that all our qualifying prospects have been snuffed out. Raducanu faces a difficult opener against Ekaterina Alexandrova, the world No 27 from Russia. As it happens, she landed the same opponent in last summer's Wimbledon draw but was spared the need to actually play that match when Alexandrova withdrew on the eve of the tournament, leading to a late call-up for lucky loser Renata Zarazua. While Raducanu's off-season was disrupted by back issues, which led her to pull out of her planned warm-up tournament in Auckland, she has been training in Melbourne all week and looks ready to compete. Her previous three appearances at the Australian Open all ended in the second round, but simply to reach that stage here would be a decent achievement, given Alexandrova's class and experience. Thursday's draw fell more favourably for British No1 Katie Boulter. But then, as the 22nd seed, Boulter has earned immunity from other seeds until at least the third round. She opens against Rebecca Marino, the Canadian who lost to Raducanu in November's Billie Jean King Cup finals. Boulter is building a strong CV on the WTA Tour, having won three titles since



summer of 2023, but her grand-slam record has yet to catch up with other aspects of her career. At the majors, she has a 46 per cent win rate and no appearances beyond the third round. This draw - which would bring Boulter up against either Veronika Kudermetova or Olivia Gadecki if she won her opener, followed by a possible meeting with 15th seed Beatriz Haddad Maia - represents a significant opportunity to improve on that record. In other areas of the draw, Britain's new top-100 player Jacob Fearnley has landed a high-profile opponent in local hero Nick Kyrgios. However, there must be some doubt as to whether Kyrgios will actually show up for that match. He picked up a grade-one abdominal injury in Brisbane last week (the lowest level of muscle tear, but still awkward for a big server) and has also been struggling with wrist issues.

And then there is Novak Djokovic, the 10-time champion who is now being coached by former British No1 Andy Murray. It was not an optimal draw for the king of Melbourne Park, who could potentially play four-time major winner Carlos Alcaraz in the quarter-final, world No 2 Alexander Zverev in the semi-final, and reigning champion Jannik Sinner in the final. British tennis lovers will no doubt look to our highest-ranked player - 15th seed Jack Draper - to continue his US Open form and disrupt the bottom half of the men's draw.

## Mohammad Hasnain joins Sydney Thunder

Mohammad Hasnain joins Thunder as a replacement call for Lockie Ferguson

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Pakistan's national fast bowler, Mohammad Hasnain, is set to make his return to the Australian Big Bash League (BBL) after Sydney Thunder announced his signing for the remainder of the 2024-25 season. Hasnain will serve as an overseas replacement for Lockie Ferguson and George Garton, who have both departed to join the ILT20, as well as Sherfane Rutherford. Sydney Thunder's General Manager, Trent Copeland, expressed confidence in Hasnain's return, emphasising his ability to fill the gap left by Ferguson's departure. "When we looked at how to replace someone like Lockie Ferguson, we knew we couldn't replicate him exactly. Instead, we targeted an X-factor player - someone capable of turning games on their head," Copeland said. "Hasnain stood out. His incredible impact for the club in BBL11, with 150 kph deliveries and match-winning spells, made him an obvious choice. At just 24 years old, he brings raw pace, wicket-taking ability, and energy to our squad - a massive boost for the tournament and finals," he added. This marks the right-arm pacer's second stint with Sydney Thunder, as he previously represented the team during the 2021-22 BBL season. However, his first appearance in the BBL since then will be notable, as Hasnain's bowling action was reported during his earlier tenure. After undergoing a series of assessments and modifications, the 24-year-old's action has since been cleared and he is now set to return to the league in full stride. Hasnain's previous BBL campaign saw him take seven wickets in five matches, averaging 15.71 with an impressive economy rate of 6.00. On the international stage, the young pacer has represented Pakistan in 28 T20I matches, claiming 25 wickets at an average of 35.08 and an economy of 8.51.

## Pat Cummins' participation in doubt for Champions Trophy

Bailey confirmed that Cummins will undergo a scan to evaluate his sore ankle

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Australia's skipper, Pat Cummins, may face a race against time to be fit for the 2025 Champions Trophy following a suspected ankle injury sustained after an intense Border-Gavaskar series. The fast bowler, who featured in all five Test matches during the summer, bowled a staggering 167 overs, the most by any player in the series. The right-arm pacer was not named in Australia's squad for the upcoming two-match Test series against Sri Lanka in the subcontinent due to the birth of his second child. Meanwhile, he may also be dealing with an ankle issue that could keep him out of action for some time. Australia's chief selector, George Bailey, confirmed that Cummins will undergo a scan to evaluate his sore ankle. "There's a little bit of work to do; he's got a little bit of a sore ankle as well, so I think in the next week or so, he's got a scan coming up, and we'll get a bit more information on where that's at," Bailey told reporters. Bailey expressed uncertainty over the skipper's availability for the Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan, adding, "Not really sure yet, we'll have to wait and see where that scan comes back and where it's tracking." The prestigious Champions Trophy will commence on February 19 in Karachi, marking the start of a thrilling month-long cricketing spectacle. The eight-team tournament, featuring 15 matches, is scheduled to run from February 19 to March 9.

## ICC delegation inspects National Bank Stadium

The delegation reviewed the venue arrangements for the Champions Trophy 2025

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A six-member delegation from the International Cricket Council (ICC) visited the National Bank Stadium on Thursday to assess the ongoing preparations for the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan. The delegation, which included key ICC officials, broadcasters and logistics personnel, thoroughly reviewed the arrangements at the venue. The purpose of the visit was to ensure that all necessary facilities are in place for the tournament, which is set to begin on February 19, 2025. Usman Wahla, Director of International Cricket at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), provided the delegation with an in-depth briefing on the development works currently underway at the stadium. The deadline for completing the required development works at the National Bank Stadium is set for January 25, 2025, ensuring that everything is ready well before the Champions Trophy commences. It is pertinent to mention that the eight-team tournament, comprised of 15 matches, will run from February

19 to March 9, across three venues - Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi - in Pakistan and Dubai. The eight teams are divided into two groups. Group A features Pakistan, India, New Zealand, Bangladesh, while Group B is comprised of Afghanistan, South Africa, England and Australia. Hosts Pakistan will take on New Zealand in the curtain raiser on February 19 in Karachi, while the blockbuster clash between arch-rivals Pakistan and India is scheduled for February 23 in Dubai.

**Champions Trophy Schedule:**

- 19 February, Pakistan v New Zealand, Karachi, Pakistan
- 20 February, Bangladesh v India, Dubai
- 21 February, Afghanistan v South Africa, Karachi, Pakistan
- 22 February, Australia v England, Lahore, Pakistan
- 23 February, Pakistan v India, Dubai
- 24 February, Bangladesh v New Zealand, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
- 25 February, Australia v South Africa, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
- 26 February, Afghanistan v England, Lahore, Pakistan
- 27 February, Pakistan v Bangladesh, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
- 28 February, Afghanistan v Australia, Lahore, Pakistan
- 1 March, South Africa v England, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2 March, New Zealand v India, Dubai
- 4 March, Semi-final 1, Dubai
- 5 March, Semi-final 2, Lahore, Pakistan
- 9 March, Final, Lahore (unless India qualify, when it will be played in Dubai)
- 10 March, Reserve day

## Major blow to Pakistan ahead of West Indies Tests

Haseebullah was struck on the hand by the ball during practice

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan's preparations for the upcoming Test series against the West Indies have suffered a significant setback with the injury of wicketkeeper-batter Haseebullah Khan. The 21-year-old has been ruled out of the two-match series after sustaining an injury to his hand, which required stitches. The young wicketkeeper was struck on the hand by the ball during practice and, as a result, will not be available for selection in the upcoming matches. Haseebullah, who has represented Pakistan in one ODI and three T20Is, was set to be named as the second wicketkeeper in the squad alongside Mohammad Rizwan for the series against the West Indies. He made his T20I debut on January 21, 2024, in Christchurch, opening the batting under the leadership of Shaheen Shah Afridi. Just months later, he played his first ODI on November 24, 2024 against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo, under the captaincy of Mohammad Rizwan. It is pertinent to mention that the West Indies cricket team arrived in Pakistan on Monday to participate in a two-match Test series, marking their return to the country

## PCB unveils ticket prices for West Indies Test series

Tickets for First Class Test series and General enclosures have been kept free

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday, revealed the ticket prices for the upcoming two-match Test series between Pakistan and West Indies, scheduled to take place at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium from December 7 to 25. According to the cricket board, the tickets will go on sale from Friday and can be bought online from pcb.tcs.com.pk, while the physical tickets will be available for purchase at the designated TCS outlets in Multan. In a bid to attract fans, the entry to the First Class enclosures - Wasim Akram and Elahi brothers - and General enclosures - Hanif Muhammad and Mushtaq Ahmed - have been kept free for both Tests. The Premier enclosures' ticket prices have been set PKR 100 for both Tests, while the VIP enclosures, which include Fazal Mahmood and Imran Khan stands, will be accessible with PKR 150 tickets. Meanwhile, tickets for the PCB Gallery - Inzamam-ul-Haq - will be available for sale at just PKR 500. The upcoming series is a significant milestone for Pakistan cricket, as it marks the first Test series on Pakistani soil featuring the West Indies since their 2006 visit. While this is the first longer-format series in nearly two decades, the West Indies have toured Pakistan three times since 2018 for limited-overs fixtures. The rivalry between Pakistan and the West Indies spans 54 Test matches, with Pakistan leading the head-to-head record with 21 wins. The West Indies have 18 victories, while 15 matches ended in draws. The last Test series between the two sides took place in 2021 in the Caribbean, ending in a 1-1 draw. - DNA

for a Test series after 18 years. As part of their preparations, the visitors will play a three-day practice match against Pakistan Shaheens starting on January 10. This tour is a significant milestone for Pakistan cricket, as it marks the first Test series on Pakistani soil featuring the West Indies since their 2006 visit. While this is the first longer-format series in nearly two decades, the West Indies have toured Pakistan three times since 2018 for limited-overs fixtures. The rivalry between Pakistan and the West Indies spans 54 Test matches, with Pakistan leading the head-to-head record with 21 wins. The West Indies have 18 victories, while 15 matches ended in draws. The last Test series between the two sides took place in 2021 in the Caribbean, ending in a 1-1 draw. West Indies Squad: Kraigg Brathwaite (captain), Alick Athanaze, Keacy Carty, Joshua Da Silva, Justin Greaves, Kavem Hodge, Tevin Imlach, Amir Jangoo, Mikyle Louis, Gudakesh Motie, Anderson Phillip, Kemar Roach, Jayden Seales, Kevin Sinclair, Jomel Warrican.

**Two-Match Test series schedule:**

- First Test: January 17-21, Multan Cricket Stadium
- Second Test: January 25-29, Multan Cricket Stadium

## Omar Ayub seeks immediate meeting...

FROM PAGE 01  
leveled against my role. My duty is to act as a facilitator between the government and the opposition, not to arrange meetings with the founder," Ayaz Sadiq stated. He further addressed critics, saying, "If those criticizing me believe I should step away from the negotiation process, I am open to considering their suggestion."

## Global parliamentary group to...

FROM PAGE 01  
The Toshakhana cases, as well as the legal and constitutional flaws and the violation of the right to a fair trial." Chaudhry said the IPU representative was also briefed on the events of May 9 and the GHQ case. "In November 2023, an IPU trial observer attempted to visit Adiala Jail but was denied permission." This is not the first time that someone from outside Pakistan has talked about Khan's imprisonment or cases, as parliamentarians from the UK and US have also sought the former prime minister's release.

## ECP dismisses reference...

FROM PAGE 01  
The ECP had reserved its decision on January 7 after hearing arguments in the case. The disqualification reference was originally submitted by Senate Chairman Yusuf Raza Gilani, who contended that Saifullah Abro did not meet the eligibility criteria for a technocrat seat due to a pending NAB reference. The reference alleged that Abro had provided misleading information in his affidavit regarding dependents, agricultural income, and assets. It also claimed he failed to disclose agricultural land owned by his children in his wealth statement submitted with his nomination papers.

## Pak passport plunges to 103rd...

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second most powerful passport. The Henley index ranks all the world's 199 passports as per the number of destinations they can access visa-free. Several EU countries including France, Germany, Italy and Spain were dropped by two places in the ranking. The fourth place is shared by a seven-nation EU cohort including Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. They have visa-free access to 191 destinations. It merits mention here that only 22 of the world's 199 passports have fallen down the Henley index ranking over the past decade. The United States is the second-biggest faller between 2015 and 2025 after Venezuela.

## Internet slowdown issue to be...

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the matter of internet slowness. "However, slowness might be experienced on Meta-related services (WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram) during peak hours," the telecom company said in a statement. The statement added that a complete resolution of the matter is expected in the next few days, adding that the PTCL and PTA were working diligently to ensure the earliest possible resolution. The PTA revealed last week that the internet and broadband users may experience disruptions as submarine cable AAE-1 near Qatar developed a fault.

## PIA set to resume...

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Only eleven executive economy seats are left in the first flight. About 85 percent of the seats for next week's flights have also been sold. Only some remnants of the executive economy remain. There was a lot of demand for direct flights from Europe to Pakistan, PIA spokesperson concluded.

## Briefs

## PSX stays bearish, loses 1,510 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Thursday, losing 1,510.19 points, a negative change of 1.32 percent, closing at 112,638.26 points as compared to 114,148.46 points on the last trading day. A total of 695,142,411 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,099,982,065 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 24.293 billion against Rs. 32.466 billion on the last trading day. As many as 454 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 89 of them recorded gains and 321 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 44 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 195,296,323 shares at Rs 1.79 per share, K-Electric Limited with 48,682,503 shares at Rs.4.76 per share and Cnergyco PK with 35,460,848 shares at Rs.6.69 per share.—APP

## Gold price ups by Rs1,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,300 and was sold at Rs 278,300 on Thursday against its sale at Rs 277,000 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.1,114 to Rs.238,597 from Rs 237,483 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs.218,714 from Rs 217,693. 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 \$13 to \$2,665 from \$2,652, the Association reported.—APP

## Rupee gains 12 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Thursday appreciated by 12 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.60 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.72. 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 Rs1.33 to close at Rs 286.68 against the last day's closing of Rs288.01, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged to close at Rs1.76, whereas a decrease of Rs6.09 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs341.42 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs347.51.—APP

## People living near airports face increased heart attack risk

ISTANBUL: Living near airports with high aircraft noise could increase the risk of heart issues, including heart attacks and strokes, according to a new study led by University College London researchers. The study analyzed detailed heart imaging data from 3,635 individuals living near four major airports in England and compared it with data from people in areas with lower aircraft noise levels. The risk, researchers found, was particularly true for those exposed to higher aircraft noise at night, likely due to factors such as disrupted sleep and increased time spent at home, leading to greater noise exposure. The researchers found that heart abnormalities in people not exposed to aircraft noise could raise the risk of major cardiac events, such as heart attack, arrhythmias, or stroke, by two to four times compared to those without these abnormalities. "Our study is observational so we cannot say with certainty that high levels of aircraft noise caused these differences in heart structure and function," said cardiologist Gaby Captur. "However, our findings add to a growing body of evidence that aircraft noise can adversely affect heart health.—APP

## Pak calls for representative governance in Syria

"Any resurgence of Al-Qaeda or ISIS related groups cannot be accepted," the Pakistani envoy said, while recommending that the Monitoring Team of UNSC's 1267 Sanctions Committee should continue to follow and report on the situation

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called for political inclusivity and representative governance in "fraternal" Syria following the overthrow of the Assad regime exactly a month ago, saying the process should be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned that is backed by the United Nations "Today, Syria is at an important juncture in its history," Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council which debated the situation in that Arab country on Wednesday. "The recent political developments offer the opportunity to restore normalcy, stability and peace in Syria," he said, adding, "Yet this will depend on ensuring a peaceful transition to a new governance structure which is inclusive and stable and ensures Syria's unity and territorial integrity." Earlier, Syria's ambassador Koussay Aldahhak told the 15-member Council that the "dawn of freedom has broken", and called on members of the UN to "respect the will of the Syrian people and its national choices." For this reason, he urged them to "immediately and fully lift unilateral coercive measures, to provide the necessary financing to meet humanitarian needs and recover basic services" and "to rehabilitate and reconstruct the damaged facilities and ensure demining."

## Pak urges de-escalation on Korean peninsula after launch, missiles

UNITED NATIONS: Voicing concern over North Korea's latest launch of a ballistic missile, Pakistan has called for diplomatic engagement and dialogue to address the challenges confronting the Korean Peninsula. "We strongly support the calls for revival of talks among the relevant parties," Ambassador Munir Akram, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council which met two days after North Korea fired off what Pyongyang described as a new type of intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile (IRBM) loaded with a hypersonic glide vehicle. Ambassador Akram called these developments detrimental to regional and international peace and security. Pakistan, he said, supported the objective of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, the implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and the goals of global non-proliferation and disarmament. "Provocations such as missile tests on the one hand — and coercive actions and threats on the other — must be ended," the Pakistani envoy said. "Pakistan opposes any further nuclear weapons testing in Korea or elsewhere." In this regard, Ambassador Akram called on all parties to exercise restraint and not escalate existing tensions, urging the Security Council to consider adopting some Confidence Building Measures by the parties in order to reduce tensions. Pakistan, he added, remains committed to working within the framework established by the United Nations resolutions to promote peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. "We hope that the Security Council will find ways of reviving the dialogue and playing its due role in reducing tensions and threats to peace and security in the region. Opening the debate, a senior UN official warned that North Korea has been actively working towards acquiring new military capabilities that undermine the global non-proliferation architecture. "While stating that the launch had no negative impact on the security of neighboring countries, [Pyongyang] regrettably did not issue airspace or maritime safety notifications," said Khaled Khari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations.—APP

As the country is committed to improving conditions following 14

years of brutal conflict, the Syrian Ambassador called on the U.S. and other States to lift restrictive measures which targeted the previous regime. Finally, he had a message for Israel in the Golan, "We stress the need to ensure that Israeli occupation entities do not take advantage of the current circumstances to violate Syria's sovereignty in an attempt to impose a new reality through their military incursion to new parts of Syria," In his remarks, Ambassador Akram, the top Pakistani diplomat, welcomed the positive statements and assurances from the leaders and representatives of the interim government, saying, "These must be translated into policies and implemented in practice." The international community and this Council, he said, must address the danger of terrorism within and from Syria, especially in the still unsettled parts of the country, noting that the antecedents of some of the groups, and the reported presence of foreign fighters, dictates caution. "Any resurgence of Al-Qaeda or ISIS related groups cannot be accepted," the Pakistani envoy said, while recommending that the Monitoring Team of UNSC's 1267 Sanctions Committee should continue to follow and report on the situation. Ambassador Akram also called on the Security Council

to seek objective information on the alleged presence of chemical weapons or capabilities in Syria. He underscored the need for dealing with Syria's massive humanitarian crisis immediately and unconditionally. Seventeen million Syrians — more than 70 percent of the population — is in need of humanitarian support, it was pointed out. Over thirteen million Syrians have been displaced — 7 million internally and 6 million abroad. The recent escalation has further added to these needs with more than one million people displaced in a few weeks. The UN Humanitarian Response Plan — which is only 33.3 percent funded — must mobilize all the resources required to meet the urgent needs of the Syrian people, including for the safe and dignified repatriation of Syrian refugees, including Türkiye, the Pakistani envoy stressed. While calling for the restoration of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Ambassador Akram said Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights is illegal and "null and void" and that the Security Council must demand the occupying country's full withdrawal. "We strongly condemn Israel's further incursion into the separation areas established under the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and its attacks on the UNDOF peacekeepers at Lebanon-Israel border.—Agencies

## Egypt unveils ancient rock-cut tombs and burial shafts

CAIRO: Egypt unveiled several discoveries near the famed city of Luxor on Wednesday, including ancient rock-cut tombs and burial shafts dating back 3,600 years. They were unearthed at the causeway of Queen Hatshepsut's funerary temple at Deir Al-Bahri on the Nile's West Bank, according to a statement released by Zahi Hawass Foundation for Antiquities & Heritage. It said it worked in tandem with the Supreme Council of Antiquities on the site since September 2022. Artifacts found at the tombs included bronze coins with the image of Alexander the Great dating to the Time of Ptolemy I (367-283), children's toys made of clay, cartonnage and funerary masks that covered mummies, winged scarabs, beads and funerary amulets. Hawass told reporters that the discoveries could "reconstruct history" and offer an understanding of the type of programs ancient Egyptians designed inside a temple. The Archaeologists also found the remains of Queen Hatshepsut's Valley Temple, rock-cut tombs dating back to the Middle Kingdom (1938 B.C. — 1630 B.C.), burial shafts from the 17th dynasty, the tomb of Djehuti-Mes and part of the Assasif Ptolemaic Necropolis.—APP

## Sri Lankan firebrand monk jailed for anti-Muslim remarks

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan court has sentenced an influential Buddhist monk, Galagodaatte Gnanasara, to nine months in prison for making derogatory remarks about Islam and inciting religious hatred. The charges date back to 2016 when Gnanasara, known for his firebrand rhetoric, publicly insulted Sri Lanka's minority Muslim population. This is the second time Gnanasara has been jailed for similar offenses. In the previous year, he was convicted on charges of disparaging Muslims, a community that comprises over 10 percent of the island's 22 million population. At the time, he was released on bail while appealing a four-year sentence. A close ally of former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Gnanasara was appointed head of a panel in 2021 tasked with reforming Sri Lanka's legal system to promote religious harmony.—APP

## Satellite images reveal destruction from LA wildfires

LOS ANGELES: Wildfires continue to wreak havoc across Los Angeles, with five major blazes burning through neighbourhoods and forcing mass evacuations. The Eaton and Palisades fires, the two largest, remain entirely uncontained, consuming nearly 26,400 acres. Satellite images reveal stark before-and-after contrasts of the damage, highlighting the catastrophic impact. Hollywood Hills, home to the iconic Hollywood sign, is among the worst-hit areas. The Sunset fire, which began on Wednesday, has left parts of Sunset Boulevard in ruins and triggered mandatory evacuations, leading to gridlock on city streets. Fire Chief Mike Stanton described the Hollywood Hills blaze as "rapidly expanding" with no chance of containment. Meanwhile, footage from the city paints a grim picture, with flames illuminating the skyline in a haunting glow. The fires have claimed at least five lives, with over 137,000 residents evacuated. Among those affected is Paris Hilton, whose home was destroyed. Officials describe the disaster as the most destructive wildfire in Los Angeles' history. Neighbouring counties are also under threat, as the blazes show no signs of abating. Authorities continue to urge residents in affected areas to evacuate promptly and avoid returning until it is safe.—Agencies



SEOUL: Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Korean Trade Minister Inkyo Cheong sign a historic declaration in Seoul, marking the launch of negotiations for the Pakistan-Korea Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

## Turkiye to tell US that Syria needs to be rid of terrorists

ANKARA: Turkish officials will tell US Under Secretary of State John Bass during talks in Ankara this week that Syria needs to be rid of terrorist groups to achieve stability and security, a Turkish Foreign Ministry source said on Thursday. Bas' visit comes amid repeated warnings from Turkiye that it could mount a cross-border military offensive into northeastern Syria against the Kurdish YPG militia if the group does not meet its demands. The YPG spearheads the US-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which played an important role in defeating Islamic State in Syria. Ankara views the group as terrorists and an extension of the Kurdish militants waging a decades-old insurgency against the Turkish state, and has said it must lay down its weapons and disband. During his visit to Ankara on Thursday and Friday, Bass will hold talks with Turkiye's deputy foreign ministers, the source said, adding the talks would focus on Syria. Talks are expected to "focus on steps to establish stability and security in Syria and to support the establishment of an inclusive government," the source said. "Naturally, the Turkish side is expected to strongly repeat that, for this to happen, the country needs to be rid of terrorist elements," the person said, adding the sides would also discuss expanding the US sanctions exemption to Syria for the country to rebuild. Ankara has repeatedly demanded that its NATO ally Washington halt its support for the YPG. It has mounted several incursions against the group and controls swathes of territory in northern Syria. Syria's Kurdish factions have been on the back foot since the ousting of former President Bashar Assad, with the new administration being friendly to Turkiye.—DNA

## Mayor of Belcastro in Italy orders ban on illness for residents

BELCASTRO: The mayor of Belcastro, a small town in southern Italy, has issued an unusual decree instructing residents to avoid falling ill. Mayor Antonio Torchia's proclamation, which reads "Getting sick is prohibited," is intended to draw attention to the town's lack of adequate healthcare services. Belcastro, with a population of around 1,300, has an aging demographic, with many residents being elderly. The town's local health center is often closed, and on-call doctors are unavailable during weekends, holidays, or after hours. The nearest emergency room is located 45 kilometers away in the city of Catanzaro. These healthcare access issues have prompted Torchia to take a drastic step, highlighting the need for urgent reform.—APP

## Pakistani products shine at the 29th Beijing fair

It's worth noting that the 29th Beijing New Year Goods Fair features nearly 10,000 high-quality products from domestic and international enterprises

## DNA

BEIJING: Pakistani products shined at the 29th Beijing New Year Goods Fair that kicked off at the National Agricultural Exhibition Center. The event attracted visitors from around the world, offering a vibrant mix of cultural and commercial displays. One of the major highlights this year was the impressive range of products from Pakistan, showcasing the country's rich heritage and skilled craftsmanship. Pakistani exhibitors displayed a variety of items, including detailed handicrafts, marble products, onyx, and traditional woodwork, all of which captured the attention of visitors. The fair served as an

important platform for Pakistani businesses to increase their international presence and promote the unique aspects of their culture. With the growing global interest in Pakistani products, we are thrilled to present our goods at such a prestigious event," said a representative from one of the Pakistani onyx companies. "The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and we hope to establish new partnerships and boost exports." Visitors expressed great appreciation for the vibrant colors and high quality of the displayed products, with many particularly drawn to the intricate wood carvings on traditional tables and furniture, reflecting

Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage, Gwadar Port reported on Thursday. As the fair continues through the week, it underscores the importance of such events in fostering trade and cultural exchange between countries. The participation of Pakistani vendors is not only a testament to the quality of their products but also a celebration of the rich traditions that Pakistan offers to the world. It's worth noting that the 29th Beijing New Year Goods Fair features nearly 10,000 high-quality products from domestic and international enterprises, with a full range of food and clothing items on display, the report added.

## China seeks stronger collaboration to promote early weather warnings

The country will share its experiences in climate change adaptation at the 62nd session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, scheduled for February in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province

## DNA

BEIJING: China aims to pioneer new paths for international collaboration to facilitate early warnings about weather conditions, providing Chinese technological expertise in disaster prevention and risk reduction, a senior official at the China Meteorological Administration said. Chen Zhenlin, head of the CMA, highlighted the substantial progress the nation made in advancing international meteorological cooperation last year. This was exemplified by the unveiling of its early warning system at the 29th session of the Conference of

the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November. Solutions have been deployed for testing in countries such as Pakistan, Ethiopia and the Solomon Islands, Chen said during a report at the 2025 National Meteorological Work Conference in Beijing. The conference reviewed China's meteorological achievements in 2024 and set key goals for the current year, China Daily reported. China's early weather warning services have also been integrated into the China-Africa Cooperation Forum's green development partnership. The president of the Maldives and the prime minister

of Sri Lanka visited the CMA to express their intent to boost collaboration, Chen noted. The World Meteorological Organization endorsed China's role in global early weather warning systems, with its secretary-general praising China's "people-oriented" approach to meteorology as a model for the world, Chen added. However, Chen emphasized that the increasingly complex global climate situation poses risks to socioeconomic development worldwide, as extreme weather events continue to rise in frequency and intensity. Last year, countries such as the United States and Spain faced catastrophic weather disasters, resulting in significant loss of life.

Super Typhoon Yagi caused economic damage to China that was six times greater than that caused by Typhoon Rammasun a decade ago. Citing Swiss Re, a leading international reinsurance provider, Chen said global economic losses from natural disasters last year surpassed \$310 billion. To address these challenges, China plans to develop more efficient and inclusive early warning platforms to enhance global monitoring and forecasting capabilities. Chen said China aims to offer comprehensive solutions in meteorological disaster prevention and reduction. This year, China will expand meteorological cooperation with key regions such as

Africa and Southeast Asia, focusing on building cloud-based early warning systems to support the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative. China also intends to strengthen ties with the United States, European nations and global organizations as it advocates for the international standardization of meteorological technologies, particularly in sectors such as artificial intelligence and early warning systems, Chen said. The country will share its experiences in climate change adaptation at the 62nd session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, scheduled for February in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

## Briefs

### Joseph Aoun voted Lebanon's new president

BEIRUT: Lebanese lawmakers have elected army chief Joseph Aoun as Lebanon's new president, putting an end to a two-year-long political deadlock in the crisis-hit Arab country. Legislators on Thursday chose Aoun after two rounds of voting in the 128-member parliament of the small Mediterranean country, which has been without a president since the end of the tenure of former President Michel Aoun, who is not associated with the newly-elected president, in October 2022. Political neophyte Aoun, 60, is widely regarded as the favored candidate of the United States and Saudi Arabia, on whose financial support Lebanon relies as it works to recover from a 14-month bombardment by Israel mostly against the Arab country's southern parts where the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement is based. Hezbollah, which had exchanged daily fire with the occupying regime from October 2023 until a ceasefire in November, had previously supported Suleiman Frangieh, the leader of a small Christian party in northern Lebanon, as its preferred candidate. However, Frangieh announced his withdrawal from the race on Wednesday and threw his support behind Aoun, seemingly paving the way for the army commander. Aoun secured 99 out of 128 votes in Lebanon's deeply divided parliament, with support from across the political spectrum, including Hezbollah legislators and their rivals. - Agencies

### IHC allows Khosa to travel abroad

DNA  
ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday granted permission to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader and senior lawyer Latif Khosa to travel abroad. IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani issued the order on a petition filed by Khosa to remove his name from the Exit Control List (ECL). The judge has directed the petitioner to submit an affidavit in the trial court stating that he will appear whenever the court summons him. During the hearing, the petitioner said his name was put on the ECL due to a case registered against him at the Secretariat police station over protest outside the Supreme Court. The court inquired whether the charge sheet had been submitted, to which the prosecutor replied that it had not been submitted yet. The court further questioned the nature of the case, asking if it involved violations under Section 144 or Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 7. Justice Kiyani also asked if Latif Khosa was to be arrested. The judge also questioned if there was a genuine concern that the petitioner might abscond or not return after going abroad. The court also inquired why the trial court was preventing the petitioner from travelling to a foreign country.

### Court upholds arrest warrants for Gandapur

FAISAL SHEIKH  
ISLAMABAD: The District and Sessions Court Islamabad upheld the non-bailable arrest warrants for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in the audio leak case. During the hearing, the court cancelled the non-bailable arrest warrants of co-accused Asad Farooq after his appearance in court. Neither Gandapur nor his counsel appeared before the court during the proceedings. Subsequently, the court maintained the non-bailable arrest warrants for the chief minister and adjourned further proceedings in the audio leak case until January 25.

# FBR adopts for human monitoring of Afghan cargo

## Termination of satellite tracking raises concerns of increased smuggling as new contractors lack container-tracking

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The government has temporarily halted satellite tracking of containers carrying imported goods to Afghanistan from seaports and instead begun monitoring them through human surveillance a move that may increase the chances of smuggling. After withdrawing the license of a company that had been tracking container movements through GSM and satellite since 2013, last week, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) handed over the task to four firms. These firms were selected based on four-year-old technical qualifications and without any competitive process, according to official documents. In a written statement, FBR Director General for Transit Trade Mohsin Rafique confirmed that four firms have been "authorised regarding tracking of the cargo by the Licensing Committee, as these companies were already technically evaluated and found eligible by the Licensing Committee in its meeting dated April 6, 2021." These firms, however, lack experience in container tracking and do not have Container Surveillance Devices (CSDs), the FBR admitted in a written response to The Express Tribune. Their technical capability is limited to installing tracking devices on vehicles rather than containers. The FBR's shift from satellite tracking to a human-driven model has raised eyebrows. On December 27, the FBR issued new standard operating procedures (SOPs) for bonded cargo movement. The SOPs state,

## ADB upgrades Pak growth prospects to 3% in FY2025

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in its recent publication, has revised upwards Pakistan's growth forecast to 3.0% during the fiscal year 2024-25, from 2.8% projected in September 2024. According to the report, greater macroeconomic stability, following the approval of the new International Monetary Fund (IMF) program under the Extended Fund Facility in September will support recovery. The report says, industrial output growth is projected to accelerate with the suspension of import management measures, higher investor confidence, and easier access to foreign exchange. A more accommodative monetary policy because of faster-than-expected easing of inflationary pressures should further support economic activity through rebounding private investment. However, growth in agriculture is expected to weaken due to the heavy monsoon downpours during July-September 2024 and flood-like conditions in parts of the country. Wheat and cotton, two of Pakistan's five major crops, are projected to perform poorly in FY2025. The Asian Development Outlook for December 2024 also revised growth for FY2024, upwards to 2.5%, in line with the updated official estimate. In South Asia, the growth forecasts have been revised downward to 5.9% for 2024 and 6.3% for 2025. The lower forecast for 2024 is mainly due to India's lower-than-expected Quarter 2 growth, driven by dampened manufacturing sector performance and lagging government spending. While growth forecasts for Pakistan and Sri Lanka have been upgraded due to their recovery from the macroeconomic challenges of 2022-2023, downward revisions for Bangladesh and Maldives have further weighed on the 2024 outlook. The latter two economies' growth forecasts are also revised downward for 2025 due to the lingering effects of the political unrest of July-August 2024 in Bangladesh and fiscal consolidation measures in Maldives. Some weakening of growth is also expected for 2025 in Nepal relative to earlier forecasts. According to the report, the growth forecast for developing Asia is trimmed to 4.9% for 2024 and 4.8% for 2025. Most adjustments to 2024 growth projections for individual economies and sub-regions are based on recent data releases. The downward revisions to East Asia and South Asia offset the stronger growth in the Caucasus and Central Asia and Southeast Asia, shaving 0.1 percentage points from growth in the region. For 2025, slower growth is expected in South Asia due to weaker domestic demand prospects. - DNA

## Naqvi praises US ambassador for enhancing bilateral relations

US Ambassador Donald Blome pays Farewell call on Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador Donald Blome made a Farewell call on Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. During the meeting, they exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and Pakistan-US relations. Mohsin Naqvi appreciat-

ed US Ambassador Donald Blome's services for enhancing Pakistan-US relations and expressed good wishes for him. The US Ambassador condemned the recent terrorist incidents in Pakistan. The Interior Minister said that terrorism is a global issue, and the international community needs to formulate a joint strategy to eradicate terrorism completely. Mohsin Naqvi stated that no illegal foreigner will be allowed to stay in Pakistan. US Ambassador Donald Blome said that he received full cooperation from all institutions during his assignment in Pakistan. Federal Secretary Interior Muhammad Khurram Agha and US Deputy Chief of Mission Natalie A. Baker were also present on the occasion.



LOS ANGELES: Hollywood stars lose homes as out-of-control wildfires engulf Los Angeles, killing at least five people and placing 130,000 others under evacuation orders. - DNA

## Karachi again emerges as highest-tax paying city

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Large Taxpayer Office (LTO) Karachi has collected 30.7% increase over the Rs3,271 billion collected in the previous fiscal year (2022-23). Refunds totalling Rs52 billion were given to claimants during the same fiscal year. Income tax, workers' welfare fund/workers profit participation fund, and capital value tax are all sources of revenue under direct taxation. Particularly, withholding taxes, advance taxes, payments with returns, and collection on demand are all included in the income tax category. Compared to the Rs162 billion collected in the previous fiscal year, the total revenue from collection on demand in the fiscal year 2023-2024 was around Rs127 billion, a 21.5% decrease.

48.7%. Direct taxes totalled Rs4,531 billion, marking a substantial 38.5% increase over the Rs3,271 billion collected in the previous fiscal year (2022-23). Refunds totalling Rs52 billion were given to claimants during the same fiscal year. Income tax, workers' welfare fund/workers profit participation fund, and capital value tax are all sources of revenue under direct taxation. Particularly, withholding taxes, advance taxes, payments with returns, and collection on demand are all included in the income tax category. Compared to the Rs162 billion collected in the previous fiscal year, the total revenue from collection on demand in the fiscal year 2023-2024 was around Rs127 billion, a 21.5% decrease.

## US, Arab mediators make progress in Gaza talks

### Palestinian Resistance Movement Hamas demands end to war for hostage release

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: US and Arab mediators have made some progress in their efforts to reach a ceasefire accord between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, but not enough to seal a deal, Palestinian sources close to the talks said on Thursday. As talks continued in Qatar, the Israeli military carried out strikes across the enclave, killing at least 17 people, Palestinian medics said. Qatar, the US and Egypt are making a major push to reach a deal to halt fighting in the 15-month conflict and free remaining hostages held by Islamist group Hamas before President Joe Biden leaves office. President-elect Donald Trump has warned there will be "hell to pay," if the hostages are not released by his inauguration on Jan. 20. On Thursday, a Palestinian official close to the mediation effort said the absence of a deal so far did not mean the talks were going nowhere and said this was the most serious attempt so far to reach an accord. "There are extensive negotiations, mediators and negotiators are talking about every word and every detail. There is a breakthrough when it comes narrowing old existing gaps but there is no deal yet," he told Reuters, with-

## Pope Francis calls situation in Gaza 'shameful'

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Thursday stepped up his recent criticism of Israel's military campaign in Gaza, calling the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian enclave "very serious and shameful." In a yearly address to diplomats delivered on his behalf by an aide, Francis appeared to reference deaths caused by winter cold in Gaza, where there is almost no electricity. "We cannot in any way accept the bombing of civilians," the text said. "We cannot accept that children are freezing to death because hospitals have been destroyed or a country's energy network has been hit." The pope, 88, who was present for the address but asked an aide to read it as he is recovering from a cold, also condemned anti-Semitism; called for an end to the war in Ukraine and other conflicts around the world; and expressed concern over climate change. The comments were part of an address to Vatican-accredited envoys from some 184 countries that is sometimes called the pope's "state of the world" speech. The Israeli ambassador to the Holy See was among those present for the event. Francis, leader of the 1.4-billion-member Roman Catholic Church, is usually careful about taking sides in conflicts. But he has recently been more outspoken about Israel's military campaign against Palestinian militant group Hamas, and has suggested the global community should study whether the offensive constitutes a genocide of the Palestinian people. An Israeli government minister publicly denounced the pontiff in December for that suggestion. The pope's text said he condemns anti-Semitism, and called the growth of anti-Semitic groups "a source of deep concern." Francis also called for an end to the war between Ukraine and Russia, which has killed tens of thousands. - Agencies

## JUI-F steps up efforts for law to register madrassas in provinces

Development follows Fazl's call to PM to play role in resolving issues of seminaries' registration in provinces

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: After the promulgation of the Societies Registration (Amendment) Act, 2024, by the president last month, the JamiatUlema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) has prepared a draft bill for the registration of madrassas in the provinces. The religio-political party stepped up efforts for legislation to register Islamic schools in the provinces after the federal government notified the madrassas' registration bill last month, following its passage in both houses of parliament. The proposed act shall be called the Societies Registration Amendment Act, 2025, to pave the way for the registration of unregistered seminaries within six months in the provinces; however, those madrassas already registered with the Centre would not be required to apply for registration again. The draft law stated that unregistered Islamic schools would register themselves with the directorate under the Ministry of Education, while seminaries with more than one campus would require a single registration. Under the law proposed by the MaulanaFazlurRehman-led party, seminaries would submit their audit reports and copies to the registrar. It also sought restrictions on literature containing content that promotes militancy, sectarianism, and religious hatred in madrassas. Subsequently, each seminary would integrate new subjects into its curriculum in phases. This development came after the JUI-F chief telephoned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif earlier this month, seeking the latter's role in resolving the issue of seminaries' registration in the provinces. Fazl had apprised the premier that legislation in provincial assemblies was also needed to create a law for the registration of religious seminaries. In response, Shehbaz promised that he would talk to the chief ministers on the matter. The cleric wanted the provincial governments to follow the pattern of the federal government, which has now become law through a gazette notification. The president had also issued an ordinance concerning amendments to the Societies Registration Act, 2024, approved by the federal cabinet after the government and the JUI-F resolved their differences. The madrassa bill had become a bone of contention between the JUI-F and the government after President Zardari returned it, citing legal objections. Its enactment was part of an agreement between the government and the religio-political party for supporting the 26th Amendment, Fazl had said previously.

## Arrest warrants issued for Shoaib Shaheen

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad District and Session Court issued arrest warrants for ShoaibShaheen and several other PTI leaders for allegedly violating Section 144. The hearing, presided over by Senior Civil Judge Muhammad Abbas Shah, dealt with two cases linked to the alleged violation. The court issued arrest warrants for ShoaibShaheen, Ali Bukhari, Aamir Mughal, Ayaz Amir, Khalid Khurshed, IlyasMehrbaban, and Malik Taimoor. None of the accused or their legal representatives appeared before the court, prompting the judge to issue the warrants and adjourn the case until 10 March. Earlier today, Islamabad anti-terrorism court extended interim bail for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders Umar Ayub, Zartaj Gul, and others in a case linked to the D-Chowk protest. Judge AbulHasnat-Zulqarnain presided over the hearing and granted bail extensions until 7 February for Umar Ayub, Zartaj Gul, Sher Afzal Marwat, Ali Bukhari, and ShoaibShaheen. During the hearing, Prosecutor Chaudhry Zahid Asif informed the court that none of the accused had joined the investigation so far. The judge inquired whether Zartaj Gul was present, prompting her to approach the rostrum and request that the investigation be conducted in the courtroom. The judge remarked, "This is a court, not a police station," but agreed to issue an order concerning her request. The accused face multiple charges in cases registered at the Ramna, Secretariat, Margalla, Karachi Company, and Kohsar police stations.

## Presidency denies fake appointment notification

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Presidency on Thursday denied a fake notification circulating on social media regarding the appointment of a person named Dr. Sohail Anjum to Grade 21 post in the President House. In an official statement, the Presidency clarified that no such position existed in grade 21 or otherwise. Furthermore, the Establishment Division has confirmed that no individual named Dr. Sohail Anjum had been appointed to any post in the President House. The statement also pointed at that Dr. Sohail Anjum had allegedly gone as far as printing fake business cards falsely identifying himself as the Personal Secretary to the Secretary General of the Presidency - a position that, as clarified, did not exist. The Presidency underscored its commitment to transparency and integrity in all officer appointments. It has referred the matter to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for a thorough investigation into the creation and dissemination of the fake notification.

## Plea against former Issa, Justice Tariq dismissed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court of Pakistan Justice Jamal Mandokhel has dismissed appeal filed against former Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Qazi Faiz Issa and Justice Sardar Tariq Masood after the appeal gets ineffective. Advocate Shahid Rana had filed application in the apex court seeking action against former judges for hearing cases despite stay orders on Practice and Procedure Act. Registrar office had returned the application by putting up several objections on it. Applicant Rana Shahid has filed in chamber appeal against the objection of Registrar office. Justice Jamal Mandokhel has dismissed appeal filed against former Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Qazi Faiz Issa and Justice Sardar Tariq Masood after the appeal gets ineffective.