



# Islamabad POST

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**South Africa sports minister joins calls for Afghan cricket boycott**

Detailed News On Page-06

**Putin ready for talks with Trump: Kremlin**

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**Romina Alam urges robust climate action**

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## OIC chief meets PM

# Shehbaz reaffirms unwavering support for OIC's shared goals

The Secretary General reaffirmed OIC's full support to the Kashmiri people in their legitimate struggle for freedom and self-determination and briefed the Prime Minister about the OIC's ongoing diplomatic efforts in this regard

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received Mr. Husein Brahim Taha, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), today at the Prime Minister's House. The Prime Minister thanked the OIC Secretary General for his participation in the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities, being organized in Islamabad on 11-12, January 2025. He noted that the initiative was aimed at galvanizing concrete and concerted efforts to further improve quality education and women empowerment in the Muslim World. Deeply appreciating the Secretary General for his dynamic stewardship of the OIC, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's full support to advancing the Organization's shared priorities and objectives while making it more effective as a collective voice of the Muslim Ummah. The Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the OIC's principled position and consistent support for the resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the UN and the OIC. On Palestine issue, while strongly condemning Israel's genocidal campaign, he stressed upon the need to bring an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza, ensure unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people and global accountability of Israel for its widely documented war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Secretary General thanked the Prime Minister for the warm hospitality extended by Pakistan to him and his delegation. He said that the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Communities exemplified Pakistan's leadership role on issues of importance for the Muslim Ummah. The Secretary General reaffirmed OIC's full support to the Kashmiri people in their legitimate struggle for

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## MWL Chief lauds Pakistan's efforts against Islamophobia

PM lauds MWL's support in promoting true identity of Islam at global level

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday praised the Muslim World League's (MWL) support in promoting the true identity of Islam at the global level, advocating the common goals of the Muslim world, and promoting mutual respect and understanding between religions, beliefs and cultures. The prime minister made these remarks during a call on paid by the Secretary General of Muslim World League, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa here at the Prime Minister House, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. He extended his gratitude to the Secretary General of MWL for the decision to establish the Sirat Museum in Pakistan and underscored the country's vision to continue to work for the early completion of joint projects, especially the establishment of Sirat Museum. Appreciating the thoughtful leadership of the Secretary General, the prime minister praised the organization's support in promoting the true identity of Islam at the global level, advocating the common goals of

Continued on Page 06

## Prime Minister congratulates Joseph Aoun

Joseph Aoun was elected President of Lebanon by securing 99 votes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday congratulated Joseph Aoun on his election as the President of Lebanon. The prime minister, in a social media post on X, wished him success in his endeavors to lead Lebanon towards peace, stability and prosperity. "Pakistan values its ties with Lebanon and looks forward to strengthen our bilateral cooperation," he wrote. Joseph Aoun was elected President of Lebanon by securing 99 votes from the 128-seat parliament in a second round of voting on Thursday afternoon.

## 5 terrorists killed in DI Khan operation

Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the killed militants

SHAMIM SHAHID

DI KHAN: Five terrorists were killed in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan on Friday, according to the military's media wing. A statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) today said security forces conducted an IBO in DI Khan's general area of Maddi on the "reported presence" of terrorists. It said security forces "effectively engaged" the terrorists at their location due to which, five, including ringleader Shafiqullah alias Shafi were "sent to hell". It added that they were actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and targeted killings of innocent civilians. The ISPR said weapons and ammunition were recovered from them. Sanitisation operations were being conducted to eliminate any other terrorists, the statement said. "Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR concluded. On Tuesday, the ISPR said three soldiers were martyred and 19 terrorists were killed in three separate engagements in KP. Pakistan has recently witnessed an uptick in terrorist activities, especially in KP and Balochistan. Terror attacks have increased since the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan broke a fragile ceasefire agreement with the government.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Mr. Husein Brahim Taha calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

## After four years

# PIA resumes Europe operations with first flight to Paris

Khawaja Asif sees off passengers, says flight to Paris was fully booked

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has resumed its long-awaited flights to Europe, marking a major milestone for the national carrier after more than four years of hiatus, as the first flight took off for Paris on Friday. PIA's authorisation to operate in the Europe was suspended in June 2020 over concerns about the ability of Pakistani authorities and its Civil Aviation Authority to ensure compliance with international aviation standards. The flight took off from Islamabad around 12:40pm, becoming the only carrier to offer a direct route to and from the European Union. "This is the first time I am travelling with PIA," said passenger Shumaila Rana, a 38-year-old school teacher living in Germany. "I'm nervous and I'm having a lot of anxiety, but I'm hoping it's gonna be a good flight."

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## Remittances see 'record increase' in December

Remittances from other Gulf countries during December totalled \$310m, \$360.3m from the European Union, \$68.8m from Australia

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan on Friday said remittances from overseas Pakistanis recorded inflows of \$3.1 billion in December which Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed as a "record increase". A statement issued today said the growth in workers' remittances was 29.3 per cent compared to the same month last year and a 5.6pc

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## Briefs

### ECP registers Abbasi's party

The commission also accepted the party's intra-party elections held on June 26

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday registered the political party of former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. A notification in this regard has also been issued. According to ECP's notification, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi is serving as convener and Miftah Ismail as secretary general of Awam Pakistan Party (APP). The ECP also accepted the intra-party elections of APP held on June 26. With this addition, the total number of registered political parties in Pakistan has reached 168.

### OGRA jacks up RLNG prices for January

LNG price for SNGPL were reduced by \$0.36 per MMBTU

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) on Friday notified increase in prices of Re-gasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) for Sui Southern Gas Company Ltd (SSGCL). The RLNG's price for Karachi-based SSGCL has been raised to \$12.60 per mmbtu for January 2025. Likewise, the RLNG sale price for Lahore-based Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd (SNGPL) has been increased to \$12.89 for the ongoing month.

### Holiday Notice

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

## In awarding death sentences SC judge questions army officers' expertise

Defence ministry's lawyer says army officers are experienced in conducting trials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Mandokhail on Friday questioned whether army officers have sufficient experience and expertise to award death sentences to an accused. His remarks came during the hearing of an intra-court appeal against civilian trials in military courts, conducted by a seven-member Supreme Court constitutional bench under the supervision of Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan. 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

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## Third round of talks may be last: Yousafzai

He noted that people who received laptops from Maryam Nawaz have placed Imran Khan's picture on them

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shaukat Yousafzai stated that the third round of negotiations with the government could be the last, as the government's attitude was not serious. In his video statement, Yousafzai expressed regret over the public dispute between senior leaders Sher Afzal Marwat and Salman Akram Raja, emphasising that it was the responsibility of the senior leadership to

Continued on Page 06

## Trump sentenced in hush-money case days before taking office

Donald Trump avoids jail time or a fine but the US president-elect's criminal conviction will be on his record

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Donald Trump has become the first former United States president ever sentenced for a crime, but the US president-elect avoided penalties for his conviction over hush-money payments made to an adult film actress. Judge Juan Merchan sentenced Trump to an "unconditional discharge" on Friday, a day after the US Supreme Court rejected an attempt by Trump's legal team to delay sentencing before the Republican leader's inauguration on January 20. The decision means that Trump's conviction will appear on his permanent record, but he does not face imprisonment, a fine, or probation – leaving him unencumbered to enter the White House. Trump, who previously served as president from 2017 to 2021, was found guilty in late May on 34 counts of falsifying business documents related to hush-money payments made to Stormy Daniels, among other things. The US president-elect has denied any wrongdoing and said he plans to appeal his conviction. Appearing virtually at Friday's sentencing hearing, Trump said his criminal trial and conviction had "been a very terrible experience" and insisted he committed no crime. "It's been a political witch-hunt," Trump said before the judge issued his decision. "It was done to damage my reputation so I would lose the election and obviously that didn't work."

Continued on Page 06

## US House passes ICC sanctions bill

Last year, the ICC issued warrants for the arrest of Netanyahu and Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives has approved a bill to sanction the International Criminal Court (ICC) officials in response to the arrest warrants that the tribunal has issued against Israeli authorities for war crimes in the Gaza Strip. House lawmakers on Thursday voted 243-140 in favor of the legislative text, which was introduced by Republican Representatives Chip Roy and Brian Mast. The bill, which now heads to the Republican-controlled Senate, stipulates that the warrants against the Israeli officials should be "condemned in the strongest possible terms." It also urges sanctions with respect to the court over "any effort to investigate, arrest,

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**DIG Islamabad Police leads recovery of over 20m cash**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have successfully returned stolen items worth over Rs 20 million, including vehicles, motorcycles, cash, jewelry, and other valuables, to their rightful owners. The recovered items were handed over during a ceremony at the Police Lines Headquarters on Friday. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police, Syed Ali Raza, while addressing a press conference, shared details of a three-month crackdown against criminal elements. DIG Raza said that the operation led to the recovery of 37 vehicles, 159 motorcycles, Rs 22.9 million in cash, jewelry worth over Rs 1.6 million, and 91 mobile phones. A significant quantity of narcotics and firearms with ammunition was also seized. During the ceremony, DIG Raza, accompanied by SSP Operations/Investigation Arsalan Shahzeb, zonal SPs, and SHO, handed over the recovered vehicles, motorcycles, jewelry, and other stolen items to their rightful owners.

The event was attended by citizens who expressed their gratitude and praised the police's efforts. Islamabad resident Faisal Satti expressed his happiness to APP, saying that the return of his Rs10 lakh was an astonishing act, and that Islamabad Police returned his money with respect. Similarly, another Islamabad resident, Muhammad Yousuf, whose house was burgled and suffered a loss of Rs2.7 million, had the full amount returned. Yousuf said that this might be a historic moment in Islamabad's history, as such a large sum of Rs2.7 million was returned, and he salutes DIG Ali Raza and Islamabad Police for this remarkable act.—DNA

**AIOU holds seminar on 'Modern Trends in Islamic Research'**

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has hosted a faculty seminar on the topic of 'Modern Trends in Islamic Research' the other day. The event featured Dr Mustafeez Ahmad Alvi, a prominent scholar from the Department of Islamic Thought and Culture, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, as the keynote speaker. The session was presided over by Prof. Dr Shah Mohayuddin Hashmi, Dean, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, AIOU. In his keynote address, Dr Mustafeez Ahmad Alvi emphasized the importance of looking beyond the past in research. He stated, "Our research often draws lessons from the past, which is not entirely appropriate. We should take guidance from the past but not let it dominate our work. The focus of research should be on the present and future, aligning with contemporary needs and challenges." He further highlighted the modern era's intellectual shift, noting, "The West is gradually returning to spirituality through rational arguments." Addressing the seminar, Prof. Dr Shah Mohayuddin Hashmi stressed the need for impartiality in research. "Instead of adopting a confrontational approach, we must develop a neutral and balanced attitude. The Holy Quran encourages research in several places and the process of research is universal, rooted in scientific.—APP

**MIUC hosts dialogue on Pakistan and Africa****Unlocking opportunities through trade, culture & collaboration**

This engaging session explored trade, cultural exchange, and strategic partnerships, highlighting the shared potential for economic and cultural growth between Pakistan and Africa

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Roots International Education Group, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, successfully hosted the MIUC Dialogue Series 2.0 on Friday. The event, titled "Pakistan and Africa: Unlocking Opportunities Through Trade, Culture & Collaboration," brought together an esteemed panel of diplomats, policymakers, and scholars to discuss avenues for strengthening ties between Pakistan and African nations. The dialogue featured an impressive lineup of speakers, including Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Jauhar Saleem (Ambassador, IRS), Sohail Mehmood (Ambassador, R), and Hamid Asghar Khan (Additional Foreign Secretary for Africa, MOFA). Joining them were ambassadors from African nations, including Mohamed Karmoune (Morocco), H.E. Titus M.J. Abu-Basutu (Zimbabwe), H.E. Hareriau Fatou (Rwanda), H.E. Sheikhnur Mohamed Hassan (Somalia), and Saima Syed (Pakistan's Ambassador to Senegal). Other notable participants included Ms. Amna Khan (Director General, ISS-RA), Mr. Sameh Ahmed (DHM, Egypt), and Mr. Brian Witbooi (Counsellor, South Africa). Representatives from academic



and strategic institutions added valuable insights, including Maj Gen (R) Raja Aftab Khan (Principal, CIPS, NUST), Brig Imran Ahmed Tahir (Director ME&A, Directorate DEPO), Col. Badar Munir (Deputy Director Africa, Joint Staff HQs), and Lt. Col (R) Faiz (ISI). Contributions from

Dr. Sadia Sulaiman (Director, Area Study Center, QAU), Ms. Nadia Rauf (Deputy Director Africa, MOFA), and Ms. Ariba (Research Associate, ISSI) further enriched the discussion. This engaging session explored trade, cultural exchange, and strategic partnerships, highlighting the shared po-

tential for economic and cultural growth between Pakistan and Africa. The dialogue underscored Pakistan's commitment to fostering collaboration and building bridges for mutual prosperity. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to provide our students with valuable opportunities for learning and

growth. By engaging with thought leaders, we aim to empower them with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in a globalized world. This dialogue and future initiatives will open doors for students, helping them become leaders who can shape a better future for themselves and their communities.

**Minister inaugurates Sanatkar stalls**

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Punjab Sohail Shaikat Butt inaugurated the Sanatkar stalls of the Social Welfare Department at the Wexnet Exhibition 2025, organised by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan. Accompanied by Director General Social Welfare Sikandar Zeeshan, the minister visited various stalls and appreciated the products and craftsmanship of women artisans. He said the Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Department was taking concrete steps to empower women and promote their skills. He emphasized that the exhibition provides women with an excellent platform to showcase their talents to the world and expand their professional networks. He further stated that such events offer women a valuable opportunity to exhibit their abilities and creativity. The department set up a total of 15 stalls through its institutions, Sanatkar and Qasr-e-Behbood, where trained women from various districts of Punjab presented unique handmade items, jewelry, handcrafted clothing, home décor, paintings, and other creative products. These products not only reflect the artisans' skill and dedication but also embody Punjab's rich cultural heritage. A large number of visitors, including prominent figures from public and private sectors, visited the stalls and admired the women's handcrafted products.—APP

**Turkish minister highlights Pak-Turkiye bond during visit to school**

DNA

LAHORE: The Minister of National Education of the Republic of Turkiye, Yusuf Tekin, emphasized the deep and timeless bond of love shared between the people of Pakistan and Turkiye during his visit to the Government Kinnaird Girls High School, Empress Road, on Friday. He was accompanied by Turkiye's Consul General Dumus Bastings and received a warm welcome from Punjab's Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare, Khawaja Imran Nazir, and other provincial officials. Addressing the mask distribution

ceremony at the school, Yusuf Tekin expressed gratitude for the grand reception extended by the students and faculty. He stated that his visit would pave the way for further collaboration and development in education and other sectors. "I will continue efforts to strengthen the friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Turkiye," he remarked. Khawaja Imran Nazir, speaking on the occasion, acknowledged the consistent improvement in Pakistan-Turkiye relations during the tenure of the Pakistan Muslim League-N government. He thanked the Turkish government for donating

100,000 N-95 masks, noting that 50,000 were provided during the smog season and an additional 50,000 were handed over now. He also presented a souvenir to the visiting minister as a gesture of goodwill. The Secretary of Schools Education, Khalid Nazir Wattoo, and Secretary of Health, Nadia Saqib, were also present and participated in the ceremonial exchanges. Students of the Kinnaird School greeted the distinguished guests with flowers, band performances, and cultural presentations, including the Turkish national anthem and traditional songs.

During the visit, the Turkish Minister of Education and Punjab's Health Minister toured the school's state-of-the-art physics lab and smart classrooms, appreciating the modern educational facilities. Yusuf Tekin personally distributed masks among the students and planted a commemorative sapling in the school's lawn. The Turkish delegation expressed their gratitude to the Punjab government for the warm reception and hospitality, underscoring the enduring friendship between the two nations.

**Chairman CDA reviews progress on Blue Area Parking Plaza, Art & Craft Village**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting chaired by Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa was held on Friday to review progress on the Blue Area Parking Plaza and Capital Street (Art & Craft Village) projects. The meeting was attended by CDA members and senior officers from the relevant wings. The meeting discussed the various proposals regarding the design and operationalization of Capital Street. Chairman CDA, Mr. Muhammad Ali Randhawa directed that development work on the road infrastructure of Capital Street be initiated promptly. He further directed that the development of the already auctioned plots be expedited to hand over pos-

session to allottees within the current month. He emphasized enhancing the design and planning of Capital Street to ensure it meets the highest standards. During the briefing, it was appraised that Capital Street (Art & Craft Village) will feature facilities such as an expo hall, tourism hubs, art and craft stalls, an amphitheater, a cinema, and more. Chairman CDA instructed that all remaining construction work on the project be completed on a priority basis. The meeting was also briefed on the plans for Blue Area Parking Plaza. The proposals were presented regarding the use of various segments of the parking plaza and strategies to generate revenue. Chairman CDA, Mr. Muhammad Ali Randhawa stressed the need for an effective plan to optimize

the use of the parking plaza space to enhance revenue generation. He directed that finishing touches, including elevator installations and electrical work, be completed at the earliest. During the meeting, it was informed that the parking plaza will have a capacity for approximately 1,000 vehicles and will consist of two basements, a ground floor, and five additional floors. Additionally, the plaza will include around 64 shops. It was also shared that, in the first phase, half of the shops in the Blue Area Parking Plaza will be offered for auction. The rooftop of the plaza has a spacious place which will feature an open-air restaurant and café, along with facilities such as a paddle court, a cinema, and other indoor recreational amenities.



ISLAMABAD: Jan 10 - A painter is busy in making beautiful design on the wall of flyover at Zero Point, in Federal Capital.

**Traditional sports reflect rich culture of Pakistan**

The terms "Kushti" and "Pehelvani" are expressions derived from Persian Khushti and Pahalvani respectively

SARGODHA: Pakistan is a country where numerous games are played at international and national level besides traditional sports: Desi Kushti (Mud Wrestling), Kabaddi, Horse Dance, Chirpiest Partridge competition, Goli Pila, Tent Pegging, Stone Lifting, Shooting Volley Ball, Bull Racing, Pitthu Garam, Gull Danda, Cokela Chupaki, and Veeni (Wrist grabbing) are some of known traditional sports. Muhammad Ashraf, a sportsman, told APP on Friday that sports are actually the common denominator in the world that bring everyone together. If there is only one place across the globe where equality exists, it is probably sports. It was something that always did

not happen. "We have come a long way in sports. Why can't society use sports as a way to bring people together and create change? It teaches us there is always a second inning in life. If we fail today, there is another chance may be two days later. May be there is another opportunity coming three or six months later. If we look at mistakes as learning and never commit to repeat, then we actually get better with every mistake we make," he explains. The terms "Kushti" and "Pehelvani" are expressions derived from Persian Khushti and Pahalvani respectively. Kabaddi is another famous traditional game played between two teams with seven players each. The game

requires a raider of a team who is sent to other team's court. He takes breath and keeps chanting "Kabaddi, Kabaddi, Kabaddi" without any break. He tries to tag one of the defenders with his hand or leg and runs back to his court to point a score. The defender has to chase the raider and stop him by wrestling him to ground before he escapes without breaking his chant. A media official, Muhammad Suleman, told APP that Kabaddi is believed to be played first by the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak. Hence Sikhs consider it their religious game. Mostly, it is played in Indian and Pakistani Punjab. Pakistan has an international Kabaddi team which won the

World Cup in 2020 held in Lahore, Faisalabad and Gujrat. It was the 6th World Cup since 2010. Irfan Mana, Shafiq Chishti, Lala Obaid Ullah Kamboh, Ajmal Shahzad Dogar, and Saif Ullah Bhatti are celebrated players of Pakistani team. Pakistan also constituted a women kabaddi team, led by Madeeha Latif. The team participated in the 2014-15 World Cup. Pitthu Garam is known for all the excitement aiming, running, catching, hitting, and even harmless violence. The game is played by two teams and requires a ball and some stones that will be assembled to form a tower. Team "A" piles up the stones and makes a tower. They then strike the pile with a ball at a distance of

3-4 meters. Team "B" has to catch the ball after it hits the pile without letting it bounce. If they are able to catch it, Team "A" loses its turn. But if they are not, Team "A" then tries to re-assemble the stones, while Team "B" hits them with the ball. If they are able to dodge the balls and assemble the stones, they win. Last but not the least, horse dance is also a well-liked traditional sports in the country. Horse keepers train them for this purpose. They dance to the tune of drums at festivals and other events. Sports official Muhammad Ghulam Rasool said that though these are non-Olympic games, those are played in far and wide of the country.—Agencies

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### JANUARY

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

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Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

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Bomb Disposal.....15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122  
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## Hospitals

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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

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

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Islamabad High Court Justice Aamer Farooq cut the ribbon to inaugurate the "Central Library" of Islamabad Bar Association at District Judicial Complex, in Federal Capital.

# Al-Azhar varsity Pak campus to strengthen educational ties

Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui urged greater collaboration between Egypt and Pakistan in advancing girls' education, emphasizing that educating women is key to building a progressive society

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Al-Azhar University, one of the oldest and most prestigious centers of Islamic learning, has announced plans to open a campus in Pakistan, strengthening ties between the two nations and focusing on promoting women's education and deepening understanding of Islamic teachings and Arabic culture. The announcement was made during a meeting between Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Pakistan's Minister for Federal Education, and Dr. Nazir Mo-

hamed Ayad, the Grand Mufti of Egypt. Dr. Ayad expressed the importance of this collaboration in strengthening the educational landscape of both countries. He also emphasized the value of learning Arabic to fully grasp the true teachings of Islam, while highlighting Al-Azhar University's strong support for women's education, with over 40% of its students being women. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui warmly welcomed the delegation, emphasizing the strong Islamic and cultural ties between Egypt and Pakistan. He noted that both countries share

ancient civilizations among the oldest in the world. The minister further discussed the upcoming International Girls Conference in Pakistan on January 11-12, celebrating the initiative by Islamic countries to promote girls' education. He clarified that Islam supports the education of both men and women, dispelling misconceptions about the prohibition of women's education in Islam. He stressed that the Pakistani government prioritizes equal educational opportunities for women. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui urged greater collaboration between Egypt

and Pakistan in advancing girls' education, emphasizing that educating women is key to building a progressive society. He further reiterated that such efforts would help nurture future generations in alignment with the true teachings of Islam. Secretary of Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani assured full support from Pakistan's Ministry of Education in establishing the Al-Azhar campus. To highlight the government's commitment to equal educational opportunities for women, he noted that over 2,000 female students from colleges and universities across

Pakistan have been invited to attend the International Girls Conference. He also informed Dr. Ayad that Arabic language classes have been introduced in all public schools in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) to promote awareness of Islam's true teachings. The meeting, attended by Secretary of Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani and Ambassador of Egypt to Pakistan, Dr. Ihab Mohamed Abdelhamid Hassan, marked a significant step towards fostering educational and cultural cooperation between the two nations.

# Seminar held on fostering societal cohesion, peace building

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. 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. Managing Director, Dr Noor Anna Malik, 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. Director Research at NACTA, Dr Dayyab Gillani, served as the resource person and key speaker, presenting a comprehensive module developed to enhance the capacities of faculty, legislators and government officials to counter violent extremism and foster societal harmony. The module, prepared as part of the Hum Ahang program, emphasized understanding extremism, differentiating it from violent strands and building community resilience through innovative 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.—DNA

# Salik highlights education as key to empowering women

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Friday underscored the pivotal role of women in society highlighting that an educated woman serves as the first teacher to her children, instilling values, ethics, and a love for knowledge. Addressing the global conference on 'Girls' Education in Muslim Societies: Challenges and Opportunities,' he said an educated mother produces leaders of tomorrow by imparting wisdom and principles to her children. Chaudhry Salik Hussain said women hold a central position in society as mothers, daughters, wives, and professionals. "The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) emphasized the importance of education for women, which is key to nurturing generations and shaping the future of societies," he added. Chaudhry Salik Hussain emphasized that acquiring knowledge is not only a fundamental reli-

gious obligation but also a vital necessity for societal progress and public welfare. "Education empowers women to actively participate in societal development, contribute to economic growth, advocate for their rights, and engage in decision-making processes," he added. Citing examples from Islamic history, he said, "The legacy of women in Islamic history serves as a beacon of inspiration. Despite Islam's clear guidance, many Muslim societies face challenges to women's education, such as cultural barriers, economic constraints, and security concerns." "These challenges are not rooted in Islam but are the result of social traditions and the misinterpretation of religious teachings," the minister clarified. He stressed the importance of addressing these barriers through collective wisdom and efforts. Calling for a collaborative approach, Chaudhry Salik Hussain urged governments, religious scholars, and community leaders to create an environment where girls feel safe and supported in pursuing education. This includes providing

scholarships, financial aid, and establishing secure, accessible schools. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of raising awareness about the Islamic perspective on women's education and engaging religious leaders to counter cultural misconceptions. "In today's era of technology, we have unprecedented opportunities to enhance education," he said, pointing to e-learning platforms, community-based initiatives, and public-private partnerships as key tools to improve girls' education. "We must leverage these tools to ensure that every girl, regardless of her socio-economic background, has access to quality education," he added. The minister concluded by affirming that women's education is not just about individual growth but forms the foundation of a prosperous and harmonious society. He said, "Let us commit to empowering girls in Muslim societies through education. Together, we can dispel misconceptions, break down barriers, and pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future where every woman contributes to the development and prosperity of her community."

## IRSA releases 32,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 32,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1475.90 feet and was 77.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 15,100 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1133.40 feet, which was 83.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,800 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 19,500, 12,500, 4,800 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 12,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## Issue of Balochistan university employees solved

ISLAMABAD: The long-standing issue of non-permanent employees at Balochistan University has been resolved, thanks to the intervention of Deputy Chairman Senate Syeddal Khan and subsequent action by the Senate Standing Committee on Education. In a statement issued on January 9, the university announced that employees serving on a non-permanent basis have now been appointed on a permanent basis, strictly on merit. The matter was referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Education following a formal request from the affected employees to the Deputy Chairman Senate. A meeting of the committee, chaired by Senator Bushra Anjum Butt, was held on January 2 to address the issue. Key attendees included Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Vice Chancellor of Balochistan University Dr. Zahoor Ahmed Bazi, and other committee members. The affected employees expressed their gratitude to Deputy Chairman Senate Syeddal Khan for his proactive efforts in ensuring justice and addressing their concerns.—APP

## 11 drug peddlers, bootleggers netted

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers and bootleggers on Friday arrested 11 accused besides recovering over seven kg drugs, 30 liters liquor and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Westridge, Pirwadhai, Taxila, Wah Cantt and Airport police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and arrested Shakeel, Farooq, Sajid, Imam Sha.—APP

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## Briefs

## Notification suspended regarding travel ban on Khosa

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has suspended a notification dated December 26, regarding placing Sardar Latif Khosa's name on passport control list. In its written order, the court instructed the secretary interior to ensure that Latif Khosa wouldn't be stopped from traveling abroad. It directed the secretary interior to also inform the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Police and Immigration authorities regarding the court order. The court order said that Latif Khosa had presented the ticket according to which he wanted to travel Canada from January 10, to 24th. The court adjourned further hearing of the case till February 6. —APP

## CJ IHC inaugurates website of district courts

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Islamabad High Court (IHC) Amer Farooq on Friday formally inaugurated the official website of district session courts Islamabad. On this occasion, the Chief Justice IHC was briefed about the features of the website that it has special features for searching cases and judgments. The briefing stated that all interim orders of the district courts would also be available at a click, and cases could be searched by entering the FIR number. In addition, Chief Justice Amir Farooq also inaugurated the Central Library at the District Courts Complex Islamabad. Addressing the District Bar Association, he said that he tried to solve the problems of bar. The website of the District Judiciary has been launched, which will not only benefit the petitioners but also the overseas litigants, he said. —APP

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## CCP stresses for level playing field for business

The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Khalid Farooq, Senior Vice President RCCI, who expressed gratitude to the CCP for its ongoing efforts to support businesses and ensure a fair and competitive market in Pakistan

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) organized an advocacy session on Competition Law for members of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), highlighting the need for fair competition to drive economic efficiency. Mr. Saeed Ahmad Nawaz, Member of the CCP, emphasized the importance of a level playing field for businesses across all sectors. The session was attended by a significant number of businessmen and corporate lawyers. Mr. Saeed, stressing the need for greater awareness and understanding of the law, elaborated on CCP's proactive enforcement measures, including its Market Intelligence Unit (MIU), which uses advanced data analysis to identify abnormal pricing trends and take enforcement actions when necessary. Mr. Saeed further explained that the CCP's role extends beyond enforcement, as it actively engages with government ministries and regulatory bodies to recommend policy changes that promote fair competition. The session featured a detailed presentation by Ahmed Qadir, Director General of MIU, who explained the core components of



the Competition Act, 2010. Qadir provided insights on issues arising from abuse of dominant position, prohibited agreements, deceptive marketing practices, and mergers and acquisitions. He highlighted why avoiding anti-competitive practices important for business-

es and encouraged businesses to consult the Commission's Guidance on Competition Compliance (GCC) booklet for self-regulation. RCCI President, Usman Shaikat, acknowledged the crucial role of the CCP in fostering fair competition and creating an equitable business environment. He expressed concern over the dominance of large businesses, which often marginalize small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Shaikat emphasized the need for continued support and a conducive environment for the growth of SMEs

in Pakistan. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Khalid Farooq, Senior Vice President RCCI, who expressed gratitude to the CCP for its ongoing efforts to support businesses and ensure a fair and competitive market in Pakistan.

## HEC revises curricula for sociology programmes

MAHNOOR ANSAR

Islamabad: The Higher Education Commission (HEC), through its National Curriculum Review Committee (NCRC), has updated the curricula for Sociology degree programmes. The two-day NCRC meeting, chaired by Prof. Dr. Anwar Alam of the University of Peshawar, was held at The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The Committee worked to develop comprehensive curricula for the Associate Degree, Bachelor of Science, and Master of Philosophy in

Sociology, aligning them with national and international academic standards. These revisions reflect HEC's commitment to fostering quality education and enhancing the relevance and rigor of degree programmes in Pakistan. Mr. Muhammad Ali Baig, Deputy Director, HEC, and Secretary of the NCRC, inaugurated the meeting and welcomed distinguished academics from across the country. He outlined HEC's ongoing initiatives to advance quality education, streamline the curriculum review process, and establish robust academic frameworks. He briefed the

committee on the curriculum development methodology and emphasized the critical need for uniform academic standards in Sociology to empower Pakistan's youth with the tools and expertise necessary to address complex social challenges. The NCRC included representation from several higher education institutions across Pakistan, including Bahauddin Zakariya University, Forman Christian College University, Karakoram International University, Quaid-i-Azam University, Shah Abdul Latif University, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, The University

of Agriculture Peshawar, The Women University Multan, University of Balochistan, University of Management & Technology, University of Peshawar, University of Sindh, University of Swat, and University of the Punjab. The draft curricula, developed in accordance with HEC's undergraduate and graduate education policies, incorporate the latest advancements and trends in the field of Sociology. Once reviewed and approved by HEC management, the finalized curricula will be shared with universities nationwide for implementation.

## Govt taking right decisions on political, economic and external fronts

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Friday that the government is making prudent decisions on political, economic, and external fronts which are improving the economy and promoting the interests of the country. He said that a lot of time has been wasted in making a balanced policy regarding Afghanistan,

which has caused considerable losses to the country. Now, a new policy has been made that aligns with the country's interests. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the new regional strategy is highly commendable, and the fruits will start coming soon. The business leader said that, on the one hand, economic matters are improving, and on the other hand, records of remittances are being broken. The vol-

ume of remittances is likely to reach \$35 billion. He said that inflation has fallen to 4.1 percent, interest rates are moving towards single digits, the current account is in positive territory, and good news is coming from all sides, making the public and business community happy. Two years ago, in the same month, foreign exchange reserves were less than \$8 billion, and the country was going bankrupt; now, foreign exchange reserves have in-

creased to more than \$16 billion. Inflation has fallen from 38 percent to 4 percent. In comparison, the policy rate has decreased from 22 percent to 13 percent and will be reduced further. Shahid Rashid Butt said that the government's decision to reduce the price of electricity is welcome because neither the country can make real progress at the current price of electricity nor can inflation and unemployment be reduced. —DNA

## Japan embassy announces MEXT Teachers Training Scholarship Program

This is maximum 18 month duration non-degree training course, but applicant will get a certificate after completing the required course at the university in Japan

The Embassy of Japan in Pakistan has announced Teachers Training Scholarship 2025 of MEXT (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology) for Pakistani teachers who have teaching experience of 5 years in primary or secondary school, public or private. Age should be 35 or less. The purpose of this training course is to provide an opportunity to Pakistani teachers to conduct research on school education in Japan and learn new methodologies and teaching techniques from Japanese experts which may help them in their professional growth. MEXT offers each year scholarships to international teachers who wish to conduct research on school education at designated educational institutions in Japan as teacher training students under the Japanese Government MEXT Scholarship program. This is maximum 18 month duration non-degree training course, but applicant will get a certificate after completing the required course at the university in Japan. The last date to send applications is 14th February 5. The detailed information of the program can be found on the Embassy's website [https://www.pk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_en/MEXT\\_Teachers\\_Training.html](https://www.pk.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/MEXT_Teachers_Training.html)—DNA

## ANF recovers 13.930 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 13.930 kg drugs worth over Rs 10 million and arrested six accused including two women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday. He informed that 6 kg hashish was recovered from a woman rounded up near a park on GT Road Rawalpindi. 5 kg heroin was recovered from a woman arrested near Chungi No. 26 in Islamabad. 1.5 kg ice was recovered from two accused held on M-1 Motorway Islamabad. 940 grams ice was recovered from an accused arrested near Sakhi Sarwar Road in Dera Ghazi Khan. In fifth operation, 490 grams ice was recovered from an accused near a university in Multan. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process. —APP

## Islamabad hosting historic 'conference on girls' education'

ISLAMABAD: Special Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani Friday unveiled plans for a groundbreaking international conference on girls' education from January 11 in Islamabad, aiming to converge global experts, harness collective expertise and foster collaborative efforts to address the existing challenges hindering girls' education, unlocking opportunities for empowerment and growth. Islamabad is set to host a historic conference on girls' education, aiming to empower Muslim girls worldwide, Secretary education said in an exclusive talk with a private news channel. According to Secretary Education, this landmark event will bring together over 150 international dignitaries, including ministers, ambassadors, scholars and representatives from 40 Muslim and friendly countries. He expressed his admiration that Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, a global symbol and champion of girls' education, will be attending the conference, underscoring the government's commitment to prioritizing girls' education. The conference will focus on key themes, including Exploring the Islamic perspective on women's education and its importance in Islamic teachings, examining how Islamic consensus aligns with international charters advocating for girls' education. —APP

## Romina urges robust climate action

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change & Environmental Coordination (MoCC), Romina Khurshid Alam emphasized the urgent need for robust climate action in a seminar on "COP 29 commitments to COP 30 action: A critical analysis," held at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) on Friday. Her remarks followed the findings of the global stock take and the intergovernmental panel on climate change's sixth assessment report, which highlighted that the world has failed to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C. Ms. Romina underscored Pakistan's significant contributions at COP29, particularly in technical negotiations and bilateral engagements, positioning the country as a leader in global climate discussions. She also addressed the importance of trusted and transparent cross-border carbon markets, which can reduce the cost of implementing nationally determined contributions by up to \$250 billion annually, helping Pakistan enhance its climate action efforts. The panelists from MoCC, Additional Secretary Zulfiqar Younas and Carbon Market Specialist Ms. Sana Rasool, along with Dr. Faisal Abbas, Dr. Majid Ali, and Dr. Salman Atif from NUST, made valuable contributions on carbon

credit and the role of academia in efforts to mitigate climate impacts. In her remarks on financial opportunities, Ms. Romina highlighted the \$300 billion annual core commitment under the Baku finance goal, along with projected \$1 trillion in carbon market flows by 2050. These financial resources, she explained, could provide substantial relief for Pakistan in implementing climate plans, particularly in the areas of mitigation and adaptation. "Pakistan must strategically position itself to access these financial flows to support its climate projects," she stressed. Ms. Romina also discussed the potential for over \$730 million pledged for projects starting in 2025, which could be leveraged to address the dam-

ages caused by climate-induced disasters, including the losses from the devastating 2022 floods. On gender-responsive climate action, Ms. Romina pointed out the extension of the Lima work programme on gender, which presents an opportunity to empower grassroots women's organizations and indigenous women in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of improving data management and reporting systems to meet international requirements, ensuring Pakistan benefits from capacity-building initiatives and strengthens its climate governance through enhanced transparency frameworks. Ms. Romina said we like to retain and build upon the momentum

of its leadership in climate negotiations created at COP29. She noted that with the support of evidence-based insights and academic partners like NUST, Pakistan could position itself as a key player in global climate governance. "Academia can play a vital role in ensuring that Pakistan remains competitive in the emerging global climate finance and carbon markets," she added. Ms. Romina also highlighted the Greentech Hub, a groundbreaking initiative designed to drive cutting-edge technological solutions, enabling Pakistan's industries to meet international climate benchmarks. "A strategic focus on these opportunities will align Pakistan's climate goals with its broader sustainable development priorities," she stated.





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## Industry in crisis

**A**MONG the many crises contributing to the global "polycrisis", it seems we have to add another: a worldwide collapse in wine production and consumption. Global wine consumption is at its lowest since 1996. In China, consumption has dropped by over 60 per cent in the past five years. For French wine drinkers, among the world's biggest, consumption is more than 80 per cent lower than in 1945. The normally-sober Financial Times talked of red wine facing an "existential" fall. As Jean-Pierre Durand of the industry association Conseil Interprofessionnel du Vin de Bordeaux told the paper recently: "If the grandfather drank 300 litres of red wine per year, the father drinks 180 litres and the son, 30 litres." Global wine consumption has been battered by a wide range of forces, most of which seem unlikely to ease soon. These include a "sober curious" trend towards moderation driven by health and wellness concerns, a shift to quality over quantity, a switch to cocktails, the Gen Z obsession with keeping up a positive Instagram image, the disappearance of social gatherings and the need for "social lubrication" during the long Covid-19 lockdowns, and the sharply rising cost of booze. As one "sober curious" student in London told the BBC: "Even if I did want to get drunk, I couldn't afford it." In the United States, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has fuelled anxieties by calling for alcoholic beverages to carry a warning that they may cause cancer. The collapse in wine consumption would have been an even greater cause of concern for the global industry if production had not also been falling steeply worldwide. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of vineyards have been lost in recent years, according to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV). Its 2024 report found that global wine production fell to its lowest since 1961 at just 237 million hectolitres in 2023 – equivalent to 31.5 billion standard bottles. Italy's production, in particular, was the smallest since 1950. The fall is mainly due to the droughts, heavy rainfall and early frosts that have accompanied global warming, together with a surge in fungal diseases. By the end of the century, about 90 per cent of the traditional wine regions in the world – including Spain, Italy, Greece and southern California – are at risk of becoming unsuitable for growing wine grapes, according to a Nature report. Given that grapes are the world's third most valuable crop (after potatoes and tomatoes, apparently), this is a matter of concern for winemakers worldwide. The decline in wine production and consumption would likely have been even greater had China not emerged out of nowhere 20 years ago to rapidly become one of the world's largest wine markets and today, Asia's largest wine producer. China has the world's third largest vineyard acreage (756,000 hectares, against Spain's 945,000 hectares and France's 792,000 hectares) but consumption has fallen from 19.3 million hectolitres in 2017 to 6.8 million hectolitres in 2023 – down by about 65 per cent. While China today has well-established and reputable wine-growing regions from Yunnan, Ningxia and Xinjiang to Shanxi and Shandong, production has been falling for many years. Its importance as a wine-importing market has also fallen sharply – not least because of the severity of its pandemic lockdowns, the economic recession over the past two years and the imposing of punitive tariffs on Australian wine imports which were only lifted in March last year.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



## Syria's geopolitical shift

**I**N an unexpected and precipitous turn of events, Syria's geopolitical landscape has shifted radically in just a few days. President Bashar al-Assad, Syria's strongman, has been deposed. The Syrian Arab Army, which had withstood, against all odds, a 12-year war against heavily armed and funded terrorist groups, shockingly crumbled in what seemed like the blink of an eye. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has taken control of the entire country. The al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023, did not occur in a vacuum. It was the culmination of a series of regional events that had reshaped the Levant's status quo over the course of nearly two decades. The flaw in the first interpretation lies in its erroneous connection between the two events. The latest developments in Syria did not originate internally but were instead a meticulously planned incursion orchestrated from outside. This operation was executed by the well-armed, trained, and funded HTS, backed by the imperialistic West and their regional vassal states. In any case, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani told Al Arabiya TV on 29 December 2024 that HTS's actions had averted a regional war between the Iraqi Resistance, backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Israelis in Syria. In another statement, he said that Syria would not be used as a launchpad for attacks on "Israel". He further reassured "Israel" that HTS had removed the threat posed by the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) and Hezbollah fighters near the occupied Golan Heights. Moreover, officials in HTS's new Syrian government have echoed al-Jolani's views. These remarks lend credence to the perspective that the recent developments in Syria represent a coup against al-Aqsa Flood. The IOF succeeded in delivering significant tactical blows to Hezbollah and the al-Qassam Brigades during the ongoing war. However, Netanyahu was unable to translate these achievements into a strategic advantage against the Axis of Resistance until the fall of al-Assad's Syria, prompting him to declare, albeit prematurely, that "Israel" was transforming the face of the 'Middle East'. The fall of Syria has shifted the dynamics of the ongoing war. Netanyahu believes he can now conclude the war on Gaza with some gains rather than leaving completely empty-handed. In recent weeks, this has encouraged the Israelis to engage in serious ceasefire negotiations in Gaza for the first time, driven by the need to extricate the IOF from the Gazan quagmire—not to mention that the Israeli assault on Gaza has reached a stagnation point. Nevertheless, Netanyahu continues to push for better terms to his advantage against a steadfast al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian Resistance factions who, even after 15 months of fierce battle, are still inflicting daily losses on the IOF and launching rockets that occasionally reach as far as occupied al-Quds. While this war has demonstrated that no deal is certain until it is fully realised, indications suggest that a ceasefire agreement is closer than ever in this renewed round of negotiations. Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880–1940), regarded as the spiritual father of the Israeli right wing and founder of the Revisionist Movement, outlined the foundations of the Israeli security doctrine in his seminal two-part thesis, "The Iron Wall" (1923). Drawing on Jabotinsky's vision, David Ben-Gurion subsequently articulated the Israeli Security Triangle, consisting of deterrence, early warning, and decisive victory—principles that continue to underpin the IOF's national security strategy to this day.

# Redefining US-Pakistan relations

Donald A. Blome



Improving access to quality education and health care has also been central to our collaboration. We've invested in schools, scholarships, and university partnerships. Throughout the last decade, the United States built hundreds of new schools for Pakistani children, and rehabilitated thousands more. Each year, we welcome hundreds of Pakistani students to the United States for cultural and educational exchanges, knowing that they will return to drive progress here in Pakistan. Our healthcare partnerships – from combating polio and tuberculosis to saving women and children at risk of death from malnutrition – reflect our shared commitment to the well-being of Pakistan's...

**S**INCE arriving in Pakistan in May 2022 as U.S. Ambassador, my focus has been to strengthen and redefine the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, grounding it firmly in areas of mutual interest and cooperation on shared global challenges. It was time to reframe the relationship – not as a lens of Afghanistan-Pakistan or India-Pakistan, but as a deep and enduring partnership between the United States and Pakistan. In the last two and a half years, we've broadened and deepened that partnership and made important progress in areas that matter most to Pakistanis: jobs, affordable energy, clean water, health, and education.

It hasn't always been easy. Together, we've faced monumental challenges: devastating floods, a global pandemic, economic uncertainty, and the lingering effects of war. But those of us who've worked together to strengthen this relationship understand something fundamental: this journey is long, and each step we take – each act of collaboration – brings us closer to a future of shared prosperity and security for both our nations.

The United States and Pakistan share a history of cooperation dating back to Pakistan's independence. In recent years, we've built on that legacy. After the devastating floods of 2022, we didn't just respond; we mobilized the international community to help millions of Pakistanis recover and rebuild. We delivered life-saving aid and rebuilt health facilities, water systems, and schools. More than \$216 million in U.S. assistance helped Pakistani communities rise from the devastation. But we didn't stop there – we made sure that our recovery efforts built a strong foundation for future progress.

For decades, the United States has invested in Pakistan and its future. In the last two and a half years, we continued to build on those investments. The United States didn't just help build the Mangla, Tarbela, and other dams that provide clean energy to millions of Pakistanis. Recent upgrades funded by the United States – including new GE turbines – increase access to reliable, affordable electricity for millions more, and ensure these facilities will continue

to provide power for generations to come. Since 2005, the United States has invested almost \$2 billion in infrastructure across Pakistan – roads and bridges; schools and universities; health clinics and hospitals; solar, wind, and hydro energy solutions; electricity transmission lines; and water and irrigation. U.S. investment has and continues to create jobs for Pakistanis; provide training, technology, and upskilling; and lift up local communities. And our investments are built on U.S.-funded grants, not loans, which do not need to be paid back. That's the kind of partnership we believe in.

Economic growth has been a cornerstone of our relationship. During my tenure as Ambassador, we've made economic reform and increasing U.S. trade and investment top priorities. Because we want to see a Pakistan that is safe, strong, and secure. A Pakistan that is economically independent. A Pakistan able to take advantage of shifts in the global economy that can reap the benefits of fair and competitive markets.

In recent years, we've seen Pakistan's exports to the United States grow steadily, reaching more than \$6 billion in just the first 10 months of 2024. And U.S. companies want to do business here. In 2024, U.S. companies provided jobs to more than 120,000 Pakistanis and supported the livelihoods of over a million more through their broader economic impact. Pakistan can attract more trade and investment – especially U.S. investment – and break free from the vicious circle of debt and international financing, if it maintains a consistent commitment to economic reform, creates certainty and confidence for investors, and boldly pursues strong, sustainable, inclusive growth. Doing so would stabilize the economy and provide higher living standards for the Pakistani people. Improving access to quality education and health care has also been central to our collaboration. We've invested in schools, scholarships, and university partnerships. Throughout the last decade, the United States built hundreds of new schools for Pakistani children,

and rehabilitated thousands more. Each year, we welcome hundreds of Pakistani students to the United States for cultural and educational exchanges, knowing that they will return to drive progress here in Pakistan. Our healthcare partnerships – from combating polio and tuberculosis to saving women and children at risk of death from malnutrition – reflect our shared commitment to the well-being of Pakistan's people.

Across all of these areas, we have built something enduring. The U.S.-Pakistan partnership reflects the best of what we can achieve when we work together with shared purpose.

Traveling across Pakistan – from Gwadar to Gilgit, and everywhere in between – I've been struck by the beauty of this country and the richness of its culture. I've hiked the Himalayan foothills, shared conversations over chai, been moved by Qawwali performances, and felt the thrill of the T20 Cricket World Cup. In Punjab, I've seen how Pakistan's agricultural heartland is being strengthened by U.S. technology and innovation. In Karachi, I've met entrepreneurs shaping the country's economic future. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, I witnessed the kindness, hospitality, and generosity of Pakistani communities hosting Afghan refugees. And everywhere I've gone, I've encountered young leaders – bright, ambitious, and ready to lead their nation forward. These moments of connection remind me that the bonds between our people are as important as the policies we pursue.

It has been a great honor to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan. I'm deeply proud of what we've built and all that we have achieved together. But I know that this is just a step in our shared history. As our partnership continues to grow, we can build a future defined not by the challenges we've faced, but by the opportunity and prosperity we have created. That journey continues, and I am confident that by working together side-by-side, the ties between our nations will only grow stronger in the years ahead.

– *The writer is the outgoing US Ambassador to Pakistan.*

# The USA: Global superpower or illusion of strength?

Qamar Bashir



If Elon Musk's proposal to drastically cut spending, including defense, is adopted, the combined impact of soaring debt obligations and the potential loss of the dollar's reserve currency status would devastate the U.S. economy. This could lead to a 53% decline in per capita income, from \$80,035 to \$37,491, significantly reducing Americans'...

**T**HE defence department budget is a very big budget. It is one trillion dollars a year, Defence intelligence included, and interest payment on national debt is \$1 trillion, which just exceeded the defense department's budget; they are over a trillion dollars a year, just in interest and rising. We are adding a trillion to our national debt, which our kids and grandkids will have to pay somehow, every three months and then soon every two months, then every month. The only thing we shall be able to pay is the interest. This does not have a good ending. So we have to reduce spending. This is insane. We need to drastically cut spending, or we are heading for a financial disaster. Time to rethink our priorities."

This horrifying picture is not that of a third-world, poverty-stricken country but of the most powerful nation in the history of mankind, the United States of America. This picture was painted by none other than Elon Musk, during his latest interview on X, who is now a close associate and advisor to President-elect Donald J. Trump. This debt figure quoted by Musk means that every American would be required to pay \$35,928 annually toward the national debt. This burden would reduce the per capita income of every American from \$80,035 to \$44,107, a drastic decline that would push the U.S. out of the top 10 countries by per capita income, placing it well below most developed nations. Such a financial strain would represent nearly 45% of the average American's income, severely impacting personal finances and leaving limited disposable income. Compared to high-income countries like Luxembourg (\$125,897) and Singapore (\$105,689), this drop illustrates the immense burden the debt crisis imposes. The story doesn't end here. The total U.S. national debt stands at \$35.5 trillion, which is 128.13% of its GDP of \$27.5 trillion in 2024. Should the U.S. be required to repay this staggering debt in a single year, its entire economic output would fall far short. Even if all government revenue, corporate profits, and personal incomes were redirected to debt repayment, the shortfall would necessitate extreme measures, such as selling national assets or printing massive amounts of money. These actions would destabilize the economy, leading to hyperinflation, currency collapse, and a potential loss of global confidence in the U.S.

Dollar. The dire scenario, as painted by Elon Musk during his interview on X, appears to have resonated with President-elect Donald J. Trump, who subsequently tasked Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy with a formidable mandate: to drastically cut federal and state government spending, including defense, as part of a broader fiscal overhaul.

But what if Musk's analysis has overlooked critical factors? Cutting spending, particularly in areas like defense and government programs, risks undermining the U.S.'s global leadership and economic stability. Elon Musk's proposed solution of trimming the defense budget would significantly weaken the U.S.'s ability to maintain its formidable military power, which has been the cornerstone of its global dominance. If the U.S. were to cut its defense budget from \$1 trillion to \$500 billion annually, it would severely reduce its capacity to sustain a robust global presence, project power, and respond to emerging threats. Such a reduction would open the door for rivals like China, India, and Russia—nations not burdened by comparable debt crises—to grow stronger and potentially overtake the U.S. as the world's dominant military and economic powers. This would mark a dramatic shift in the global balance of power, diminishing the U.S.'s influence on world affairs.

Moreover, this proposal seems inconsistent with the war-driven rhetoric espoused by both Elon Musk and President-elect Donald J. Trump, who have floated audacious ideas such as annexing Canada, reclaiming influence over Great Britain, conquering Greenland, taking control of the Panama Canal, and rebranding the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America. Achieving these bold, albeit controversial, objectives would require a substantial increase in defense spending, not a reduction. A diminished defense budget would make such ambitions impossible, leaving the U.S. vulnerable to external threats and unable to sustain its position as the world's only superpower. Additionally, the formidable U.S. war machine has made the dollar an invaluable intangible asset, contributing an estimated \$1-1.5 trillion annually to the economy and effectively offsetting the negative impact of the nation's debt burden. This "dollar power" allows the U.S. to earn seigniorage revenue, enjoy reduced borrowing costs, attract substantial foreign

investment, and maintain low import costs, collectively bolstering GDP and enhancing economic stability. It also enables the U.S. to borrow at lower interest rates, saving up to \$700 billion annually, while foreign investment inflows and cheaper imports further amplify its economic advantage.

If Elon Musk's proposal to drastically cut spending, including defense, is adopted, the combined impact of soaring debt obligations and the potential loss of the dollar's reserve currency status would devastate the U.S. economy. This could lead to a 53% decline in per capita income, from \$80,035 to \$37,491, significantly reducing Americans' quality of life and weakening the nation's global standing. Economically and strategically, Musk's solution appears regressive and counterproductive, risking the very foundations of U.S. dominance. Instead of cost-cutting, the solution lies in increasing revenue streams and redistributing the cost of U.S. military power. A key measure would be requiring NATO allies and Middle Eastern partners to bear a larger share of the cost of U.S. military deployments, emphasizing the stability these forces provide to their regions. The U.S. could also replicate China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by creating global infrastructure and investment projects, allowing it to control strategic assets, expand trade routes, and extend its economic and political influence. Additionally, generating controlled regional conflicts could sustain demand for U.S. military hardware and services, transforming defense exports into a lucrative revenue source while reinforcing geopolitical dominance. Strengthening alliances and encouraging financial contributions to collective security frameworks, coupled with defense-driven innovation and monetizing dual-use technologies, would add resilience to the U.S. economy. These strategies ensure economic growth and maintain America's position as a global superpower without compromising its defense capabilities or risking its global leadership. The choice is clear: either adopt Elon Musk's vision or pursue the exact opposite approach to secure long-term economic and strategic dominance.

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

## Briefs

## Shehbaz reaffirms unwavering support...

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freedom and self-determination and briefed the Prime Minister about the OIC's ongoing diplomatic efforts in this regard. The Secretary General agreed with the Prime Minister that the OIC should continue to press upon the international community for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and stressed that addressing the Palestinian Question on basis of the two-state solution was key to ensuring durable peace and stability in the region. The two sides also exchanged views on regional and global issues of shared interest, including Afghanistan and the global surge in Islamophobia. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatimi were also present in the meeting.

## MWL Chief lauds Pakistan's...

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the Muslim world, and promoting mutual respect and understanding between religions, beliefs and cultures. Welcoming the Secretary General on his arrival in Pakistan, the prime minister appreciated the support of the MWL in co-hosting the International Conference on Girls' Education in Muslim Countries on January 11-12 in Islamabad. The two leaders highlighted the sustainability and effectiveness of this partnership and agreed that holding this conference would send an important message to the world on the important topic of the Muslim world's commitment to promoting girls' education. The prime minister reiterated Pakistan's support for the objectives and goals of the Muslim World League.

## Trump sentenced in hush...

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Prosecutors in the New York case had argued that the hush-money payments aimed to conceal allegations of a sexual relationship with Daniels that could have been politically damaging. The payments were made ahead of the 2016 US presidential election, which saw Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton to win the White House. Trump, who pleaded not guilty in the case, has denied any sexual relationship took place. Reporting from Washington, DC, on Friday morning, Al Jazeera's Alan Fisher said prosecutors had argued "it was important that Donald Trump was held responsible". "The judge himself said this was a unique and difficult case, but in the end, he decided that the sentence had to be an unconditional discharge," Fisher said. Under New York's penal code, a court can sentence a defendant to an unconditional discharge if it "is of the opinion that no proper purpose would be served by imposing any condition upon the defendant's release". Earlier this week, Trump's lawyers had asked the Supreme Court to delay the sentencing "to prevent grave injustice and harm to the institution of the Presidency and the operations of the federal government".

## US House passes ICC sanctions bill

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detain or prosecute any protected person of the United States and its allies." The sanctions include prohibiting US property transactions and blocking and revoking visas. Last year, the ICC, based in The Hague, issued warrants for the arrest of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former minister of military affairs Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza. In response, the House passed the ICC sanctions bill, but it was not brought to a vote in the Senate, which was then under Democratic control. Thursday's vote was the second time that the chamber has voted for the pro-Israel measure.

## SA sports minister joins calls for Afghanistan cricket boycott

McKenzie urges his country's cricket governing body not to honour the Champions Trophy fixture against Afghanistan on February 21

SPORTS DESK

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's Sports Minister Gayton McKenzie has given his support to calls for a boycott of Afghanistan at the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan, adding his voice to those of British politicians who have called on England not to play the South Asian nation at the tournament next month. "Cricket South Africa, the federations of other countries and the ICC (International Cricket Council) will have to think carefully about the message the sport of cricket wishes to send the world, and especially the women in sports," he said in a statement on Thursday. "It is not for me as the sports minister to make the final decision on whether South Africa should honour cricketing fixtures against Afghanistan. If it was my decision, then it certainly would not happen." England and South Africa share the same group with Afghanistan in the one-day international (ODI) competition and are under pressure to boycott the fixtures in response to the Taliban government's crackdown on women's rights since returning to power in August 2021. South Africa are scheduled to open their Champions Trophy schedule against Afghanistan in



Karachi on February 21 but McKenzie urged his country's cricket governing body not to honour the fixture. "As a man who comes from a race that was not allowed equal access to sporting opportunities during Apartheid, it would be hypocritical and immoral to look the other way today when the same is being done towards women anywhere in the world," he added. More than 160 British politicians have signed a cross-party letter to the England and Wales Cricket Board, calling for a boycott of England's fixture against Afghanistan in Lahore on February 26. ECB chief executive Richard Gould responded by calling for a uniform approach from all member nations towards Afghanistan's participation in international cricket. Australia are the other team scheduled to take on Afghanistan, in Lahore on February 28. Cricket Australia indefinitely postponed a bilateral men's Twenty 20 series against Afghanistan last March citing "deteriorating human rights for women and girls in the country under Taliban rule" but they did play them at the World Cup in India in late 2023 and at the T20 World Cup last June. Cricket Australia chairman Mike Baird last month said he was "very proud of the position we've taken" after they were accused of hypocrisy. "We've taken a position, and we're proudly standing up where we think we should," he said.

## Arnold not to blame for goals conceded: Slot

WEB DESK

LONDON: Liverpool manager Arne Slot says he recognises patterns in the goals his side concede - but they are not down to right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold. Alexander-Arnold was heavily criticised following the Reds being held to a 2-2 draw by Manchester United on Sunday. United scored their first through Lisandro Martinez with an attack down Liverpool's right and their second came from Amad Diallo converting a cross from the right. According to football statisticians Opta, Liverpool's opponents are having 44% of their touches in the left

third in the attacking areas - this would be Liverpool's right-hand side - which is the highest ratio in the Premier League. The percentage of opposition chances from Liverpool's right is 35.7% while it is 38.1% from the middle third and 26.2% from the Reds' left. "I do see a certain pattern in the goals we concede but I don't see the pattern if it is about Trent. Not at all," said Slot. "Trent has had one difficult game for us [in Sunday's 2-2 draw with Manchester United at Anfield] and maybe a few that were OK to good. Mainly, he has had great games when he played for us this season." Alexander-Arnold, who is out of contract in

the summer and has been linked with a move to Real Madrid, came on as a substitute after an hour in the first leg of Liverpool's Carabao Cup semi-final at Tottenham. The England international had a shot cleared off the line in a game the Reds lost 1-0. "I know there is a lot of focus on him at the moment but I would also like to highlight the focus on how well he did when he came on in the last half hour [against Tottenham in the Carabao Cup on Wednesday] and how our fans reacted to him. That is what pleased me even more during that game." Liverpool host Accrington Stanley in the FA Cup third round on Saturday (12:15

GMT) and, while Slot is expected to rotate his squad for the game, he knows his team will have to be prepared for the challenge of facing the League Two side. "I think every team that plays against us, it is a special occasion but especially for a lower league team," said the Dutchman. "They will be up for it, they have looked forward to this game for many weeks. "If you go to a Champions League final, everyone is completely hyped up and ready and, for them, that will feel like it is the Champions League final, so we have to be aware of that. "It's up to us to be ready for them wanting to play the best game of their lives and that is what we have to do as well."

## Murray a natural coach: Djokovic

Murray joined Djokovic's team in November to help the Serb's bid for an 11th title

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic has been pleasantly surprised by the professionalism of new coach Andy Murray in the leadup to the Australian Open but said sharing his deepest thoughts with his former rival had initially been a challenge. Briton Murray joined Djokovic's team in November to help the Serb's bid for an 11th title at Melbourne Park and a record 25th Grand Slam trophy. Firm friends, Murray played Djokovic 36 times from 2006 to 2022, losing 25 including four Australian Open finals. Though yet to put their partnership to the test in a match, Djokovic was impressed with Murray's dedication and efforts to gel with other members of his team. "So far has been only positive experience for me, to be honest," Djokovic told reporters on Friday. "I'm very pleasantly surprised with his dedication and professionalism, considering he's never had the experience of working as a tennis coach. "It comes natural to him. His IQ generally and tennis IQ is very high." Djokovic said they had spent 10-12 days with each other in the pre-season before linking up at Melbourne Park where the seventh-seeded Serb will face American wildcard NisheshBasavareddy in the first round. Despite their good relations and long playing history, Djokovic said opening up to Murray was a "strange feeling" at first. "Not just about the game but about how I feel, about life in general," he added. "Not in a negative way, but just in a way I have never done that with him because he was always one of my greatest rivals. "We were always kind of hiding things from each other. "Now all cards are open on the table. That's what he demands." While forthcoming with Murray, Djokovic was in no mood to elaborate on comments that he had been fed poisoned food while in detention during the 2022 Australian Open visa saga. The Serb told GQ that he found high levels of mercury and lead in his system when he returned home to Serbia after being deported from Australia. Asked about the comments on Friday, Djokovic said he would rather "focus on the tennis." - Agencies

## Athanaze's 99 scripts West Indies' commanding start

Rameez Jnr spearheads Shaheens' bowling charge with three wickets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Middle-order batter Alick Athanaze's anchoring 99-run knock put West Indies in a commanding position on the opening day of the three-day practice match against Pakistan Shaheens here at the Islamabad Club Ground on Friday. Opting to bat first, the touring side got off to a decent start to their innings as skipper Kraig Brathwaite and fellow opener Mikyle Louis put together a rampant 47-run partnership. Brathwaite, who was the core aggressor of the opening stand, was first West Indian batter to return to the dugout after scoring a brisk 34 off 39 deliveries with the help of five fours and a six. Following the early hiccup, Louis joined hands with Keacy Carty and knitted an important 42-run partnership for the second wicket until both fell victim to Mohammad Rameez Jnr in quick succession to leave the visitors reeling at 90/3. Louis made a cautious 34 off 63 deliveries, while Carty made a 46-ball 22. Coming out to bat at number five, Athanaze soon took the reins of West Indies' batting expedition with a gritty knock. The left-handed batter put together one-sided partnerships with Kavem Hodge (17), Justin Greaves (five) and Tevin Imlach (13) before finally falling victim to Ahmed Safi Abdullah just one run shy of his well-deserved century. Athanaze remained the top-scorer for the West Indies with a magnificent 99 off 142 deliveries, comprised of 15 fours and a six.



CAP CAP

## Asif wins 3rd SAARC Snooker Championship

Asif becomes second Pakistani to win the prestigious title

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan's experienced cueist Mohammad Asif outfoxed Sri Lanka's ThahaIrshath to win the 3rd SAARC Snooker Championship at the Moors Sports Club in Colombo on Friday. The reigning world champion humbled Irshath in the high-stakes clash without dropping a single frame, stamping his authority in the sport. Asif got

off to a flamboyant start to the final as he clinched the opening frame with ease. The second frame saw Irshath putting up a spirited fight and was at one stage dominating the proceedings. However, an untimely error on the pink, allowed Asif to take charge and eventually winning the second frame 73-46 to extend his lead. Irshath started the third frame in a commanding manner, thanks to Asif's scratch in his first break, and had secured an early lead. But a dismal control of the cue ball barred him from extending his break and left an open table for Asif, who responded with a 58-point clearance break. Asif, fuelled with momentum, was even more ruthless in the remaining two frames, winning them by 109-6 and 74-0 to round up a commanding victory. Notably, Mohammad Asif became the second Pakistani to win the SAARC Snooker Championship, joining Asjad Iqbal, who won the inaugural edition in 2019 by defeating compatriot Mohammad Bilaal. Asif also enjoyed an unbeaten run throughout the tournament, which included a victory over compatriot Muhammad Naseem Akhtar in the semi-final, who was also unbeaten in the tournament until succumbing to a 5-3 defeat.

## 25 players called up for 'strike-force' camp

Former all-rounder Razzaq to supervise the 90-day-long camp

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan's young middle-order batter Haider Ali has been named among 25 players, called up for the 'strike-force' camp, scheduled to commence here on Monday. According to the details, the 90-day-long camp will feature country's top batters with power-hitting ability and will be supervised by former Pakistan all-rounder Abdul Razzaq. The selected players including Haider, Khushdil Shah, Khawaja Nafay and Abbas Afridi, are set to report for the camp on Sunday. As a result, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has ordered releasing the selected players from their respective departmental teams for the ongoing President's Trophy Grade-I. The move is a part of PCB's plans to infuse young talent to the national T20 squad, a transition, which according to the

sources is aimed to be completed within a year. It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan have consistently been facing setbacks in the shortest format.

The green shirts played their first bilateral T20I series against Australia last month since their disastrous ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 campaign.

The Mohammad Rizwan-led side, who secured a historic victory in the prior ODI series, failed to end their woes in the format as they suffered a 3-0

series whitewash.

The green shirts then featured in a three-match T20I series against Zimbabwe, where they prevailed 2-1 failed to stamp their authority after losing the final fixture.

The national team kicked off their ongoing tour to South Africa with a three-match T20I series which was won 2-0 by the hosts. The green shirts suffered defeats in the opening two T20Is, while the last fixture was abandoned due to rain. Players selected for strike-force camp: Abdul Samad, Haider Ali, Yasir Khan, Khushdil Shah, Muhammad Akhlaq, Imran Randhawa, Saad Masood, Mubasir Khan, Hassan Nawaz, Khawaja Nafay, Muhammad Amir Barki, Mohammad Faizan, Afaq Ahmed, Jahadad Khan, Amad Butt, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Usman Khan, Khayam Khan, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Shawaiz Irfan, Basit Ali, Mohammad Faiz, Ali Imran, Sarwar Afridi and Nasir Nawaz.



## SC judge questions army officers'...

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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. During the hearing, Justice Mandokhail remarked that the Army Act was applicable to the military only and the court must ensure that fundamental rights and justice are upheld for all. Justice MusarratHilali sought clarification on who drafts judgments in military courts, noting that, as per her understanding, cases are heard by one person, while decisions on punishments are made by commanding officers who did not hear the case.

## Third round of talks may be last: Yousafzai

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maintain discipline within the party. He mentioned that negotiations with the government might not go beyond the third round due to the government's insincerity. He highlighted that the government was now on the defensive, and praised PTI for exposing the government's inefficiency through these talks. Yousafzai also urged the establishment to realise that PML-N and PPP were a burden on the country. He questioned the government's project, "Uraan Pakistan", pointing out that if there was no peace, rule of law, or political stability, no one would invest in Pakistan. He criticised the government for taking a massive loan of 27 trillion rupees over the past two years, demanding transparency on how the money was spent, especially since no relief was provided to the public.

## PIA resumes Europe...

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Federal Minister for Aviation Khawaja Asif, who saw off the passengers at the airport, said that the flight, PK 749, was 100% booked, signalling a positive turn for the airline, which has faced several challenges in recent years. While addressing a ceremony after the flight's take off, Asif said that the national airline's services to Europe were once again operational, with PIA now connecting Pakistan with the French capital. The minister emphasised that the closure of several of PIA's profitable routes in the past had severely impacted its operations. He also noted that these losses had affected services provided to overseas Pakistanis, particularly in Europe.

## Remittances see 'record...'

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increase in comparison to November 2024. The SBP added that overall remittances rose 32.8pc during the first half of the fiscal year 2024-25, with inflows of \$17.8bn from July to December 2024 compared to \$13.4bn in the last fiscal year's corresponding period. A separate detailed remittance report said that inflows of \$2.91bn were recorded during November and \$2.38bn in December 2023. According to the SBP, inflows in December were mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (\$770.6 million), the United Arab Emirates (\$631.5m), the United Kingdom (\$456.9m) and the United States (\$284.3m). Remittances from other Gulf countries during December totalled \$310m, \$360.3m from the European Union, \$68.8m from Australia, \$15.8m from Malaysia and \$9.6m from Norway, the report added. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif congratulated the nation on the "record increase", saying that the claims of those who had been chanting to halt the country's economy had proven to be baseless.

## Briefs

## Saudi-based doctor receives highest award for overseas Indians

NEW DELHI: Dr. Syed Anwar Khurshid, one of the longest-serving Indian physicians in Saudi Arabia, received on Friday the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, the highest honor conferred by India's president on nationals based overseas. Dr. Khurshid was born in Gulbarga city in the southwestern state of Karnataka and has spent most of his professional life — more than 40 years — in the Kingdom. He has served for three decades at King Faisal Hospital in Taif and nearly a decade as a Royal Protocol physician in Riyadh, was involved in the COVID-19 response, and has overseen critical care operations and medical assistance to Hajj pilgrims. He has also contributed to education, founding the International Indian School in Taif, and provided guidance on the establishment of other schools for the Indian community in Saudi Arabia. Dr. Khurshid usually travels to India twice a year to see his relatives and hometown, but this time the visit is different, coming with a recognition that he did not expect. "My heart rate is higher this time," he told Arab News, as he arrived in India to take part in the ceremony in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. "I really felt excited, thrilled when the award was announced. —Agencies

## Kremlin says Putin ready for talks with Trump

MSOCOW: The Kremlin said Friday that President Vladimir Putin was open to talks with Donald Trump, after the incoming US president said a meeting between the pair was being set up. Trump, who will be inaugurated on January 20, has said he can bring a swift end to the nearly three-year conflict between Russia and Ukraine, without presenting a concrete plan. "The president has repeatedly stated his openness to contact with international leaders, including the US president, including Donald Trump," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Trump on Thursday said a meeting with Putin was being arranged. "He wants to meet, and we're setting it up," Trump said at a meeting with Republican governors at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida. "President Putin wants to meet, he's said that even publicly, and we have to get that war over with, that's a bloody mess," he said. The Kremlin welcomed Trump's "readiness to solve problems through dialogue," Peskov said Friday, adding Moscow had no pre-requisites for staging the meeting. —Agencies

## Kyiv begins mass operation to seal borders for draft evaders

KYIV: Ukrainian police said Friday they were conducting hundreds of raids nationwide to shut down routes used by military-aged men to flee the country to avoid military service. Kyiv has been driving a large-scale mobilization campaign for months to boost its military, which is struggling to hold back Russia's significantly larger army that is advancing in the east of the country, nearly three years after Moscow invaded. The divisive campaign has spurred panic among Ukrainian fighting-aged men and has seen thousands flee the country illegally toward Europe, sometimes utilizing dangerous smuggling routes over mountains or rivers. "More than 600 simultaneous searches are being conducted by the SBU (Security Services of Ukraine) operatives and National Police investigators," police said in a statement. "This is only the first stage of a special operation to block the channels of trafficking of men of military age abroad," it added. It said that the operation was primarily targeting the organizers of schemes. —APP

## Modern industrial estate: A catalyst for economic resurgence

President Qureshi unveiled the Chamber's ambitious vision to establish a state-of-the-art expo center in Islamabad—a beacon for manufacturers to showcase their products to domestic and international audiences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, the esteemed President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), reaffirmed the Chamber's resolute dedication to driving economic advancement by championing the principles of ease of doing business. He extolled the pivotal role of the business community as the cornerstone of the nation's economic edifice, pledging that the ICCI remains steadfast in addressing their challenges with utmost urgency. President Qureshi unveiled the Chamber's ambitious vision to establish a state-of-the-art expo center in Islamabad—a beacon for manufacturers to showcase their products to domestic and international audiences. Recognizing the acute congestion plaguing existing industrial zones, he underscored the pressing need for a strategically located modern industrial estate to invigorate industrial growth and enhance accessibility. Elaborating further, he outlined initiatives to foster the exchange of business delegations on regional and global fronts. These endeavors, he noted, would fortify partnerships with other Cham-



bers of Commerce while unlocking expansive opportunities to bolster exports. The Chamber also aims to elevate industrial infrastructure to international benchmarks, magnetizing foreign direct investment through collaborative ventures. President Qureshi exuded confi-

dence that these transformative efforts would catalyze robust business activity, generate significant employment opportunities, stimulate auxiliary industries, and amplify foreign exchange earnings through augmented export capacity. In his address, he highlighted the Chamber's ongoing

strides towards enhancing member services. The digitalization of ICCI processes is well underway, alongside plans for the renovation of meeting and conference facilities to foster a more dynamic and professional environment. Furthermore, he underscored the imperative of equipping the

Chamber's secretariat staff with advanced training to augment their professional competencies. Reiterating his unwavering commitment, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi vowed to elevate ICCI into a paradigmatic corporate entity, setting an aspirational benchmark as an institution of global repute.

## Right-wing disinformation targets DEI, 'liberal' policies as LA burns

WASHINGTON: Months of dry weather and recent strong winds created optimal conditions for the deadly wildfires engulfing Los Angeles, but narratives on social media falsely single out "liberal" policies — including those to increase diversity in the city's fire force — as the culprit. Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley, who was appointed in 2022 after two decades of service, was singled out in a series of X posts blaming her department's diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategy. "She boasts about being the first female and LGBTQ fire chief in the LA Fire Department. Promoting a culture of DEI is her priority. Does this make you feel safer?" the anti-LGBTQ account Libs of TikTok posted on January 8 on X. "They prioritized DEI over saving lives and homes," X's billionaire owner Elon Musk, a close ally of US President-elect Donald Trump, chimed in. But experts say such scapegoating is hardly unexpected. From the Maui fires in 2023 and hurricanes Milton and Helene in 2024, every recent major natural disaster in the United States has systematically triggered social media narratives questioning the effort and legitimacy of first responders. "This rhetoric is expected — and has become increasingly mainstreamed — following extreme weather phenomena and disasters," added Sara Aniano, a disinformation analyst at the Anti-Defamation League Center on Extremism. Social media users also attacked California Governor Gavin Newsom, echoing misleading complaints from Trump about how the state handles its water supply. "Governor Gavin Newsom should immediately go to Northern California and open up the water main, and let the water flow into his dry, starving, burning State," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, using his preferred nickname for the leader. But most Los Angeles water comes from the city's aqueduct, not Northern California. At a White House briefing, US President Joe Biden pushed back against Trump's accusations that California authorities have wasted water and said there was no room for politics in the situation. He called for officials to be "honest" and "straightforward" with the public about the available capacity. Trump also tried to blame a lack of water on environmentalists' efforts to protect the smelt — a small fish that lives hundreds of miles away from the fires. Such comments are a distraction from known impacts on the fires, such as the Santa Ana winds, and the fact that fire events in the state have been enhanced by a changing climate. Scientists say human-caused climate change is altering weather patterns and changing how wildfires impact the US West. Southern California had two decades of drought that were followed by two exceptionally wet years that sparked furious vegetative growth. Then the region had no significant rain for eight months. Altogether, the weather left the area packed with fuel and primed to burn. —DNA

## Macron to head to Lebanon after election of new president

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday welcomed the "crucial election" by Lebanese lawmakers of army chief Joseph Aoun as president and said he would soon visit the country. Macron spoke with the general hours after Aoun was announced as the leader to end a two-year vacuum in the country's top post. France "will continue to be at the side of Lebanon and its people," Macron told Aoun in a telephone call, the French presidency said in a statement. Macron said he would go to Lebanon "very soon." "Congratulations to President Joseph Aoun on this crucial election," Macron wrote on X earlier. "It paves the way for reform and the restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty and prosperity," he added. Aoun must oversee a ceasefire in south Lebanon and name a prime minister able to lead reforms demanded by international creditors to save the country from a severe economic crisis. "The head of state indicated to President Aoun that France would support his efforts to quickly complete the formation of a government capable of uniting the Lebanese, answering their aspirations and their needs, and carrying out the reforms necessary for the economic recovery, reconstruction, security and sovereignty of Lebanon," said the statement released after the telephone talks. Macron also vowed support for the "national dialogue" that Aoun said he will launch and called on all groups to "contribute to the success of his mission," the statement said. France administered Lebanon for two decades after World War I and has maintained close ties even since its independence in 1944. —DNA

## US, French troops could secure Syria's northern border, Syrian Kurdish official says

PARIS: Talks are taking place on whether US and French troops could secure a border zone in northern Syria as part of efforts to defuse conflict between Turkey and Western-backed Kurdish Syrian forces, a senior Syrian Kurdish official said. Ankara has warned that it will carry out a cross-border offensive into northeastern Syria against the Kurdish YPG militia if the group does not meet Turkish demands. Turkey regards the YPG, which spearheads the US-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as a terrorist group linked to Kurdish PKK militants who for 40 years have waged an insurgency against the Turkish state. The SDF played an important role in defeating Daesh in Syria in 2014-17. The group still guards Daesh fighters in prison camps there, but has been on the back foot since rebels ousted Syrian President Bashar Assad on Dec. 8. French President Emmanuel Macron said earlier this week that Paris would not abandon the SDF, which was one among a myriad of opposition forces during Syria's 13-year-long civil war. "The United States and France could indeed secure the entire border. We are ready for this military coalition to assume this responsibility," Itham Ahmed, co-chair of foreign affairs for the Kurdish administration in northern territory outside central Syrian government control. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch Ambassador (Desig) to France called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

## Iran to soon unveil advanced drone, missile cities

The commander stated that the same countries that had brought Iran under oppressive and illegal sanctions would "fall apart" upon coming under likely reciprocal economic bans by the Islamic Republic, but Iran stands strong

TEHRAN: The chief commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the country is to soon unveil several "new missile and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) cities." "Soon, new missile and drone cities will be unveiled, and you will bear witness to the grandeur and profundity of Iran's hidden power," said Major General Hossein Salami on Friday. The commander hailed that the Islamic Republic had not fallen short of providing itself with sufficient military hardware reserves by any means of manner, noting, "Iran has produced so much advanced missiles, vessels, drones, and other military hardware, which falls short of finding the capacity to store the equipment on some

occasions." He said that Iran is the only country that when it launches an operation against enemies, its national currency strengthens and people take to the streets in the middle of the night to celebrate. "The entire world should know that our deterrence might relies on what exists within our own borders. The resolve, decision, capability, and action [that we rely on] are of an entirely Iranian nature," Salami asserted. The comments came amid the Islamic Republic's Armed Forces' ongoing push to continuously enhance their military hardware and combat readiness in line with the directives that have been issued by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khome-

ni. The forces have vowed to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of the threats that are posed by the Iranian nation's enemies. The IRGC official noted that the Iranian people demand that the country's Armed Forces launch Operation True Promise III, which would serve as a sequel to two previous such retaliatory operations against Israeli targets that achieved their targets accurately. According to Salami, the Iranian nation is interested in the country's staging a strong performance in all areas. "The people respect the credibility that is associated with power very much. We are not going to let the people's appetite for pur-

suit of strength and esteem die down." The official noted that the country had refused to fire even "a single bullet" from Syria and Lebanon during the Israeli regime's intensified deadly aggression against the countries. "It is obvious that we responded to the enemies using our own missiles and operating from our own soil." "We do not use any other country as a battlefield [for launching aggression against others]. We are so great [in capacity and power] that can use our own territory to retaliate against the enemies." According to the official, the Islamic Republic did not draw military advantage from Syria so it could become apprehen-

sive with the fall of the Arab country's former government. "The enemies want to allege that Iran has become weak, [but] are we in a stronger position in our efforts to close up the [strategic] Strait of Hormuz this year or the previous one?" Salami also praised the country's assertion of its political standpoints, saying that Iran is capable of "destroying the enemies' regional bases" at its discretion if necessary. The commander stated that the same countries that had brought Iran under oppressive and illegal sanctions would "fall apart" upon coming under likely reciprocal economic bans by the Islamic Republic, but Iran stands strong. —Agencies

## Security chief of South Korea's impeached President Yoon resigns

SEOUL: South Korea's presidential security chief resigned Friday as he faced questioning over why his guards prevented the detention of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, and as investigators prepared to make a fresh arrest attempt. Yoon last week resisted arrest in a standoff between his guards and investigators after his short-lived power grab on December 3 plunged South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades. Yoon's Presidential Security Service (PSS) chief Park Chong-jun — a former police officer — submitted his resignation on Friday morning "as he attended a police questioning", a PSS official told AFP. It was later accepted by acting president Choi Sang-mok, an official from the interim leader's office told reporters. It came as a joint investigation team from the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) and the police prepare to mount a new bid to arrest Yoon over his martial law declaration. Park told reporters before being questioned at the Korean National Police Agency early Friday that there must be no violence if investigators attempt another arrest of Yoon. "I believe that under no circumstances should there be physical clashes or bloodshed," the former security chief said. —APP

## RCCI President leads delegation visit to innovation HUB

ISLAMABAD: President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Usman Shaikat, accompanied by Vice President Fahad Barlas, recently visited the e-Rain Innovation HUB in Rawalpindi. During the visit, the RCCI delegation received an in-depth briefing on the state-of-the-art facilities and services offered by the Innovation HUB, said a press release issued here on Friday. The facility provides modern office spaces, advanced research amenities, and cutting-edge organic infrastructure aimed at fostering creativity and innovation. Beyond professional workspace solutions, the HUB also offers landscaped seating areas, a sports zone for recreation, and ample parking facilities to enhance convenience and comfort for its users. During the visit, RCCI President Usman Shaikat discussed potential avenues for collaboration with the Innovation HUB. Key topics included the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) focused on experience sharing and the development of internship opportunities for graduates at the WBIC (Women Business Incubation Center) and co-working spaces. —APP

## EU medical aid crosses into Syria from Türkiye

ISTANBUL: Some 55 tonnes of EU-funded medical supplies entered northwestern Syria from Türkiye on Thursday, a UN health official said. Part of an EU air bridge to Syria, the supplies crossed Türkiye's southern Cilvegozu border post and were taken to a warehouse in the northwestern city of Idlib, Mrinalini Santhanam of the World Health Organization said. "There's one more air bridge, and it is planned for February," she said, adding that it was "still in the planning stages" with talks "to determine the volume and the scale." The supplies, distributed to Idlib and the Aleppo region health care centers, are part of an EU humanitarian bridge announced by Brussels on Dec. 13. The aim is to support Syria's battered healthcare system following the ouster of Bashar Assad on Dec. 8. Included in the shipment were 8,000 emergency surgical kits, anesthetic supplies, IV fluids, sterilization materials, and medications to prevent disease outbreaks, the WHO said. The civil war, which broke out in 2011, devastated Syria's health care system, with "almost half of the hospitals (there) not functional." —APP

**Briefs**

**PM increase in foreign remittances**

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday felicitated the nation on record increase in foreign remittances in December 2024, saying that the claims of those who had been chanting to halt the country's economy had proven to be baseless. The foreign remittances during December 2024 increased to US\$3.1 billion against November 2024, posting month-on-month growth of 5.6%. In a press statement, the prime minister said the remittances witnessed a record growth of 29.3% in December 2024 against same month (December 2023) of last year. "Record increase in the foreign remittances reflects the strong commitment of the overseas Pakistanis for playing their role in development of the country," the prime minister said. After achieving economic stability, Pakistan is now on the path of economic growth, the prime minister said adding that the government was determined to ensure national development and public welfare.

**ATC approves bail for 153 PTI workers**

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad on Friday approved the bail of 153 PTI workers who were arrested on November 26 when law enforcement agencies carried out a crackdown on protesters at Islamabad's D-Chowk. On Nov 13, Imran issued a "final call" for nationwide protests on Nov 24, demanding the restoration of the PTI's electoral mandate, the release of detained party members, and the reversal of the 26th Amendment which he said had strengthened a "dictatorial regime". In the wake of the protest, human rights organisation Amnesty International demanded a transparent investigation of the state's "deadly crackdown" to disperse PTI supporters from D-Chowk. Numerous PTI workers were arrested in the ensuing crackdown while multiple cases were filed against the party leadership and supporters. According to the federal capital's police chief, more than 1,400 suspects had been arrested by the Islamabad and Rawalpindi police. On January 3, an Islamabad ATC granted post-arrest bail to 250 PTI arrested on Nov 26, while on January 6, as many as 192 PTI workers, who were detained in Jhelum district jail, were released after their bail petitions were accepted by an ATC in Islamabad.

**Venezuela's Maduro sworn in for 3rd term**

CARACAS: Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro has been sworn in for a third presidential term despite the protests of the country's opposition movement, capping more than five months of dispute over last summer's contested election. The ceremony took place on Friday in a small room of the National Assembly, a marked difference from previous ceremonies held in the building's main hall. Maduro was proclaimed winner of the country's presidential election on July 28, by electoral authorities under the tight control of the ruling Socialist Party. But Venezuela's opposition published thousands of voting tallies claiming that their candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez, had actually won the vote with 67% against Maduro's 30%. Independent observers such as the Carter Center and the Colombian Electoral Mission, as well as CNN's own analysis, have found the opposition tallies to be legitimate. And several nations, including the United States, have since recognized Gonzalez as Venezuela's rightful president-elect. - Agencies

**Imran Khan vows to take cases to international stage**

*Aleema Khan explained that they were prevented from entering the jail and had to walk to the internal gate*

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has stated that his party has no other options left but to take their cases to the international stage. Speaking to the media outside Adiala Jail, Imran Khan's sister, Aleema Khan, revealed that he had expressed that they had approached both the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and the Supreme Court (SC), but no one was willing to listen to them. "We have no other option left. We will take our cases to the international level." Aleema Khan explained that they were prevented from entering the jail and had to walk to the internal gate. She stated that previously, the whole family had access to the jailed leader, but now, only limited access was being granted. She added that this situation was tantamount to torture, as even Imran Khan's personal doctor was being denied access. Imran Khan's sister further commented that after watching the press conference of Rana Sanaulah, Imran Khan smiled and

**PML-N mocks PTI as Imran's civil disobedience call fails**

Increase in remittances a "categoric rejection" by overseas Pakistanis, says Bilal Azhar Kayani

ISLAMABAD: Felicitating the nation on record increase in foreign remittances and Pakistan International Airline's first flight to Europe in four years, the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) mocked its political arch-rival, saying the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) civil disobedience call fell flat. "Congratulations to the nation on the morning of prosperity as anarchists' night comes to an end... overseas Pakistanis have rejected those who called for civil disobedience," Punjab senior minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said in a statement on Friday. The statement came as Pakistan's remittances reached \$3.1 billion in December, marking a 29.3% year-on-year increase, data from the central bank showed, high-

lighting continued financial support from overseas Pakistanis amid challenging economic conditions. The data from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed that the remittances had not only recorded a yearly increase but also registered a 5.6% surge compared to the previous month. Similarly, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) also resumed its long-awaited flights to Europe, marking a major milestone for the national carrier after more than four years of hiatus, as the first flight took off for Paris today. The former ruling party had announced a civil disobedience movement if their demands — the release of political prisoners and a judicial probe into the events of May 9, 2023 and November 26 crackdown — go unmet. - DNA

enjoyed it. "We are trying to convey every message of Imran Khan to the nation. We will not let any message be missed." She mentioned that two months ago, they had been threatened with the release of AI-generated videos, but Imran Khan remained confident, saying that they had the support of the entire nation and all of Pakistan's social media. Aleema Khan clarified that despite being perceived as being involved in politics, they were not politically engaged. She assured that they were dedicated to Imran Khan's release and his leadership, whether he held an official position or not. She emphasised that Imran Khan was the voice and thought of the people of Pakistan. During her conversation with journalists, Aleema Khan added, "All decisions will be made from Adiala Jail, and they are still being made. We will stay here until Imran Khan is free." She also expressed that they were not afraid of the threats they were receiving, as they believed in the protection of Allah. She also promised to ensure Imran Khan's safety and bring forward everything that was being done to him.

**IHC suspends travel ban on Khosa**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has suspended a notification dated December 26, regarding placing Sardar Latif Khosa's name on passport control list. In its written order, the court instructed the secretary interior to ensure that Latif Khosa wouldn't be stopped from traveling abroad. It directed the secretary interior to also inform the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Police and Immigration authorities regarding the court order. The court order said that Latif Khosa had presented the ticket according to which he wanted to travel Canada from January 10, to 24th. The court adjourned further hearing of the case till February 6. Earlier, the IHC sought a report from authorities concerned in a case pertaining to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Zartaj Gul's travel ban. According to details, the IHC bench comprising Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, who heard the case, also directed the relevant officer to appear in court for the next hearing. Zartaj Gul had filed a petition through her counsel, maintaining that despite being granted bail in 47 cases, including 21 terrorism-related cases, her name was not removed from ECL. In the petition it was maintained that the PTI leader's name was initially removed from the ECL but was later reinstated. The court was requested to direct the authorities to remove her name from the ECL.

**Two injured in Chaman railway station explosion**

DNA

CHAMAN: Two people were injured in an explosion near Chaman Railway Station in Balochistan on Friday. The injured were promptly transported to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Security forces cordoned off the area after the blast and initiated a search operation to ensure safety. Authorities stated that the cause of the explosion is yet to be determined. Police and security agencies have launched an investigation to uncover the details surrounding the incident.

**Mohsin Naqvi, Fazlur Rehman discuss peace efforts in Kurram**

Minister says some elements distorted Kurram issue, but govt committed to bringing stability



MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the residence of JamiatUlema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana FazlurRehman to inquire after him and discuss critical national issues. During the meeting, both leaders deliberated on matters of mutual interest, including the overall political and security situation in the country. A major focus of the discussion was on measures to establish peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in the conflict-affected Kurram district. Both Naqvi and Fazl expressed satisfaction with the timely arrival of relief goods convoys to Parachinar. The interior minister as-

ured that all stakeholders had been taken into confidence to resolve the issues in Kurram and emphasised the government's commitment to peacebuilding efforts. "Some elements have deliberately distorted the Kurram issue, but we remain steadfast in our resolve to bring stability to the area," Naqvi stated. He also appreciated the Grand Jirga's sincere efforts in improving the situation in Kurram, calling their role pivotal in fostering dialogue and reconciliation among local communities. Naqvi praised MaulanaFazlurRehman for his positive contributions to Pakistani politics, acknowledging his role as a key leader in addressing national challenges. He conveyed his good wishes for the JUI-F chief's health and well-being.

**PHC bars deportation of Afghan musicians**

Until the government concludes the cases, no strict action is to be taken against the musicians, the court's decision emphasised

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued a two-page short verdict restraining the government from deporting Afghan musicians seeking asylum in Pakistan. According to reports, Justice Waqar Ahmed authored the concise decision, directing the federal government to appoint an officer to review asylum applications and make a decision within two months. The court instructed that Afghan musicians must not be expelled from the country for at least two months. The Ministry of Interior has been asked to allow the musicians to remain in Pakistan during this period. Until the government concludes the cases, no strict action is to be taken against the musicians, the court's decision emphasised. Pakistan temporarily halted the repatriation of illegal immigrants, including Afghan refugees, following a request from the United Nations in July 2024. The decision came after the recent visit of UN-

HCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi to Pakistan. During his visit, Grandi met with Afghan refugees in Peshawar and Haripur and held talks with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and other high-ranking officials. The UNHCR chief requested the Pakistani government to suspend the repatriation of illegal immigrants, citing humanitarian concerns. Prior to this decision, repatriation of illegal Afghan nationals continued as 620,981 Afghans have returned to their country till June 22. Between 11th to 21st of this month, total 13,815 Afghans returned to their country including 5,014 men, 4,087 women and 4,714 children. It is pertinent to mention here that the apex committee of the National Action Plan (NAP) in a meeting on October 3, 2023, chaired by the then-caretakeer PM AnwaarulHaqKakar gave a deadline to all foreign nationals living illegally in the country until October 31 to leave voluntarily or face deportation. Since the expiry of the deadline over 500,000 illegal Afghans have returned to their homeland via the Torkham and Chaman borders.

**Los Angeles wildfire deaths at 10 as National Guard called in**

Governor Gavin Newsom said the service members were part of a thousands-strong deployment of state personnel

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Massive wildfires that engulfed whole neighbourhoods and displaced thousands in Los Angeles have killed at least 10 people, authorities said, as California's National Guard soldiers readied to hit the streets to help quell disorder. News of the growing toll, announced late on Thursday by the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, came as swaths of the United States' second-largest city lay in ruins. A vast firefighting operation continued into the night, bolstered by water-dropping helicopters thanks to a temporary lull in winds, even as new fires continued to spring up. With reports of looting, Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said a nighttime curfew was planned, and the state's National Guard was on hand to patrol affected areas. Governor Gavin Newsom said the service members were part of a thousands-strong deployment of state personnel. "We're throwing everything at our disposal — including our National Guard service members — to protect communities in the days to come," he said. "And to those who would seek to take advantage of evacuated communities, let me be clear: looting will not be tolerated." Luna said his officers were patrolling evacuation zones and would arrest anyone who

was not supposed to be there. But with such a huge area scorched by the fires, evacuees feared not enough was being done and some were taking matters into their own hands. Nicholas Norman mounted an armed vigil at his home after seeing suspicious characters in the middle of the night. "I did the classic American thing: I went and got my shotgun and I sat out there, and put a light on so they knew people were there," he told AFP. The biggest of the multiple blazes has ripped through almost 20,000 acres (8,800 hectares) of the upscale Pacific Palisades neighbourhood, while another fire around Altadena has torched 13,700 acres. Firefighters said they were starting to get a handle on the Pacific Palisades blaze, with six per cent of its perimeter contained — meaning it can't spread any further in that direction. But after a lull, winds were returning and new fires continued to erupt. One flared near Calabasas and the wealthy Hidden Hills enclave, home to celebrities like Kim Kardashian, late on Thursday. The Kenneth Fire exploded to almost 1,000 acres within hours, forcing more people from their homes, with over 180,000 now displaced. US President Joe Biden told a White House briefing he had pledged extra federal funds and resources to help the state cope with "the most ... devastating fire in California's history".

**Turkish minister highlights Pak-Turkiye ties**

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Minister of National Education of the Republic of Turkey, Yusuf Tekin, emphasized the deep and timeless bond of love shared between the people of Pakistan and Turkey during his visit to the Government Kinnaird Girls High School, Empress Road, on Friday. He was accompanied by Turkey's Consul General Dumus Bastings and received a warm welcome from Punjab's Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare, Khawaja Imran Nazir, and other provincial officials. Addressing the mask distribution ceremony at the school, Yusuf Tekin expressed gratitude for the grand reception extended by the students and faculty. He stated that his visit would pave the way for further collaboration and development in education and other sectors. "I will continue efforts to strengthen the friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Turkey," he remarked. Khawaja Imran Nazir, speaking on the occasion, acknowledged the consistent improvement in Pakistan-Turkiye relations during the tenure of the Pakistan Muslim League-N government. He thanked the Turkish government for donating 100,000 N-95 masks, noting that 50,000 were provided during the smog season and an additional 50,000 were handed over now. He also presented a souvenir to the visiting minister as a gesture of goodwill. The Secretary of Schools Education, Khalid NazirWattoo, and Secretary of Health, Nadia Saqib, were also present and participated in the ceremonial exchanges. Students of the Kinnaird School greeted the distinguished guests with flowers, band performances, and cultural presentations, including the Turkish national anthem and traditional songs. During the visit, the Turkish Minister of Education and Punjab's Health Minister toured the school's state-of-the-art physics lab and smart classrooms, appreciating the modern educational facilities. Yusuf Tekin personally distributed masks among the students and planted a commemorative sapling in the school's lawn. The Turkish delegation expressed their gratitude to the Punjab government for the warm reception and hospitality, under-scoring the enduring friendship between the two nations.

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