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Ambassador reaffirms Japan's commitment to development in Pak

Detailed News On Page-08

Army Act apply solely to military officers

Detailed News On Page-08



Djokovic wins opening match at AO 2025

Detailed News On Page-06



Pledges decisive action

COAS calls for political unity against extremism

Pakistan Armed Forces an Unbreakable Shield Against Terror, says Army Chief General Munir

STAFF REPORT / DNA

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), visited Peshawar today, where he was provided with a comprehensive briefing on the prevailing security situation and the ongoing counter-terrorism operations targeting Fitna Al Khwarij. Briefing was also attended by Federal Minister of Interior and Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During his visit, the COAS praised the unwavering resolve and unmatched sacrifices of Pakistan Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies, who have been instrumental in dismantling terrorist networks and thwarting their nefarious agenda. He stated, "As we stand united against the forces of evil, I am immensely proud of the remarkable achievements of our security forces. Through their dedication, courage, and supreme sacrifices, we have successfully degraded the operational capabilities of terrorist organizations, both within our borders and beyond. Our forces have relentlessly pursued and eliminated key terrorist leaders, dismantled their infrastructure, and neutralized their cells, sending a clear message that terror has no place in our land. This war is ongoing and we would take it to its logical conclusion, InshAllah. COAS further emphasised the relentless efforts of law enforcement agencies in ensuring the safety and security of citizens, foiling numerous attacks, and maintaining peace and order. He highlighted that every operation has been a testament to the courage, professionalism, and operational readiness of the security forces, who continue to thwart the evolving threats posed by terrorists. The COAS made it clear that any attempt to disturb the peace of the nation will be met with decisive and overwhelming force. "The enemy may try to sow discord and fear, but we will not relent. Hostile elements will be dealt with an iron hand."

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Forces kill 27 terrorists in Balochistan

Troops "stealthily surrounded & effectively engaged the terrorists' location" in Kacchi district, says ISPR

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Security forces have eliminated as many as 27 terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in remote district of Balochistan, the military's media wing said on Monday. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement that on January 12 security forces conducted the IBO in Kacchi district of Balochistan, on reported presence of terrorists in the area. During the conduct of operation, troops "stealthily surrounded & effectively engaged the terrorists' location, and after an intense fire exchange, twenty seven terrorists were sent to hell". Multiple hideouts, including caches of arms, ammunition and explosives, were also destroyed during the operation, the ISPR added. The terrorists were involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as innocent civilians and were highly wanted by the law enforcement agencies, as per the ISPR.

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PESHAWAR: General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), attending a briefing on the security situation and counter-terrorism operations targeting Fitna Al Khwarij. The session was also attended by Minister of Interior, CM of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and senior military officials. - DNA

IHC tells FO 'Next week is crucial in Aafia case'

The court also noted that the record of the Prime Minister's foreign visits had not been presented

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court held a hearing related to the release and repatriation of Dr Aafia Siddiqui, who is imprisoned in the United States. The court remarked that next week is crucial and issued essential instructions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this regard. During the proceedings, the court stated that next week would be important concerning the Aafia Siddiqui case and directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to cooperate with Dr Fowzia Siddiqui. During the hearing before Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan, Dr Fowzia Siddiqui's lawyer, Imran Shafiq,

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Government focusing on sustainable growth

Pakistan is preparing to debut Yuan-denominated bonds this year to shore up finances

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Pakistan is in the phase of economic stabilization and the government is now focusing on sustainable growth. In an interview with a foreign TV channel on the sidelines of the Asian Financial Forum in Hong Kong, he said we are now very focused for fundamentally changing the DNA of the economy

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'UK grooming gangs'

Pak slams xenophobic remarks against its community in UK

Pakistan says "demonising" such a large community on basis of actions of few individuals needs to be condemned

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Responding to a recent spate of "xenophobic remarks", the Foreign Office (FO) on Monday expressed deep concern over the increasingly racist and Islamophobic political and media commentary towards the Pakistani community in the United Kingdom (UK). "Pakistan-UK friendship is characterised by warmth, cordiality, robust cooperation and trust. Nurtured over decades this relationship remains an important priority of Pakistan's foreign policy," an FO spokesperson said in a statement. "The deep and multifaceted relations cover important areas including trade and investment, education, security, counter-terrorism, parliamentary cooperation and people-to-people contacts," said Shafiqat Ali Khan, adding: "The presence of 1.7 million strong British-Pakistani diaspora provides the strongest link between the two friendly countries."

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Trump 'biggest enemy' of Muslims: Fazl

DNA

MULTAN: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has denounced former US President Donald Trump as the "biggest enemy of Muslims" during a speech at a religious convention in Multan. He further criticized those who espouse nationalism while simultaneously claiming to be liberal. Maulana Fazlur Rehman stated that prophets faced immense hardships, contrasting this with the numerous blessings bestowed upon humanity. He asserted that embracing Trump as a brother would only

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Briefs

Ejaz's production orders issued

The senator has been in prison for over 18 months

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani has issued production orders for Senator Ejaz Chaudhry. The senator has been behind bars for over 18 months at Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail. In March last year, he was due to be produced in the Senate, but was unable to attend the session. According to the production order, the request to produce Chaudhry was made by Opposition Leader in the Senate Shibli Paraz. "The Honourable Chairman Senate considers necessary the presence of Senator Ejaz Ahmad Chaudhry during the sittings of 345th session of the Senate of Pakistan," order read.

Bilawal to pay week-long visit to Lahore

Plans to make key decisions regarding the restructuring of PPP's Lahore chapter

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is set to visit Lahore next week for a week-long stay to address critical political and organisational issues in Punjab. During his visit, Bilawal will meet with the PPP leadership to discuss the power-sharing dynamic with the ruling PML-N in Punjab and the province's evolving political situation. According to sources, the chairman will also hold meetings with party representatives from across Punjab and is expected to visit the homes of dedicated PPP workers in Lahore.

Written demands to be presented

3rd round of govt-PTI talks set for Thursday

Much-anticipated in-camera session to be held at 11:30am at Parliament House

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has summoned the "decisive" third session of the negotiation committees representing the government and the opposition PTI on January 16. The much-anticipated in-camera session will be held at 11:30am at the Parliament House, during which the former ruling party will likely to present its demands in writing before the government's team. The development came a day after the PTI's negotiators met incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan in Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi. The meeting, according to the former ruling party, was arranged in a "controlled environment". Following the meeting with the PTI founder, the former ruling party had announced that they were ready for the third round of talks with the ruling coalition. The date for the crucial meeting was fixed following a telephonic conversation between PTI leader Asad Qaiser and the NA speaker, sources told Geo News on Monday.

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Imran 'employing delaying tactics': Attaullah Tarar

PTI running away from £190 million scam due to involvement in corruption

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership was running away from mega corruption case of £ 190 million because they know that their hands were not clean and they were involved in corruption. Addressing a press conference along with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz senior leader Senator Talal Chaudhry that there was no example in the history of waiving off billions of rupees like this as

Continued on Page 06

PTI leadership rules out 'any deal' with government

"Khan sahib's stance is clear: he will fight his battles in line with law, Constitution," says PTI secretary general

£190m case verdict to be announced on 17

"Al-Qadir Trust case is politically motivated," says PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan

COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: The verdict against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the £190 million case has been delayed for the third time and will now be announced on January 17. Accountability court Judge Nasir Javed expressed dismay over the no-show of the accused, saying that he had been present at the court since 8:30am, leading to the postponement of the verdict. Khan had previously claimed that the verdict - initially delayed on December 23, 2024, and again on January 6, 2025 - was postponed to "pressurise him".

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Police martyrs'4 kids job as ASI notified

ABBOTTABAD: In a significant move, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Hazara, Nasir Mahmood Monday has issued a notification for the recruitment of four children of police martyrs as Assistant Sub-Inspectors (ASI). This decision was made after fulfilling all departmental rules and regulations, with the children of four martyrs from Hazara Police now being appointed to the posts. The children include Mubashir Ahmad, the son of martyr Constable Chanzeb from Manshera District, Ins Khan, son of martyr ASI Muhammad Akram from Kohistan District, Saif Sajid, son of martyr Constable Sajid Khan from Manshera District, and Nafis Hussain, son of martyr Constable Naveed Hussain from Haripur District. While addressing the newly appointed children of the martyrs, DIG Hazara Nasir Mahmood Satti expressed his congratulations and acknowledged the sacrifices made by their fathers. He emphasized that the martyred officers had laid down their lives for the protection of the nation and for maintaining peace and order. He further noted that these martyrs had earned the highest honor of martyrdom, a significant sacrifice for the nation. Nasir Mahmood Satti reaffirmed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police is always committed to supporting the families of its martyrs and prioritizes their welfare. He also urged the newly appointed ASIs to serve the nation with the same dedication and commitment as their fathers did, ensuring peace, national security, and justice for the oppressed. Satti encouraged them to uphold the values of hard work, dedication, and honesty in fulfilling their responsibilities and to make their martyred fathers, their families, and the department proud.—APP

Kundi suggests initiating global programs if KP govt approves

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Monday offered to initiate international programs in collaboration with global organizations if the provincial government agrees. He emphasized his willingness to engage international institutions to address pressing issues in the province. Governor Kundi also highlighted the disparity in healthcare benefits between provinces, particularly pointing out the significant difference in health card benefits. He said, "If you visit Sindh with me, you will realize that while the health card in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provides benefits worth 1 million rupees, in Sindh, it exceeds 5 million rupees." The Governor said he was talking to media at Peshawar Press Club, where he offered Fatiha with senior journalist Fida Adeel over demise of his father. Governor Kundi emphasized that negotiations are only possible with serious parties and stressed that dialogue is the only way to resolve ongoing problems. He mentioned that the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) would not receive any NRO, and criticized the shift in political allegiances, saying that people who were once unwilling to engage with certain political parties are now willing to do so.—APP

Azerbaijan to open Trade Center in Lahore

The ambassador said that Azerbaijan had a lot of respect and affection for Pakistani nation and is committed to strengthening bilateral ties

DNA

LAHORE :Azerbaijan-Pakistan economic collaboration set to expand as significant initiatives are well on the way to enhance trade, investment, B2B (Business to Business) and people-to-people ties. "We are going to establish Azerbaijan Trade Center in Lahore and Pakistan-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce to bring the business communities of both countries closer and open new avenues for mutual cooperation", said Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov while speaking here at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Monday. LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad and Senior Vice President Engineer Khalid Usman also spoke on the occasion while LCCI Executive Committee Members, including Khurram Lodhi, Ahsan Shahid, Asif Malik, Asif Khan, Waqas Aslam, Abdul Majeed, Karamat Ali Awan, Riaz Shahid, Aamir Ali, Aamna Randhawa, Ali Imran and former Executive Committee Member Abdul Wadud Alvi were also present. The ambassador said that Azerbaijan had a lot of respect and affection for Pakistani nation and is committed to strengthening bilateral ties. He highlighted the duty-free access granted to Pakistani rice by Azerbaijan until 2027, encouraging traders to capitalize on this opportunity, especially considering Punjab's



reputation for producing high-quality Basmati rice. He assured that Azerbaijani authorities would provide maximum facilitation to Pakistani traders exploring opportunities in Azerbaijan. Referring to the positive impact of direct flights between the two countries, the ambassador revealed that bilateral trade volume has tripled since 2022, growing from USD 10 million to significantly higher levels. He said that over 80,000 Pakistanis visited Azerbaijan last year

which reflects the growing interest and people-to-people connections. The ambassador also invited Pakistani investors to explore opportunities in Azerbaijan's infrastructure and energy sectors and highlighted the country's strategic position as a key international transport corridor between Asia and Europe. He highlighted Azerbaijan's strong trade surplus and assured robust support for potential collaborations. On the energy front, Ambassador Farhadov stressed the importance of further collaboration in defense, petroleum products and other sectors. He also reiterated the USD 2 billion investment commitment made during Azerbaijan President's visit to Pakistan, with work underway to realize these projects. LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad underscored the excellent diplomatic, historical and cultural relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan and called for joint efforts to boost bilateral

trade to USD one billion in the coming years. He said that Azerbaijan shares borders with Russia, Georgia, Iran, Turkey and Armenia. The geographic position of Azerbaijan makes it a key player in regional trade and transportation networks. Azerbaijan is also known for its huge reserves of oil and natural gas which make it a major player in the global energy market. The LCCI President said that despite having such deep relations, we have yet to succeed in utilizing the real trade potential. According to the trade figures, our exports to Azerbaijan in 2023-24 were just 6 million dollars whereas the imports from Azerbaijan amounted to few thousand dollars. The main reason of such a low level of trade is lack of proper information about each other's markets. "We are really keen to take fair share in the overall trade of Azerbaijan. The global exports of Azerbaijan were around 34 billion dollars while global imports were nearly 17 billion dollars in 2023. We need to make joint efforts to take trade volume between both countries to at least One Billion Dollars in coming few years", he added. LCCI Senior Vice President Engineer Khalid Usman said that Pakistan's exports to Azerbaijan consist of rice, water pumps, fruits and fabrics of cotton etc. There is an urgent need of finding new products lines and new avenues of cooperation for enhancing trade between Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

CM Bugti, Iranian envoy vow to promote bilateral relations

QUETTA: Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Reza Amiri Moqadam called on Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti here on Monday at the CM Secretariat. The discussions were held on promoting trade, educational and cultural relations between Pakistan and Iran during the meeting. Welcoming the Iranian delegation, the Chief Minister of Balochistan said that he valued the centuries-old long-standing relations between Pakistan and Iran, the two countries have always shared each other's joys and sorrows. It is the need of the hour to further strengthen trade, cultural and social relations between the two countries, he said. In the meeting, the Iranian Ambassador offered cooperation in various fields of social develop-

ment including increasing trade volume, educational scholarships, and technical education. The Chief Minister said that exchange of delegations and trade relations between Balochistan and Iran at different levels would be further promoted saying that prevention of illegal smuggling, effective measures could be taken for a lasting solution to be found to the problems being faced by traders. He said that efforts would be made to resolve the problems of the border adjacent to Balochistan in collaboration with the central government so that facilities could be provided to the traders. The CM said that the establishment of law and order in the areas would increase trade activities and it could be possible to eliminate smuggling. In

this regard, a meeting will also be held in Islamabad in which representatives of the Chambers of Commerce will be invited, he said. The Chief Minister assured of facilities for Iranian traders and said that no legal commercial container or truck would face any kind of problems in Balochistan. For timely resolution of such problems, the Iranian Consulate should appoint its, a representative who will be in touch with the relevant authorities of the provincial government to assist the traders, he said. While offering educational scholarships, the Iranian ambassador said that Iran is keen to start various programs for Pakistani students. The CM also appreciated the offer and said that the Iranian Consulate and the officials of the Balochistan govern-

ment would jointly prepare a plan for the scholarship program. Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that under this offer, a special educational scholarship program would also be launched for the Hazara community living in Quetta. He said that for the first time in the history of Balochistan, the Benazir Bhutto Scholarship Program has been launched adding that under which students are being given scholarships for higher education in two hundred prominent universities around the world. Providing technical training and employment is among the priorities of the provincial government, he maintained. He accepted the invitation to visit Iran at the invitation of the Iranian Ambassador and said that he would soon visit Iran with a delegation.—DNA

Police for strict action against officers in crime-prone areas: DIG

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) police, Syed Ali Raza, has reinforced the Islamabad Police's commitment to eradicating crime during a briefing with zonal SPs, SHOs, Moharrirs, and the Dolphin Squad, on Monday. A public relation officer told APP that DIG Raza issued a clear directive that officers would be held accountable for criminal incidents occurring in their areas. "Any criminal activity will result in strict action against the officer in charge," he said. DIG Raza instructed officers to enhance patrolling in commercial areas using smart cars and focus on thorough checks at crime hotspots. DIG Raza also urged officers to make patrols more efficient, stressing that combating crime required courage and determination. "This mission demands sacrifice, and no effort should be spared in protecting our citizens," he added. To motivate better performance, DIG Raza assured that officers demonstrating excellence would be rewarded with incentives. On the other hand, poor performance or negligence would lead to strict departmental consequences. DIG Raza concluded by stressing that protecting citizens' lives and property and controlling crime is the top priority for Islamabad Police. "Any negligence in this regard will not be tolerated," he said, reaffirming the police force's resolve to safeguard the capital. The briefing highlights Islamabad Police's determination to create a secure and crime-free environment, with a clear focus on enhancing public safety and law enforcement effectiveness.—DNA

KP to launch free medication project for underprivileged citizens

Ehtesham Ali stressed the government's efforts to enhance healthcare facilities at the regional level to reduce the burden on teaching hospitals

PESHAWAR: The Advisor to the Chief Minister on Health, Ehtesham Ali on Monday announced a groundbreaking initiative to provide free outpatient medications to underprivileged individuals across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The project would be piloted at the Mardan Medical Complex (MMC), with plans for future expansion across the province. Speaking during his visit to Bacha Khan Medical College, Ehtesham Ali highlighted the provincial government's commitment to improving healthcare and education, terming them as top priorities. He emphasized that stringent criteria would be established to ensure only deserving patients benefit from the free medication scheme. Provincial Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, and Members of the Provincial Assembly Iftikhar Mashwani, Abdul Salam Afridi also accompanied the CM's aide. Officials from the Mardan Medical Teaching Institution, including Board of Governors Chairman Prof Dr Arshad Javed, and other key staff members, briefed the delegation about institutional operations. Ehtesham Ali stressed the government's efforts to enhance healthcare facilities at the regional level to reduce the burden on teaching hospitals. He added that the health department was also working on an online portal to provide real-time information about available medicines in provincial hospitals. The portal aimed to improve transparency and ensure timely availability of essential medicines. Highlighting the importance of accountability, the advisor assured swift action against any negligence or complaints related to healthcare services. During the visit, the Dean and CEO of Bacha Khan Medical College and MMC, Prof Dr Amjad Ali, briefed the officials about the progress of various projects, including the establishment of endocrinology, neurology, dermatology, and plastic surgery departments within the past six months. He also highlighted the near-completion of facilities such as a 10-bed Medical ICU, a Cath Lab, and the 130-bed Benazir Bhutto Children's Hospital. Dr Amjad requested financial support for procuring an MRI and CT scanner for MMC and completing remaining development work at the children's hospital.—DNA

KP law minister for preparing public welfare projects

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Afridi Advocate on Monday stressed on preparing the projects of public interest in the fields of education, health, drinking water, electricity, gas, communication and works under the Production Bonus Fund (PBF). The law minister directed the authorities concerned to prepare such projects which would directly benefit the people. In a statement issued here he further directed that coordination between all departments was very important for timely completion of the projects. Referring to PBF he said that transparent and fair use of the fund would be ensured at all costs and each and every penny would be spent purely on the welfare of the people. He added that a comprehensive development plan would be devised keeping in view the needs of each area under the PBF.—APP

Punjab CM distributes Honhaar scholarship cheques

BAHAWALPUR: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif distributed Honhaar merit scholarship cheques among students of Bahawalpur Division at the Islamia University Bahawalpur, Bahadur-ul-Jadeed Campus. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif mingled with the students present at the event. She invited squash player Sohail Adnan, who won the British Junior Championship Under 13, to sit beside her and also presented him with a prize cheque of 5 million rupees. The Chief Minister sat among the students and engaged in conversation. At the request of the students, CM Maryam Nawaz joined them in singing the national anthem. Following her instructions, a guard of honor was presented in honor of the students. A disciplined police contingent gave a general salute to the students. The Chief Minister also called over special needs students who were singing to express her affection. A documentary about the merit awards was presented at the event. A total of 3,011 students from Bahawalpur Division received merit scholarships amounting to 173.2 million rupees. After Lahore Division, Bahawalpur Division received the highest number of merit scholarships, with 2,296 students from public sector universities awarded 147.1 million rupees in scholarships.—APP

ECO calligraphy, arts exhibition ends, celebrating regional culture

The sale of calligraphic pieces supported the artist and underscored the importance of preserving traditional art forms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The exhibition "Timeless Serenity of Calligraphy and Arts," which showcased the artistic and cultural treasures of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) member states, on Monday concluded with a ceremony held at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) here. The concluding ceremony was graced by Hassan Nasir Jami, Federal Secretary, Ministry of National Heritage and

Culture, as the Chief Guest, and Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, as the Guest of Honor. In his address, Hassan Nasir Jami emphasized the transformative role of cultural diplomacy in strengthening regional harmony and mutual understanding. He praised the exhibition as a reflection of the shared values and artistic brilliance of the ECO member states. "Art and culture provide a universal language that transcends boundaries, fostering connections

that are essential for sustainable regional cooperation," he said. Atadjan Movlamov, while addressing the audience, acknowledged the collaborative efforts of the organizers and commended the exhibition for celebrating the diverse yet interconnected cultural identities of the ECO region. He noted that such initiatives contribute significantly in deepening mutual respect and understanding among member states. The exhibition, which ran from January 7 to 14, featured calligraphic masterpieces

by Azeem Iqbal and paintings from ECO member states, including Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan. Visitors had the opportunity to not only admire the art but also deepen their knowledge of the cultural richness of ECO member states through the exhibits and interactive engagements. On the last day of the Exhibition, Azeem Iqbal is hosting a calligraphy workshop on Tuesday, from 11 AM to 1 PM, at PNCA, National Art

Gallery, Islamabad. This will offer the attendees to have a hands-on learning and a deeper appreciation of the art form, enhancing their cultural experience. The event drew wide participation from diplomats, cultural practitioners, and art enthusiasts who praised the exhibition as a platform for fostering unity and celebrating the ECO region's artistic legacy. The sale of calligraphic pieces supported the artist and underscored the importance of preserving traditional art forms.



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For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman
Mobile: 0300 8553342

National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA	Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Palestine	Palestine Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Sudan	National Day
Jan 04 / Myanmar	Independence Day
Jan 06 / Iraq	Armed Forces Day
Jan 12 / Tanzania	Armed Forces Day
Jan 14 / Uzbekistan	Armed Forces Day
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Wild Life Board obduracy led to closure of Monal

At the behest of chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Board, La Montana and Monal were not only closed, but the buildings of these restaurants built with government money were also demolished

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At the behest of chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Board, La Montana and Monal were not only closed, but the buildings of these restaurants built with government money were also demolished. Margalla National Park has a law and boundary, Margalla Hills, and Pir Sohawa Road have neither any legal status nor any separate law. If the Chairperson Wildlife Board has discovered such a law, then the general public should also be informed about it. The wildlife law applies equally to Islamabad Club, Riding Club, Polo Club, Gun Club and more than

100 restaurants and commercial centers located in The Margalla Hills National Park. Shah-Allah Ditta, Shakarparian, Club Road and all the commercial centers in Saidpur are still doing their business. The affectees held a protest demonstration and asked the Chairperson Wildlife Board, 'our question is about the double standards of the ordinance, why do officers have separate laws for their children and separate for public spaces? At the behest of the Chairperson Wildlife Board, demolishing only two restaurants out of 113 commercial centers in the national park is not personal enmity, then what else is? Our only demand to the Chairperson

Wildlife Board is that all the restaurants used by officers and their children in Margalla National Park should also be brought under the preview of the National Park Law. What could be a greater example of the excesses of the Chairperson Wildlife Board than the fact that after the demolition of Monal and La Montana, a huge restaurant in Daman Koh was licensed to do business within the limits of Margalla Park. But the Chairperson Wildlife Board refused to meet the 1,100 employees who were rendered unemployed. 'These actions of the Chairperson Wildlife Board made us unemployed on the one hand and on the other hand, the

entire area was made a hub of criminal activities. In the last four months, three murders and several robberies have taken place on Pir Sohawa Road, the record of which is available at Kohsar police station. Not only this, Pir Sohawa Road is also completely damaged at this time and garbage and dirt are seen everywhere. Why don't the so-called environmental pollution authorities see all this now? With the closure of the 4 acres restaurants in the 31,000-acre Margalla National Park, which were located in the name of chowki in the Master Plan of Islamabad and have been providing entertainment to the general public, has the wildlife

in Margalla National Park been relieved of all the problems faced by them? and Due to the demolition of both the restaurants, has the wildlife started using Pir Sohawa Road? not at all, it is a blatant joke and lie. 'We demand from the Chairperson Wildlife Board that all unemployed employees should be given licenses to open kiosks on the land adjacent to Monal and La Montana and if our legitimate demand is not met, our next step will be a sit-in in front of the Islamabad Club and will continue till the law of the Wildlife Board is equally implemented on Islamabad Club. Hope It doesn't happen', the protesters added.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting of the working group on establishment of textile parks in Pakistan. The meeting was attended by the Minister of Investment, Provincial Ministers, Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretary Ministry of Industry, Secretary Board of Investment, Secretary Special Investment Facilitation Council and other high officials.—DNA

IRSA releases 29,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 29,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 40,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1476.71 feet and was 78.71 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 1134.05 feet, which was 84.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,900 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 22,000, 14,500, 2,000 and 5,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul.—APP

Chicken price increases by Rs 79 at last two weeks in twin-cities

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: In the twin cities, the price of chicken increased by Rs 79 rupees per kg in the last two weeks, and the price of poultry chicken increased to Rs 412 rupees per kilo. The last month until December 24, chicken was sold at Rs 333 rupees per kg, which was less than the previous month's price hike in poultry prices in the retail market. The poultry consumables, chicken and eggs prices have been reduced for the past few weeks, and are once again out of reach of the public. The prices of poultry items have increased by 23.72

percent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi during the last two weeks, which has created huge volatility in the market. According to the market survey, during past two weeks in the twin cities, a 23.72 percent increase was witnessed in the price of chicken, while a same 26 percent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the last seven weeks. According to the survey, the price of live chicken in the twin cities was between Rs 400 and 412 per kg from the last week of this month of January 2025. Similarly, chicken meat is sold at Rs 600 to 610 per kg in the market of both cities. During this time, it was also found that poultry eggs used to be

sold at Rs 300 to Rs 210 per dozen in the market of both cities. Meanwhile, the former Chairman Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Chaudhry, Muhammad Ashraf said the increase in the current prices of poultry is due to demand and supply issues. PPA ex-Chairman said that the increase in poultry business inputs and cost of doing business was seen across the country due to which the market was in crisis. He said that many people related to the chicken business in the country were affected by the current crisis and especially small businesses and poultry farms were closed, adding the poultry business in the four provinces including

Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is suffering from the current economic crisis. Chaudhry Ashraf said that the country's economic conditions are also an important issue and the poultry feed ingredients imported from foreign countries are very expensive, in which soybean is important. He said that many soybean ships have stopped at Karachi port, which has an inevitable impact on poultry prices. Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) has also called for a further increase in the prices of chicken and there was an increase observed in the prices of poultry items in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

ICCI President calls for addressing SMEs challenges

Organizations like SMEDA, NAVTTC, and TEVTA must be crucial in facilitating this growth. Additionally, Qureshi suggested that SMEs' participation in international trade shows and exhibitions should be encouraged to boost their contribution to national export revenue

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), emphasized the pivotal role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in driving economic growth and development. He stressed that addressing the challenges faced by SMEs is crucial for their development and, ultimately, for the country's economic progress. Qureshi urged the government and relevant stakeholders to take concrete measures to resolve the key issues confronting SMEs, enabling them to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to the nation's economic prosperity. Meanwhile, the ICCI President has welcomed the launch of a simplified SME Loan Application Form, a joint effort by the Small and Medium

Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), the State Bank of Pakistan, and the Pakistan Banks Association to address the long-standing barriers SMEs face in accessing formal financing due to complex loan application processes and low financial literacy. Introducing the simplified loan application form is a significant step towards promoting SME growth. However, Qureshi stressed that more needs to be done to achieve rapid and sustainable growth in the SME sector. He added that streamlining regulations reduces bureaucratic hurdles and encourages SME growth. Nasir Qureshi went on to say that SMEs are the economic engine of Pakistan, which contributes 40 percent of the GDP and employs nearly 80 percent of the workforce, but unfortunately, their potential to contribute to import substitution and export enhance-

ment remained largely untapped. Nasir Qureshi highlighted that Pakistan has over 5.2 million SMEs, accounting for approximately 90% of private businesses. Despite their significant presence, SMEs face numerous challenges, including limited access to financing, frequent power outages, and soaring energy costs, which hinder their growth and ability to create jobs. To address these issues, Qureshi emphasized the need for a supportive environment that bridges the gap between industry requirements and available skills. Organizations like SMEDA, NAVTTC, and TEVTA must be crucial in facilitating this growth. Additionally, Qureshi suggested that SMEs' participation in international trade shows and exhibitions should be encouraged to boost their contribution to national export revenue. This would enhance their competitiveness and promote economic development in Pakistan.

SMEDA to organize training

ISLAMABAD: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) will organize a one-day workshop on "Accounting & Bookkeeping for SMEs" for profitable business growth on January 14 (Tuesday). The workshop will be held at the Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries (ICSTSI), according to sources in the authority informed on Monday. The training program will provide information about the importance of financial records, accounting concepts, income statements, cash inflow & outflow analysis, basic financial ratios, record-keeping best practices, tax considerations, accessing financial requirements and record-keeping for taxes. The session would be attended by business owners, accounts staff, emerging and existing entrepreneurs, managers, executives and team leaders.—APP

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Briefs

Senior journalist Javed laid to rest

RAWALPINDI: Senior journalist Javed, Chief Reporter of Daily Ausaf and ABN News who passed away due to cardiac arrest on Sunday, was laid to rest here at the Bara Qabristan (graveyard) in Chour Harpal on Monday morning. Earlier, the funeral prayer of the senior journalist was offered at the graveyard, which was attended by a large number of people from all walks of life, including Pakistan Awami League chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Dr. Jamal Nasir, Pakistan Peoples Party leader Zamurad Khan, journalists and APP employees. Late Javed Shahzad had a heart attack and was taken to a hospital but he could not survive. He was the elder brother of Khurram Shahzad, senior reporter of Associated Press of Pakistan (APP). —APP

NCRD training programme to address climate-related challenges

ISLAMABAD: The Akhtar Hameed Khan National Centre for Rural Development (AHKNCRD), in collaboration with the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), held an inaugural ceremony on Monday for an International Training program at the National Centre for Rural Development (NCRD). The program aims to address challenges related to climate change. The title of the inaugural event was 'Disaster Management and Climate Change Adaptation'. 10 CIRDAP member countries, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, and Iran attended the international training program. The inaugural ceremony was chaired by Director General of NCRD Israr Mohammad Khan and was also joined by Director of CIRDAP, Zakirul Haq. The ceremony was also graced by the presence of eminent dignitaries, including Dr. Zafar Qadir, Former Director General of NCRD and Former Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA); Dr. Muhammad Israr, Secretary of Livestock, Fisheries & Cooperative and Integrated Rural Development (IRD) expert at CIRDAP; Dr. Muhammad Azeem Khan, Former Chairman of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) and Former Member of Food Security & Climate Change, Planning Commission of Pakistan; Aftab Ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC); and Raheel Nazir, CEO of Rahe-Nau Constellations. Moreover, Ambassador to the Embassy of Nepal, Rita Dhital joined the session. In his welcome address, Director General of NCRD Israr Mohammad Khan hailed the efforts of organizers for holding this ten-day extensive international training in Pakistan, which has begun from January 12. He welcomed the delegates from CIRDAP member countries, delegates of the diplomatic corps, and other dignitaries and commended the efforts of CIRDAP officials, especially Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, DG CIRDAP, in that regard.—APP

Pak faces myriad of challenges in field of education: Khalid

Dr. Khalid said that due to our efforts the percentage of Out of School Children with respect to population is decreasing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Monday met with a high-level delegation led by former Prime Minister of Norway Kjell Magne Bondevik. The meeting was also attended by Secretary Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani and former Member of the Oslo Parliament, Norway, Aamir Javed Sheikh, said a press release. Dr. Khalid Maqbool welcomed the former Prime Minister of Norway Kjell Magne Bondevik. He said that Kjell Magne Bondevik is a friend of Pakistan who has always worked towards helping Pakistan in fighting its challenges. The minister said that the presence of His Excellency internationalized the agenda of the International Conference on Girl's Education. He said that Pakistan is taking the lead for the Islamic countries to tackle the issue of girl's education and Out of School Children in general. Dr. Khalid Maqbool said that Pakistan faces a myriad of challenges in the field of education in the wake of climate change. He said that the present government has also declared an educational emergency. He said that currently the Ministry of Education is addressing the issues of access to schools, limited infrastructure, quality of teachers training and nutritional problems of children in collaboration with other ministries. Dr. Khalid said that due to our efforts the percentage of Out of School Children with respect to population is decreasing. He said that to develop and implement targeted interventions a special department called Pakistan In-



Islamabad: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui with a high-level delegation led by former Prime Minister of Norway Kjell Magne Bondevik after meeting.

stitute of Education has been developed to gather accurate data about challenges being faced by the Education sector of the country. The minister said that to address the cultural impediments of access to education for girls, the International Conference on Girl's Education will be a historic achievement. He said that religious scholars from all over the world supported the cause of girl's education. He said that Pakistan has taken the lead to eradicate the misconception surrounding girl's education in the Islamic countries. Kjell Magne Bondevik said, "I have always worked towards helping Pakistan

in resolving its numerous strategic and internal challenges." He said that Pakistan has made history by conducting the International Conference on Girl's Education. He said that Pakistan has huge potential and through proper management of resources all of the issues can be addressed. He praised the efforts of the Ministry for Education and the Federal Minister of Education in championing the cause of promoting girl's education. Secretary Education Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani said that Pakistan has adopted latest techniques and approached to tackle all of the challenges of the education sector. He said that

Pakistan is focusing on effective disaster management to protect the educational infrastructure of the country. He said that climate change has presented unique challenges but the Ministry of Education has started targeted interventions to ensure positive outcomes, adding that a special pink bus program was launched in GB and Islamabad to ensure that female students do not have to face logistical issues of access to schools. He also said that a Schools Meals Program has also been launched which will ensure that the stunting issue of children is also addressed. He explained that under the leadership of Prime

Minister of Pakistan a special task force on education was also formed which has been a guiding beacon for all of the efforts of the government. Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Monday met with a delegation led by the Deputy Minister for Education of Yemen Dr. Ali Alabab to discuss girls' education. The meeting was also attended by the Ambassador of Yemen to Pakistan Mohammed Motahar Alashabi and Additional Secretary Education Hassan Saqlain, said a press release. Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui welcomed the Deputy Minister for Education of Yemen Dr. Ali Alabab.

CAA's pensioners challenges withdrawal of incentives

ISLAMABAD: An intra-court appeal (ICA) has been moved to Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday challenging the withdrawal of incentives from the pensioners of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The ICA is moved by the more than 300 pensioners of the CAA against the verdict of single member bench of IHC, which had previously declared the decision of CAA board as legal. The petitioners adopted the stance that medical facilities have been withdrawn from the parents and children of pensioners. They said that incentives including house grants and others were also withdrawn by the CAA. The petition prayed the court to set aside the decision of CAA and single member bench of IHC.

CJP advises journalists to criticize judges but constructively

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Yahya Afridi has said that disposal of over 8000 cases in a short period of time at the Supreme Court of Pakistan is an achievement. He said still he felt embarrassed to hear inmates in various jails are complaining about the prolonged litigation without conclusion but assured that the ongoing process of reforms in judicial system will reduce cases backlog significantly. The Chief Justice stated this while talking to members of the Press Association of the Supreme Court of Pakistan who called on him Monday at the SCP premises. The Chief Justice briefed the press association on his reforms' agenda and said that through active use of IT, every litigant will be kept updated about all orders and developments in his case through email and whatsapp. Moving in the right direction and through better case management, we are going to reduce the backlog significantly and shortly, the CJP said. The Chief Justice advised the press that they are free to criticize judges and judgments but criticism should be constructive and for a better cause. All judges are independent and none of them should be clubbed. The CJP added that district judiciary works under the high courts and the Supreme Court doesn't interfere in their affairs.—APP

Urgent policy urged to safeguard textile Industry

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Textile Council, Fawad Anwar on Monday issued an urgent appeal to the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, emphasizing the critical need for immediate policy intervention to prevent the revival of Pakistan's textile industry. In a letter addressed by the Chairman of PTC, Fawad Anwar, the Council highlighted the severe financial strain faced by the textile sector, which contributes nearly 60% of Pakistan's export earnings and employs over 15 million people, said in a statements issued here. "We believe a calibrated policy approach which can safeguard Pakistan's textile sector from irreversible damage while still aligning with the country's macroeconomic goals," Fawad Anwar, Chairman of Pakistan Textile Council said. He said that despite the positive impact of structural reforms under the IMF program, their implementation has resulted in unsustainable financial challenges for the textile industry, requiring immediate policy recalibration. Key Concerns Raised by PTC is crippling energy Costs and industrial electricity tariffs have reached 16-18 cents/kWh, nearly double the rates in Vietnam, Bangladesh, India, and China, he said. Chairman PTC said that as prices for captive power have surged above \$13-14/MMBtu compared to \$5-8/MMBtu in regional economies, with additional capacity charges and surcharges further inflating costs. He said the working capital rates have jumped from 2% to approximately 14%. And recent IMF-driven tax policies, including minimum turnover taxes and super taxes, have increased effective tax rates to over 50%, significantly impacting profitability in this low-margin, high-volume industry. The investment in industrial re-investments, crucial for sector survival, has become difficult due to soaring short-term interest rates, he said. PTC also warned that the continued financial stress could result in the closure of textile mills, sparking mass unemployment, civil unrest, and long-term economic instability. He said that giving recommendations for Sustainable Sector Stability and urged the government to adopt a balanced and calibrated approach that ensures economic stability without compromising the long-term viability of Pakistan's key foreign exchange-generating industries. Key recommendations include: Balancing proposed reforms with global competitiveness considerations for export sectors and gradually phasing out subsidies while enhancing public infrastructure for sustainable energy pricing, he said. He proposed reducing capacity charges by negotiating lower tariffs with power producers, especially for imported fuel-based plants and revisiting levies on captive power and ensuring regionally competitive gas rates for industrial use. He proposed implementing a more balanced taxation framework that ensures industry viability and retains critical foreign exchange inflows. The Pakistan Textile Council remains committed to working collaboratively with the government to ensure sustainable growth for Pakistan's textile industry, which is vital for the nation's economic stability and long-term prosperity.—DNA

Serena Interchange underpass opened for traffic

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad residents have received good news as the Serena Interchange Underpass has been opened for traffic, Development Authority (CDA) spokesperson confirmed on Monday. Talking to news agency, he said a key phase of the project has been completed, marking significant progress following directives of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. The connection roads and slipways linked to the underpass have been finalised, facilitating smooth traffic flow in the area. Additionally, he said the structural work on two underpasses under construction on Srinagar Highway has also been completed, adding to the project's momentum. Meanwhile, Chairman CDA,

Muhammad Ali Randhawa, visited the Serena Underpass site and expressed satisfaction with the construction progress. He announced that the underpass located Suhrawardy Road is now operational for traffic, bringing relief to commuters facing long-standing congestion issues. "This is a significant milestone for the Serena Interchange project," stated the CDA Chairman. "The remaining segments of the project are progressing rapidly, and we are committed to delivering quality infrastructure to the residents of Islamabad." He also highlighted the ongoing work on landscaping and horticulture around the site, ensuring that the underpass area will be both functional and aesthetically pleasing. With the completion of this crucial project, Islamabad's traffic woes are expected to see considerable improvement, offering residents a more efficient and smoother commute.—APP

PIMS launches patients helpline service

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) on Monday launched a helpline service to immediately address the concerns of patients. The step was taken on the special instruction of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for the convenience of patients. According to Dr. Mubashir Mushtaq Dahi, spokesperson to the Executive Director of PIMS hospital, now patients can contact through phone number 0519071711 directly in case of problems related to treatment at the hospital. He said that best treatment facilities are being provided in the capital's largest hospital, PIMS. He said that signboards have been installed at various places in the hospital for the convenience and awareness of patients and their families. He said that thousands of patients come to PIMS OPD and its emergency for treatment on daily basis. He said that the Prime Minister's Coordinator for Health, Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed Barth has taken important initiatives to provide best health facilities in Islamabad. He added the availability of senior doctors in the hospital for 24 hours to serve patients has been ensured. He said that ED PIMS Dr. Imran Sikandar is committed to resolve the complaints of patients timely on contacting him through helpline number. He said that basic medicines are being provided free of cost to thousands of patients in the hospital every day.—APP

3 drug peddlers, 3 liquor suppliers arrested

Likewise, the R A Bazaar Police nabbed two accused for illegally decanting of Liquefied Petroleum Gas and seized gas cylinders and refilling equipment

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police on Monday arrested three drug peddlers, three liquor suppliers and two other accused for illegal LPG decanting from different areas. According to a police spokesman, the Morgah held three drug peddlers with more than 4.5 kilograms of hashish. The arrested accused included Ikram, Imran and Tariq. Similarly, the Waris Khan Police arrested three liquor suppliers namely Zahid, Khalil-ur-Rehman and Hamza Omar, and recovered 18 litres of liquor from them. Likewise, the R A Bazaar Police nabbed two accused for illegally decanting of Liquefied Petroleum Gas and seized gas cylinders and refilling equipment. The accused were identified as Tariq and Saqib.—APP

Rubina addresses BISP beneficiaries' concerns at e-katcheri

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, held a live e-Kachehri session via BISP's official Facebook account to directly engage with beneficiaries and address their concerns. Over the course of one hour and ten minutes, 32 callers from across the country spoke directly with the Chairperson, sharing their issues and seeking solutions. Senator Rubina Khalid issued immediate directives to BISP officials to resolve the complaints. Heartwarming Gesture of Honesty from Dera Ismail Khan A notable moment during the session came when 17-year-old Ayesha, an

eight-grade student from Dera Ismail Khan, called to inform the Chairperson that her family was previously eligible for BISP financial assistance but now their financial situation has improved. She requested that her (Mother) family be removed from the BISP beneficiary list so that another deserving family could receive the assistance. Senator Rubina Khalid lauded Ayesha's honesty, describing her as an example of integrity. She also promised to visit Ayesha's family to personally acknowledge their noble gesture. Senator Khalid remarked, "It would greatly benefit our program if more indi-

viduals who no longer consider themselves in need would come forward voluntarily to withdraw. This would allow us to extend assistance to other deserving families." She further advised beneficiaries to refrain from requesting repeated surveys for inclusion in the program before the two-year mark, emphasizing that unnecessary requests could cause unnecessary inconvenience. The Chairperson highlighted BISP's commitment to promote education through its school enrollment stipend program, ensuring out-of-school children are brought back into the education system.

She also clarified that no government employee is eligible for the BISP program under the revised criteria. Senator Rubina Khalid announced that, starting January 2025, the quarterly Kafalat cash assistance has been increased from PKR 10,500 to PKR 13,500. President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, and Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have instructed that the funds must reach deserving women with transparency and dignity. Beneficiaries were advised to count their full payment amount upon receipt and report any deductions immediately.—APP

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Trump's Greenland gambit

IN August 2019, then US president Donald Trump made headlines with his surprising proposal to buy Greenland from Denmark. While the idea was met with scepticism and humour, it also reignited a historical debate and shed light on Greenland's growing geopolitical significance. As Trump prepares to re-enter the White House, his renewed interest in Greenland – and its implications for US foreign policy and Arctic governance – merits deeper examination. The idea is not new. In 1868, US secretary of state William H. Seward, fresh from acquiring Alaska, expressed interest in Greenland and Iceland as part of America's expansion strategy. In 1946, the Truman administration offered Denmark US\$100 million in gold for Greenland, recognising its strategic importance with a Cold War emerging. While Denmark declined, the US was allowed to establish military bases on Greenland, including at Pituffik (formerly Thule), which remains a critical part of its Arctic strategy. Greenland's appeal lies in its immense natural resources, including rare earth minerals, and oil and gas reserves, as well as its strategic location between North America and Europe. As climate change accelerates Arctic ice melt, opening up new shipping routes and resource extraction opportunities, Greenland's geopolitical value has soared. Trump's interest in Greenland reflects a long-standing recognition of its importance in global affairs. Under international law, the notion of buying Greenland raises complex questions. Greenland is an autonomous territory within the kingdom of Denmark. While Denmark retains control over foreign affairs and defence, Greenland's government manages its internal affairs and has the right to pursue full independence through a referendum. Buying Greenland would require the consent of both Denmark and Greenland's governments. The transaction is likely to involve negotiations under international treaties and the United Nations Charter, which upholds the principle of self-determination. Greenland's population of roughly 56,000 – predominantly indigenous Inuit – would need to be consulted, ensuring their rights and interests are protected. While there is no modern precedent, analogous cases like the 1917 sale of the Danish West Indies (now the US Virgin Islands) offer insights into the legal and diplomatic challenges. Trump's proposal has elicited mixed reactions from Arctic stakeholders. Denmark's government swiftly dismissed the idea, with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen calling it "absurd" back in 2019. Greenland's leaders echoed this sentiment, emphasising its autonomy and rejecting any notion of a sale. Other Arctic states, including Canada, Norway and Russia, are likely to have viewed Trump's proposal with a mix of amusement and apprehension. For Canada, Greenland's proximity to its Arctic territories highlights shared security and environmental concerns, prompting a measured response. While Canada is unlikely to support the US proposal, it is likely to be viewed with a mix of caution and concern. Any such development would be closely monitored, with Canada emphasising the importance of multilateral cooperation, environmental stewardship and the protection of indigenous rights.



UK return to 'pragmatic' tradition

BRITISH Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves started to visit China from Saturday and jointly restarted with the Chinese side the China-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue that had been suspended for six years. After Keir Starmer came to power last year, his administration conveyed the willingness to improve relations with China. In November 2024, Chinese President Xi Jinping and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer met during the G20 Summit in Brazil, the first time since 2018 when the leaders of the two countries met in person, marking important progress in bilateral relations. The resumption of economic and financial dialogue between the two sides is a concrete action to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries. China-UK relations have shown signs of warming up under the support from leaders of the two countries, and "pragmatic" has become the key word. The world has noticed that Reeves mentioned "pragmatic" four times in her closing speech at the dialogue, hoping to develop a "pragmatic and predictable" relationship with China. During the dialogue, the two sides reached a series of mutually beneficial and win-win results and consensus. Reeves told the British media that she looked forward to China issuing its first overseas sovereign green bond in London this year. Vice Premier He Lifeng, who co-chaired the dialogue, also said that China welcomes British financial companies to expand RMB services and welcomes British companies to participate in China's green finance and pension industries. The search for respective strengths and common ground and the promotion of cooperation in this way is highly anticipated by the various sectors of the two countries, especially the business communities. Although China and the UK have differences in history, culture, values and social systems, they share extensive common interests. The history since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the UK has also proved that differences do not necessarily lead to confrontation. The important thing is to seek and expand the scope of cooperation between the two countries in a pragmatic manner. Over the past decade or so, the China-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue has achieved great results. During this period, the UK became the first major Western country to apply to join the AIB. China's sovereign bonds were issued in London for the first time and the Shanghai-London Stock Connect was launched. The two sides strengthened the strategic alignment between the joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Northern Powerhouse plan. These results have promoted the internationalization of the RMB, deepened the interconnection of financial markets of both sides, and enhanced cooperation in investment, trade and technological innovation between the two sides. This has accumulated lessons and confidence for the reset and expansion of more cooperation areas at this stage. The delegation accompanying Reeves on her visit to China includes the Governor of the Bank of England, the Chairman of Standard Chartered and the Chairman of HSBC. This lineup of top banking executives reflects British capital's strong interest in the Chinese market, long-term confidence in China's economic growth potential, and trust in China's policies for further opening up its financial markets.

Remarkable growth of Asian economies: China and Pakistan

Qamar Bashir



This adjustment accounts for Pakistan's substantial informal economy, which includes unrecorded and untaxed transactions that significantly contribute to economic activity. By incorporating this informal sector and updating the base year for GDP calculations, the revised figure provides a more accurate and comprehensive assessment of Pakistan's economic size. This re-evaluation strengthens Pakistan's position in global rankings, highlighting its untapped potential and opportunities to formalize and expand its economic base for sustainable growth

AMONG news of an economic slowdown in China and economic challenges in Pakistan, I was surprised to notice the outstanding ratings of both countries on the economic front based on the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) method. According to the World Bank, China, with an economy of \$34.66 trillion, assumed the first position, outperforming the US, which stood in second place with a PPP GDP of \$27.72 trillion. According to the World Bank, Pakistan ranked 25th globally with a PPP GDP of \$1.50 trillion, outperforming countries like the Netherlands, Argentina, Malaysia, South Africa, Singapore, Switzerland, Israel, Denmark, and many others. The performance of both China and Pakistan was even more impressive according to data released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measured in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). According to the IMF, China's GDP (PPP) was projected at \$39.44 trillion, positioning it as the world's largest economy by PPP, while the United States trailed behind at \$30.34 trillion, making it the second-largest economy by PPP. These projections highlight China's significant economic lead over the United States in PPP terms, with China's economy expected to be about 30% larger than that of the U.S. in 2025. According to the IMF, though the prediction about Pakistan's economy was not as optimistic as that of the World Bank, Pakistan's projected GDP (PPP) for 2025 is approximately \$1.66 trillion, ranking it 26th globally. This places Pakistan ahead of several European countries such as Portugal (\$529.9 billion), Greece (\$453.4 billion), and the Czech Republic (\$645.5 billion), as well as Asian nations like Singapore (\$918.4 billion), Malaysia (\$1.46 trillion), and the Philippines (\$1.48 trillion). World Economics' analysis and database provide a broader perspective on GDP figures by incorporating adjustments for the size of the informal economy and outdated base year data. According to World Economics, China's GDP (PPP) is estimated to be \$42.817 trillion for 2025, capturing the vast informal economy that significantly contributes to its economic activity. This adjusted figure underscores China's position as the world's largest economy by PPP, reflecting the expansive informal sector and its unregistered contributions to economic output. Such recalibrations highlight China's global economic dominance and the scale of activities not captured in official datasets. World Economics presented one of the most impressive predictions for the year 2025, estimating Pakistan's GDP at \$2.08 trillion, which is 46% larger than the official World

Bank estimate of \$1.347 trillion for 2023. This revised figure elevates Pakistan's GDP (PPP) ranking for 2025 to approximately 24th place globally, surpassing many countries of Europe and Africa, South America, and Asia. The adjustment highlights an economy far larger than previously recognized, largely due to the inclusion of Pakistan's substantial informal sector. This emphasizes the importance of integrating informal activities into formal structures to promote sustainable growth. This adjustment accounts for Pakistan's substantial informal economy, which includes unrecorded and untaxed transactions that significantly contribute to economic activity. By incorporating this informal sector and updating the base year for GDP calculations, the revised figure provides a more accurate and comprehensive assessment of Pakistan's economic size. This re-evaluation strengthens Pakistan's position in global rankings, highlighting its untapped potential and opportunities to formalize and expand its economic base for sustainable growth. China's economic prowess in 2025 is expected to solidify its position as the world's largest economy by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), with a projected GDP (PPP) of \$34.66 trillion (WB) and 39.44 trillion (IMF) and \$42.817 trillion (WE). This dominance is driven by its vast population of over 1.4 billion, providing a significant labor force and consumer market. As the "factory of the world," China continues to excel in manufacturing, particularly in electronics, machinery, and textiles, while advancing its technological capabilities in robotics, artificial intelligence, and smart manufacturing. President Xi Jinping's ideology to transition China's industries toward quality-oriented production and fundamentally upgrade its industrial infrastructure ensures that the economy remains competitive and innovative. This vision counters predictions of a slowing growth trajectory, highlighting China's resilience and adaptability in a rapidly evolving global economy. Moreover, initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) expand China's trade networks, solidify geopolitical influence, and strengthen economic ties across Asia, Africa, and Europe. China's leadership in renewable energy, urbanization, and infrastructure development further boosts its economic clout. It leads the world in solar and wind energy production, aligning with global sustainability goals and ensuring energy security. The development of smart cities and the world's most extensive high-speed rail network enhances connectivity and trade efficiency. Financially, China's efforts to internationalize the yuan and its massive foreign currency reserves reinforce its global monetary influence. The inherent polit-

ical stability and continuation of policies within China's governance system serve as a foundational strength, enabling consistent long-term planning and execution of economic strategies. While challenges such as slowing population growth, economic rebalancing, and geopolitical tensions persist, the combination of forward-thinking industrial reforms and stable governance positions China to maintain its upward growth trajectory and dispel concerns about economic deceleration. Pakistan's economy demonstrates inherent strengths and resilience that have enabled it to secure rankings of 24th to 26th globally in GDP (PPP), outperforming many major economies. Its young and dynamic population, with over 60% under 30, drives economic growth and expands a rapidly urbanizing consumer market. The substantial contribution of its informal economy, which includes unrecorded and non-taxed transactions, reveals a larger economic footprint than official figures suggest. Strategically located at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Pakistan serves as a critical transit route for regional trade, bolstered by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Its strong agricultural base, abundant natural resources, and emerging industries like IT services and textiles diversify its economy and enhance global competitiveness. Additionally, remittances from its large diaspora provide a steady inflow of foreign exchange, supporting economic stability. Despite global challenges, Pakistan has demonstrated resilience through structural reforms, adaptive governance, and efforts to attract foreign investment. These factors, coupled with its untapped potential and strategic initiatives, position Pakistan as a rising economy with opportunities for sustained growth and an improving global economic stature. The claim that Pakistan's GDP (PPP) is 5% of China's GDP (PPP) is nearly accurate, with the actual figure being approximately 4.86%. Here's the corrected statement: China is the economic leader of the world on a PPP basis, and it is only a matter of time before it becomes the world leader in terms of nominal GDP growth. While Pakistan's GDP (PPP) is approximately 4.86% of China's GDP, it has the potential to achieve an influential economic role provided it brings political stability, sets the right direction, invests in research and development, and fosters innovation and creativity in its industrial, services, and agricultural sectors.

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

Democratic erosion in contemporary politics

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The process of democratic erosion typically begins with the election of an agent committed to altering the political system. Even before assuming office, these individuals often articulate ambitious reform agendas designed to mobilize public support. Upon gaining power, they initiate structural changes to weaken institutional checks and balances...

DEMOCRATIC erosion has emerged as a significant phenomenon in the global political landscape, marked by a steady departure from democratic norms and practices. Unlike abrupt breakdowns such as coups or revolutions, this process unfolds gradually through actions often initiated by legally elected officials. These individuals, referred to as agents of erosion, exploit legal frameworks to systematically dismantle democratic institutions. Their actions are frequently cloaked in justifications that appeal to public interest, creating the illusion of democratic legitimacy. The author highlights key conceptual challenges in understanding democratic erosion, particularly distinguishing it from related phenomena such as loss of democratic quality and autocratization. While the former refers to a decline in the effectiveness of democratic systems, the latter represents a more profound shift toward authoritarianism. A nuanced understanding of these distinctions is crucial for analyzing the pathways through which democracies regress. Democratic erosion is characterized by its incremental nature. This gradualism distinguishes it from more overt forms of democratic collapse. Each step in the process may appear minor and legally defensible, making it difficult to detect the cumulative impact. Over time, however, the erosion transforms the political landscape, often leaving behind only the facade of democracy. The study identifies two critical elements in the process of erosion: agency and sequencing. Agency refers to the role of political actors who deliberately initiate and sustain the erosion of democratic norms. Sequencing, on the other hand, examines the chronological and causal progression of events that lead to the

deterioration of democracy. These elements are interdependent, as the intentions and strategies of agents shape the sequence of erosion. Agents of democratic erosion, typically incumbents, leverage their positions of power to alter democratic rules. They often use legal mechanisms such as constitutional reforms or new legislation to consolidate authority. These agents justify their actions as necessary for addressing economic, social, or political challenges, thus gaining public support. The legitimacy derived from elections enables them to claim a mandate for their transformative agendas. A distinctive feature of these agents is their lack of normative commitment to democratic principles. While some leaders openly advocate for alternative models of governance, others maintain a rhetorical commitment to democracy while systematically undermining its foundations. Their actions often include curtailing the independence of the judiciary, weakening opposition parties, and restricting civil liberties. The process of democratic erosion typically begins with the election of an agent committed to altering the political system. Even before assuming office, these individuals often articulate ambitious reform agendas designed to mobilize public support. Upon gaining power, they initiate structural changes to weaken institutional checks and balances, concentrating authority in the executive branch. The subsequent stages involve reconfiguring the political system to entrench their power. This may include extending term limits, manipulating electoral laws, and reshaping the media landscape. These measures not only secure the incumbent's position but also create systemic barriers to future democratic restoration. The erosion process is often marked

by the subtle and legalistic implementation of changes, minimizing public resistance. The final stage of erosion is characterized by the suppression of political rights and freedoms. Media outlets, civil society organizations, and opposition groups become targets of control and repression. Governments may employ a combination of legal measures, such as anti-disinformation laws, and extralegal tactics to silence dissent. While these actions might appear sporadic, they collectively undermine the democratic fabric of the state. A significant challenge in addressing democratic erosion lies in identifying its early stages. The gradual nature of the process makes it difficult to distinguish between legitimate policy changes and deliberate attempts to subvert democracy. Moreover, the interplay between domestic and international factors adds complexity to the analysis. For instance, the rise of autocratic powers globally has emboldened erosion agents, creating a permissive environment for their actions. The implications of democratic erosion extend beyond national borders. As more countries experience erosion, the global balance between democracies and autocracies shifts. This trend poses challenges to the liberal international order, as eroding democracies often adopt counter-hegemonic strategies. Furthermore, the weakening of democratic institutions in influential states can have cascading effects, inspiring similar processes in other regions. Additionally, the role of international actors in countering democratic erosion warrants attention. While global organizations and alliances have historically promoted democratic values, their effectiveness in addressing erosion remains inconsistent. A coordinated approach involving both domestic and international stakeholders is essential for preserving democratic systems.

Briefs

COAS calls for political...

FROM PAGE 01

They will continue to suffer heavy losses, and their capacity to inflict harm will be decimated," said the COAS. The COAS also lauded the exceptional morale of the troops, who remain steadfast in their commitment to safeguard the sovereignty of the nation. He affirmed that the Pakistan Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies stand as an unbreakable force, resolute in their mission to protect the motherland and its people. COAS also separately interacted with politicians of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa belonging to different political parties. The participants resolved consensus on the need for one political voice and public support against the scourge of terrorism. The political representatives showed vivid clarity on unflinching support of the Armed Forces and LEAs in nation's fight against terror and agreed on the need for a unified front beyond political colours against the extremist philosophy of terrorist groups.

Forces kill 27 terrorists in..

FROM PAGE 01

"Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation, remain determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan." The nation has been reeling under rising violent attacks since the Taliban rulers returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021, particularly in the bordering provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The year 2024 turned out to be the deadliest for Pakistan's civil and military security forces in a decade with at least 685 fatalities and 444 terror attacks, according to "CRSS Annual Security Report 2024" issued by Centre for Security and Strategic Studies.

3rd round of govt-PTI..

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The 71-year-old cricket-turned-politician has been behind bars since August last year after he was sentenced in Toshakhana case-I — one of the dozens of cases registered against the former premier since his ouster from power in April 2022. A day earlier, addressing a joint press conference alongside PTI senior leaders Omar Ayub Khan and Asad Qaiser, Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) head Sahibzada Hamid Raza, who also serves as the spokesperson for the negotiation team, urged the government to make progress on their demands during the upcoming round of dialogue.

Imran 'employing..

FROM PAGE 01

black money was whitened through creation of a fraudulent trust. He said the 190 million pounds case was classic example of "robbing Peter to pay Paul". The minister said that the verdict on 190 million pound case was supposed to be given today, but the accused fail to appear in the court. The minister said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership had made a habit of not appearing in courts. He reminded that the PTI had used delaying tactics for six years in foreign funding case. Similarly, he said in the Tocha Khana case also, they used delaying tactics and sought adjustments after adjustments.

PTI leadership..

FROM PAGE 01

We are in talks [with the government] for democracy, human rights, and the Constitution," he added. Raja further stated that there were no other reasons and the PTI was not seeking relief for anybody. There was no link between the talks and this case, he reiterated. PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, who accompanied Raja at the media talk, also dismissed the questions if the verdict's postponement as part of any deal. Accountability court Judge Nasir Javed delayed the announcement of the graft case, also known as Al-Qadir Trust case earlier this morning, expressing dismay over the no-show of the accused. It'll now be announced on January 17.

Djokovic wins firstmatch as Sinner beats Jarry

"I'm thrilled to have him in my corner," said Djokovic after his victory at Melbourne Park

SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: Novak Djokovic came from a set down to win his opening-round Australian Open match - his first victory with three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray in his coaching box. The Serb beat 19-year-old American NisheshBasavareddy 4-6 6-3 6-4 6-2. Djokovic, 37, has enlisted the help of his former long-term rival as he pursues a record-extending 11th Australian Open title, as well as a 25th major which would put him clear of Australia's Margaret Court in terms of all-time victories.

"I'm thrilled to have him in my corner," said Djokovic after his victory at Melbourne Park. "I must say that it's a bit strange to have him courtside in my box. We played for over 20 years against each other at the highest level, so it's nice to have him on my side of the net." Murray, often found berating his own coaching box and shouting at himself on court as a player, cut a composed figure in Djokovic's box on Rod Laver. All eyes were on the coaching pod - a new innovation at the Australian Open which allows players to have coaching staff courtside - where Murray sat with three other members of Djokovic's team, offering gentle encouragement as the 24-time Grand Slam champion navigated losing the first set and applauding points won in key



moments. "He gave me some great advice during the match," said Djokovic. "It's really nice to be able to exchange some feedback. It's been a really nice experience, hopefully we don't stop here." Djokovic, seeded seventh in Melbourne, struggled to find his rhythm in the first set against Basavareddy, making uncharacteristic errors in crucial moments. The last time Djokovic lost in the first round of a Grand Slam was against Paul Goldstein at the 2006 Australian Open, just a few months after Basavareddy was born. World number one Jannik Sinner opened



his Australian Open title defence in blazing sunshine with a win over Nicolas Jarry on Rod Laver Arena on Monday that brought the scourge of doping in the sport back into focus. Women's number two IgaSwiatek, who served a short doping ban last year, also progressed on a balmy day at Melbourne Park along with third seed Coco Gauff, who safely negotiated a tricky first-round encounter with 2020 champion Sofia Kenin. StefanosTsitsipas, however, crashed out at the first hurdle at the hands of American young gun Alex Michelsen, much to the disappointment of the local Greek com-

munity who had turned out in numbers to support the 2023 finalist.

The sunny weather was welcome after persistent rain had chopped six hours of play out of the outer court schedule on day one but the dark cloud of doping, which has shrouded tennis over the last year, refused to budge. Jarry served an 11-month ban for doping in 2020 and the big-serving Chilean was quick to contrast his treatment with Sinner's avoidance of a suspension for failing two drug tests last year after losing 7-6(2) 7-6(5) 6-1 to the Italian.

"It's tough for me to play against him ... it's a very difficult and delicate topic. What I can say is that I would have liked the same treatment as the things that I went through," he told reporters. "Could AI help badminton players up their game?"

"I don't think it was the same, so that's all." Sinner, who could yet face a ban after an April hearing at the Court of Arbitration for Sport, told reporters he was not familiar with the details of Jarry's case. "We got treated in the same way," he added. "There's the protocol. If the protocol has some issues or problem, then it's not my fault, you know?" Swiatek was also at the centre of allegations that the doping authorities in tennis were running a two-tier system favouring more high-profile players after she served a one-month ban late last year.

Barcelona fight back to beat Real Madrid

WEB DESK

BARCELONA: Barcelona came from behind to beat Real Madrid in an incident-packed Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia. KylianMbappe gave Real Madrid the lead with a fantastic solo goal, running from the halfway line before slotting past WojciechSzczesny. Lamine Yamal levelled for Barcelo-

na in the 22nd minute with an expert finish into the bottom corner from Robert Lewandowski's ball. Hansi Flick's side then took command with three more goals before the break. Poland striker Lewandowski put Barca ahead with a penalty after Gavi was fouled, before a bullet header from Raphinha three minutes later. The Brazilian winger then picked out Alex

Balde to score a fourth in the 10th minute of added time in the first half. Barca grabbed their fifth goal three minutes after the restart with Raphinha's second of the game. But they had goalkeeper Szczesny sent off for a foul on Mbappe outside the box in the 56th minute. Brazil forward Rodrigo curled the resulting free-kick past replacement keeper Inaki Pena - but there was no fur-

ther comeback from Real as Barca claimed the trophy for a 15th time in their history. It marked the second time in two Clasicos under Flick that Barcelona have hit plenty of goals against their rivals, winning 4-0 at the Bernabeu in La Liga back in October. It was also his first trophy - albeit a minor one - since a 2020-21 Bundesliga title success with Bayern Munich. The result at King Abdullah Sports City was slightly surprising considering Real Madrid were the team in better form.

Barca have only won one of their last seven La Liga games and sit five points behind Real in the table - with Atletico Madrid top by one point. Carlo Ancelotti's men, meanwhile, had won their last five games in all competitions and were last beaten on 4 December. Szczesny was making his third appearance for Barcelona, having waited months for a chance after coming out of retirement to sign earlier this season.



Khabib escorted from plane after dispute

LONDON: Former mixed martial arts champion Khabib Nurmagomedov was escorted from a plane after he refused to move from an exit seat. The Russian, 36, had a disagreement with a flight attendant before take-off on the Frontier Airlines flight which was reportedly flying from Las Vegas to Los Angeles. In a video of the incident shared widely on social media on Sunday, Khabib is told to either move seats or get off the plane and be rebooked on another flight. The video, which is just over a minute long, has not been verified by the BBC and it is not clear what happened in the build-up but Khabib has put an explanation on his social media. When he questions why he is being asked to move, the former undefeated UFC lightweight champion is told: "Because they [the flight attendants] are not comfortable with you sitting in the emergency exit row" and he replies "It is not fair". He is then warned again and the attendant says she will call a supervisor if he does not move. Khabib replies that he "would like to sit here" before he is asked to leave by another member of staff. He then calmly leaves the plane. Khabib is regarded as one of the best MMA fighters of all time and won all 29 of his UFC fights including beating Conor McGregor in 2018. In a statement on X, Khabib said: "[The lady who asked me] questions were very rude from the very beginning, even though I speak very decent English and can understand everything and agreed to assist, she still insists on removing me from my seat. - Agencies

South Africa announce squad for Champions Trophy

South Africa will face Afghanistan on February 21 in Karachi

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa on Monday announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan and the UAE, with Temba Bavuma named as captain. After finishing as runners-up in last year's ICC Men's T20 World Cup and reaching the final of the World Test Championship 2023-25, the team is ready for another major challenge. The squad is strengthened by the return of key pace bowlers Anrich Nortje and Lungi Ngidi.

Nortje's inclusion marks his return to ODI cricket following recovery from a stress fracture in his back, which had kept him out since September 2023. This injury forced him to miss the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 and South Africa's home summer. Lungi Ngidi also makes his comeback to the international fold after being sidelined since October 2024 due to a groin injury. South Africa has largely retained the core group of players that led them to the semi-finals of the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup, with 10 of the 15 members from that

squad included for the Champions Trophy. New faces in the squad include Tony de Zorzi, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs and Wiaan Mulder, all set to make their debuts at a 50-over ICC event.

The South African squad will open their Champions Trophy campaign in Pakistan next month, with fixtures against Afghanistan on February 21, Australia on February 25 and England on March 1. South Africa Squad for ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025: Temba Bavuma (C), Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, KeshavMaharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, KagisoRabada, Ryan Rickelton, TabraizShamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen.

South Africa Champions Trophy Schedule: • 21 February, Afghanistan v South Africa, Karachi, Pakistan • 25 February, Australia v South Africa, Rawalpindi, Pakistan • 1 March, South Africa v England, Karachi, Pakistan. - Agencies



PSL 10: Teams finalise squads

The PSL 10 draft was held at Huzoori Bagh, Lahore

DNA

LAHORE: The much-anticipated Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 Players Draft was held here as all the six franchises of the marquee league completed their squads.

PLATINUM CATEGORY

Round 1: Lahore Qalandars: Daryl Mitchell Karachi Kings: David Warner Quetta Gladiators: Mark Chapman Peshawar Zalmi: Tom Kohler-Cadmore Multan Sultans: Michael Bracewell Islamabad United: Matthew Short Round 2: Quetta Gladiators: Faheem Ashraf (Wild Card) Karachi Kings: Adam Milne Quetta Gladiators: Finn Allen Karachi Kings: Abbas Afridi (Wild Card) DIAMOND CATEGORY Karachi Kings: Khushdil Shah Peshawar Zalmi: Corbin Bosch Islamabad United: Jason Holder Lahore Qalandars: Kusal Perera

Peshawar Zalmi: Mohammad Ali GOLD CATEGORY Round 1 Peshawar Zalmi: Abdul Samad (Wild Card) Multan Sultans: Mohammad Hasnain Islamabad United: Ben Dwarshuis Karachi Kings: Aamir Jamal Multan Sultans: Kamran Ghulam Peshawar Zalmi: Nahid Rana Round 2 Peshawar Zalmi: Hussain Talat SILVER CATEGORY Round 1 Multan Sultans: Akif Javed Karachi Kings: Mir Hamza Islamabad United: Salman Irshad Lahore Qalandars: Asif Afridi Quetta Gladiators: Khurram Shahzad Peshawar Zalmi: Max Bryant Round 2 Peshawar Zalmi: Najibullah Zadran Quetta Gladiators: Haseebullah Khan Karachi Kings: Litton Das Islamabad United: Mohammad Nawaz Lahore Qalandars: Asif Ali

Multan Sultans: Taryab Tahir (Right To Match) Round 3 Lahore Qalandars: Rishad Hossain Islamabad United: Andries Gous Multan Sultans: Gudakesh Motie Quetta Gladiators: Kyle Jamieson Multan Sultans: Josh Little Lahore Qalandars: Muhammad Akhlaq EMERGING CATEGORY Round 1 Quetta Gladiators: Hasan Nawaz Peshawar Zalmi: Maaz Sadaqat Multan Sultans: Shahid Aziz Islamabad United: Saad Masood Lahore Qalandars: Momin Qamar Karachi Kings: Riazullah Round 2 Karachi Kings: Fawad Ali Lahore Qalandars: Mohammad Azab Islamabad United: Hunain Shah Multan Sultans: Ubaid Shah Quetta Gladiators: Mohammad Zeeshan SUPPLEMENTARY CATEGORY Round 1 Islamabad United: Riley Meredith

Multan Sultans: Johnson Charles Lahore Qalandars: Tom Curran Quetta Gladiators: Kusal Mendis Peshawar Zalmi: Alzarri Joseph Karachi Kings: Kane Williamson Round 2 Peshawar Zalmi: Ahmed Daniyal Islamabad United: Rassie van der Dussen Multan Sultans: Shai Hope Quetta Gladiators: Sean Abbott Karachi Kings: Mohammad Nabi Lahore Qalandars: Sam Billings Round 3 Karachi Kings: Omair Bin Yousuf Lahore Qalandars: Salman Ali Mirza Multan Sultans: Yasir Khan Islamabad United: skipped Quetta Gladiators: Shoab Malik Peshawar Zalmi: skipped Round 4: Islamabad United: skipped Peshawar Zalmi: skipped Multan Sultans: Muhammad Amir Barki Lahore Qalandars: Mohammad Naazem Karachi Kings: Mirza Mamoon Imtiaz Quetta Gladiators: Danish Aziz

£190m case verdict to be announced...

FROM PAGE 01

However, he did not appear in court today. "I have been sitting in the courtroom for two hours, but none of them have appeared today," the judge told reporters present in the courtroom, adding: "Let's give them another chance." The National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) prosecution team, the media, and the court staff were present in the court room, but none from the defence were in attendance. While the sentence was scheduled to be handed down at 11am and the judge postponed the announcement before that. Today's deferment in the £190m reference verdict — termed an "open-and-shut case" by Senator Faisal Wadwa — comes amid the government's hope for justice as expressed by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif.

Pak slams xenophobic..

FROM PAGE 01

Islamabad's reaction came after Elon Musk, owner X, falsely accused British-Pakistani men of running grooming gangs in a spate of posts on the microblogging website. The FO official said that British nationals of Pakistani origin have a rich history of contributing to the UK's growth, development and, indeed, freedom. "An exceptionally large number of predominantly Muslim soldiers from what is now Pakistan served in the British Indian army and laid down their lives for the cause of democracy in both world wars," Khan added. The official said that British Pakistanis today form the backbone of the UK's health, retail, and services sectors, adding that many British Pakistanis hold high public offices, while thousands served their communities as Members of Parliament, mayors, councillors, and members of local police and municipal services.

Trump 'biggest..

FROM PAGE 01

occur if he converted to Islam. He also criticized those who promote nationalism while labeling themselves as liberal, characterizing such behavior as hypocritical. The JUIF leader condemned prejudice and narrow-mindedness, noting that those who exhibit such traits often claim to be free-thinking. He emphasized the importance of continuous struggle and perseverance, regardless of public acceptance. He also highlighted the exodus of people from cities due to inadequate facilities. He questioned the transfer of religious leadership from religious scholars to political entities, arguing that politics is a responsibility for religious leaders.

'Next week is crucial..

FROM PAGE 01

stated that no response had been received to the letter the Prime Minister sent to the U.S. President. Furthermore, there was no confirmation from the U.S. about receiving the letter. The court also noted that the record of the Prime Minister's foreign visits had not been presented, despite the court having ordered on December 20 that details of the Prime Minister's foreign trips be submitted. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative informed the court that the Foreign Secretary was in China, delaying the details' submission.

Government focusing..

FROM PAGE 01

to make it export-led. The Finance Minister said Pakistan is preparing to debut Yuan-denominated bonds this year to shore up finances and expressed the government's optimism of meeting the International Monetary Fund's bailout loan terms. He said Pakistan is very keen to tap the Panda bonds and the Chinese capital markets. He said we have been remiss as a country not to tap it previously. The Finance Minister said the IMF, which is scheduled to visit Pakistan next month, wants Pakistan to broaden its tax base and reach a tax-to-GDP ratio of 13.5%, from 10% in December.

Briefs

PSX
witnesses
bullish trend,
gains 982
points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 982.77 points, a positive change of 0.87 percent, closing at 114,230.06 points as compared to 113,247.29 points on the last trading day. A total of 521,209,059 shares were traded during the day as compared to 499,846,692 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 28.287 billion against Rs. 24.825 billion on the last trading day. As many as 449 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 280 of them recorded gains and 116 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 53 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 70,133,140 shares at Rs 1.78 per share, Cnergico PK with 39,599,889 shares at Rs.6.95 per share and Sui South Gas with 31,998,634 shares at Rs.43.76 per share. —APP

Gold price dips
by Rs1,500 per
tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.1,500 and was sold at Rs 279,300 on Monday against its sale at Rs 280,800 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,286 to Rs.239,455 from Rs 240,741 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went down to Rs.219,500 from Rs 220,679. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,350 and Rs. Rs.2,872.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$15 to \$2,675 from \$2,690, the Association reported. —APP

Rupee sheds
10 paise
against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Monday depreciated by 10 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.67 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.57. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.95 and Rs 280.45 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 2.11 to close at Rs284.66 against the last day's closing of Rs286.77, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.77, whereas a decrease of Rs 4.05 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound. —APP

Children face new era
of crisis: UNICEF

The report said that Intensifying armed conflict will continue to pose serious risks to children in 2025. Conflicts are also increasing in intensity and violence

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: The world is entering a new era of crisis for children; climate change, inequality and conflict are disrupting their lives and limiting their futures, an authoritative study from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has warned. At the beginning of each year, UNICEF looks ahead to the risks that children are likely to face and suggests ways to reduce the potential harm. The latest report, 'Prospects for Children 2025: Building Resilient Systems for Children's Futures', demands strengthening national systems that are designed to mitigate the impacts of crises on children and ensure they have access to the support they need. The report said that Intensifying armed conflict will continue to pose serious risks to children in 2025. Conflicts are also increasing in intensity and violence. Over 473 million children — more than one in six globally — now live in areas affected by conflict, with the

world experiencing the highest number of conflicts since World War II. And the percentage of the world's children living in conflict zones has doubled — from around 10 per cent in the 1990s to almost 19 per cent today, it was pointed out. Amid growing geopolitical rivalries and the paralysis of multilateral institutions, both state and non-state actors appear increasingly willing to flout international laws designed to protect civilian populations, with attacks on civilian infrastructure like schools and hospitals becoming ever more common. This unravelling of decades of efforts to safeguard civilians is taking a heavy toll on children. As well as the risks to their lives, children face displacement and the threat of starvation and disease. There are also substantial risks to their psychological well-being. The multilateral system has struggled to respond effectively. A concerted and sustained effort is needed to reverse the losses of recent years. Govern-

ments of developing countries are finding it increasingly difficult to fund key investments in children, thanks to slow growth, rising debt and inadequate tax revenues and development assistance. Another important factor is the growing burden of sovereign debt. Nearly 400 million children live in countries in debt distress, and without major reforms this figure is set to rise. The cost of servicing this debt is squeezing out essential investments for children. In 2025, the international community faces crucial decisions about reforms to the framework of institutions, policies, rules and practices that govern the global financial system. Children are disproportionately impacted by climate change and the effects on their development, health, education and well-being can be lifelong and irreversible. It said that 2025 presents crucial opportunities to make progress towards global climate goals. This means comprehensive and robust policy-making, adequate and

equitable financing and investments, strong regulatory and accountability frameworks, and effective monitoring systems. Several digital trends are poised to shape the future in 2025 and beyond. Rapid advancements in emerging technologies will continue to shape all spheres of children's lives from education to communication to participation in digital economy. One key trend is the emergence of digital public infrastructure (DPI), which is a set of shared digital systems that can provide equitable access to public and private services. It allows large-scale delivery of digital public services, including for children, and is now being rapidly adopted around the world. DPI has the potential to fundamentally shift how governments serve and engage with their citizens, including children. It can also be central to promoting rules driving development, inclusion, trust, innovation, and respect for human rights. But persistent inequalities in digital access, par-

ticularly in least-developed countries, are a major barrier to ensuring DPI serves every child. There are issues, too, with ensuring data harmonization across systems and with guaranteeing adequate data protection and security. In 2025, the report said nations and institutions must address the critical question of whether the global multilateral framework will unify to form a cohesive response to our shared challenges or fragment further, risking a loss of collective action. The direction we take will deeply impact efforts to protect children's rights and well-being across the world. The conclusion drawn by the report's authors is the critical importance of adopting and promoting systems to improve the lives and prospects of children. "These systems must embody principles of inclusion, equity, and accountability, ensuring that the rights and needs of children remain at the forefront. And, just as importantly, they must not only address current global challenges but also anticipate and prepare for what lies ahead."

Delegation led
by Dr Musadiq
to showcase
mining
potential at
Riyadh

RIYADH : Pakistan's Minister of Petroleum and Water Resources Dr. Musadiq Malik alongside key policymakers, state-owned entities and industry leaders will represent Pakistan at the Future Minerals Forum (FMF) in Riyadh on the 14-16th of January. The delegation, including prominent companies like Pakistan Petroleum Limited, Oil and Gas Development Company Limited, Mari Energies, Government Holdings (Private) Limited, Pakistan Minerals (Private) Limited, Saindak Metals Limited, Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation, Balochistan Mineral Resource Limited, Bolan Mining Enterprises, Wah Nobel, HTMA Private Limited and BIAFO Industries Limited, aims to unlock the country's mining potential and foster international partnerships. The government has introduced investor-friendly policies, offering incentives such as duty exemptions, tax breaks among many others. These measures designed to grow the mining sector are aligned with global trends towards cleaner energy and greener technology. Pakistan's rich geology, including the Tethyan Belt mineralized zone which holds world-class deposits like Reko Diq and Saindak presents opportunities in copper, gold, rare-earth elements and more. With robust infrastructure, strategic location, and the support of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, the county seeks to position itself as a global mining hub. —APP

Pak's plastic
import
market to
strike \$3.37b

BEIJING: The plastic industry in Pakistan is a significant and rapidly growing sector that contributes to the country's economy. "Pakistan's plastic import market is projected to surge to approximately \$3.37 billion (25 billion RMB) by 2028, up from around \$2.91 billion in 2023. This growth represents an average annual increase of 2.4% for imports, said Sardar Muhammad, the Acting Consul General of Pakistan in Guangzhou. He delivered the address at the recent Pakistan-China B2B Investment Conference, which focused on the plastics sector. The event attracted participation from over eight Pakistani companies and 44 Chinese companies, both online and in person. He emphasized that Pakistan has significant potential for joint ventures and investment opportunities in the plastics sector. He encouraged businesses to take advantage of the opportunities available in Pakistan for enterprises looking to expand their investments. —APP



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Ulrika Sundberg, Special Envoy to OIC and for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Meets Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Minister for Law, Justice, and Human Rights, to Strengthen Interfaith Harmony and the Protection and Promotion of Minority Rights.

Pak, Bangladesh
diplomats stress
strengthening
bilateral trade ties

DUBAI: Consul General of Bangladesh in Dubai Md. Rashedujjaman on Monday paid a courtesy call on his Pakistani counterpart Hussain Muhammad here wherein both sides discussed bilateral ties and ways to further strengthen cooperation. Welcoming the visiting Consul General, Hussain emphasized the importance of strengthening ties between Bangladesh and Pakistan, particularly in trade. Both diplomats acknowledged the potential for collaboration and agreed to engage their respective consulates' trade sections to further promote bilateral cooperation. During the meeting, Md. Rashedujjaman expressed his gratitude to Hussain Muhammad for the warm reception and appreciated the valuable insights shared regarding the consular services provided by the Pakistani consulate. Both sides had an in-depth discussion on various consular services including passport issuance, national identity cards, and visa procedures. —APP

Lebanon's new president
starts consultations on
appointing PM

BEIRUT, Lebanon: New Lebanese President Joseph Aoun will begin parliamentary consultations Monday over designating a prime minister to form a government that will have to face major challenges in the crisis-hit country. The consultations, a constitutional requirement under Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system, come just days after Aoun's election amid foreign pressure for swift progress — particularly from the United States and Saudi Arabia. The small Mediterranean nation had been without a president since October 2022, run by a caretaker government despite a crushing economic crisis and a war between Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Israel. Names floated for the post of prime minister, which is reserved for a Sunni Muslim, include current caretaker premier Najib Mikati, anti-Hezbollah lawmaker Fouad Makhoum, and Nawaf Salam, presiding judge at the International Court of Justice in the Hague. Aoun's consultations with political blocs begin at 8:00 am (0600 GMT) with a meeting with powerful parliament speaker and Hezbollah ally Nabih Berri. A source close to Hezbollah told AFP that both the group and Berri's Amal movement supported Mikati. The incumbent's re-designation is "part of the accord reached with the Saudi envoy to Lebanon... that led Hezbollah and Amal to vote for Aoun as president" last week, the source said on condition of anonymity as the matter is sensitive. Saudi Arabia and the United States were among key countries driving diplomatic efforts to end the presidential vacuum. —APP

Pakistan to improve local
fisheries after learning in China

QINGDAO: In the bustling city of Qingdao, China, Aidah from Gwadar, Balochistan, is standing at the forefront of academic excellence as she pursues her PhD in fisheries resources at Ocean University of China (OUC). The azure waters of the East China Sea shimmer in the distance, serving as a constant reminder of her profound connection to the sea, water, and fish. "The sea is in my blood," Aidah says, reflecting on her journey. It is under the mentorship of Chinese Professor Liu Qun that Aidah has discovered the immense potential of sustainable fisheries management. Upon her arrival at the OUC, she was immediately captivat-



ed by the inclusive environment. "Teachers here are welcoming and humble," she remarks. "They treat all students equally, regardless of nationality. This experience has been incredibly enriching, both academically and personally." Her research focuses intently on the coastline of Balochistan, particularly the demersal and biolog-

ical fish species in both shallow and deep waters. By studying their health, the effects of overfishing, and the policies that affect them, Aidah aims to develop sustainable fisheries management practices to safeguard future fish populations. "Overfishing is a massive issue along the Balochistan coastline," she emphasizes. "Unlike Sindh, where policies and fishing seasons are more regulated, Balochistan needs a comprehensive approach." Despite the rigorous demands of pursuing a PhD, Aidah has still made impressive professional gains. She has completed two research papers and is diligently working on a third, with one of her papers cur-

rently under revision for publication in the Fish and Fisheries journal. Her academic journey has taken her to numerous conferences, workshops and international events, such as the Marine Aquaculture International Training Program and the China International Agricultural Products Fair. "These experiences have not only enhanced my research but also provided valuable networking opportunities with professionals from institutions like Shanghai Ocean University," she shares. Aidah's time in China has not only molded her academically but has also ignited her passion for advocating for education in Balochistan. —DNA

Is PM AJK's claim of good governance &
honesty just a slogan or reality?

Under the leadership of Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, who vowed to eradicate corruption and establish a transparent administration, both corruption & nepotism appear to have escalated instead of being curtailed

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



THE lofty claims of good governance and honesty made by the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq, have proven to be nothing more than empty rhetoric. Contrary to the promises of progress and transparency, the condition of AJK has deteriorated, plunging its residents into greater misery. Discontent is evident among the Kashmiri populace, allied political parties, and even the parliamentarians who initially supported the Prime Minister. Under the leadership of Chaudhry An-

warul Haq, who vowed to eradicate corruption and establish a transparent administration, both corruption and nepotism appear to have escalated instead of being curtailed. In several key departments such as Highways, Buildings, Public Health Engineering, and Local Government, the situation has worsened due to administrative inefficiencies. It has become a common practice for a single officer to hold multiple positions simultaneously. The allocation of posts seems heavily influenced by personal connections rather than merit, with influential individuals securing more favorable postings. This blatant disregard for meritocracy undermines the principles of good governance and casts doubt on the sincerity of the government's commitment to fairness. One notable instance that highlights the inefficiency of the current administration is the controversy surrounding the cigarette companies accused of tax evasion. When the Prime Minister raised allegations against these companies, they retaliated by

shutting down their operations and leaving Azad Kashmir. This situation not only failed to curb tax evasion but also resulted in economic repercussions for the region. Similarly, efforts to address corruption in the fish auction at Mangla Dam have also proven futile. The absence of a transparent tendering process this year led to the outright theft of the fish, further exposing the government's inability to maintain order and accountability. Another pressing concern is the prolonged tenure of influential engineers and officers who remain entrenched in their positions despite the supposed push for reform. These individuals were posted in their current roles long before the tenure of Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, and their continued presence raises serious questions about the government's commitment to transparency and fairness. Instead of implementing a rotation policy to ensure fresh perspectives and reduce opportunities for corruption, the administration appears



complicit in perpetuating the status quo. The quality of development projects in the region has also come under scrutiny, with many works being executed at substandard levels. The lack of effective oversight and accountability has resulted in poorly constructed infrastructure that fails to meet the needs of the people. While there is a glaring disparity in the allocation of funds, with highways and local government projects receiving ample resources, sectors such as public health and building construction

are grossly underfunded. This skewed distribution of resources reflects a clear prioritization of projects that may benefit a select few, leaving the majority of citizens to suffer the consequences of neglect in essential services. The injustice inherent in these practices cannot be overlooked. If a system is fair and operates on merit, there is no need to embellish it with false claims of good governance and honesty. The current administration's actions contradict its promises, and the lack of tangible progress has eroded public trust. Transparency, meritocracy, and accountability should be the cornerstones of any administration, but in AJK, these principles seem to have been compromised. In conclusion, the tenure of Chaudhry Anwarul Haq as the Prime Minister of AJK has so far been characterized by unfulfilled promises, administrative inefficiencies, and widespread discontent. The growing corruption, nepotism, and lack of accountability have deep-

ened the challenges faced by the region. The governance of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) under the leadership of Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq has recently come under scrutiny. While there have been symbolic gestures, such as the inauguration of plantation initiatives accompanied by photo sessions for the media, substantial progress on key issues appears to be lacking. This raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of the administration and its priorities. A major issue contributing to this stagnation is the lack of effort to secure funds from the federal government. The region is grappling with heavy liabilities, primarily due to the non-availability of adequate financial resources. This financial shortfall has led to delays or outright cessation of crucial development projects. Without active engagement and negotiation with the federal government to release the required funds, the AJK administration risks further exacerbating the region's

economic challenges. Another significant problem lies in the administrative setup. Officers and engineers continue to occupy the same posts they held in the past, leading to a lack of fresh perspectives and innovative approaches. This inertia within the bureaucracy hinders progress and stifles any potential for meaningful reforms. The allocation of development funds has also become a contentious issue. This practice of rewarding political supporters undermines the principle of equitable distribution of resources and risks alienating other constituencies that are equally in need of development. The quality of the development works carried out under the local government has also been called into question. Despite the PM AJK's efforts to reward supportive MLAs, there is no guarantee of their continued allegiance. The volatile nature of political alliances in AJK means that these MLAs could withdraw their support at any time, potentially leading to the collapse of the Anwar government.

Briefs

Qureshi and others indicted in May 9 cases

DNA

LAHORE: The Anti-Terrorism Court in Lahore, conducting jail trials for three high-profile cases, including the attacks on Jinnah House and Askari Tower, Monday indicted several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders. Shah Mehmood Qureshi and others were charged in the Askari Tower attack, while Dr. Yasmin Rashid, Omar Sarfaraz Cheema, Ejaz Chaudhry, and Mian-Mehmood-ul-Rashid faced charges related to other incidents. Among those indicted were Khadija Shah, Sanam-Javed, Alia Hamza, and Rubina Jameel, who appeared in court alongside other accused who are on bail. The court, presided over by Anti-Terrorism Court Administrator Judge Manzar Ali Gul at KotLakhpur Jail, summoned prosecution witnesses for January 23. Special Prosecutor Rao Abdul Jabbar Khan attended the hearing, although other prosecutors were absent due to stringent security measures. The court adjourned the Jinnah House attack case until January 27 and the Mughalpur police vehicle burning case until January 23, with the Special Prosecutor seeking amendments to the charge sheet. Defense lawyers Rana Mudassar Umar and Burhan Muazzam Malik represented the accused, who have been directed to ensure their attendance at the next hearing.

SBP reaffirms commitment to digitalization

DNA

KARACHI: Governor, State Bank of Pakistan Mr. Jameel Ahmad reaffirmed the central bank's dedication to increasing financial inclusion through strengthened collaborations with both global and domestic stakeholders. Mr. Ahmad shared these remarks in a bilateral meeting held with Chief Executive Officer of AFI, Dr. Alfred Hannig, during his visit to Pakistan on January 13, 2025, in Karachi. In the meeting, Mr. Ahmad highlighted SBP's recently launched 3rd edition of National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2024-28. He emphasized that SBP will persist in its efforts for enhancing financial inclusion through digitalization, and reduce the gender gap in finance. Dr. Hannig extended AFI's appreciation for SBP's leadership role in promoting financial inclusion in Pakistan and discussed areas of mutual collaborations to continue efforts towards breaking the barriers. SBP is a founding member of AFI since 2008, which is a policy leadership alliance of central banks and financial regulatory institutions from 84 countries with the common objective of advancing financial inclusion at country, regional and international levels. SBP currently serves on AFI Board, and as Vice-Chair of AFI Gender Inclusive Finance Committee and the South Asia Regional Financial Inclusion Initiative (SARFII).

Imran Khan, Bushra files plea for acquittal

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: In an important development, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi have filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) for acquittal in the Toshakhana 2 case. The petition challenged the trial court's decision to reject their plea for acquittal. The plea argued that the Special Judge Central's November 14 decision to dismiss the acquittal plea was unlawful. The petition, filed on behalf of Khan and Bushra Bibi, requests the Islamabad High Court to overturn the trial court's decision and grant their acquittal in the case.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Brunei Col (Retired) Pengiran Kamal Bashah Pengiran Ahmad, handed over ASEAN Committee Chair to Ambassador of Myanmar Mr Wunna Han. The ASEAN Islamabad Committee Chair rotates among the member countries after six months. The heads of missions of the ASEAN countries including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, Brunei, Vietnam and the Philippines posing for a group picture in traditional ASEAN style. – DNA

Final draft of Gaza truce deal presented after 'breakthrough'

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas says talks over some core issues for a ceasefire deal in Gaza have made progress

NEWS DESK

DOHA/CAIRO: Mediators gave Israel and Hamas a final draft of a deal on Monday to end the war in Gaza, an official briefed on the negotiations said, after a midnight "breakthrough" in talks attended by envoys of both Joe Biden and Donald Trump. The official said the text for a ceasefire and release of hostages was presented by Qatar to both sides in talks in Doha, which included the chiefs of Israel's Mossad and Shin Bet spy agencies and Qatar's prime minister. The official said Steve Witkoff, who will become US envoy when Trump returns to the US presidency next week, attended the talks. A US source said the outgoing Biden administration's envoy Brett McGurk was also there. "The next 24 hours will be pivotal to reaching the deal," the official said, characterising the draft as the outcome of a breakthrough reached in the early hours of Monday. Israel's Kan radio, citing an Israeli official, reported on Monday that Israeli and Hamas delegations in Qatar had both received a draft, and that the Israeli delegation had briefed Israel's lead-

ers. Israel, Hamas and the foreign ministry of Qatar did not respond to requests for confirmation or comment. Officials on both sides, while stopping short of confirming that a final draft had been reached, described progress at the talks. A senior Israeli official said a deal could be sealed within a few days if Hamas replies to a proposal. A Palestinian official close to the talks said information from Doha was "very promising," adding: "Gaps were being narrowed and there is a big push toward an agreement if all goes well to the end." The United States, Qatar and Egypt have worked for more than a year on talks to end the war in Gaza, so far fruitlessly. Both sides have agreed for months broadly on the principle of halting the fighting in return for the release of hostages held by Hamas and Palestinian detainees held by Israel. However, Hamas has always insisted that the deal must lead to a permanent end to the war and Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, while Israel has said it will not end the war until Hamas is dismantled. Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration is now widely seen in the region as a de facto deadline. The president-elect has said

there would be "hell to pay" unless hostages held by Hamas are freed before he takes office, while outgoing President Biden has also pushed hard for a deal before he leaves. The official said talks went until the early hours of Monday, with Witkoff pushing the Israeli delegation in Doha and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani pushing Hamas officials to finalize an agreement. The head of Egypt's general intelligence agency Hassan Mahmoud Rashad was also in the Qatari capital as part of the talks, the official said. Trump envoy Witkoff has traveled to Qatar and Israel several times since late November. He was in Doha on Friday and traveled to Israel to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday before returning to Doha. Biden also spoke on Sunday by phone with Netanyahu, stressing "the immediate need for a ceasefire in Gaza and return of the hostages with a surge in humanitarian aid enabled by a stoppage in the fighting under the deal," the White House said. Israel launched its assault in Gaza after Hamas fighters stormed across its borders in October 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking more than 250 hos-

tages, according to Israeli tallies. Since then, more than 46,000 people have been killed in Gaza, according to Palestinian health officials, with much of the enclave laid to waste and most of its population displaced. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a hard-line nationalist who has opposed previous attempts to reach a deal, denounced the latest proposals as a "surrender" and a "catastrophe for the national security of the state of Israel." Bloodshed continued in Gaza on Monday, with Israeli military strikes killing at least 21 people, medics said, including five killed in an Israeli strike at a Gaza City school sheltering displaced families. For the last several months, fighting has been particularly intense along the northern edge of Gaza, where Israel says it is trying to prevent Hamas from regrouping and Palestinians accuse Israel of seeking to permanently depopulate a buffer zone. Hamas armed wing spokesman Abu Ubaida said the group's fighters attacked Israeli forces in the area killing at least 10 soldiers and injuring dozens of others in the past 72 hours. Israel confirmed on Saturday that four soldiers had been killed.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia sign agreement for Hajj

Nearly 180,000 Pakistani pilgrims to be offered accommodation in Mina at reduced rates under agreement

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Monday signed annual Hajj agreement 2025 under which as many as 179,210 Pakistani pilgrims would perform the Hajj this year and will be offered special accommodation in Mina during the holy pilgrimage, a statement issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs read. The Saudi minister assured to provide all possible support for better facilities to Pakistani pilgrims. Furthermore, the ministry stated that a short Hajj programme of 20 to 25 days has been introduced to make the journey more accessible, easier, and comfortable which would enable pilgrims to choose their accommodation in Madinah for four to eight days.

Iran, European powers to hold nuclear talks

GENEVA: Iran is set to hold nuclear talks with France, Britain and Germany on Monday, just a week before US President-elect Donald Trump takes office. They are the second round of talks over Iran's nuclear program in less than two months, following a discreet meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, in November between Tehran and the three European powers, known as the E3. "These are not negotiations," the German foreign ministry told AFP. Iran has similarly emphasized that the talks are merely "consultations." The talks, scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, will cover a "wide range of topics," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Bagaei said during a weekly press briefing. – Agencies

Army Act apply solely to military officers': SC Justice

Procedural clarity took centre stage in court discussions on military trials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail has said that several offences are listed under the Army Act, but all apply exclusively to military officers. He made the remarks during the Supreme Court hearing on intra-court appeals challenging the trial of civilians in military courts. A seven-member constitutional bench, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the case on Monday, Express News reported. The session began with Khawaja Haris, representing the Ministry of Defence, presenting arguments. Justice Aminuddin urged Khawaja Haris to conclude his arguments by Tuesday, requesting a concise explanation of which cases were transferred to military courts and why. He added that any questions

from the bench on the matter would be addressed later. Khawaja Haris argued that the Supreme Court had previously invalidated Section 59(4) of the Army Act. Justice Mandokhail noted that Section 31D, used for civilians' trials, relates to incitement to obstruct military duties. Justice Musarrat Hilali pointed out that the Constitution recognises various tribunals, stressing the need to examine the jurisdiction, location, and procedure for trying cases. "The issue here is procedural—who will conduct the trial," she said. Justice Mandokhail questioned whether civilians' trials in military courts could be classified as court-martials. Khawaja Haris confirmed they could. Justice Hilali raised the absence of a specific punishment in the Army Act for suspending the Constitution, asking, "What punishment does the Act prescribe for an army officer who suspends the Constitution?" Khawaja Haris countered by stating that Article 6 of the Constitution prescribes punishment for such acts and takes precedence over all laws. He also mentioned that the Army Act includes penalties for breaches of the oath. Justice Mandokhail remarked that the judiciary had previously legitimised martial law and questioned whether judges involved in unconstitutional actions also fall under Article 6. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar added that judges were initially implicated in the treason trial of former military ruler Pervez Musharraf but were later excluded from the case.

15 Villages connected to electricity with Japan's Aid

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Akamatsu Shuichi on Monday inaugurated two projects to install electricity facilities in MandiBahauddin district, Punjab. These projects, managed by the Hana Development Council, a non-governmental organization dedicated to improv-



ing health and infrastructure, aim to enhance the quality of life for rural communities, particularly in MandiBahauddin. The government of Japan, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Program, had provided financial assistance of 92,307 USD under two projects. The grant of 42,818 USD was allocated in 2019 for provision of sustainable electricity facility to eight(8) communities, and 49,489 USD granted in 2022 to connect additional seven(7) communities in MandiBahauddin. The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Japanese Embassy officials, NGO Board Members and community leaders. Akamatsu Shuichi, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony, congratulated Hameeda Waheeduddin, a Member of Punjab Assembly, President of the NGO, for successful completion of these important projects. Akamatsu emphasized the impact of these initiatives that fifteen communities have now access to the sustainable electricity, these projects have brought a real difference to the daily lives of thousands of people. It is not just about installing power lines and electrical grids. It is about empowering communities and improving lives. He also stressed that the government of Japan would continue to support the people of Pakistan, to improve their living standards and represented his sincere wish that this project would certainly strengthen the existing relations between the people of Japan and Pakistan.

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