



Islamabad POST

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Iran 'never' plotted to kill Donal Trump, says Pezeshkian

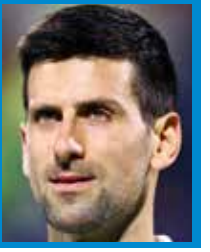
Detailed News On Page-08

45 % power tariff reduced for EVs stations

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Djokovic breaks Federer record in Melbourne

Detailed News On Page-06



Urges end to pandering

Army slams Indian military for 'hypocrisy'

Military also asked neighbouring country to refrain from "pandering to political exigencies", says ISPR

ANSAR M BHATTI

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army on Wednesday slammed the Indian army chief, General Upendra Dwivedi, for "extreme duplicity" and asked the neighbouring country to refrain from "pandering to political exigencies". General Dwivedi had claimed that Pakistan is the "epicentre" of terrorism, asserting that the ongoing cycle of violence in "Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK)" is being orchestrated from within Pakistan. Live Mint reported, while also alleging that 60% of terrorists killed last year were of Pakistani origin. "Insinuating Pakistan as the epicentre of terrorism by the Indian Army Chief is not only contrary to facts but also an exercise in futility to beat the dead horse of India's default position - blaming Pakistan for Indigenous reaction to state-sponsored brutality. It is a classic case of extreme duplicity," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. The military's media wing also said that the remarks were an attempt to deflect the world's attention from India's brutality in IIOJK, repression of minorities internally, and India's transnational repression. "The General Officer, in his earlier stint in IIOJK, personally oversaw the most brutal repression of Kashmiris. Such politically motivated and fallacious statements reflect the extreme politicisation of the Indian Army," it stressed. The ISPR also said that the world was a witness to India's hate-speech concludes that provoke genocide against Muslims, adding that the international community was not oblivious to India's transnational assassinations, and Indian Security Forces' oppressive use of force against innocent civilians and gross human rights violations against unarmed Kashmiris.

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FO trashes provocative statements

'Provocative' statements counter productive to regional peace: FO

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office also rejected the "baseless accusations and unfounded assertions" made by Gen Dwivedi. In a statement, the FO said that IIOJK remains an internationally recognised disputed territory, whose final status is to be determined in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. "In this context, India has no legal or moral grounds to assert fictitious claims over the territories of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan," said the FO. It also said that such from Indian leadership cannot divert international attention from the grave human rights violations and oppressive measures being carried out in IIOJK.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding measures taken against human trafficking. - DNA

Bilawal 'invited' to Trump's inauguration

PPP chairman will depart for Washington in next few days to attend ceremony on Jan 20, say sources



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has been invited to US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration ceremony on January 20 in personal capacity, claimed well-placed sources on Wednesday. The PPP chairman would depart for Washington in next few days to attend the inauguration of President-elect Trump. Besides Bilawal, the US president-elect also invited Chinese President Xi Jinping and other global

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Pak confirms 72nd polio case

This confirmation marks the 11th reported polio case from DI Khan in 2024

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a concerning development, Pakistan on Wednesday confirmed another case of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) for 2024, taking the total tally of the country to 72. According to the health officials, the latest case involves a girl from Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The samples from the affected girl were taken on December 31, 2024. This confirmation marks the 11th reported

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Directs FIA to strengthen measures

PM Shehbaz orders strict action against human traffickers

PM for an active role of all institutions to curb human smuggling

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed all the relevant institutions to play an active role in curbing human smuggling and take strict legal action against the perpetrators defaming the country through their heinous business. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the measures against human smuggling, instructed to address the shortage of manpower in the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and ensure effective screening of those traveling abroad at the airports. The prime minister directed the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to run an awareness campaign on illegal foreign travel and human smuggling. He also called for seeking Interpol's support for the extradition of most wanted criminals involved in human smuggling. During the briefing, the prime minister was told that several human smugglers had been arrested from June 2023 to December 2024.

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KSA 'mulling \$ 100 million investment' in Pakistan mining infrastructure

Saudi minister confirms that kingdom's mining company looking at investing in Pakistan's RekoDiq mine

AGENCIES

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia Mining Minister Bandar Alkhorayef confirmed on Wednesday that kingdom's mining company Manara Minerals was looking at investing in Pakistan's RekoDiq mine, saying that the Saudi Development Fund could contribute over \$100 million to Pakistan's mining infrastructure. "Part of what we are looking at is how we can help Pakistan also in some infrastructure," Alkhorayef said in an

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Briefs

4 khwarij killed in N. Waziristan

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed khwarij

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces killed four khwarij terrorists in an intelligence based operation (IBO) in general area Spinwam, North Waziristan District on reported presence of khwarij. "During conduct of the operation, own troops effectively engaged khwarij's location and after intense exchange of fire, four khwarij were sent to hell," an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians.

Fazl calls for dialogue, not revenge

Also questions undue focus on US president-elect Donald Trump

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has emphasised that politics should not be based on revenge and called for resolving issues through dialogue. Speaking to reporters, Fazl expressed his belief in negotiations, stating, "Politicians should not be in prisons". He highlighted the need for free and fair elections, and rapped past political compromises and the negative attitude of politicians that rendered parliament ineffective. He reiterated his commitment to ideological politics, expressing concern over a lack of government writ in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

SC Judge asks Why wasn't APS attack case trialled in military court

"If civilian's crime is related to armed forces, trial will proceed in military court," says defence ministry's lawyer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's constitutional bench on Wednesday asked the government why the trial for the Army Public School (APS) attack was not conducted in a military court despite the existence of the Army Act and a link of the crimes to it. During the hearing on appeals against the trial of civilians in military courts, the bench also questioned why an amendment in the Constitution was required to conduct terrorism trials in military courts. The constitutional bench, headed by Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan, heard the intra-court appeal against the decision to try civilians in military courts, with Khawaja Haris representing the Ministry of Defence. During the hearing, Haris said the nature of the crime determines where the trial would take place. If a civilian's crime is related to the armed forces, the trial will proceed in a military court, he said. Justice Jamal Mandokhail responded, asking whether the intent behind the crime could also be considered - whether the purpose was against the country's interests.

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KP CM says, informed COAS about harsh discussion with PM

Says he also raised concerns about the events of Nov 26 in meeting with Gen Asim Munir

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has disclosed that during his meeting with Army Chief Gen Asim Munir, he spoke about the harsh discussion that he had with the prime minister. Speaking at a private TV channel, Gandapur shared that a heated exchange took place in the Apex Committee meeting with the prime minister. He further elaborated that he discussed the matter during his meeting with the army chief and raised concerns about the events of Nov 26. He mentioned that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar was also present in the meeting,

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Hopes grow for Gaza deal as Hamas approves ceasefire

The international community will have to maintain pressure on Israel after an ceasefire in Gaza so it accepts the creation of a Palestinian state, Palestinian PM

NEWS DESK

DOHA: Citing the Palestinian group a Qatari news channel reported that a delegation, led by Khalil al-Hayya, handed Hamas's approval of the proposed ceasefire and captives deal to the mediators in Qatar and Egypt. Negotiators from Israel and Hamas are making a final push to seal a Gaza ceasefire in Doha, with all sides suggesting an agreement is almost done. Quoting a Palestinian source an Arab media outlet revealed that although the occupation has given its general approval for the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, the signing and implementation of the truce are being delayed due to pending details. Regarding these details, the source stated that the occupation has not provided information on the mechanism for the prisoner exchange, nor clarified how the injured would be allowed to leave for treatment. He added that the occupation also failed to provide a map outlining the military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, nor any details regarding the management of the Rafah crossing and the entry of trucks. The source noted that such delays by the Israeli occupation continue to disrupt the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip. Arab, American, and Israeli officials confirmed that the draft ceasefire in Gaza

South Korean impeached president arrested

Investigators from CIO) failed to arrest him on 3 January after being locked in a six-hour stand-off

AGENCIES

SEOUL: Yoon Suk Yeol has become South Korea's first sitting president to be arrested after investigators scaled barricades and cut through barbed wire to take him into custody. Yoon, 64, is being investigated on charges of insurrection for a failed martial law order on 3 December that plunged the country into turmoil. He has also been impeached by parliament and suspended - but will only be removed from office if the Constitutional Court upholds the impeachment. However, Yoon's dramatic arrest on Wednesday brings to an end a weeks-long standoff between investigators and his presidential security team. Investigators from the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) failed

to arrest him on 3 January after being locked in a six-hour stand-off with his security detail. But just before dawn on Wednesday, a much larger team of investigators and police arrived at his residence in central Seoul, armed with ladders to climb over buses blocking its entrance and bolt cutters to remove barbed wire. Other officers in the arrest team, which numbered around 1,000, scaled walls and hiked up nearby trails to reach the presidential residence. After several hours, authorities announced that Yoon had been arrested. In a three-minute video released just before his arrest, the 64-year-old leader said he would co-operate with the investigators, while repeating previous claims that the warrant was not legally valid. "I decided to appear

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and the exchange of prisoners have been agreed upon in principle. If everything proceeds smoothly, the ceasefire is expected to be finalized this week. An Israeli official said Hamas had agreed to a ceasefire and hostage return proposal shared by Qatari negotiators. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said shortly afterward that Hamas had not yet given a response. A Hamas official who declined to be named also said that the group had not yet given a written response to the proposal. The proposed three-phase deal would begin with an initial six-week ceasefire. Citing a Palestinian official, a British news channel reported that Hamas would release three hostages on the first day of a deal, after which Israel would begin withdrawing troops from populated areas. More hostage releases would then be staggered over the following weeks, he said, with Israel allowing displaced residents to return in northern areas. Israel has said it expects 33 hostages to be released in the first phase and that it will free a yet to be determined number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails in return. Negotiations for the second phase - which should see the remaining hostages released, a full Israeli troop withdrawal and a "sustainable calm" - would start after two weeks.

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RCCI leadership meets HCBAR President for collaborative luncheon

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President, Usman Shaukat, along with Group Leader Sohail Altaf, participated in a luncheon hosted by Advocate Malik Jawad Khalid, President of the High Court Bar Association Rawalpindi (HCBAR). The event brought together prominent members from both organizations to foster dialogue and strengthen ties between the business community and the legal fraternity. Attendees included RCCI Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, members of the RCCI Executive Committee, and former Presidents of the Chamber. The luncheon served as a platform to discuss mutual areas of interest, explore avenues for collaboration, and underscore the importance of joint efforts in advancing regional economic and legal frameworks. One of the highlights of the meeting was the announcement of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to be signed between RCCI and HCBAR, aimed at formalizing their cooperation. Both parties expressed their unwavering commitment to further enhancing the relationship between these two vital institutions for the betterment of the community.

Law Ministry concludes training session for Customs Prosecutors

ISLAMABAD: On the special directions of the Prime Minister, a three-day training program aimed at enhancing the capacity of Customs prosecutors, conducted by the Ministry of Law and Justice in collaboration with the Federal Board of Revenue, concluded in Karachi on Wednesday. The first two training sessions under the program were held in Islamabad and Lahore, which also catered to participants from KP and GB, said a press release. It said that this event marks the final training of the series. The training brought together experts and participants dedicated to strengthening legal practices in customs enforcement. The training sessions covered various critical topics, providing participants with invaluable knowledge and skills. The program included sessions on trade-based money laundering, offering insights into the intersection of financial crimes and customs activities. Muhammad Sadiq, Director General Valuation and Chief Collector Exports, Karachi graced the ceremony as the chief guest. He appreciated the Ministry of Law and Justice for its ownership of the legal fraternity across the country and its efforts in capacity building of prosecutors and investigators working in customs. In particular, he acknowledged the role of the Federal Minister for Law and Justice in the initiative and his commitment to fostering excellence in legal practice. He also suggested organizing similar training programs in the future to enhance the skills and capabilities of legal professionals nationwide. —APP

Shuichi opens solar-powered irrigation project in Narowal

Ambassador of Japan, Punjab governor discussed strengthening of bilateral ties in the fields of agriculture, economy, and culture during a meeting at the Governor's House

DNA

NAROWAL: Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Akamatsu Shuichi on Wednesday inaugurated a solar-powered irrigation system in Tehsil Shakar Garh, District Narowal. Speaking at the ceremony, Ambassador Akamatsu commended the NGO for successfully completing the initiative. He expressed hope that the project would enhance agricultural productivity, improve farmers' livelihoods, and contribute positively to the local economy. Reaffirming Japan's commitment to supporting Pakistan's development, the ambassador emphasized that such efforts would strengthen the bonds between the two nations. The project, funded under Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Program, received financial support amounting to \$65,617. The funds were utilized to install seven solar-powered irrigation pumps, ensuring efficient and sustainable irrigation in the region. The project, managed by Rural Aid Pakistan, a non-governmental organization, aims to combat poverty and empower vulnerable rural communities through sustainable development. It has been actively working for over three decades, implementing various projects in collaboration with government departments and international donors. This initiative is expected to improve the agricultural environment, increase crop yields, and boost the incomes of local farmers. The ceremony was attended



by representatives of Rural Aid Pakistan, local government officials, community leaders, and farmers. Earlier, ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Akamatsu Shuichi called on Governor Punjab Sardar Saqib Haider Khan and discussed strengthening of bilateral ties in the fields of agriculture, economy, and culture during a meeting at the Governor's House, here on Wednesday. The governor said Pakistan and Japan have cordial relations, adding that

these relations would be taken to new heights as per vision of President Asif Ali Zardari. Sardar Saqib Haider said due to fertile land and climate in Pakistan, the taste of fruits and vegetables here is famous all over the world. He said: "We look forward to cooperation of Japan in the field of agriculture." He said that Japanese automobiles were very popular in Pakistan for their quality and durability. He said that Japanese companies could take advantage

of economic opportunities in various sectors in Pakistan, including the automobile sector. The governor said exchange of business and cultural delegations between Pakistan and Japan would further expand bilateral relations. He hailed support of the Japanese government for preservation of artifacts in the Taxila Museum. He assured the Japanese ambassador of the cooperation of the Governor's House regarding solution to the

problems of engineers working in Japanese companies and the security of the Japanese people living in Pakistan. Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi said that about 80 Japanese companies were working in Pakistan. He stressed the need to increase people-to-people contacts between Pakistan and Japan. The envoy expressed the desire to promote bilateral relations between Japan and Pakistan especially in culture and trade sectors.

KP CM announces regularization of Tourism Police

DNA

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, on Wednesday announced the regularization of Tourism Police personnel. In a significant move, the monthly salaries of Tourism Police officials have also been increased from PKR 36,000 to PKR 45,000, following approval in a board

meeting. An official release issued here said that in order to further strengthen the Tourism Police, the government has decided to equip them with heavy bikes and advanced communication gadgets. Additionally, the CM directed the tourism department to identify and develop more tourist destinations. He emphasized the inclusion of at least four new tourism projects in the budget for the

next fiscal year. Highlighting the growing popularity of the province among tourists, Ali Amin Gandapur stated that 15 million domestic and international tourists visited Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the last season. He stressed the need to explore and develop new tourist spots to accommodate the rising influx. As part of the initiatives, the CM instructed necessary amendments to the mas-

ter plan for the Thandiani Integrated Tourism Zone and its subsequent advertisement. He also directed the simultaneous construction of access roads to Integrated Tourism Zones to ensure seamless travel and comprehensive tourism development. Ali Amin Gandapur reiterated that tourism is a priority sector with vast potential for employment and investment in the province.

PM&DC lauds decision to increase ICT quota in Punjab's medical colleges

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) has commended the Punjab government for accepting the suggestion to significantly increase the quota of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT)-domiciled students in Punjab's public sector medical and dental colleges for the academic year 2024-25. According to PMDC, this progressive step addresses a critical concern for ICT students and reinforces the commitment to fairness and inclusion in medical education. The issue of ICT students' admissions gained attention after a reduction in allocated seats was announced. Any students approached the PM&DC President regarding this issue; therefore the President alerted the concerned heads. In response, the Punjab government reviewed an increase in the quota seats for ICT-domiciled students. The recently announced admission policy for the 2024-25 session by the Punjab Government, under clause 11, restricts the quota for ICT-domiciled students to only three seats. Recognizing the potential impact of this reduction on students' aspirations, PM&DC collaborated closely with the Ministry of National Health Services, the Standing Committee on Health and other stakeholders. After a thorough review and consultation, the Punjab Government increased the quota from three to 30 seats. President PM&DC, Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj said that the increase in the quota seats reflects equitable access to education and highlights the importance of prioritizing student welfare. He said, "By increasing the quota for ICT students, we are developing a more inclusive and balanced approach to medical education, which benefits the entire nation." He said that the need for this has become evident due to the rapid increase in population observed over the past few years. "PM&DC appreciates the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health and the standing committee on health, in bringing this issue to resolution." The council emphasized the importance of continuing efforts to address the inter-provincial admission policies and expressed hope that the decision will improve educational equity. —APP

Arora discusses interfaith harmony with Farhadov

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora held a meeting with Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov at his camp office, here on Wednesday and discussed with him bilateral relations, interfaith harmony, issues concerning religious minorities, education, health, and other important matters. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties. The minister informed the ambassador about the steps taken by the Punjab government to protect the minority community, particularly regarding the issuance of minority cards. He stated, "The purpose of the Minority Cards is to facilitate the protection of the rights of minority individuals, while ensuring the protection of religious minorities throughout the province." Additionally, Ramesh Singh Arora proposed to benefit from Azerbaijan's experience in the tourism sector. Azerbaijani Ambassador Khazar Farhadov appreciated the ongoing development projects and public welfare initiatives in Punjab. He stated, "Azerbaijan considers Pakistan as its close friend and brotherly country." This meeting is expected to enhance and improve relations and cooperation between the two nations. —APP

KP governor emphasizes need for clean drinking water projects

Kundi promised to play an active role in addressing their issues and ensuring their rights are protected

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday emphasized the need for clean drinking water projects in different areas of the province and stressed the importance of attracting the attention of donor organizations to meet regional needs. The Governor said this in a meeting of the Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) at the Governor House. During the meeting, CEO Masood-ul-Mulk briefed the Governor on ongoing projects in

27 districts of the province. The Governor was provided details about water supply, sanitation, electricity, solar energy, and skilled training programs in Dera Ismail Khan, Tank and other districts under the SRSP's initiatives. The meeting also included a briefing on flood recovery and development programs, as well as infrastructure improvements in nine union councils of Dera Ismail Khan and Tank. The Governor also highlighted the necessity of ensuring transparency in projects

based on public and regional requirements. Meanwhile, a delegation from the Local Council Association of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa met with the Governor Faisal Karim Kundi. The delegation included the Provincial President of the Association and prominent political figure, Mayor of Mardan, Himayatullah Khan Mayar, Coordinator Intizar Khalil and President of the Village Council Bannu, Mian Mahfooz Rehman. Member of the Provincial Assembly, Arbab Zarak Khan was also

present on this occasion. The delegation informed the Governor about the difficulties faced by local government representatives and the undemocratic attitude of the provincial government. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed his concern, saying that the provincial government has been undermining the rights of local representatives for the past three years. He said that not only powers and funds are not being provided, but peaceful protesters de-

manding their rights are also subjected to violence. He termed this behavior highly inappropriate and undemocratic. The Governor assured the delegation that they would not be left helpless and announced plans to host a convention for local government representatives from across the province at the Governor House in the first week of February. He promised to play an active role in addressing their issues and ensuring their rights are protected. —APP

Ghazi Famed Oranges Gala empowers local farming community

ISLAMABAD: The first Ghazi Famed Oranges Gala, held in Tehsil Ghazi, District Haripur, served as a dynamic platform to empower the local farming community and catalyze sustainable economic growth in the region. By spotlighting the heritage and excellence of Tehsil Ghazi's famed oranges, the gala positioned the district as a treasure trove of agricultural brilliance, attracting visitors, stakeholders, and buyers across Pakistan. The event brought together a remarkable confluence of stakeholders, featuring 48 meticulously curated stalls that epitomized the best of agriculture, innovation, and community enterprise. 16 of these stalls were dedicated to celebrating the rich diversity and exceptional quality of Ghazi's oranges, cementing their status as a hallmark of the district's agricultural legacy. Thirteen stalls from leading private companies showcased cutting-edge agricultural products and technologies, while nine banks provided financial solutions and support tailored to farmers. Additionally, four government departments highlighted state-of-the-art initiatives aimed at modernizing and empowering the agricultural sector. Six stalls from the University of Haripur offered groundbreaking academic and technical insights into sustainable farming practices. The event was a celebration and a clarion call to recognize and harness the untapped potential of Ghazi's fertile lands and its exceptional citrus produce. Organized by the Department of Agriculture Extension Haripur, with technical collaboration from the University of Haripur, the gala was conceived and executed under the visionary leadership of Deputy Commissioner Haripur, Shauzab Abbas, and funded by the District Administration Haripur. The event was inaugurated by former provincial minister, Yousaf Ayub Khan and the serving MPA from Ghazi, Adeel Iqbal. Their presence lent the event an air of prestige and underscored the government's unwavering commitment to fostering agricultural excellence and community development in the region. The Family Resort in Ghazi provided an idyllic backdrop for the gala, offering a warm and inviting ambience that seamlessly blended the region's natural beauty with the energy of the event. The gala was more than a mere exhibition; it was a celebration of innovation, collaboration, and the indomitable spirit of the local farming community. —APP

Shazma successfully defends PhD thesis in pharmaceutical sciences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Shazma, a promising researcher, has



successfully defended her PhD thesis in Pharmaceutical Sciences at University of Peshawar achieving a significant milestone in the field of ophthalmology. Her groundbreaking work, titled "Self-Assembled Latanoprost Loaded Nanocelles as a Drug Delivery System," focuses on a novel

nano-formulation for the management of glaucoma, a condition affecting approximately 70 million people worldwide and a leading cause of irreversible blindness. Under the supervision of Meritorious Professor Dr. Zafar Iqbal (Tamgha-e-Imtiaz) and co-supervision of Professor Dr. Fazle Nasir, Chairman of the Department of Pharmacy, Shazma's research offers a more effective and long-lasting alternative to current treatments. Her formulation not only enhances efficacy but is also free of side effects, marking a breakthrough in the fight against glaucoma. This innovative work is expected to revolutionize glaucoma treatment, offering hope to millions at risk of losing their sight.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



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WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



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



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Khorev calls for boosting Russia-Pak trade ties

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari proposed the initiation of direct flights between Pakistan and Russia to enable businesspersons and investors from both countries to better benefit from each other's expertise and markets

ISLAMABAD: The Russian Ambassador to Pakistan, Albert Khorev, stated that Russia is keen to enhance cooperation in various sectors to play a significant role in strengthening Pakistan's economy. He emphasized that the promotion of Pak-Russia trade relations will have a positive impact on the economies of both countries. Pakistan offers vast opportunities for investment, and Russian investors are eager to invest in various sectors. He appreciated the investment-friendly measures taken by the Government of Pakistan, which are encouraging for foreign investors and will help further solidify the bilateral relations between the two countries. He expressed these views during a meeting with the Secretary General of UBG Zafar Bakhtawari & Chairman of the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, member of the Central Core Committee of UBG, and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari who was also accompanied. The meeting included



detailed discussions on enhancing Pak-Russia economic, trade, and cultural relations. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari stressed the importance of Pak-Russia relations and said that fostering trade and cultural cooperation between the two countries is the need of the hour. He proposed the initiation of direct

flights between Pakistan and Russia to enable businesspersons and investors from both countries to better benefit from each other's expertise and markets. He further mentioned that Pakistan's IT sector holds immense potential, and collaboration with Russia could open a new chapter of progress

in this field. Zafar Bakhtawari added that promoting cultural ties between the two countries would have a positive impact on public relations and strengthen mutual ties further. He also highlighted that Pakistan's ongoing development projects and business environment offer excellent opportunities for

foreign investors.

Ahsan Bakhtawari briefed the Russian ambassador about the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement's cleanliness and plantation campaigns. He invited the ambassador to participate in these activities, which the ambassador graciously accepted. Albert Khorev assured that he would certainly join these activities once the plantation season begins. It was also agreed during the meeting that the exchange of cultural delegations between Pakistan and Russia would not only improve relations at the public level but also promote the cultures of both nations. Furthermore, discussions were held on joint efforts to enhance the public recognition of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), fostering development in the IT sector, and advancing cooperation in modern technology exchange. The Russian Ambassador, Albert Khorev, agreed with the proposals of Ahsan Bakhtawari and Zafar Bakhtawari and assured them that these suggestions would be seriously considered.—Agencies

Army Chief's resolve against terrorists commendable

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Wednesday that the Army chief's resolve against terrorists is commendable. He said that the sacrifices and exemplary achievements of the army for the country's sake are a source of pride for the nation. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the business community across the country fully and unconditionally supports the army. The business leader said that the zero-tolerance policy against terrorists is being implemented vigorously, which is improving the situation in the country. The Army chief has made it clear that a decisive and befitting response is being given to those who disrupt peace and order in Pakistan, he said. Mr. Butt noted that the enemy is trying to spread fear, but we will not back down and will continue to work against the evil forces. The army chief's reduction in the operational capabilities of terrorists both inside and outside the borders has brought relief to the nation, he said.—APP

Empowerment of key institutions essential

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Wednesday that strengthening key institutions is essential to increasing the pace of economic development.

He said that to empower institutions, political interference must be eliminated and the administration appointed on merit. Mian Zahid Hussain said that increasing domestic and foreign investment is difficult without the autonomy of institutions and decisions made on merit. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said there has been a long time in Pakistan's history when governance in institutions has been lacking, decisions have not been made on merit,

and political interference has been rampant. He added that this has led to the collapse of many institutions while the performance of many others has fallen to a disappointing level. The business leader questioned how the pace of development can increase when essential institutions are in decline. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan is far behind its neighboring countries in terms of institutional functioning and laws, which impacts investors, the public, and the economy. Due to unneces-

sary political interference, important government institutions have become burdens instead of contributing to the country's development. To keep them functional, trillions of rupees are wasted every year. He said that competent officers are put on the back burner, while political relations are considered more critical for promotions than ability, hard work, and honesty. Therefore, government employees and officers prefer relations over their work, which has caused a lot of harm to the country.

MoU to advance education and scientific awareness in Islamic world

ISLAMABAD: Union of News Agencies of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (UNA) and the Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTEC) signed a memorandum of cooperation at COMSTEC Secretariat on Wednesday, marking a significant step towards fostering collaboration in education, media, and research across the Islamic world. The agreement was signed by UNA Director General Mr. Mohammed bin Abdul Rabbah Al-Yami and COMSTEC Coordinator General Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary. The memorandum aims to enhance cooperation between the two OIC bodies in the fields of education and scientific and technological awareness, strengthen the role of media in disseminating advancements in science and technology, promote scholarships, educational programs, and research opportunities for students and researchers in Islamic countries, provide training and capacity-building initiatives for communication and information professionals in member states. Speaking at the ceremony, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary appreciated the collaboration, describing the agreement as a historic milestone for strengthening partnerships within the Islamic world. He also extended a warm welcome to the UNA Director General and his delegation and emphasized the shared commitment to advancing education and innovation. The signing coincided with the Director General's visit to Pakistan to participate in the international conference titled "Girls' Education in Muslim Societies: Challenges and Opportunities," held in Islamabad. This partnership is expected to significantly contribute to the development of education, scientific awareness, and media capacity in OIC member states, furthering the mission of both UNA and COMSTEC.—DNA

BISP recovers millions of rupees from agents involved in embezzlements

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday said that Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) had recovered Rs 69,496,295 from 8,747 agents involved in embezzlements to ensure transparency in the system. Responding to a question answer session of Senators Haji Hidayatullah Khan and Danesh Kumar in Senate, the minister revealed that total amount of embezzled was Rs 144, 733,798, out of which 75,237,503 was outstanding. He said the BISP was taking practical steps to recover the rest of the amount. Tarar appreciated the efforts taken by BISP in ensuring the transparency in the system, adding that the present government was committed to ensure zero tolerance against embezzlements and corruption.—APP

Political leadership urged to be united against India

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Nusrat Khan said that the political leadership should jointly respond to India's accusations of terrorism against Pakistan. In a statement, Nusrat Khan said that not



only in Kashmir, India is involved in terrorist activities even in Canada. Nusrat Khan said that the Modi government is involved in linguistic, political and sectarian activities in Pakistan. Nusrat Khan said that the Modi government wants to stabilize Pakistan internally without any interference

under the Prime Minister's plan. The PTI leader said that the BJP should not forget that every child of Pakistan stands by its security forces to eliminate terrorism. Nusrat Khan said that the time is not far when the dream of complete peace from Khabar to Karachi will be realized.

Minister, Envoy discuss mutual interest matters of maritime

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Egypt to Pakistan Dr. Ehab Mohamed Abdel Hameed Hassan here on Wednesday called on Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh discussed the mutual interest matters. During the meeting, both discussed the focusing on opportunities to enhance maritime trade and strengthen bilateral relations, said a press release. Highlighting the strong ties between the two brotherly Muslim nations, both sides ac-

various sectors, particularly maritime affairs, which hold immense potential for economic growth. The meeting underscored the significance of fostering robust trade relations and identified new avenues for investment in the maritime sector. Both nations were committed to expanding their economic collaboration by leveraging their geostrategic positions and enhancing connectivity through seaborne trade. The discussion also included the critical role of maritime affairs in regional and global trade dynamics. Ambassador Dr. Ehab Hassan highlighted Egypt's experi-

minister appreciated Egypt's willingness to collaborate and shared Pakistan's vision for modernizing its ports, increasing maritime trade, and creating investment-friendly opportunities in the blue economy. Deputy Chief of Mission, Sameh Ahmed El-Ghomrawi, and Secretary of Maritime Affairs, Syed Zafar Ali Shah, were also present at the meeting. They reaffirmed their commitment in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between the two nations. The discussions concluded with an agreement to explore further avenues for cooperation, with a focus on establishing a



knowledgeable the historical and cultural affinities shared by Pakistan and Egypt. They agreed that these commonalities offer a solid foundation for advancing cooperation in

ence in managing its maritime industry, including the Suez Canal's strategic importance, and extended support to Pakistan in developing its maritime infrastructure and expertise. The federal

sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership. Both countries emphasized the need to hold regular consultations to advance shared goals in trade and maritime development.

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Briefs

Cars' sale up 51% to 46,398 units during Jul-Dec

ISLAMABAD: Recent data released by the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA) showed that the sale of cars during the first six months of the current financial year 2024-25 increased by 51.32 percent compared to the same months last year. According to the data, 46,398 cars were sold during the months under review, compared to 30,662 units in the same months last year. The breakup figures showed that 6,404 units of Honda Civic and City were sold during July-December 2024-25 compared to the sale of 3,938 units during July-December 2023-24. Toyota Corolla and Yaris cars sales increased by 82.47 percent as it went up to 9,633 units from 5,279 units in the previous year. Suzuki Swift's sales also rose by 60.71 percent as its sales surged from 2,230 units to 3,584 units this year. Sales of Suzuki Cultus declined to 1,130 units during the first six months of the current year, whereas during the same months last year, the sale was recorded at 1,062 units while the sale of Suzuki WagonR also decreased to 1,159 units from 1,829 units last year. —APP

IRSA releases 29,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 29,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1477.18 feet and was 78.188 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 14,800 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1134.70 feet, which was 84.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 5,100 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 16,200, 15,200, 2,000 and 4,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Mohsin Naqvi Lauds Security Forces

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has commended the security forces for their successful intelligence-based operation in North Waziristan. Interior Minister praised the security forces for their continuous successful operations against Khawarij terrorists, lauding their bravery in thwarting the terrorists' nefarious plans. Minister Naqvi highlighted that the security forces eliminated 4 terrorists, rendering their plans futile. He emphasized that the nation stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the security forces, acknowledging their sacrifices and bravery. —APP

ANF foils drug smuggling bid

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in an operation managed to foil a drug smuggling bid and recovered 1020 grams Ice drug, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Wednesday. He informed that an attempt to smuggle drugs abroad by hiding them in sports goods was foiled and a New Zealand bound parcel was seized at a courier office located in Aabpara Market, Islamabad. 1020 grams ice drug, tactfully concealed in a Carrom board being sent through a parcel was recovered. The parcel was booked by a resident of Azad Kashmir. He informed that further investigation has been initiated after the seizure of drugs. ANF is well aware of the tactics of the drug smugglers and will continue its fight against drug smuggling with determination, he added. —APP

Pakistan, Djibouti sign MoU on bilateral political consultations

Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa Division) Hamid Asghar Khan and Permanent Secretary General (Foreign Secretary) of Djibouti Mahmoud Ali Hassan signed it on behalf of their respective sides, according to a press release issued on Wednesday

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Djibouti have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Bilateral Political Consultations and also held the inaugural session, expressing satisfaction at the existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the two brotherly countries. Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa Division) Hamid Asghar Khan and Permanent Secretary General (Foreign Secretary) of Djibouti Mahmoud Ali Hassan signed it on behalf of their respective sides, according to a press release issued on Wednesday. The two sides termed the MoU a historic step towards building a comprehensive and enduring bilateral partnership focusing on trade and investment in the coming days. The two sides reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral relations in-



cluding political, economic, and defence and security spheres, and exchanged views on further deepening bilateral ties through increased engagement at all levels. Expressing satisfaction at the excellent multilateral cooperation, both sides also shared views on various regional and international issues of mutual concern. The discussion particularly focused on the situation in the Middle East and Horn of Africa. Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Djibouti are strengthening day by day since Pakistan opened its resident Mission in Djibouti in May, 2022. The next session of the Bilateral Political Consultations will be held in Islamabad early next year. The visit by the Foreign Minister of Djibouti and establishment of a Joint Business Council (JBC) is envisaged in the first half of 2025.

Govt's girls' education drive wins parliamentarians' praise

Pakistan is taking a pioneering role in promoting girls' education, earning appreciation and said the Chief Minister of Punjab and the Prime Minister, who are keenly invested in this initiative

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentarians Wednesday lauded government's efforts in promoting girls' education, praising the successful hosting of a global conference that reiterated Pakistan's commitment to ensuring every child, particularly girls has access to quality education. Member of the National Assembly PML-N Bilal Azhar Kiyani statement to PTV news channel highlighted the government's efforts to prioritize girls' education, ensuring every child has access to quality education. Pakistan is taking a pioneering role

in promoting girls' education, earning appreciation and said the Chief Minister of Punjab and the Prime Minister, who are keenly invested in this initiative. By hosting a successful global conference on girls' education, Pakistan is leading the way for Islamic countries to address the pressing issues of girls' education and out-of-school children, tackling challenges such as access to schools, quality education and cultural impediments, he added. Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, a PML-N MNA also emphasized the importance of girls' education in Islamic society, citing it as both a moral and religious ob-

ligation. He highlighted the need to promote girls' education, referencing the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as emphasized in various Ahadis. Sardar Muhammad Yousaf further emphasized that an educated woman is the cornerstone of an educated society, highlighting the pivotal role women play in shaping the minds of future generations. Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, also praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for hosting a successful international conference on girls' education, highlighting the PM's commitment to promoting education for girls in Muslim communities worldwide. Mirza

Ikhtiyar Baig, MNA from PPP also emphasized the importance of girls' education, acknowledging its transformative impact on individuals and society. He appreciated the bold stance taken by the Prime Minister and Malala Yousafzai, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, in promoting girls' education. He highlights the significance of girls' education in Pakistan, where despite progress, many girls still lack access to quality education. The Prime Minister's initiative and Malala's advocacy have been instrumental in bringing attention to this critical issue and promoting policy changes to support girls' education, he admired.

Secretary education unveils 'Challenge Fund'

RAWALPINDI: In a bid to boost literacy rates and enrollment, Federal Education Secretary Mohiuddin Wani on Wednesday announced the launch of a 'Challenge Fund' in collaboration with provinces, aimed at supporting out-of-school children across Pakistan. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, he said that the federal government has initiated a 'Challenge Fund' aimed at boosting literacy rates and supporting out-of-school children across Paki-

stan, adding, "this program is part of the government's efforts to address the country's education crisis, with over 26 million children currently out of school". The 'Challenge Fund' initiative is expected to support innovative projects and programs that focus on improving literacy rates, increasing enrollment and promoting education among marginalized communities, he added. The program will likely collaborate with various stakeholders, including provincial governments, NGOs, and

private sector organizations, to ensure its success, he mentioned. Responding to a query, Federal Education Secretary Mohiuddin expressed deep concern over the alarming number of out-of-school children in Pakistan, particularly girls. According to Wani, a staggering 60% of girls and 40% of children overall are currently not enrolled in school. He emphasized that girls are disproportionately affected, falling victim to a combination of factors including poverty, conservatism and health issues. This

stark reality highlights the urgent need for targeted initiatives to address these challenges and ensure that all children, regardless of their gender or socio-economic background, have access to quality education, he mentioned. To another question, Wani said "the prime minister deserves appreciation for holding a successful conference on girls' education, which is a critical step towards empowering young girls and promoting education in the country". —APP

Govt won't hinder PTI's right to seek justice

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Law and Justice, Barrister Aqeel Malik on Monday said that the PTI has yet to submit its written demands, if they have concerns about Imran Khan's security and health, they can seek legal recourse without any obstacles from the government. In an interview with a private news channel, Aqeel Malik urged PTI to take the legal route to address health and security concerns of their leader Imran Khan. He said that the government was awaiting PTI's written demands to move forward with negotiations. Malik said the government awaits PTI's written demands, expressing his surprise that despite the ongoing negotiations, the party has yet to submit its formal proposals, which raises questions as to why PTI has not submitted their demands yet, thereby delaying the attainment of fruitful results through meaningful dialogue. —APP

Punjab govt revs up eco-friendly transport

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to curb pollution and promote sustainable transportation, the Punjab government has launched an innovative initiative to electrify the province's two-wheeler fleet, handing over 250 eco-friendly electric motorcycles to environment protection officers in the first phase of a pilot project aimed at reducing carbon footprint. Director General (DG) Environment Punjab Imran Hamid Sheikh, in an exclusive interview with a private news channel, shared his insights on the recently launched e-bike initiative. "This is just the beginning, a pilot phase and we are excited to see the impact it will have," he stated. Sheikh emphasized that

the primary objective of this project is to encourage environment officers in the field to switch to eco-friendly transportation, utilizing these e-bikes for their daily commute. Sheikh further elaborated on the benefits of this initiative, highlighting its potential to significantly reduce carbon emissions and contribute to a cleaner environment. He expressed his optimism about the project's success, citing the enthusiasm and cooperation of the environment officers who will be using the e-bikes. The DG Environment also touched upon the future plans for the project, indicating that the government intends to expand the initiative to other departments and dis-

tricts, pending the outcome of the pilot phase. With this ambitious project, the Punjab government aims to set a precedent for environmentally responsible governance and promote sustainable practices throughout the province, he added. DG Environment Imran Hamid Sheikh praised the Punjab Chief Minister and the e-bike initiative, recognizing its potential to reduce carbon emissions and promote eco-friendly transportation. Azeem Shaheen, a member of the Special Squad, highlighted the benefits of the e-bikes, stating that they can be fully charged within 4 hours and can travel a considerable distance. —APP

'PTA addressing customers complaints timely: Shaza

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday said that Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) was ensuring internet speed, quality standards and addressing complaints of customers timely. Responding to a question answer in of Senators Muhammad Aslam Abro and Anusha Rehman Ahmed Khan in Senate, the minister said that PTA has conveyed that 1015 complaints had been received on fault and distribution in internet services from July 1 to Dec 31, 2024. She further said that the measures put in a place to bring improvement in network services to facilitate the customers. She said that IT expert was increasing every passing day and internet users in Pakistan were also increasing in the country. Shaza Fatima informed that foreign investors were directly investing in IT sector to further improve and streamline the system, adding that the present government was providing conducive environment to them. —APP

IG reviews police performance in high-level meetings

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi chaired a series of high-level meetings on Wednesday to assess the performance of senior officers and streamline public service delivery. A police spokesperson told APP that the meetings were attended by the DIG Islamabad, SSP Operations, Zonal SPs, SDPOs, and SHOs. The IG Rizvi reviewed the SHOs' performance in detail, reprimanding underperforming officers and commending those excelling in their duties, he said. IG Rizvi emphasized that only those SHOs who deliver results will retain their positions. "Negligence in protecting the lives and property of citizens will not be tolerated under any circumstances," he stated. IG directed officers to prioritize the concerns of applicants visiting police stations, ensuring immediate registration of cases where required. "Any inappropriate behavior with citizens or complainants will not be tolerated," IG Rizvi said. "You are professional officers. Perform your duties with utmost dedication and integrity," he added. —APP

PAC organizes various winter workshops

RAWALPINDI: Following its traditional activities, the Punjab Arts Council (PAC) organized various workshops during the winter season aimed at training young individuals in different fields of arts and skills. According to the information, the workshops featured renowned instructors, including Calligraphy by Usman Mirza, Painting Exhibition by Khuram Shahbaz Babri, Drawing by Muhammad Younas Roomi, Spoken English by Abbas Akhtar Awan, Cooking by Aswa Amin, and Graphic Designing by Muhammad Arsalan Ali. More than 300 students participated in these workshops. The certificate distribution ceremony was organized by the PAC in which Director Arts Council, Sajjad Hussain, was the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, Sajjad Hussain said that the PAC was playing a vital role in the promotion of art and culture through its relentless efforts. "The institution is not only committed to preserving and promoting fine arts but also organizes various cultural and training activities to nurture creative talents within society", he said. —CDA to introduce additional plots in Sector C-14

CDA to introduce additional plots in Sector C-14

ISLAMABAD: In response to the overwhelming interest of Pakistani citizens, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to introduce additional residential plots in Sector C-14 in collaboration with the Defence Housing Authority (DHA). CDA and DHA have unveiled an excellent investment opportunity for the public. The jointly launched project, Margalla Enclave, promises to be one of Islamabad's most significant residential ventures, offering a prime location and modern urban living. Margalla Enclave will feature residential plots of 5 Marla, 10 Marla, and 1 Kanal, catering to the needs of various segments of the society. These plots are available on flexible payment plans of 1, 2, and 3 years, ensuring affordability for all. The project will be equipped with all essential urban amenities, including reliable infrastructure, modern utilities, and green spaces, ensuring a high standard of living. Citizens can access complete information about Margalla Enclave on the official CDA website. Chairman CDA, Mr. Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated this joint venture between CDA and DHA represents a significant milestone in Islamabad's development and provides citizens with an exceptional opportunity for secure investment and quality living. Previously, Sector C-14 witnessed a successful balloting process, and the response from citizens was remarkable. Successful allottees can confirm their plot allocations by submitting the first installment. Development work in Sector C-14 is progressing rapidly, and plot possession will be handed over after the final installment is cleared. The CDA remains committed to delivering world-class residential projects that meet the growing demands of Islamabad's citizens and overseas Pakistanis while setting new benchmarks in urban planning and development. —DNA



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US-China tech war

VEHICLE production has long been a symbol of national technological prowess and the manufacturing capability of countries such as the United States, Japan and Germany in the 20th century. As a result, China's rapid global expansion in electric vehicles (EVs) in recent years has been a hot topic. While the winner of the EV competition is yet to be determined, the next chapter of the contest is to achieve autonomous driving, which relies on artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductor technology and data-driven intelligence. This underscores a broader geopolitical contest where leadership in this domain equates to shaping the global balance of tech power. Progress in autonomous driving is continuing steadily. The Society of Automotive Engineers categorises automation from Level 0 to Level 5, with Level 0 involving full human control and Level 5 representing complete machine control. Currently, Tesla operates at Level 2, or partial automation. Some companies have blamed regulation for keeping them from achieving Level 3 certification. So far, Level 4 automation is primarily seen in robotaxis approved for experimental services, such as Waymo in Phoenix, Arizona, and Baidu's Apollo Go in Wuhan. As of the end of 2024, no commercial vehicle has been certified for Level 5 automation. The US currently has an advantage when it comes to the development of AI chips for vehicles. Although Chinese companies have shown excellent performance in the global EV market, only 10 per cent of the chips used in vehicles made in China are developed domestically, with the other 90 per cent imported from the US, Europe and elsewhere. This has raised valid concerns that the US could tighten restrictions on the export to China of AI chips used in vehicle manufacturing. These high-end chips are difficult to develop independently. By limiting Chinese access to such critical technologies, the US could weaken China's competitive edge in the global EV market. This aligns with broader US efforts to curb China's technological rise in sensitive sectors such as AI and semiconductors. In response, China has launched a two-pronged strategy to challenge US dominance in autonomous driving technology. First, it is championing the vehicle-to-cloud (V2C) model, which shifts computational demands from in-vehicle systems to external infrastructure. This approach prioritises robust communication networks over in-car processing power, mitigating reliance on high-performance chips. Simultaneously, China is making massive investments in domestic semiconductor manufacturing and innovation, seeking to close the gap with the US and Europe in the next decade. However, these efforts are seriously constrained by the export controls maintained by the US and its allies. The US has also put forward some preventive plans to curb China's autonomous driving development. The proposal to ban Chinese-made hardware and software for automotive driving systems and vehicle connectivity systems could protect the US domestic system market and restrict Chinese product expansion. Moreover, US regulation often has a ripple effect, which can be seen in Canada announcing plans to ban vehicle software from China soon after the US proposal. Elon Musk meets Premier Li Qiang in Beijing amid Tesla bid to promote self-driving tech Like the human brain processing complex information to make decisions, advanced AI chips handle huge computational tasks at rapid speed under complex road situations. Advanced driving models cannot be built without a large amount of reliable data.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily
 Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
 Deputy Editor: Abid Raza
 Member APNS / ABC Certified
 Vol: 05 Issue: 232
 Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com
 Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960
 Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



Zero-sum game

ON January 13, outgoing US President Joe Biden delivered a speech. Unsurprisingly, he brought up China, stating that experts once expected China's economy to surpass America's, but China "will never surpass us." It appears that this fixation on "benchmarking" against China and viewing China as its "biggest strategic competitor" remains Washington's demon. However, in fact, only by bidding farewell to zero-sum games, can Washington get rid of its strategic anxiety. On the same day, the Biden administration announced export control measures related to artificial intelligence (AI), sparking immediate opposition and resistance from multiple parties, including the US semiconductor industry and the European Union. The strict prohibition on American companies exporting to certain countries, including China, hasn't created more development room for the US relevant industry. Just as the Semiconductor Industry Association (SIA) President and CEO John Neuffer bluntly said, this new rule, "rushed out without any meaningful input from industry," would cause unintended and lasting damage to America's economy and global competitiveness in semiconductors and AI. In a post on its official website, Nvidia pointed out, "While cloaked in the guise of an 'anti-China' measure, these rules would do nothing to enhance US security." The "you lose, I win" mind-set of competition is incompatible with today's world and is bound to face setbacks on a practical level. In an era of major power competition and expansion, some Western countries have adopted zero-sum thinking to guide their foreign policies, bringing conflict and the pain of war to the world and leaving behind profound historical lessons. Today, relationships between countries have long shifted from "you lose, I win" to "win-win cooperation." Various global issues have transcended national borders and capabilities, requiring all parties to work together to address them. The development between nations is not a zero-sum game of life and death like in a Roman gladiatorial arena; viewing great power relations through this lens will only lead to confrontation and crises. On the contrary, the diversity of cultural backgrounds and development paths provides multiple possibilities for the progress of human civilization. It is with a deep understanding of this reality that China has proposed the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind and three major global initiatives. It is necessary to emphasize that the driving force behind China's development lies in surpassing itself, not replacing the US. China's development begins and ends with meeting its people's growing needs for a better life, not engaging in a "you lose, I win" competition with the US. China emphasizes a civilizational perspective of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness. It is building a bridge of cooperation among different countries and civilizations worldwide, providing stability and certainty to the world. Washington's suppression of China's development with a Cold War mentality deviates from the fundamental interests of various sectors of the American economy and society, as well as those of countries around the world. Over the past few decades, the success of US companies like Qualcomm and Apple has largely been driven by Chinese demand and consumption. When it comes to the question of "how to correctly deal with China's development," Washington has repeatedly chosen the wrong answer.

The Dichotomy of American Power

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The growing urban-rural divide reflects a deeper polarization within American society. Urban areas, characterized by diverse and educated populations, align predominantly with progressive ideologies. In contrast, rural regions, which remain predominantly white, older, and less educated, gravitate toward conservative politics. This divide has transformed the political landscape, with rural voters exhibiting strong support for the Republican Party, while urban centers predominantly back Democrats. This polarization threatens democratic stability, as both parties adopt increasingly uncompromising strategies...

THE contemporary United States reveals a paradoxical duality a nation experiencing internal discord while maintaining global preeminence. Despite two-thirds of Americans perceiving the country as on the wrong track and waning public trust in government, the United States remains the wealthiest and most powerful state in the international system. This paradox is underpinned by structural factors, such as vast land resources, a growing and diverse demographic, and a decentralized political framework. However, these assets also exacerbate vulnerabilities, including pronounced economic disparities, political polarization, and strategic overreach. Economically, the United States continues to dominate the global landscape, accounting for 26% of global GDP, comparable to its share during the unipolar moment of the 1990s. The American economy has outpaced its European counterparts and maintains a substantial lead over emerging economies, including China. Innovations in technology, energy production, and military alliances have further cemented this position. For example, the United States has transitioned from being the largest energy importer to the leading producer of oil and natural gas, enhancing its geopolitical advantage. However, this prosperity is juxtaposed with significant socioeconomic inequalities. While median household incomes and wages for low-income workers have risen, rural areas continue to face economic stagnation. The decline of manufacturing and public sector jobs in these regions has intensified economic and political divides, as urban centers benefit from globalization and technological advancements. Rural populations, heavily reliant on dwindling industries, often perceive themselves as

marginalized, fostering resentment and undermining national cohesion. The growing urban-rural divide reflects a deeper polarization within American society. Urban areas, characterized by diverse and educated populations, align predominantly with progressive ideologies. In contrast, rural regions, which remain predominantly white, older, and less educated, gravitate toward conservative politics. This divide has transformed the political landscape, with rural voters exhibiting strong support for the Republican Party, while urban centers predominantly back Democrats. This polarization threatens democratic stability, as both parties adopt increasingly uncompromising strategies, sidelining bipartisan governance. The United States' global dominance is rooted in its unparalleled economic, military, and technological capabilities. The dollar's centrality in international finance and the country's leadership in technological innovation underscore this influence. Moreover, military alliances, such as NATO and initiatives like AUKUS, have bolstered U.S. strategic positioning. Yet, the pursuit of global leadership is marred by strategic contradictions. The tendency to oscillate between detachment and over engagement undermines the coherence of U.S. foreign policy. Historical examples, such as the inconsistent responses to German and Japanese expansion in the 1920s and the protracted conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, highlight the costs of strategic miscalculation. Additionally, current underinvestment in defense relative to GDP raises concerns about the country's readiness to address emerging threats from adversaries like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. Geographically, the United States benefits from natural insulation provided

by oceans and a resource-rich territory. These factors, combined with a robust private sector and a decentralized governance system, foster innovation and economic resilience. The U.S. labor market, characterized by adaptability and productivity, further reinforces this advantage, enabling rapid recovery from crises. However, demographic trends pose both opportunities and challenges. While the United States is projected to maintain a growing working-age population, thanks to immigration and higher birth rates, other major powers face significant demographic declines. This dynamic offers the United States a competitive edge but necessitates policies that address domestic disparities and foster social cohesion. To sustain its global leadership, the United States must navigate its internal and external contradictions. Bridging the urban-rural divide requires targeted investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare in neglected regions. Policies that promote economic inclusivity and mitigate disparities can strengthen national cohesion. On the global stage, a balanced approach to foreign policy, combining robust deterrence with diplomatic engagement, is essential to maintaining stability and addressing emerging threats. The United States' unique combination of structural advantages and institutional flexibility provides a foundation for continued dominance. However, leveraging these strengths requires addressing vulnerabilities that threaten its stability and global standing. By fostering unity and exercising prudent leadership, the United States can navigate the complexities of the modern era and contribute to a more stable and prosperous world order.

Pakistan and Bangladesh: Turning the Page on a Bitter Past

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



This renewed brotherhood also reflects the resilience of nations and their ability to overcome historical grievances. It is a testament to the enduring truth that no external power can permanently divide those united by shared destiny. The journey from 1971 to the present moment has been fraught with challenges, but it also demonstrates the capacity for reconciliation...

AFTER almost half a century, as a student of history, I was struck by a picture that symbolized the transformation of relationships between two nations. The photograph captured Pakistan Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir presenting souvenirs to a top military delegation from Bangladesh, a gesture of goodwill and friendship. This seemingly simple act carried profound symbolism, not just for Pakistan-Bangladesh relations but also for the broader narrative of South Asian history. As I pondered this picture, my mind wandered to another image deeply etched in history; General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi signing the instrument of surrender at the Racecourse Ground (now Suhrawardy Udyan) in 16 December 1971, marking the creation of Bangladesh. This surrender was not just a military event but a culmination of years of political unrest, misunderstandings, and external conspiracies. It symbolized the tragic breakdown of unity within Pakistan and the birth of a new nation under circumstances marred by international intrigue. For years, this image adorned the walls of Bangladesh's political elite. It served as a constant reminder of their liberation struggle and, at times, a tool for fostering animosity against Pakistan. A notable example was the placement of the surrender photograph in the Bangladesh Prime Minister's office, where Sheikh Hasina Wajid would often stand with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for media coverage, emphasizing the bond between India and Bangladesh that was forged during those turbulent times. However, history has a way of revealing hidden truths. Over time, the Indian narrative of its role in the 1971 war has been openly acknowledged by Indian leadership. Prime Minister Modi himself has repeatedly boasted about India's involvement in the dismemberment of Pakistan. His admission aligns with documented evidence of India's covert operations, mili-

itary interventions, and support for the Mukti Bahini. This acknowledgment, while a point of pride for India, has also served to expose its role in exploiting regional vulnerabilities for its own geopolitical ambitions. For decades, Bangladesh appeared ensnared in India's strategic orbit, with economic and political ties heavily skewed in India's favor. Indian goods dominated Bangladeshi markets, water-sharing disputes over transboundary rivers remained unresolved, and Indian influence often seemed to encroach upon Bangladesh's sovereignty. However, in recent years, as relations have shown signs of strain, Bangladesh has begun to assert its independence at the regional level. In this evolving context, the recent thaw in Pakistan-Bangladesh relations is a development of immense significance. The symbolic meeting between General Syed Asim Munir and the Bangladeshi military delegation represents a conscious effort to move beyond the bitter legacy of 1971. Both nations appear to recognize the futility of prolonged hostility and the benefits of fostering brotherhood. This rapprochement is rooted not just in shared history and culture but also in pragmatic considerations. In a region dominated by India's hegemonic ambitions, cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh could serve as a counterbalance, ensuring greater regional stability. The economic trajectories of both nations further underscore the need for collaboration. Bangladesh has emerged as a global leader in textile exports, achieving remarkable economic growth despite challenges. Pakistan, with its vast resources and strategic location, has the potential to complement Bangladesh's economic aspirations. Trade agreements, joint ventures, and cultural exchanges could unlock untapped potential, benefiting both nations. Moreover, the shared religious and cultural heritage between Pakistan and Bangladesh remains a powerful bridge. Despite the painful separation, the bonds of faith, language, and

traditions have endured. Initiatives such as academic exchanges, people-to-people contact, and collaboration in arts and sports can further cement these ties. The broader geopolitical landscape also necessitates unity. India's expansionist policies and its attempts to isolate Pakistan have not gone unnoticed. The same India that once posed as Bangladesh's liberator has now been unmasked as a regional bully, manipulating its neighbors to serve its own interests. By strengthening their bilateral relationship, Pakistan and Bangladesh can collectively challenge this narrative, advocating for a more inclusive and balanced South Asia. This renewed brotherhood also reflects the resilience of nations and their ability to overcome historical grievances. It is a testament to the enduring truth that no external power can permanently divide those united by shared destiny. The journey from 1971 to the present moment has been fraught with challenges, but it also demonstrates the capacity for reconciliation and forward-thinking leadership. As I revisited the image of General Niazi's surrender, juxtaposed with the recent picture of General Asim Munir extending goodwill, a poignant Urdu verse came to mind: "Pohnchi wahan pay khak, jahan ka khameer tha" (Destiny ultimately leads us to where we truly belong). The wheel of time has turned, exposing conspiracies and unveiling new realities. The past, though painful, serves as a guide for the future. It reminds us that while history cannot be undone, it can be a source of learning and growth. The evolving Pakistan-Bangladesh relationship holds lessons for all nations grappling with the weight of historical animosities. It underscores the importance of dialogue, mutual respect, and the recognition of shared interests. As the region stands at a crossroads, the example set by these two nations could inspire a new era of cooperation and harmony in South Asia, defying the divisive forces that once tore them apart.

Briefs

Army slams Indian military...

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"Such oppression has only served to strengthen the resolve of Kashmiris for their right of self-determination, enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolutions," it said. The army suggested that "instead of trying to conjure up a non-existent terror infrastructure in Pakistan, it would be wise not to indulge in self-delusion, and appreciate the ground reality." "The sobering fact that a senior serving Indian military officer is in Pakistan's custody, caught red-handed while orchestrating acts of terror against innocent civilians inside Pakistan seems to have been conveniently ignored by the General," the statement added. The ISPR also said that Pakistan takes strong exception to such baseless and unfounded statements.

Hopes grow for Gaza...

FROM PAGE 01
The international community will have to maintain pressure on Israel after an hoped-for ceasefire in Gaza so it accepts the creation of a Palestinian state, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa said on Wednesday. "The ceasefire we're talking about ... came about primarily because of international pressure. So pressure does pay off," Mustafa said before a conference in Oslo. Israel must "be shown what's right and what's wrong, and that the veto power on peace and statehood for Palestinians will not be accepted and tolerated any longer," he told reporters. He was speaking at the start of the third meeting of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, gathering representatives from some 80 states and organizations in Oslo.

South Korean...

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before the CIO, even though it is an illegal investigation, in order to prevent any unsavoury bloodshed," he said, adding that he witnessed officials "invade" his home's security perimeter with fire equipment. On Wednesday afternoon, investigators said Yoon had remained silent throughout questioning. Yoon's lawyers have said his arrest was "illegal" because the CIO, as an anti-corruption agency, has no power to investigate the insurrection allegations against Yoon. They also claim the warrant was issued by the wrong jurisdiction. The same court later dismissed an injunction filed by President Yoon to invalidate the arrest warrant, which the authorities maintain is lawful.

Why wasn't APS attack...

FROM PAGE 01
The judge also raised the question about why the cases of attacks on the General Headquarters (GHQ) and Karachi airport did not proceed in military courts. He said that the answer to this question was provided in the 21st Amendment case. The defence ministry's counsel explained that the 21st Amendment case mentioned the attacks on the GHQ, airbases, military, and places of worship. The counsel further said that the Army Act mandates that if the crime is related to the military, the trial will be held in a military court. Justice Mandokhail asked for clarification on what "related to the military" meant, to which Haris said that it referred to crimes directly tied to the Army Act.

KP CM says, informed...

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and when Dar brought up the issue, he (Gandapur) spoke about it openly. In response to a question, Gandapur shared that he interrupted the KP governor during a discussion when he made false statements regarding federal funds. He noted that the governor objected to being stopped, prompting him (Gandapur) to walk out of the meeting. "I will return only after the governor finishes his remarks," he quoted his remark.

Ali Dara clinches Islamabad Cup Snooker championship

The week-long event was organized by the Islamabad Billiards and Snooker Association (IBSA) under the umbrella of the Pakistan Billiards and Snooker Association (PBSA)

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Rising star Ali Dara defeated seasoned player Faisal Masih in a closely contested final, winning the Islamabad Cup Snooker Championship by 5-4 frames for the first time in his career at Shander 41 Snooker Academy. The week-long event was organized by the Islamabad Billiards and Snooker Association (IBSA) under the umbrella of the Pakistan Billiards and Snooker Association (PBSA). In a thrilling final, Ali Dara triumphed over Faisal Masih in the decisive frame with 5-4. The best-of-9 frames match concluded with scores of 65-42, 35-60, 69-42, 31-59, 67-51, 23-61, 59-34, 44-70, and 68-53. In the Masters category final, Chaudhry Shehzad defeated Raheel Waheed 4-1 frame. In the Under-20 category final, Muzammal Sheikh triumphed over Burjees Khan 3-1, while in the Under-17 category, Abu Bakar Chatta beat Gulam Mustafa 3-1 frame. Senior Vice President of Islamabad Billiards and Snooker Association, Saleem Akhtar Rana, Secretary-General Faheem Anwar Khan, MS Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology (RIC) Dr. Ayaz Haider, President of the Rawalpindi Billiard and Snooker Association Dr. Amir Khan, Vice President Malik Asghar, and other dignitaries attended the closing ceremony and distributed prizes to the players.



Djokovic breaks Federer record in Melbourne win

The win gives Djokovic sole ownership of the all-time record for most Grand Slam singles matches played among men and women, and takes him past former rival Federer

SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: Novak Djokovic surpassed Roger Federer's record for the most major singles matches played as he reached the Australian Open third round. The 37-year-old was made to work in his 430th Grand Slam singles match but he emerged triumphant, beating qualifier Jaime Faria 6-1 6-7 (4-7) 6-3 6-2. The win gives Djokovic sole ownership of the all-time record for most Grand Slam singles matches played among men and women, and takes him past former rival Federer, who played his last major match at Wimbledon in 2021. "I love this sport. I love competition," Djokovic said when asked about the milestone. "I try to give my best every single time. It's been over 20 years that

I've been competing in Grand Slams at the highest level. "Whether I win or I lose, I will always leave my heart out on the court. I'm just blessed to be making another record." The victory also meant the Serbian became the first man over the age of 30 to reach 150 Grand Slam singles wins. Djokovic can make further history still in Melbourne - win the title and he would claim a 25th major, moving him clear of Australia's Margaret Court as

the sole leader of all-time Grand Slam singles titles. The seventh seed, who has three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray in his coaching box, will face Czech 26th seed Tomas Machac in the third round. Norwegian sixth seed Casper Ruud became the biggest casualty in the men's draw, losing 6-2 3-6 6-1 6-4 to 19-year-old Czech Jakub Mensik. World number 48 Joao Fonseca, the 18-year-old Brazilian qualifier who stunned



James Vince to skip County Championship 2025 for PSL 10

'I also need to understand what is best for my family,' says Vince

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: England's top-order batter James Vince has decided to skip this year's County Championship to partake in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10, international media reported on Wednesday. The 33-year-old made the decision to counter England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) new policy regarding the No-Objection Certificates (NOC), which prohibits players participating in overseas leagues during the English summer, including the PSL, Caribbean Premier League (CPL) and Major League Cricket (MLC), with the notable exception of the Indian Premier League (IPL). Vince, who was retained by former champions Karachi Kings in the diamond category for the PSL 10, will continue to lead Hampshire's T20 side but has relinquished the club's captaincy after a nine-year stint besides taking no part in the County Championship, scheduled this summer. "I love Hampshire. It's been my club and home for 16 years, so I want to be able to maintain my best to keep delivering for Hampshire in T20 cricket, and hopefully even further our success in the competition [the Blast]. I also need to understand what is best for my family, and combine that with the stage of my career I am at," Vince said. "I am so grateful to everyone at Utilita Bowl for supporting me last year through a really tough time, and for allowing me to make this next step," he added. Furthermore, the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) decision to reschedule the PSL to April-May window to accommodate the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, also played a part in James Vince's decision as the league's schedule for this year coincides with England's domestic tournaments.

Fawad Alams achieves major landmark

Fawad becomes 20th Pakistani batter to achieve the milestone

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan's left-handed veteran Fawad Alam on Wednesday, added another feather to his cap as he completed 15000 first-class runs. The southpaw achieved the milestone in the second-round match of the ongoing President's Trophy Grade-I match between State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Pakistan Television (PTV) here at the State Bank Stadium. Fawad scored an anchoring half-century and helped SBP to acquire a massive lead over the last edition's runners-up. As a result, the 39-year-old became only the 20th Pakistani batter to achieve the landmark. His average of 55.89 is the highest by any national batter to breach the 15000-run barrier. The left-handed unorthodox batter made his Test debut in 2009 after a brief stint in white-ball cricket following his debut in 2007. He scored a century on his Test debut to kick off possibly a glittering career.

Fakhar Zaman climbs, Shaheen slips in ICC ODI rankings

Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Rizwan and Saim Ayub retained their 20th, 22nd and 23rd positions, respectively

LAHORE: The latest ICC rankings update has brought significant shifts for Pakistan cricketers, with some making notable gains and others experiencing declines. Opening batter Fakhar Zaman, despite being sidelined for months, climbed one spot to secure 17th place with 623 rating points. Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Rizwan and Saim Ayub retained their 20th, 22nd, and 23rd positions, respectively. Salman Ali Agha moved up to 79th, while Abdullah Shafique, after a string of poor performances, dropped to 98th with 436 points. Babar Azam remains the pinnacle of ODI batting as the world's number one, followed by India's Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill in second and third positions. On the bowling side, Haris Rauf held steady at 18th with 585 points. Naseem Shah made progress, moving up to 50th and Mohammad Wasim Jr climbed two spots to 59th. Mohammad Nawaz stayed at 72nd. However, Shaheen Afridi was dethroned from third place by Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana, dropping to fourth. Afghanistan's

Rashid Khan and India's Kuldeep Yadav occupy the top two positions. In Test batting, Pakistan's vice-captain slipped five places to 11th with 724 points, while Babar Azam climbed five spots to 12th. Mohammad Rizwan also improved, advancing to 19th. Salman Ali Agha jumps to 22nd and Shan Masood surged 12 places to 45th with 550 points. However, Imam-ul-Haq and Abdullah Shafique fell to 49th and 53rd, respectively, while Kamran Ghulam and Saim Ayub dropped to 87th and 92nd. For Test bowlers, Noman Ali and Shaheen Afridi slipped to 11th and 21st places, respectively. Mohammad Abbas and Naseem Shah also saw minor declines, with Abrar Ahmed being a bright spot, climbing to 58th. Jasprit Bumrah retained the top spot, with Pat Cummins overtaking Josh Hazlewood for second and Kagiso Rabada holding third. In T20I batting, Babar Azam moved up to sixth place, joining skipper Mohammad Rizwan in the top 10. Saim Ayub retained his 57th spot. Australia's Travis Head leads the rankings, with England's Phil Salt and India's Tilak Varma following. Among T20I bowlers, Shaheen Afridi improved to 21st, but Haris Rauf and Abbas Afridi fell to 29th and 44th, respectively. West Indies' Akeal Hosein remains the top T20I bowler, with England's Adil Rashid and Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga trailing. - DNA

Badosa, Kostyuk move into 3rd round as Zheng out

Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk, the No 17 seed, advanced to the third round of the Australian Open by beating German Jule Niemeier 6-3, 6-0 at Melbourne Park on Wednesday

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Spaniard Paula Badosa, the No 11 seed, defeated Australian wildcard Talia Gibson 6-1, 6-0 to advance to the third round of the Australian Open at Melbourne Park on Wednesday. Badosa, ranked No 12, will play Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk, the No 17 seed, next. The Spaniard won against Chinese Xinyu Wang (6-3, 7-6 (5)) in the previous round of the first Grand Slam tournament of the 2025 season. During the first round of the first Grand Slam tournament of the 2025 season, Gibson, ranked No 150, beat Zeynep Sonmez (3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-1). Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk, the No 17 seed, advanced to the third round of the Australian Open by beating German Jule Niemeier 6-3, 6-0 at Melbourne Park on Wednesday. Kostyuk, ranked No 18, will face the winner of the match between Spaniard Paula Badosa, the No 11 seed, and Australian wildcard Talia Gibson next. The 22-year-old Ukrainian won against Japanese qualifier Nao Hibino (3-6, 6-3, 6-1) ahead of her victory. In the previous round of the first Grand Slam tournament of the 2025 season, Niemeier, ranked No 93, won against Pole qualifier Maja Chwalinska (6-0, 6-1). Meanwhile,

Zheng Qinwen admitted it was not her day as she was beaten in the Australian Open second round in the biggest shock of the tournament so far. China's Zheng, runner-up to Aryna Sabalenka last year and the Olympic singles gold medalist, lost 7-6 (7-3) 6-3 to German veteran Laura Siegemund. The fifth seed is the highest ranked

player from either singles draw to lose so far at Melbourne Park. Zheng was irked by two time violations during the match, one of which cost her a first serve. She complained to the umpire that she could not see the shot clock, which tells players how long they have left to serve before the 25 second allowance runs out. "Maybe today is

not my day," Zheng, 22, said. "There's a lot of details in the important points. I didn't do the right choice." Two-time defending champion Sabalenka avoided the same fate but was made to work in her 6-3 7-5 win against Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro. World number one Sabalenka was 5-2 down in the second set before mounting a comeback.



FO trashes provocative statements

FROM PAGE 01
"These actions suppress the legitimate and just struggle of the Kashmiri people for their inalienable right to self-determination," said the statement, adding that Pakistan also underscores that provocative statements of this nature are counter-productive to regional peace and stability. "Instead of levelling baseless allegations against others, India must introspect and address its own documented involvement in orchestrating targeted assassinations, acts of subversion, and state-sponsored terrorism in foreign territories," it added.

PM Shehbaz orders...

FROM PAGE 01
Many government officials have been dismissed for facilitating the crime while several others face disciplinary proceedings. The prime minister was apprised of the punitive measures being taken against the government officials involved in human smuggling. Besides the assets of human smugglers worth Rs500 million had been confiscated and a process was underway for more such confiscations. It was also told that special prosecutors had been appointed to prosecute the human smugglers.

KSA 'mulling' \$100m...

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interview on the sidelines of the Future Minerals Forum in Riyadh. "Without that infrastructure, the economics of the deal are not attractive, so through the Saudi Development Fund we are thinking about how we can finance it." The statement came a day after Petroleum Minister Musaidik Malik said Saudi Arabian mining company Manara Minerals could invest in Reko Diq mine in the next two quarters. "I'm very hopeful that in the next quarter or two we will have very big announcements," Malik said on the sidelines of the Future Minerals Forum in Riyadh, adding they would be copper-related.

Pak was never...

FROM PAGE 01
committed to working with Pakistan to address those common threats and challenges. "And that's not - that hasn't changed. It's not going to change." In August, 2024, spokesperson from the State Department Vedant Patel had reaffirmed his country's commitment to preventing groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from using Afghanistan as a hub for launching attacks against neighbouring countries including Pakistan.

Bilawal 'invited'...

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leaders to his inauguration in Washington. It is pertinent to mention here that PPP Co-chairman and incumbent President Asif Ali Zardari had attended the pre-inauguration oath ceremony of then US president-elect Trump in Washington, DC in 2017. Zardari was accompanied by PPP leaders Rehman Malik (late) and Sherry Rehman. Following his landslide victory in the November 5 presidential election, Trump will be sworn in as the 47th head of the state during the inauguration ceremony at the Capitol next week.

Pak confirms 72nd polio...

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polio case from DI Khan, underscoring ongoing challenges in the fight against the disease despite repeated mass vaccination drives. A day earlier, the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH) confirmed 71st case in Sindh's Jacobabad. The national tally for WPV1 cases in 2024 now stands at 72, with Balochistan reporting the highest number at 27 cases, followed by 21 each from Sindh, 22 from KP, and one each from Punjab and Islamabad. Health officials stressed that polio remains a paralyzing disease with no known cure, emphasising the critical need for vaccination.

Briefs

Gold price increases by Rs 2,900 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.2,900 and was sold at Rs 280,800 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs 277,900 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.2,487 to Rs.240,741 from Rs 238,254 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs.220,679 from Rs 218,400. The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,350 and Rs.2,872.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$29 to \$2,690 from \$2,661, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee sheds 4 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 04 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.76 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.72. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.20 and Rs 280.70 respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.54 to close at Rs287.24 against the last day's closing of Rs285.70, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.77, whereas an increase of 89 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs341.08 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs340.19. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paise each to close at Rs75.89 and Rs74.26, respectively.—APP

PSX loses 308 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 308.46 points on Wednesday, a negative change of 0.27 percent, closing at 114,495.71 points as compared to 114,804.17 points on the last trading day. A total of 659,431,269 shares were traded during the day as compared to 589,463,320 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs39.640 billion against Rs. 32.584 billion on the last trading day. As many as 455 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 176 of them recorded gains and 225 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 54 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were TradeCall Telecom with 68,666,714 shares at Rs 1.80 per share, Pak Refinery with 56,858,715 shares at Rs.43.49 per share and Cnergycio PK with 43,218,561 shares at Rs.7.06 per share.—APP

German minister says 'historic opportunity' to support new Syria

DAMASCUS: Germany's Development Minister Svenja Schulze promised to support Syria's "peaceful and stable development" as she visited Damascus on Wednesday to meet with the interim authorities. "After over 50 years of dictatorship and 14 years of civil war, Syria now has the chance of peaceful and stable development," Schulze said in a statement. Her visit comes a little over a month after Islamist-led forces toppled long-time president Bashar Assad. Schulze is due to meet with the new leadership as well as aid organizations "to identify how Germany can support the development of a peaceful, stable and inclusive Syria," the minister's statement said. "It would be wrong of us not to use this historic window of opportunity to support Syria in embarking on a peaceful new beginning," she said. "Germany can do a lot to support the new beginning for... Syrian society."—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador İrfan Nezirolu paid a courtesy visit to Muhammad Saleem Baig, Chairman of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). During the meeting, opportunities for collaboration and experience sharing in the fields of media, communication, and broadcasting were discussed.—DNA

Saudi prepares for another hajj menaced by extreme heat

Authorities were pursuing heat-mitigation measures at holy sites long before last year's deaths

RIYADH: The deaths of 1,300 pilgrims during the hajj in Saudi Arabia last year underscored the urgent need to mitigate dangers posed by extreme heat, with crowd management an essential first step, analysts say. Temperatures soared to 51.8 degrees Celsius (125 degrees Fahrenheit) in the holy city of Mecca last June as 1.8 million worshippers took part in the annual rites, one of the five pillars of Islam. Saudi officials said 83 percent of the 1,301 recorded fatalities did not have official hajj permits and were therefore unable to access amenities meant to make the hajj more bearable, including air-conditioned tents. It was a high-profile example of the havoc wrought by heat in 2024, which the Copernicus Climate Change Service said on Friday was the hottest year ever recorded. The vast majority of hajj pilgrims come from abroad, and diplomats involved in

their countries' responses to last year's crisis told AFP at the time that most deaths were heat-related. While Riyadh has not detailed preparations for this year's pilgrimage - still five months away - authorities will no doubt want to avoid a repeat, said Abderrezak Bouchama of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah International Medical Research Center. "I think they will above all reduce the risk of illegal pilgrims," said Bouchama, who has worked with the Saudi government for more than three decades on reducing heat deaths. "I think they've learnt their lesson, so we have to see what kind of measures they have taken for that." Other steps to make heat less perilous, such as introducing wearable sensors to quickly detect heat stress, are long-term projects that likely won't be rolled out by June, Bouchama added. Saudi officials did not respond to AFP's requests for comment. The

hajj takes place over five to six days, mostly outdoors. It has seen a number of disasters over the years, including in 2015 when a stampede during the "stoning the devil" ritual in Mina killed up to 2,300 people. Responses in the past have "typically focused on infrastructure improvements and crowd control measures", said Karim Elgendy, an associate fellow at the Chatham House think tank. "Based on this pattern, we would expect authorities to approach the 2025 hajj with enhanced heat mitigation infrastructure and potentially stricter capacity controls." Hajj permits are allocated to countries on a quota system and distributed to individuals by lottery. But even for those who can obtain them, the steep costs spur many to attempt the hajj without a permit, though they risk arrest and deportation if caught. The introduction of a general tourism visa in 2019 has made it

easier for all foreigners, including permit-less pilgrims, to enter the country. Sealing off entry points to Mecca is "very difficult", meaning Saudi authorities should expect irregular pilgrims again this year, said Umer Karim, an expert on Saudi politics at the University of Birmingham. Saudi authorities "need to make arrangements not just for registered numbers but also for additional numbers", particularly cooling and emergency health facilities, he said. Yet Elgendy stressed last year's deaths were the product of "an unprecedented perfect storm of environmental conditions", not just a strain on resources caused by unregistered pilgrims. On top of high temperatures, "the summer solstice timing meant pilgrims faced maximum sun exposure during outdoor rituals", he said. The hajj's timing is determined by the Islamic lunar calendar and will move forward about 11 days in the

Gregorian calendar, meaning this year it will again fall during the scorching Saudi summer. Authorities were pursuing heat-mitigation measures at holy sites long before last year's deaths. Near the Kaaba, the black cubic structure in the Grand Mosque in Mecca towards which all Muslims pray, air-conditioned spaces allow pilgrims to cool off, and a climate-controlled pathway connects the hills of Safa and Marwa inside the mosque compound. Since 2023, roads used by the faithful have been covered in a white cooling material that Saudi officials say reduces the temperature of the asphalt by 20 percent. Volunteers also distribute water and umbrellas and offer advice to pilgrims on avoiding hyperthermia, while misting systems and air-conditioned shopping malls provide temporary relief between prayers.—DNA

Nasir welcomes new power supply system for SEZs, estates

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Qureshi, has praised the government's trailblazing decision to implement a single-point electricity supply system for Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and industrial estates across Pakistan. This move is seen as a crucial step toward resolving the long-standing power supply issues that have impeded industrial growth and hindered smooth business operations in the country. By streamlining the electricity supply process, the government aims to foster a more conducive environment for industrial development and economic growth. Under the new system, SEZ administrations will be responsible for managing the electricity supply, including handling new connections and billing processes. This shift will eliminate the middlemen and avoid delays caused by power distribution companies, which have often frustrated industrial consumers. As a result, businesses within SEZs will benefit from a faster, more efficient electricity supply, with fewer bureaucratic obstacles. The direct involvement of SEZ authorities in managing these operations is expected to improve overall service quality and reduce downtime for businesses. The move also empowers SEZs with enhanced control over electricity operations, allowing them to respond more swiftly to the needs of businesses. With the elimination of the need to obtain additional licenses for internal power supply, the new model creates a more competitive environment within the zones. SEZs will now be able to manage their own electricity distribution more effectively, ensuring that the power supply meets the growing demands of industrial operations. This newfound autonomy is expected to encourage investment and innovation in these areas, benefiting the broader economy. Furthermore, Nasir Qureshi also highlighted the federal cabinet's approval of revised agreements with 14 Independent Power Producers (IPPs).—DNA

Fire-hit LA faces new peril as dangerous winds ramp up

LOS ANGELES: Powerful winds forecast for late Tuesday night threatened to whip up massive fires that are still burning around Los Angeles, possibly worsening a tragedy that has killed at least 25 people. A week after blazes erupted and spread uncontained, forecasters predicted "particularly dangerous" Santa Ana winds would spike. "Stay aware of your surroundings. Be ready to evacuate. Avoid anything that can spark a fire," the National Weather Service said, warning of gusts up to 70 miles (110 kilometers) an hour between 3am (1100 GMT) and 3pm (2300 GMT) on Wednesday. Part of Los Angeles County and much of neighboring Ventura County were in a "Particularly Dangerous Situation," according to the NWS, a designation that was in effect before last week's deadly blazes. "All the plants and vegetation is really dry and ready to burn so... fires can grow pretty fast," meteorologist Ryan Kittell told AFP. The Palisades and Eaton fires - both of which are still burning in places - could flare up, and new ignitions could quickly turn problematic, Kittell said. Officials insisted they were poised for any renewed threats, particularly around the existing burn sites, after hydrants ran dry in the initial firefight. "Please be assured that the Los Angeles County region is prepared," fire chief Anthony Marrone said. "We have checked the water system in the Eaton fire area, and it is operational, meaning that we have water and we have pressure." The renewed danger comes with 24,000 acres (9,700 hectares) of the upmarket Pacific Palisades in ruins and 14,000 acres (5,700 hectares) of the community of Altadena badly charred. Gusting winds were also whipping up toxic ash, with health officials urging everyone to wear a mask. "Ash is not just dirt," said Anish Mahajan of the LA County Public Health Department. "It's hazardous fine dust that can irritate or harm your respiratory system and other parts of your body where it lands." California Governor Gavin Newsom on Tuesday ordered debris removal teams to be on standby, as emergency managers look ahead to possible winter rainstorms that could provoke mudslides. Around 88,000 people remain displaced. For those whose homes survived, there is frustration about not being able to return. For others, there is nothing left. "We all left with the clothes on our back," Sonja Jackson told the Los Angeles Times as she waited in line for government help. "We thought we'd be able to come back in the morning. We didn't think the fires were gonna do what they did." The scale of the disaster was still difficult for many to grasp, with Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass saying it was only after flying over it that she had started to appreciate the immensity of the damage. "It's one thing to see it on television, it's another thing to see it from air. The massive, massive destruction is unimaginable until you actually see it," she said. AccuWeather increased its assessment of the total cost of the tragedy to between \$250 billion and \$275 billion, a figure that would make it one of the most costly in US history. Federal authorities said Tuesday they have launched a probe into the causes of the fires, but warned it could take time. "We know everyone wants answers, and the community deserves answers. ATF will give you those answers, but it will be once we complete a thorough investigation," said Jose Medina of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Late night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel was back on the air Monday night after having to evacuate his studio last week when a blaze erupted in the Hollywood Hills, just a few hundred meters (yards) away. "It's been a very scary, very stressful, very strange week here in LA, where we work, where we live, where our kids go to school," an emotional Kimmel told his audience. It's been terrible. Everyone who lives in this city knows someone... whose house has burned down. And the truth is we don't even know if it's over." With so many in dire straits, the city was clutching for any sliver of good news, with some taking refuge in local sports teams who were back in action. The Los Angeles Rams dominated the Minnesota Vikings in an NFL play-off game, to take them one step closer to the Super Bowl, cheered on by fans brandishing flags and signs thanking firefighters.—DNA

Faceless office system

The biggest advantage of the faceless system is the reduction in corruption. Ordinary citizens will no longer need to visit offices repeatedly to resolve their issues, saving them valuable time

TANVEER HUSSAIN



THE 21st century is an era of science and technology. In this fast-paced age of development, only those nations can survive that success-

fully align themselves with modern requirements. Around the world, the trend of replacing traditional office systems with faceless office systems is rapidly growing. Under this system, priority is given to digital data over paper documents, files, and bulky registers. Offices and companies encourage online work through digital tools instead of requiring employees' physical presence, which helps reduce the challenges citizens face in office-related matters. Unfortunately, we are far behind the world in this area. The faceless system not only improves workers' performance but also saves time and resources. Transitioning office systems to faceless operations reduces expenses such as large building

rentals, luxury cars, expensive furniture, electronics, and electricity bills. Similarly, costs associated with large conference halls, expensive attire, and catering arrangements for official meetings are also minimized. If most offices and companies in the country adopt the faceless system, it will lead to a noticeable reduction in road traffic. Saving fuel will also decrease the government's import bill. Due to flexible working hours, workers can spend more time with their families and friends, which enhance their mental well-being. The biggest advantage of the faceless system is the reduction in corruption. Ordinary citizens will no longer need to visit offices repeatedly to resolve their issues, saving them valuable time.

Reduced direct interaction with citizens will discourage office staff from engaging in blackmail or unnecessary delays, thus decreasing cases of bribery. To ensure the success of the faceless system in the country, uninterrupted high-speed internet is essential. Unfortunately, due to political and security reasons, internet services in our country are often disrupted for days, causing significant difficulties for citizens in their daily affairs. The registration of VPNs and the installation of firewalls have also significantly slowed internet speed, which poses a major obstacle to implementing the faceless system. Resolving this issue is critically important. A robust networking and communication system is essential for

the efficient functioning of offices. Another crucial step is the professional training of workers. The correct use of Information Technology is helpful for complaint registration, assessment, enforcement, and results preparation etc. To ensure the success of the faceless system, large-scale training programs need to be initiated across all regions of the country. Print and digital media can also be utilized to educate the general public about the benefits of the faceless system and train them in its use. Including IT as a mandatory subject in the educational curriculum is the need of the hour. If we fail to adopt systems aligned with modern requirements, we will lag far behind other countries in the region.

Karot Hydropower project key CPEC initiative for clean energy

ISLAMABAD: A group of media representatives and parliamentarians visited the Karot Hydropower Project, a key initiative under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). During the visit, the delegation was briefed on the project's importance, including its annual generation of 720 MW of clean electricity and its contribution of 3,206 GWh to Pakistan's national grid. The delegation observed the project's role in mitigating climate change by reducing approximately 3.5 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. Senior Advisor at China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Ltd (CSAIL) informed the delegation that the reliable and affordable electricity produced by the project will enhance industrial productivity and support the growth of sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services, which rely heavily on consistent energy supply. "Additionally, the project's long-term operation will decrease Pakistan's dependency on energy imports, thereby boosting the country's energy security and economic stability," he said. As a single power generation hydropower complex, the Karot HPP comprises a rock fill dam, spillway, powerhouse, diversion tunnels, head race power tunnels, and tail race tunnels.—APP

Dense fog over Indian capital delays flights, trains

NEW DELHI: Dense fog and cold weather delayed train and flight departures in several parts of northern India, including its capital New Delhi, on Wednesday. India's weather office issued an orange alert for Delhi, the second highest warning level, forecasting dense to very dense fog in many areas. Visibility at Delhi's main airport was between zero to 100 meters (328.08 ft), the weather office said, and more than 40 trains across northern India were delayed because of fog, local media reported. Some aircraft departures from Delhi were delayed, airport authorities said on social media platform X, warning that flights lacking the CAT III navigation system that enables landing despite low visibility would face difficulties. Delhi's main airport handles about 1,400 flights every day. "Low visibility and fog over Delhi may lead to some delays," the country's largest airline IndiGo said in a social media post.—APP

Australia summons Russian envoy over reports captured soldier killed

SYDNEY: Australia summoned the Russian ambassador over reports a Melbourne man had been killed after being captured by Russia while fighting for Ukraine, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Wednesday. The Australian government had asked Russian authorities to immediately confirm the status of Oscar Jenkins and remained "gravely concerned" over reports that he had been killed, Albanese said during a media conference. "We'll await the facts to come out. But if there has been any harm caused to Oscar Jenkins, that's absolutely reprehensible and the Australian government will take the strongest action possible," Albanese said. When asked by a reporter if Australia would expel the Russian ambassador or recall its envoy in Moscow, Albanese said his government would determine its response after verifying all reports. Foreign Minister Penny Wong said Australia had been maintaining "a very difficult relationship for many years" with Russia under different governments. "We will look at the facts when they have been ascertained but I want to be clear all options are on the table," Wong told ABC Radio on Wednesday.—APP

Briefs

Yasmin, Ejaz indicted in PML-N office case

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Dr. Yasmin Rashid and Senator Ejaz Chaudhry, along with other accused, have been formally charged in the case of arson at the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) office on May 9. During the hearing at Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court, police presented the senior PTI leaders and other suspects before the court. PTI activist Sanamjaved also appeared to mark her attendance. The accused denied the charges, following which the court summoned witnesses from the prosecution at the next hearing. The court has adjourned the hearing until January 23.

Sanaullah urges PTI to submit written demands

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to move forward with negotiations, Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday hoped the PTI would soon present its written demands, including a comprehensive list of political prisoners and its stance on judicial commission-related laws, paving the way for a consensus-building dialogue. Rana Sanaullah, emphasized in an exclusive interview with a private news channel that consensus remains elusive without the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) submitting its written demands. Sanaullah expressed hopes that the PTI will soon submit its demands, potentially marking a significant turning point in negotiations, adding, once PTI's demands are received, the government plans to initiate consensus-building discussions with its allied parties and own party leadership. Advisor to PM underscored that negotiation is a vital component of democratic and political processes.

Sattar sees breakthrough in talks

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Describing dialogues between the government and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as a significant step toward easing the current political crisis, MNA Farooq Sattar urged all parties to ensure the negotiations remain on track. "The start of negotiations is a big relief to end the political tension. We should not let the talks go off track under any circumstances," Sattar emphasized while talking to the media personnel. He said PTI committee members have been invited to meet with the party founder and a potential breakthrough in the dialogue process will be made if the PTI presents its demands in writing.

Govt reduces 45% tariff for EVs charging stations

The minister highlighted that the recovery rate for the period from July to November 2024 has reached 96%, significantly improving compared to the same period in 2023 due to the prudent policies of the government

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy SardarAwas Ahmad Laghari Wednesday said that power division has reduced 45 percent power tariff for electric vehicle charging stations and now charging stations will get Rs. 39.70 per unit from the current Rs. 71 per unit. Addressing at a press conference the minister said that regulations related to electric vehicle charging stations will also be implemented and registration and business will be allowed within 15 days. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, a special concessional electricity rate was announced today for electric vehicle charging stations. The special concessional electricity rate for charging stations has been reduced from the current Rs. 71 per unit to Rs. 39.70 per unit. Thus, for the first time in the history of the country, the per unit electricity price for electric vehicles has been reduced by 44 percent. Along with this, regulations related to the establishment of the first electric vehicle charging stations and battery replacement points in the history of the country have also been implemented. These regulations have been implemented under the National Energy

Conservation Authority, an institution of the Power Division, for which a regular gazette notification has also been issued. The circular debt decreased to 12 billion rupees, reaching 2,381 billion rupees for the period from July to November 2024 as the debt was 2,393 billion rupees on June 30, 2024. The minister highlighted that the recovery rate for the period from July to November 2024 has reached 96%, significantly improving compared to the same period in 2023 due to the prudent policies of the government. Meanwhile, the minister also revealed that the power division proposed revised agreements with eighteen more Independent Power Producers (IPPs) before the federal cabinet. The Cabinet Committee on Energy approved the Power Division's summary, granting permission for a single-point power supply to Industrial States and Special Industrial Zones beside authorizing their management for giving connection, bill collection, and other related matters. The decision was made to address complaints from industrial zones and special industrial zones regarding the new connections and billing process, said a press release. In this regard, a mechanism is also being developed, which would be implemented by the Power Division in the next two to three months. The minister stated that the

power sector has begun to reap the benefits of the steps taken by the Power Division. According to an estimate, there are currently 10 millions of motorcycles in the country and they spend \$6 billion on fuel annually. Thanks to the conversion of these motorcycles to electric technology, which is possible on an average for fifty thousand, not only will they get their full money back in terms of capital savings in three to four months, but also billions of dollars will be saved in terms of valuable foreign exchange. Similarly, the use of electric technology in three-wheeled vehicles (rickshaws) is also likely to significantly reduce the cost of travel within the city, which will not only make a significant difference in fares but will also help in preventing the cost of harmful gases, which will help in dealing with air pollution. The reduction in travel costs will also have an impact on the delivery of goods within the city, which will also make a positive difference in the prices of necessities of life. Due to this revolutionary initiative of the Power Division, while on the one hand there is a possibility of a positive change in travel costs and related matters, a positive business opportunity is also being provided due to the establishment of charging stations and battery replacement points in every street. With a concessional price, permis-

sion for the establishment of charging stations or battery points can now be obtained in just 15 days. In this regard, the Power Division's subsidiary NEECA has established a one-window and now registration can be done only by visiting the website. In this regard, to ensure a competitive market and facilitate domestic and foreign direct investment, these regulations have been simplified and the registration fee has also been kept at just 50 thousand. The implementation of these regulations is estimated to achieve the target of 30% electric vehicle inclusion by 2030. The regulations related to electric vehicles and battery replacement points support the provision of charging technology at five different levels. These regulations provide equal opportunities to all global and regional electric vehicle manufacturers. Special attention has also been paid to the protection of charging stations and battery replacement points and related measures under these regulations, which will also be regularly monitored and audited. The issuance of regulations related to preferential electricity rates and electric vehicle charging stations will provide new profitable business and investment opportunities, which will not only provide new job opportunities but will also strengthen the entire national economy.

Iran 'never' plotted to kill Trump

TEHRAN: Just days before Donald Trump is set to return to the White House, Iran's president has reiterated his country's categorical denial of being part of a plot to kill Trump during his election campaign last year. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian made the remarks in his first interview with a US media outlet since Trump survived an assassination attempt last July, and also after the US Justice Department in November charged an Iranian man in connection with a plot to kill Trump the previous month. Trump won the election on November 5 and is set to take office next Monday. "We have never attempted this to begin with, and we never will," Pezeshkian told NBC News in an interview in Tehran on Tuesday. He went on to say that accusations that Iran tried to assassinate Trump are part of "schemes by foreigners" — referring to Israel and other countries — to "feed into Iranophobia." On relations with the US and the tension with the Iranian nuclear issue, along with the recent threats by Trump to increase sanctions and put more pressure on Iran, Pezeshkian charged that the US had "attempted to topple Iran". — Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah calls on the DPM/FM Ishaq Dar in his office. He was accompanied by Syed Naveed Qamar as well as Sindh Planning Minister, Chief Secretary Sindh and others. — DNA

Tarar rules out 'executive order' for Imran

The federal law minister firmly stated that Pakistan's constitution does not permit the release of prisoners through an executive order

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar has disclosed that the opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), is demanding the release of its prisoners, including Founding Chairman Imran Khan, through an executive order. The minister made this statement during his address to the Senate session on Wednesday. Tarar highlighted that PTI, which previously claimed it would not grant NROs to opposition leaders while in power, is now seeking an executive release for its detainees. The federal law minister firmly stated that Pakistan's constitution does not permit the release of prisoners through an executive order. Earlier today, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan labelled Imran Khan as a "political prisoner" during a media talk outside Islamabad district court. He demanded the immediate release of the party's founder, asserting that this step is essential for democracy and political stability. Barrister Gohar also confirmed that PTI will formally submit its demands in writing during the upcoming PTI-government negotiations chaired by National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq. Expressing optimism, he remarked, "I hope the talks process will soon conclude, and we will have some good news." He further emphasised that if the government approaches the talks with sincerity, all issues can be resolved effectively.

Tulip Siddiq resigns as Treasury minister

LONDON: Treasury minister Tulip Siddiq has resigned after growing pressure over an anti-corruption investigation in Bangladesh. She had referred herself to the prime minister's standards adviser, Sir Laurie Magnus, after questions about links to her aunt, who was ousted last year as Bangladesh's prime minister. Sir Laurie said he had "not identified evidence of improprieties" but it was "regrettable" that Siddiq had not been more alert to the "potential reputational risks" of the ties to her aunt. Siddiq said continuing in her role would be "a distraction" for the government but insisted she had done nothing wrong. Before her resignation was announced, Siddiq had been named in a second investigation in Bangladesh. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch has said the prime minister "dithered and delayed to protect" her. — Agencies

Green impact fund proposed to boost green MSMEs

Finance Minister Chairs the 2nd Meeting of the PM's Committee on Social Impact Financing

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chaired the second meeting of the Prime Minister's Committee on Social Impact Financing at the Finance Division today. The session aimed at exploring innovative financial solutions to drive social impact, enhance financial inclusion, and uplift marginalized communities across Pakistan. The meeting brought together a diverse group of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including Dr. Amjad Saqib, Founder - Akhuwat Foundation, Mr. Waqasul Hassan - CEO Karandaaz, Dr. Fatima Khushnood, CEO - Pakistan Environment Trust, Mr. Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh, Team Leader - REMIT, Dr. Ayesha Khan, Regional MD - Acumen, Ms. Maheen Rahman, CEO - InfraZamin, Ms. Shazia Maqsood Amjad, CEO - Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, Mr. Shahid Aziz, Former CEO - Interloop Asset Management, Mr. Rashid Bajwa, CEO - NRSP, Mr. Naveed A. Khan, Chairman - Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company (PMIC). The meeting was also attended by Governor SBP, CEO State Life Insurance Corporation (SLIC), MD Bait-ul-Mal, Secretary BISP, Secretary PA&SS, and Secretary Finance. Before initiating the meeting, Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb emphasized the significance of addressing both economic reforms and critical existential challenges facing Pakistan.

Half of Pakistanis jailed abroad are in KSA

Foreign minister says Riyadh has agreed to transfer 570 prisoners to Pakistan under agreement

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly session was informed on Wednesday that nearly half of the approximately 20,000 Pakistani nationals in overseas jails were imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for various crimes. "The number of Pakistanis detained in Saudi Arabia for various crimes stands at 10,279," Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, who also serves as the deputy prime minister, stated while providing details of Pakistani inmates during the question break. According to foreign ministry data, at least 19,997 Pakistanis are languishing in foreign jails. Speaking about the process of repatriation of the prisoners, Dar said that upon the completion of their sentences, emergency travel documents were provided to the Pakistani nationals if their passports had expired. "Pakistani community pays the fines of prisoners who have completed their sentences," Dar asserted and added, "There is no obstacle in the repatriation of prisoners to Pakistan." Saudi Arabia, according to Dar, has agreed to transfer 570 prisoners to Pakistan under the agreement. A total of 19,997 Pakistanis are in foreign jails, while 68 were on death row in 10 countries on charges of terrorism, murder and drug trafficking, as per data obtained from 88 Pakistani missions across the world. Saudi Arabia has the highest number of imprisoned Pakistanis, followed by 5,292 in the UAE, 598 in Greece, 578 in Oman, 463 in Malaysia, 387 in Turkey, 371 in Bahrain, 321 in UK, 194 in Chengdu, 106 in Beijing, 84 in Guangzhou, 90 in Frankfurt, 63 in Washington, 48 in New York, 17 in Los Angeles, and 10 in Australia.

Air Chief reaffirms commitment to strengthening Pakistan-Bangladesh military relationship

Lt. Gen. Kamrul Hassan Lauds Pakistan Air Force's Technological Innovations

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: A high level defence delegation of Bangladesh led by Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hassan, Principal Staff Officer, Armed Forces Division, Bangladesh, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force at Air Headquarters Islamabad. During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff reaffirmed his commitment to enhancing military partnership between the two Air Forces through joint training initiatives. The dignitaries also agreed to explore avenues of collaboration in order including exchange initiatives and joint training. Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hassan lauded the innovative projects, cutting-edge technologies and indigenously developed technological framework of Pakistan Air Force under the current leadership. He expressed profound interest in sophisticated military hardware being developed, notably the JF-17 Thunder fighter jets. The meeting between Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force



and Bangladeshi defence delegation signifies a resolute commitment to reinforce military partnership, fostering collaboration and promoting robust relations between the two countries.

Launching Premier Floor

- Premier Lounge
- Laundry / Drycleaning
- Minibar, Dry and Fresh Fruit Platter, & Assorted cookies
- Spouse stay with breakfast
- Maisha Healthclub and Swimming pool
- Prestige Club membership bonus points

*Subject to Availability and Prior Reservation.

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