



Islamabad POST

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Macron urges Israel to swift withdrawal from South Lebanon

Detailed News On Page-07

Pak needs unity, not anarchy, says Maryam

Detailed News On Page-08



Haaland to stay at Manchester City until 2034

Detailed News On Page-06



14 years for Khan, 7 for BB

Imran, Bushra get jail terms in £190mln case

In its judgment, the court also ordered the authorities to confiscate and take control of Al-Qadir University; During Khan's tenure, the NCA seized 190 million pounds worth of assets from the tycoon. The assets were meant to be handed to Pakistan, with the settlement deemed a civil matter by the NCA

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Accountability Court (AC) on Friday announced 14-year jail term for PTI founder and seven years for his wife Bushra Bibi in a graft reference about a 190-million-pound scam. The court also imposed a fine worth Rs. one million on PTI founder and Rs.0.5 million on Bushra Bibi. In case on failing to submit the fine, the PTI founder would face additional six month while Bushra Bibi three-month imprisonment. Accountability Court Judge Nasir Javed Rana announced the verdict which was previously reserved after the prosecution presented its all evidence and witnesses. PTI founder and Bushra Bibi appeared before the court while NAB prosecutors Irfan Ahmed, Sohail Arif, Owais Arshad Adiala, PTI founder's sister Aleema Khan, PTI lawyer Barrister Salman Akram Raja, and Bushra Bibi's daughter and son-in-law were also in attendance. Earlier, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar, along with Shoaib Shaheen, also reached court. Judge Nasir Javed Rana pronounced the verdict after which PTI founder's wife Bushra Bibi was arrested from the courtroom. In its judgment, the court also ordered the authorities to confiscate and take control of Al-Qadir University. It may be mentioned here that the court had reserved the verdict 30 days ago on December 18, and its announcement were postponed four times. The court had also instructed Bushra Bibi and PTI founder to ensure their attendances today. A total of 35 witnesses were presented before court against the accused. The court had declared other co-accused

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'Black Day'

PTI to challenge Khan's conviction

Former ruling party claims PTI founder was not involved in corrupt practices

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) announced on Friday challenging the punishment handed down to party founder, Imran Khan, and his wife, Bushra Bibi, in the Al-Qadir Trust case. "We will challenge this verdict in the superior courts," vowed Omar Ayub, the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly and a senior PTI leader, during a press conference in Islamabad. PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar, speaking to the media outside Adiala Jail, criticised the verdict against the party's founder, calling it "another addition to the chapter of controversial decisions." Barrister Gohar emphasised that the PTI founder had not taken any money, reiterating that both Khan and Bushra remain undeterred by the current situation.

Continued on Page 06

JCP approves Addl judges for IHC and BHC

Shahrukh Arjum and Humayun Dilwar have failed to get approval of the Judicial Commission

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan, chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, convened two separate meetings to deliberate on the appointment of additional judges for the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and Balochistan High Court (BHC). The commission approved the nominations of Azam Khan and Raja Inam Amin Minhas as additional judges for the Islamabad High Court. Sources said the commission nominated two out of the four candidates.

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Negotiations to continue

Imran Khan 'vows to endure jail', calls for rule of law

"Bushra Bibi has expressed her commitment to stand with her husband," says former premier's lawyer

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: After the court's verdict in the £190 million reference, former prime minister Imran Khan reaffirmed his commitment to the rule of law, declaring that he would endure imprisonment for as long as necessary. This was disclosed by his lawyer, Faisal Chaudhry, following a meeting with Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, at Adiala jail, moments after the court awarded the couple years-long imprisonment. Speaking to the media after the meeting, Chaudhry also revealed that Bushra Bibi expressed her unwavering support for Khan, saying: "I stand with him and will continue to do so." He also confirmed that Bushra Bibi would soon be shifted to a cell in Adiala Jail. Chaudhry, however, remained optimistic, asserting: "We will win this match. This is a match for justice and fairness in the country, and Imran Khan will

Continued on Page 06

Imran's 'bribery, corruption' proven after ruling: Tarar

Defense counsel failed to prove innocence of accused in £190 million scam case: Tarar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Friday that the defense counsel fought £190 million corruption case on political grounds and did not submit any evidence to counter proofs given by the prosecution. During media talk outside Parliament House along with

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Briefs

2nd phase of rightsizing okayed

Several amendments related to the upgrading and merger of institutions have been approved

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government has 'okayed' second phase of rightsizing for various institutions. As per details shared from sources, the federal cabinet that met with PM Sharif in the chair also decided to restrict any institution from providing services for more than three years. Several amendments related to the upgrading and merger of institutions have been approved. Furthermore, the federal cabinet of Pakistan has approved third-party audits of various institutions.

ECP delists 3 political parties

Political parties are bound to conduct the intra-party elections after every four years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday delisted three political parties due to their failure to conduct the required intra-party elections. The ECP revoked the registration of Pakistan National Party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Nizam and National Democratic Party. It merits mention here that political parties are bound to conduct the intra-party elections after every four years in any case.

Holiday Notice

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

Milestone in space tech

Pakistan launches first indigenous EO satellite

Indigenous satellite to enable effective monitoring and management of natural resources and disaster response

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) successfully launched on Friday the country's first indigenous Electro Optical Satellite (EOS) from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre (JSLC), China. "This remarkable milestone marks a giant leap forward in Pakistan's journey toward self-reliance and technological excellence in space exploration," said Suparco, the national space agency of Pakistan. It said that the successful launch of the satellite represents the expertise and dedication of Suparco's engineers and scientists, showcasing their commitment to advancing space technology. "This milestone strengthens Pakistan's capabilities in space-based observation, enabling effective monitoring and management of natural

Continued on Page 06

Azerbaijani cargo vehicles to enter under new deal

FBR allows Azerbaijani cargo vehicles entry into Pakistan under the 2024 trade agreement

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has granted permission for Azerbaijani cargo vehicles to enter Pakistan under the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement 2024. The FBR issued a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) under the new agreement and the 2024 Transit Trade Rules, covering cargo arriving via the Karachi Port, Port Muhammad Bin Qasim, and Gwadar Port. According to the order, customs processing for transit trade

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Security forces eliminate five terrorists

ISPR added sanitization operation being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: On 17 January 2025, the security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in general area Tirah, Khyber District on the reported presence of terrorists. The military's media wing noted that during the conduct of operation, the troops effectively engaged terrorists location, as a result of which, five terrorists including their ring leader Abidullah-Turab, were sent to hell, while one was apprehended.

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Opposition alliance vows to fight for rule of law

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that for upholding democracy and rule of law in the country all opposition parties have to join hands for launching a decisive movement in the country

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Opposition parties alliance vows to join hand for the restoration of rule of law and the supremacy of the constitution in the country. TehreekTahafuzz Ain-e-Pakistan leaders Mehmood Khan Achakzai, AsadQaiser, Salman Akram Raja, Omar Ayub and Miftah Ismail meet at the residence of former PM ShahidKhaqanAbbasi on Friday to discuss future plan of action. After the meeting, Opposition leaders held a press conference. Talking to media ShahidKhaqanAbbasi said that for upholding democracy and rule of law in the country all opposition parties have to join hands for launching a decisive movement in the country. He said in order to create census, there was need that TehreekTahafuzz Ain-e-Pakistan leaders will meet all political parties and invite them to join their struggle as no single political party can move against the constitution. Mehmood Khan Achakzai told media that all political parties who believe in the integrity of Pakistan, democracy and

Continued on Page 06

No clean chit for May 9 events: SC

The hearing, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, aimed to address appeals challenging the military trial process


SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan's Constitutional Bench has remarked about the legal and constitutional complexities surrounding the trials of civilians in military courts over their alleged involvement in the May 9 attacks. The seven-judge bench, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the appeals challenging the military trial process.


Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam calls on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House. - DNA



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CM Sindh inaugurates 3-day Livestock Expo

The Chief Minister emphasised the significance of the livestock sector in boosting the province's economy and enhancing food security. He stated that numerous opportunities in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries possess immense potential for growth and innovation

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has inaugurated 3-day Livestock Expo-2025 here at Expo Centre on Friday. The three-day Livestock Expo 2025 (from Jan 17 to 19) is being organised by the Livestock & Fisheries Department in collaboration with the Agriculture Department, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Culture, Tourism & Antiquities Department, KMC, and the Commissioner of Karachi. The event was attended by Minister for Livestock & Fisheries Mohammad Ali Malkani (the host), Minister of Culture Zulfiqar Shah, provincial ministers from the Balochistan government, MPAs, diplomats, Secretary of Livestock Kazim Jatui, director generals of various departments, and other officials. Speaking at the inauguration cer-

emony of the Livestock Expo, the CM highlighted the opportunities available in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries, which possess immense potential for growth and innovation. The Chief Minister emphasised the significance of the livestock sector in boosting the province's economy and enhancing food security. He stated that numerous opportunities in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries possess immense potential for growth and innovation. He urged the private sector to invest in the livestock and fisheries sectors to achieve substantial returns and enhance the national economy. Shah stressed the necessity of increasing exports to fortify the country's foreign exchange reserves. Murad Shah announced initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, enhancing animal health, increasing yields, and introducing innovative farming methods. He noted that

his government's vision focuses on empowering rural communities, bolstering farmers' livelihoods, and driving sustainable growth in the agriculture and livestock sectors. He acknowledged that despite its potential, the sector continues to face challenges such as limited resources, outdated practices, and inadequate access to modern technology. However, the Sindh Government, in collaboration with international banks, businesses, and institutions, is committed to addressing these challenges. "Previously, vaccines were imported, but now we have commenced local production, which is a significant achievement," he remarked. Murad Ali Shah also addressed the current economic challenges, urging collective efforts to overcome them. "If we unite, we can surmount the issues posed by IMF programmes. Our collective goal must be the progress of Pakistan," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Women are taking interest in different things in Book Museum at National Book Foundation in Federal Capital.

Minister for tapping underutilized aquaculture potential to boost fishery

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, highlighted Pakistan's vast yet underutilized aquaculture potential during the National Workshop on the Promotion of Aquaculture in Pakistan held on Friday. He expressed concern over the slow progress in leveraging the country's 1,100 km coastline and an extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 240,000 km², which hold immense potential for economic development, said a press release. Speaking at the workshop, the minister stated that Pakistan has significant resources yet lags behind in their optimal utilization. He emphasized that the world is advancing rapidly, and it is essential to focus on aquaculture as a vital sector for growth. He pointed out various challenges hindering the sector, such as regulatory hurdles, outdated practices, and limited technological advancements. Stressing the urgent need to comply with international hygiene and safety standards, he noted that countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the US have raised concerns about the hygiene standards of Pakistan's seafood exports. Addressing these issues is crucial to accessing global markets. The minister urged ending the use of prohibited gujja nets by Sindh fishermen, which harm juvenile marine life and attract international criticism. He called for streamlining regulations to attract foreign investment in aquaculture and encouraged the youth to prioritize entrepreneurship over reliance on government jobs. The workshop brought together fish hatchery operators, farmers, feed millers, NGOs, and government organizations to discuss modernizing aquaculture and boosting seafood exports. It was highlighted that the fisheries sector, contributing 0.31% to Pakistan's GDP, plays a crucial role in food security and livelihoods for coastal communities. During FY2024 (July-April), total fish production reached 720,900 metric tons, with 410,900 metric tons from marine fisheries. Pakistan's seafood exports, destined for the Middle East, EU, US, and Southeast Asia, underline the growing global demand. He announced ongoing discussions with Saudi investors and US representatives to enhance trade and investment in aquaculture.—APP

Efforts afoot to promote agricultural mechanization

LAHORE: Punjab Agriculture Minister Ashiq Hussain Kirmani has said that Punjab CM is taking measures on priority basis to promote agricultural mechanization across the province. He said this while presiding over the meeting held at agriculture house on Friday. The minister comprehensively reviewed the progress of key projects under the Chief Minister's Kisan Package and early cotton sowing campaign. Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said that under the second phase of the Green Tractor Programme, farmers owning five acres or more land would be provided 65, 75 and 85 horsepower tractors at subsidy. This programme, with a total cost of Rs 5 billion, would distribute 5,000 green tractors to farm-

ers. He further highlighted that small-scale farmers would also be included in this phase. The minister said that as per the chief minister's vision, agricultural equipment and modern machinery worth Rs 60 billion would be provided to farmers on subsidy over the next three years. He further said that under this programme, advanced agricultural machinery including wheat harvesters, rice harvesters, maize dryers and 13 other types of machinery, would be made available to farmers through service providers in collaboration with banks and financial institutions. Additionally, service providers would receive interest-free loans of up to Rs 55 million to facilitate farmers. Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani also announced that

under the Green Pakistan initiative, agricultural machinery would be offered on rent in collaboration with land information and management system. Currently, 75% of the work on the agri-mall in Sahiwal had been completed, while progress in Sargodha, Multan, and Bahawalpur was ongoing as per timelines, he added. He further said that the Chief Minister's Kisan Card programme would be expanded. The meeting also discussed promoting early cotton sowing in 12 districts of South Punjab. Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani emphasized implementing agro-ecological zoning to ensure a bumper cotton crop this year. Punjab Agriculture Secretary Iftekhar Ali Sahoo and others attended the meeting.—APP

Randhawa approves several uplift projects for Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Islamabad Development Working Party (IDWP) was held on Friday under the chairmanship of Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa. For the first time, Member Engineering and Member Planning from CDA participated in the meeting. The participation of CDA's Member Planning and Member Engineering in the IDWP aims to align all projects with the Islamabad Master Plan. During the meeting chaired by Chief Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa, approval was granted to hire consultants for the feasibility study, detailed design, and land acquisition for the establishment of a Special Protection Unit. Similarly, approval was also given to engage consultants for the feasibility study and detailed engineering design for the construction of government officers' residences. Furthermore, the meeting approved the PC-II for the establishment of a Counter-Terrorism Department and the creation of canine centers in Islamabad. Additionally, the IDWP approved a project for constructing buildings for eight police stations in Islamabad. Approval was also granted for improving road infrastructure in Islamabad's rural areas. Chief Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa directed that third-party validation be conducted for all ongoing and future projects. He further instructed that no payments should be made without third-party validation. Moreover, he emphasized the necessity of engaging consultants for all projects presented in the IDWP meetings.

Oxford, Cambridge experts discuss educational cooperation with Governor Kundi

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said that this collaboration would open new opportunities for the province's students and youth, ultimately contributing to the region's progress

PESHAWAR: Research experts from Oxford and Cambridge Universities on Friday met with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, at the Governor House and discussed international cooperation opportunities to enhance education, skills development, and capacity building. The delegation was led by Shehzad Khan Tarakai. During the meeting, the Governor and the experts talked about creating projects that would provide better educational facilities to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and offer training aligned with global standards. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi emphasized that this collaboration

would open new opportunities for the province's students and youth, ultimately contributing to the region's progress. The delegation members assured that they would design practical initiatives based on an understanding of the province's needs, aiming to increase educational and employment opportunities. Meanwhile, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) District General Secretary of Lakki Marwat, Qasimullah, and District Information Secretary, Advocate Javed Iqbal called on Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi. During the meeting, the delegation expressed deep concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the

province. The delegation also thanked Governor Kundi for appointing Advocate Javed Iqbal as a member of the selection board for Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi assured the delegation that the workers of the party are an asset, and the doors of the Governor House are always open to them. He further said that the provincial government is playing a criminal role in the province's worsening security situation. The delegation praised Governor Kundi for his commitment to fighting for the rights of the province and taking an active interest in resolving public issues.—APP

Ramesh reviews final stages for issuance of minority cards

The meeting was attended by Secretary of Human Rights, Ali Bahadur Qazi, Additional Secretary Rizwana Naveed, and other relevant officials

LAHORE: A meeting was held at the camp office of human rights under the chairmanship of Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora to review the final stages of the issuance of minority cards. Representatives from NADRA, PITB, Punjab Bank, Finance, and other relevant departments provided detailed briefings. NADRA's representative highlighted the technical aspects of the registration process for minority cards, while officials from Punjab Bank clarified the procedure for receiving financial assistance. It was revealed that a significant amount of data has already been verified by NADRA, and the final stages for issuing the minority cards will be completed soon. The meeting also decided that the completion of the minority card issuance process would be expedited to ensure that eligible minority families receive immediate financial assistance and other benefits. In his address, provincial minister stated, "The issuance of minority cards will be a great gift for religious minorities in the new year. The Punjab government is committed to ensuring transparency and ease in this process." He further instructed that "minority cards should only be given to deserving families, and there should be no corruption or confusion in the distribution process." He also directed the Secretary of Human Rights to appoint a focal person for the immediate resolution of public complaints. Representatives from the Finance Department, NADRA, Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), PITB, Punjab Social Protection Authority, and Punjab Bank participated in the meeting. The meeting was attended by Secretary of Human Rights, Ali Bahadur Qazi, Additional Secretary Rizwana Naveed, and other relevant officials.—DNA

PM's climate aide, FCCI discuss green business strategies

"Climate change is an immediate challenge that requires urgent action from all sectors of society, including the business community," Ms. Alam said during the meeting and added: "We need businesses to step up and lead by adopting energy-efficient technologies, reducing waste, and implementing environmentally responsible production processes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam has urged the business community to adopt environmentally responsible practices and support Pakistan's national climate goals. During a meeting with two-member delegation of Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) led by its president, Rehan Naseem Bharara, Alam suggested to convene all Pakistan chambers roundtable conference aimed at raising awareness on carbon credit initiatives and engage

the private sector about the importance of transitioning to clean energy and integrating sustainable practices into business operations. Ms. Romina highlighted that the government is committed to addressing the climate crisis through comprehensive policies focused on reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable development across industries. "Climate change is an immediate challenge that requires urgent action from all sectors of society, including the business community," Ms. Alam said during the meeting and added: "We need businesses to step up and lead by adopting energy-effi-

cient technologies, reducing waste, and implementing environmentally responsible production processes." Romina encouraged the FCCI to consider how the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) policy could be incorporated into local industries, underscoring the need for businesses to be aware of their carbon footprint and take proactive measures to mitigate their environmental impact. FCCI President, Rehan Naseem Bharara expressed his support for the government's climate initiatives and reiterated the Chamber's commitment to fostering environmental sustainability in the Faisalabad in-

dustrial sector. Bharara assured that the FCCI would continue to promote green technologies and explore investment opportunities in the green energy sector to help members transition to more environmentally sustainable business models. Both parties agreed to strengthen the collaboration between the Ministry of Climate Change and the FCCI to create a sustainable green economic model in the region. The meeting concluded with a commitment to develop a strategic framework that would ensure Faisalabad's industries are at the forefront of Pakistan's green transformation, setting an example for other regions to follow.

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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
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Nasir highlights private sector's potential for export-led growth

On their part, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry said that the private sector's ability to innovate and adapt to changing market trends can help Pakistan stay competitive in the global economy

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has highlighted the critical role of the private sector in Pakistan's economic development. He emphasized that the private sector role in reducing unemployment and poverty cannot be

ignored. Furthermore, it fosters innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting start-ups and small businesses, thereby driving the creation of new industries and opportunities. In a statement issued here on Friday, President Qureshi also noted the potential of the private sector in promoting export-led growth, particularly in industries like textiles, pharmaceuticals, mines and minerals,

food processing, and IT to boost the foreign exchange earnings. He stressed the importance of public-private partnerships in delivering public services and infrastructure projects, benefiting from the combined strengths of both sectors. To fully tap into the private sector's potential, ICCI President called for policies that encourage entrepreneurship, innovation, and

investment. He concluded by asserting that a collaborative effort between the government and private sector could unlock Pakistan's economic potential, foster growth, and pave the way for a prosperous future. On their part, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry said that the private sector's ability to innovate and

adapt to changing market trends can help Pakistan stay competitive in the global economy. But the private sector in Pakistan faces challenges like access to finance, taxation, and political instability, which impacts its ability to create jobs, despite these challenges, the private sector remains a vital contributor to Pakistan's economy and job market, they added.



ISLAMABAD: Jan 17-Women are taking interest in different things in Book Museum at National Book Foundation in Federal Capital.

Facilitation centre at AIOU solution to students' educational challenges

ISLAMABAD: The state-of-the-art Facilitation Center of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has served 466,872 students and processed 66,617 applications by December 2024. While the Call center has addressed 614,574 calls related to admissions, CMS, course materials, LMS, tutors, workshops, examinations, results, and degrees, with satisfactory responses recorded for all calls. According to the official source, the Facilitation and Call Center were established by AIOU at its main campus in October 2022 to cater to the needs of its students, both nationwide and overseas. Keeping student convenience in mind, these centers were set up near Gate No. 2 of the university. As soon as students enter the university through this gate, they find these centers just a few steps away. The facilitation center offers solutions to all educational problems under one roof, eliminating the need for students to visit different university departments. Equipped with modern facilities, the center includes three counters for student advisory services, addressing issues related to workshops, tutors, CMS, LMS, admissions, examinations, NOCs, migration, applications for certificates and degrees, degree verification, corrections, and fee matters. Bank services are also available for fee submissions. Services are provided on a first-come, first-served basis, with a seating capacity for 130 students at a time. Separate washrooms for males and females, free Wi-Fi, and printing services are also offered. Priority services are extended to differently-abled students, who are provided with wheelchairs as needed. The facilitation center operates with a modern queuing system. Students generate a token from an electronic kiosk near the entrance and wait comfortably for their turn. Token numbers are displayed on screens and announced via microphone. This efficient system ensures minimal waiting time. The center's overall operations are overseen by Director Student Affairs, Syed Ghulam Kazim Ali, and Facilitation Center Incharge, Atif Farooq Solangi—two highly dedicated officials who report daily to Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mehmood. The call center, with its 35 cabins, handles student inquiries over the phone. Students can call the university's helpline at 051-111-11-2468, where their queries are directed to the relevant operator. The establishment of these centers, students faced significant delays in resolving their issues, often requiring multiple visits to various departments. This caused frustration, leading to false narratives about inefficiency and negative publicity for the university, which adversely impacted enrollments. However, with the facilitation and call centers now operational, students' issues are resolved swiftly, enhancing their experience and satisfaction. Many students who previously criticized the system now praise it and promote the university in their communities, encouraging others to enroll. Talking to media, AIOU's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mehmood, emphasized that illuminating every household with the light of education and addressing students' needs is a top priority. He stated, "Students are our greatest asset, and they have the first claim on our resources. We spare no effort in ensuring their convenience." His focus on educational quality has also resulted in notable achievements. In the 2024 Impact Rankings by the globally respected Times Higher Education, AIOU ranked first among Pakistan's 89 universities and seventh among 2,175 universities from 125 countries for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education. With over 1.1 million students enrolled, AIOU is Pakistan's largest university, boasting more students than the combined total of all other universities in the country. Managing such a vast number of students, addressing their issues, and fulfilling their needs is no small feat. However, persistence and determination make the impossible achievable. Following its mission, the university has reached new milestones.—DNA

Tarar highlights irregularities in £190 mln settlement case

The law minister's underscored the government's commitment to transparency and justice while emphasizing the role of the judiciary in addressing such issues

ISLAMABAD: Federal Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar on Friday reaffirmed the government's commitment to an independent judiciary while highlighting irregularities in a £190 million settlement case. He said that matters under Article 175 lie exclusively within the judiciary's domain. Talking to media persons, Tarar explained that the issue of £190 million first came to light when the current government took office. The matter was discussed in a cabinet meeting where it was revealed that the UK's Asset Recovery Unit had launched an investigation. Initially, Hussain Nawaz was among those named in the case but was later cleared following an inquiry. The case then shifted focus to Malik Riaz's Bahria Town family,

who became central to the settlement. Tarar outlined that, under the law, the recovered amount should have been handed over to the federal government. During the previous administration, a sealed envelope was presented in the cabinet by Shahzad Akbar and former Prime Minister Imran Khan. They informed the cabinet that the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) had seized £190 million and that the amount should be returned to Pakistan. Approval for this transfer was obtained secretly, and Akbar, acting as Pakistan's agent, signed an agreement related to the funds. When the new government assumed power, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to investigate the matter. A cabinet committee was also formed to examine the details, while the Attorney General's office was instructed to file a case in the Supreme Court, arguing that the funds belonged to taxpayers and must be deposited into the federal treasury. Despite the government's efforts, the case dragged on for over a year. Tarar criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders for making media statements instead of presenting their case in court. Ultimately, a trial court handed down convictions of 10 and 7 years for those found guilty. The law minister's underscored the government's commitment to transparency and justice while emphasizing the role of the judiciary in addressing such issues.—APP

investigation. He stressed the importance of public-private partnerships in delivering public services and infrastructure projects, benefiting from the combined strengths of both sectors. To fully tap into the private sector's potential, ICCI President called for policies that encourage entrepreneurship, innovation, and investment. He concluded by asserting that a collaborative effort between the government and private sector could unlock Pakistan's economic potential, foster growth, and pave the way for a prosperous future. On their part, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry said that the private sector's ability to innovate and

Govt committed to legal framework

ISLAMABAD: Ejaz ul Haq, a member of the government negotiation team Friday appreciated the peaceful atmosphere during the January 16 talks between the government and PTI, urging those unwilling to engage in talks to show flexibility as the government seeks to resolve issues through all legal means.

Talking to a private news channel, Ejaz ul Haq assured the government's commitment to lawful means for issue resolution is a significant step towards promoting a peaceful and stable environment. Ejaz ul Haq emphasized the importance of avoiding a deadlock in talks, instead striving for positive outcomes through patience and flexibility from both parties. Ejaz ul Haq stated that the demands presented by PTI could have been presented in a better manner. Responding a query, he said that PTI wants to maintain its narrative while also showing flexibility, which is causing confusion.—APP

Call for enhancing Pakistan-Iran economic partnerships

Not both sides expressing a shared determination to strengthen bilateral ties and work collaboratively for the development and stability of the region

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday highlighted the importance of strengthening Pakistan-Iran relations and said both the nations shared religious and cultural ties as a foundation for deeper cooperation. He said that enhancing parliamentary exchanges is essential for fostering stronger trade and economic partnerships between the two countries. Iran is a close and valued neighbour, and Pakistan cherishes its longstanding, fraternal relationship with Iran he said during a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam. Ayaz Sadiq stressed the importance of further consolidating the bond between the two brotherly nations said a news release. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to strengthening parliamentary collaboration and expanding economic ties with Iran. He pointed out that enhanced interactions between the parliaments of the two nations could catalyze bolstering bilateral relations. He highlighted the significant role both countries play in fostering regional peace and stability, emphasizing that their cooperation is crucial for achieving this goal. Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam, in turn, lauded Pakistan's efforts in promoting regional harmony and stability. He expressed Iran's strong commitment to furthering its brotherly relations with Pakistan and praised Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's dedication to enhancing parliamentary cooperation between the two countries. The Iranian Ambassador also identified several areas for potential collaboration, particularly in energy, agriculture, and other economic sectors. He expressed confidence that by working together, Pakistan and Iran could unlock new opportunities for mutual growth and prosperity. Not both sides expressing a shared determination to strengthen bilateral ties and work collaboratively for the development and stability of the region.—DNA

Motorbikes, three-wheelers sale increases

ISLAMABAD: The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country has witnessed an increase of 28.53 per cent during the first six months of the current fiscal

year (2024-25) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year. During the months under review, as many as 696,455 motorbikes and three-wheel-

ers were sold against the sale of 541,821 units in July-December (2023-24), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).—DNA

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Briefs

ANF recovers
174 kg
drugs in 10
operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 10 operations managed to recover 174.616 kg drugs worth over Rs 38.4 million and arrested eight suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that 1 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near a university on the service road in Rawalpindi. The arrested suspect confessed to selling drugs to the students of different educational institutions. 116 grams weed was recovered from two parcels sent from the UK at a courier office in Quetta. 90 kg hashish and 50 kg ice were recovered from an uninhabited area of Pasni in Balochistan. 9.6 kg hashish was recovered from a suspect rounded up near a hotel in Sohrab Goth, Karachi. 5 kg ice drug, 1.2 kg hashish and 500 grams heroin were recovered from the possession of an accused held near M-1 Motorway Islamabad. .8 kg opium was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Chenab Toll Plaza G.T Road Gujrat and two accused were arrested during the operation. 2 kg hashish and 1.5 kg ice were recovered from the possession of an accused arrested near a petrol pump in Hyderabad Jamshoro. 1.1 kg heroin and 1 kg ice were recovered from an accused near Turkey Toll Plaza Jhelum. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigations are under process.—APP

IGP takes
action against
SHO for poor
performance

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi chaired crime meetings across all zones of the federal capital on Friday, making key decisions to improve police performance and ensure accountability. An official told APP that during the meetings, the IGP Rizvi demoted the Station House Officer (SHO) of Sihala to the rank of Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) over poor performance. Similarly, the Investigation In-charge of Koral Police Station was transferred to the police lines for unsatisfactory work, while the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Investigations in Sawan Zone and Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Koral were asked to provide explanations for their weak performance. On the other hand, SHO Humak and the Investigation In-charge of Humak Police Station were commended for their exemplary work. Both officers were awarded appreciation certificates and cash rewards of one lakh rupees each. The IGP Rizvi emphasized that all officers must work with a spirit of public service to control crime effectively. "Officers delivering exceptional performance will be rewarded, while those failing to meet expectations will face consequences," he said. The IGP concluded by urging all officers to adopt a people-centric approach and work diligently to uphold law and order in the district.—APP

ISSI holds event on latest
developments in Syria

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised an In-House Meeting on the "Latest Developments in Syria". Leading academics and prominent practitioners joined the discussion, which focused on the recent developments leading to the fall of the Al-Assad regime, regional implications of the emerging situation, and Pakistan's current and future

Azerbaijan envoy visits NUML
to commemorate Black January

During his visit, Ambassador Khazar Farhadov met with the Honorable Rector NUML, Maj Gen (R) Shahid Mehmood Kayani HI(M). Director General NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir, Dean Faculty of Languages, and other senior officials were also present during the meeting

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: His Excellency Mr. Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, visited the National University of Modern Languages today as the Chief Guest at an event organized by the Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center. The event was held in solemn remembrance of the tragic events of January 20, 1990, known as Black January, to honour the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for Azerbaijan's independence. During his visit, Ambassador Khazar Farhadov met with the Honorable Rector NUML, Maj Gen (R) Shahid Mehmood Kayani HI(M), Director General NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir, Dean Faculty of Languages, and other senior officials were also present during the meeting. The Rector warmly welcomed the Ambassador, highlighting the strong and historic brotherly ties between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. Both dignitaries emphasized the importance of further enhancing collaboration in education, particularly through exchanges between the universities of the two nations. The Ambassador appreciated Pakistan's unwavering support for



Azerbaijan on regional and international issues and praised the cultural and educational bonds shared by the two countries. The Rector expressed interest in initiating joint academic projects and cultural exchanges to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation. On this occasion, the Rector extended heartfelt condolences to the Ambassador and the people of Azerbaijan over the recent tragic air-

line crash, praying for the departed souls and their families. Following the meeting, the Ambassador participated in the commemorative event organized by the Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center at NUML. Students, faculty, and dignitaries paid homage to the martyrs of Black January through poetry, speeches, and heartfelt tributes. The Dean of the Faculty of Languages, the Head of the Turkish



Language Department, and the Head of the Azerbaijan Department highlighted the significance of the sacrifices made during the fateful events of January 1990. In his address, Ambassador Farhadov expressed gratitude to NUML for keeping the spirit of Azerbaijan's history alive and underscored the resilience and patriotism of those who laid down their lives for Azerbaijan's sovereignty. He lauded the role

of the Azerbaijan Language and Culture Center at NUML in fostering a deeper understanding of Azerbaijan's culture and history among Pakistani students. The event concluded with the resolve to strengthen the existing partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, not just at the governmental level but through people-to-people connections and academic collaborations.

CDA starts new mechanism
to relocate plants from one
place to other

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Friday informed the Senate that the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has started a new mechanism of transfer [relocation] of plants/trees from one place to another during any road expansion or development projects. Replying to various supplementary questions during Question Hour, the minister said that although it was a challenging task but now plants were shifted from one place to another to protect flora and fauna. He said as far as a plantation in Islamabad is concerned, CDA has the mandate of development which includes landscape development and planting as well. Large green belts have been provided in the Master plan of the city, he added. He said CDA carried out plantation twice during the year. These plantations were further protected from illicit cutting through stringent legislation like Landscape Act, 1967 and the Forest Act, 1927, he added. He said due to the efforts of CDA Islamabad is one of the greenest cities in the world. As far as cutting of trees is concerned, it is allowed only during the execution of mega projects with conditions that the trees being cut would be replaced three times, he added. To another question, the minister said NADRA has provided the National Police Bureau (NPB) with state-of-the-art digital infrastructure and sophisticated protocols to ensure an efficient data management system to protect privacy and confidentiality. In case of unauthorized access and misuse of NSOR data, a person found involved will strictly be dealt in accordance with Section 26 of Anti Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act 2021, he added. To another separate question, Azam Nazeer told the House that CDA has not imposed any fines on HTV vehicles. Furthermore, CDA is not authorized to impose any kind of fine on HTV vehicles, he added.

ICT services export
remittances Rise by 28%:

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, informed the National Assembly on Friday that Pakistan's ICT services export remittances recorded a 28% increase, reaching approximately \$1.86 billion during the first six months of the current financial year. During the question hour, she attributed this growth to improved internet usage and speed in the country. However, she acknowledged that internet users are facing challenges, emphasizing that efforts are underway to address these issues. "At present, WhatsApp is fully

functional, and all VPNs are operational," she said. The minister highlighted that the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) operates a 24/7 service center to register complaints, assuring that technicians are dispatched promptly to resolve issues. "My primary duty is to protect and promote the IT industry," she added. The minister said that Pakistan's current internet bandwidth operates at 274 MHz, which limits accessibility. The government plans to add 562 MHz, recently vacated through court proceedings. She appreciated the efforts of the Law Ministry and Special Investment Facilitation (SIFC) for working to resolve these legal hurdles. She also shared that Pakistan

has eight submarine cables, one of which has reached the end of its lifespan. She announced that the world's largest submarine cable has now arrived in Pakistan, expressing optimism that it will help address connectivity problems. She further mentioned that the Pakistan-China optic fiber cable is currently operational. Highlighting the government's achievements, the minister pointed to foreign direct investment in the IT and telecom sectors. She also emphasized the importance of VPN registration for the freelancing and IT industry. "PTA has made VPN registration free of cost, and to date, over 31,000 IPs have been registered," she said.

Govt committed to
legal framework

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seeks to resolve issues through all legal means. Talking to a private news channel, Ejaz ul Haq assured the government's commitment to lawful means for issue resolution is a significant step towards promoting a peaceful and stable environment. Ejaz ul

Haq emphasized the importance of avoiding a deadlock in talks, instead striving for positive outcomes through patience and flexibility from both parties. Ejaz ul Haq stated that the demands presented by PTI could have been presented in a better manner.

Rain,
windstorm,
and snowfall
predicted

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast moderate rain-windstorms accompanied by snowfall over hilly areas in northwest Balochistan and northern parts of the country from January 18 to 21, as a westerly wave is expected to approach the region on January 18. The weather system is expected to bring moderate rain and windstorms to areas including Quetta, Ziarat, Chaman, Pishin, Qilla Abdullah, Qilla Saifulah, Chagi, Noushki, Kalat, Barkhan, Khuzdar, Harnai, Zhub, Musakhel, Kharan, Kech, Panjgur, and Gwadar from January 18 to 20. Similarly, rain-windstorms and snowfall are predicted in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Buner, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, Waziristan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Karak, Kohat, Murree, Galliat, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir from January 18 to 21.—APP

British High
Commissioner
to Pakistan
visits NUST

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms. Jane Marriott paid a visit to the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) with an aim to strengthen collaboration between the leading higher education institutions in UK and NUST. Rector NUST, Dr. Muhammad Zahid Latif greeted the British High Commissioner upon her arrival at the NUST main office. During the meeting, the two sides expressed their commitment to strengthening collaboration between NUST and the leading higher education and research institutions across UK. They particularly examined potential partnerships to enhance knowledge-sharing and drive impactful advancements in various fields. Earlier, the High Commissioner, along with other members of the delegation, visited the National Science and Technology Park (NSTP) at NUST, and interacted with several startups, including LearnObots, Orbit-Ed and Vyro. She expressed her admiration for the innovation-driven startups making meaningful contributions to sectors such as edu tech, smart tech, energy tech, etc. Later, the delegates visited NUST School of Interdisciplinary Engineering and Sciences (SINES), which houses 10 international laboratories. They also visited the Centre for Emerging Technologies (CEMTECH) at NUST, wherein the briefing highlighted the center's leading work in AI, Chip Design etc. Overall, the visit provided delegates with an opportunity to learn about the university's cutting-edge research capabilities and its emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration across various scientific fields.—DNA

PTI should
not backtrack
from talks:
Talal

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Talal Chaudhry on Friday called upon the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) to continue participating in the ongoing talks, saying the party should not back away as it was well-acquainted with the case. Speaking with the private news channel he noted that the PTI had already demonstrated confidence in the judges and courts on two separate occasions. Senator Talal stated that it is abundantly clear that the PTI chairman and his wife will not be able to evade the ongoing case. Notably, the PTI leadership has repeatedly asserted that any potential punishment will not hinder the negotiation process. Senator Talal Chaudhry observed that the perception of a potential National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO)-style deal for the opposition has all but evaporated in the wake of the 190 million pound case decision.—APP



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Pak moment at the UNSC?

PAKISTAN recently commenced its historic two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), effectively replacing Japan on one of the two seats for Asia-Pacific member states. Given the grave security challenges and protracted conflicts in an increasingly polarized world, can Pakistan play a meaningful role in shaping the discussion and agenda at the premier global body? Several factors merit attention. Consider counter-terrorism. A deadly surge in terrorism and associated violence killed more than 1,600 Pakistani civilians and security officials last year, while the UNSC underscores a uniformed strategy to counter groups across regions. This provides a vital opportunity for Pakistan to underscore the gravity of cross-border terror attacks emanating from Afghanistan. After all, Islamabad has long argued that the attack capabilities of Al-Qaeda and the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) remain largely unaddressed, providing an opening for greater information sharing on their financial support, inter-group coordination, and expanding terror operations. These contributions can help integrate Pakistan's counter-terrorism concerns within the UNSC's Sanctions Committee on the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. As a non-permanent member, Pakistan will acquire a seat at the Committee, signaling potential influence in shaping sanctions or terror designations against individuals and groups during its term. To Pakistan's advantage, there is growing appetite within the UNSC to adapt to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS)'s expanding terror footprint. For instance, there is focus on promoting "country assessments" that could help member states advance the work of targeted sanctions, and improve their own capacities to combat terrorism. Given Pakistan's push to sanction Majeed Brigade – the suicide arm of the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) – country assessments could play an important role in communicating a shared call to action. Key pieces are falling into place: Al-Qaeda's operational support to the TTP remains well-established, and the latter's engagement with Baloch militant groups has intensified since July 2022. Given the Committee's focus on combatting terrorist groups and their expanding sphere of influence, Pakistan's contributions could serve as a value addition to the UNSC's evolving counterterrorism agenda. Interestingly, Pakistan's involvement in the UNSC could also prove significant for UNSC reform. Islamabad can emerge better positioned to strengthen its leadership of the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group, a Pakistan-backed grouping that has called for an increase in non-permanent member seats and a longer term at the council. Islamabad can argue that the current arrangement has brought in voices from South Asia to Latin America, but the complexity of challenges – from the Gaza war to climate and terrorism – demands greater involvement from both small and medium-sized states. The time is also right for Pakistan to push for a longer duration of non-permanent states to help democratize UNSC's peace-building agenda. After all, evidence suggests that the inclusion of more non-permanent small states can increase their influence on international security matters, a long-overdue impact sought by scores of developing states. But evidence also suggests that the effectiveness of small states is constrained by their two-year term limit.

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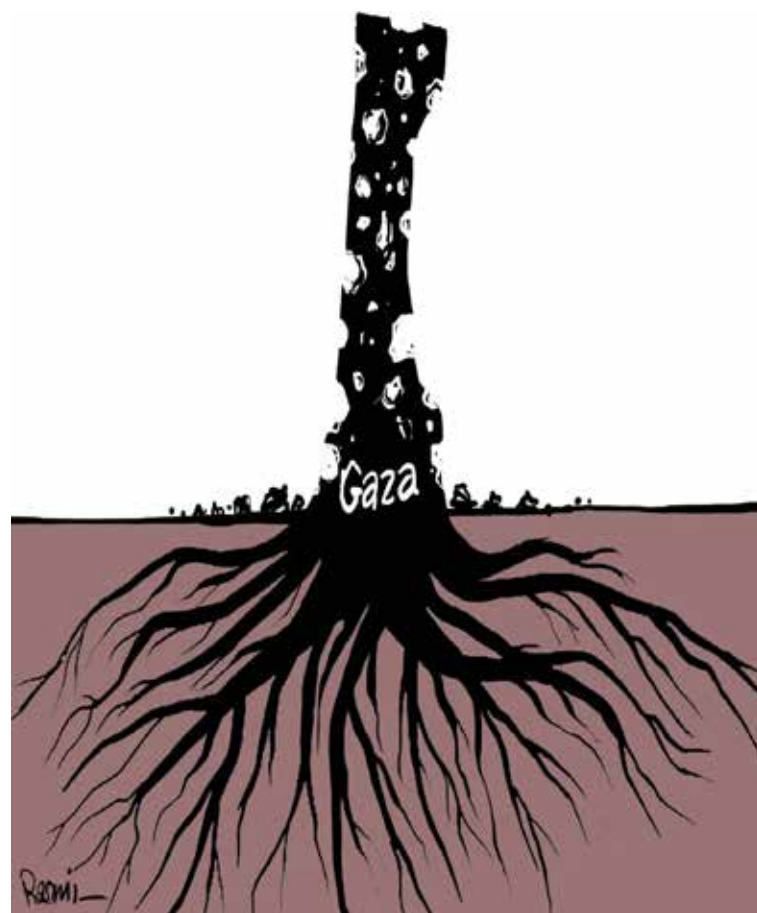
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China's green energy ties in ME

A MID geopolitical rivalry between China and the United States, including US sanctions on Chinese clean technology (cleantech), Beijing seeks to strengthen its presence in the Middle East, a region that has traditionally been in Washington's sphere of influence. What regional actors seem to expect from China is assistance in the development of their green energy sectors. Estimates suggest the Middle East receives 22-26 per cent of the total solar energy on Earth. As such, it sees China as a desirable partner, knowing that the world's second-largest economy can produce enough solar cells, electric vehicles and lithium-ion batteries for the region. Given that clean energy was the top driver of China's economic growth in 2023, it has the capacity to be an important part in the Middle Eastern energy transition. According to Australian research group Climate Energy Finance, China's international investments in clean energy technology have surpassed US\$100 billion since the start of 2023. The Griffith Asia Institute in Australia estimated that Chinese companies were involved in green energy projects across the Middle East worth about US\$9.5 billion between 2018 and 2023. From China's perspective, the region represents a very attractive market for expansion. Therefore, it is no surprise that a high-level Chinese delegation participated in the 15th session of the International Renewable Energy Agency Assembly in Abu Dhabi. The event was part of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, a platform that gathered together leaders in politics and the global energy sector, as well as provided Chinese green energy companies with an opportunity to strengthen their positions in the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere across the region. One of them is Jinko Power, a Shanghai-based solar corporation, which played an important role in the construction of the Al Dhafra solar power plant, the largest in the world. "Before entering the Middle Eastern market, many people were laughing at us because we decided to do the solar business in oil-rich countries," MothanaQteishat, Jinko Power's vice-president, told me in an interview. Those people might not be laughing any more as other Chinese corporations have also entered the Middle Eastern market. Their focus is mostly on the Gulf region, specifically on nations such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman. In these countries, the Chinese are cooperating with local green energy giants. Al Dhafra, built by the China Machinery Energy Corporation, is now jointly held by several Chinese and UAE companies, including the semi-state-owned renewable energy developer Masdar. The corporation planned to expand its business by entering the Chinese market last year. But what went wrong? "Although big, China is not the core market for us. There is significant domestic and local competition there that doesn't necessarily make us very competitive," AbdulazizAlabdali, the corporation's chief operating officer, told me. He also pointed out that Masdar will continue to cooperate with its Chinese partners nevertheless. The UAE is expected to be a major partner in China's ambitions to export its green technologies to the Middle East. Its recent accession to the Brics group of nations seems to have had a positive impact on its green energy ties with Beijing.

US strategy and Iran's nuclear program

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The necessity of exhausting diplomatic avenues is underscored by the uncertainties surrounding the efficacy of military action. While the United States and its allies may possess the technical capability to target Iran's principal nuclear facilities, the complete eradication of all nuclear material and infrastructure is far from assured. Iran could preemptively relocate or conceal highly enriched uranium, ensuring the preservation of critical components for bomb production. Moreover, a military strike by a declared nuclear power like the United States could inadvertently legitimize Tehran's pursuit of its own nuclear deterrent, further escalating regional...

FOR over two decades, certain factions within Washington's political and strategic circles have advocated for preemptive military action against Iran's nuclear program. However, these propositions have consistently been rejected. The rationale for this rejection was straightforward: Iran's nuclear capabilities were underdeveloped, and the international community was united in demanding Tehran demonstrate the peaceful nature of its nuclear ambitions. When Iran failed to do so, global consensus facilitated the imposition of significant economic sanctions, which pressured the Iranian regime into negotiations. These measures highlighted the effectiveness of multilateral diplomatic efforts. Today, the arguments against military intervention remain compelling. A military strike on Iran would likely exacerbate the already fragile security landscape in the Middle East, consume considerable U.S. resources at a time when attention is pivoting to other global regions, and potentially undermine U.S. credibility if the mission were to fail. Furthermore, even the most meticulously planned attacks might achieve only a temporary delay in Iran's nuclear progress. A sustainable solution to this issue still hinges on diplomatic engagement, underscoring the enduring value of negotiated agreements over unilateral military actions. However, the case against military action has become increasingly complex. Iran's nuclear program has advanced significantly and now possesses many of the essential components for developing a nuclear weapon. Concurrently, Tehran's geopolitical position has weakened, as evidenced by the deteriorating state of its regional alliances and its vulnerability to repeated Israeli strikes within its borders in 2024. The international consensus on pressuring Iran has also fractured. Although sanctions remain in place, they are routinely circumvented by nations such as China, India, and Russia. Full enforcement of these sanctions would necessitate robust cooperation from these states, especially China, at a time when U.S.-China relations are characterized by mutual hostility. Additionally, Iran's strategic ties with Russia have deepened, marked by mutual defense agreements, further complicating efforts to isolate Tehran. In light of these developments, the United States must make a final, concerted effort to negotiate a halt to Iran's nuclear program. While diplomacy is the preferred course, Washington must concurrently prepare for the possibility of military action. It is imperative to convey to Iran the seriousness of this potential course of action while actively pursuing a diplomatic resolution.

The necessity of exhausting diplomatic avenues is underscored by the uncertainties surrounding the efficacy of military action. While the United States and its allies may possess the technical capability to target Iran's principal nuclear facilities, the complete eradication of all nuclear material and infrastructure is far from assured. Iran could preemptively relocate or conceal highly enriched uranium, ensuring the preservation of critical components for bomb production. Moreover, a military strike by a declared nuclear power like the United States could inadvertently legitimize Tehran's pursuit of its own nuclear deterrent, further escalating regional tensions. Historical precedents reinforce the limitations of military interventions in curbing nuclear proliferation. For instance, the 1981 Israeli bombing of Iraq's Osirak reactor did not terminate Iraq's nuclear ambitions; instead, it intensified the country's efforts in subsequent years. Similarly, although the 2007 bombing of Syria's al-Kibar reactor may have delayed its nuclear program, the ongoing Syrian civil war complicates any assessment of the strike's long-term efficacy. Iran's extensive expertise in nuclear technology means that even a comprehensive attack would at best achieve a temporary setback, necessitating repeated strikes to maintain pressure. To effectively dismantle Iran's nuclear ambitions, the United States would likely need to expand its military objectives to include targeting Iran's broader security infrastructure or even pursuing regime change. Such endeavors would demand a sustained commitment of resources and political will, raising significant questions about the feasibility and ethical implications of such actions. Furthermore, initiating military strikes could foreclose future diplomatic opportunities, particularly if the Iranian regime interprets these actions as an existential threat. A military campaign against Iran would impose significant economic and strategic burdens on the United States. Current reports of ammunition shortages and strained missile defense systems underscore the challenges of sustaining another major conflict. These resource constraints are further exacerbated by ongoing geopolitical crises, including Russia's war in Ukraine and escalating tensions over Taiwan. Additionally, a unilateral U.S. strike on Iran might alienate key allies and partners, particularly in Europe and the Global South, as well as within the Middle East itself. The absence of broad international support would complicate efforts to manage the conflict's aftermath and mitigate its broader regional implications. Despite the challenges, there are reasons for cautious optimism regarding the potential for a

diplomatic resolution. Historical instances, such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), demonstrate the capacity of negotiations to effectively constrain Iran's nuclear program. The JCPOA imposed stringent limits on Iran's nuclear activities and established robust monitoring mechanisms, resulting in substantial curbs on Tehran's capabilities. Although the agreement's collapse was precipitated by the Trump administration's withdrawal, its initial success highlights the potential efficacy of negotiated agreements. Rebuilding trust and crafting a new agreement would require significant diplomatic effort and creative problem-solving. Key issues to address include the scope of constraints on Iran's nuclear program, the inclusion of provisions related to Iran's regional behavior, and the nature of sanctions relief and security assurances. Multilateral negotiations involving additional stakeholders may enhance the agreement's legitimacy and durability but would also introduce complexities, particularly given current global tensions. If diplomatic efforts fail, the United States must be prepared to confront the implications of a nuclear-armed Iran. Although Iran's nuclear weapons would not pose an immediate existential threat to the United States, their proliferation could destabilize the region, triggering arms races and increasing the likelihood of nuclear conflict. Moreover, the potential for nuclear technology to fall into the hands of non-state actors or terrorist groups amplifies the risks associated with Iran's nuclear ambitions. A targeted military campaign could yield strategic benefits by depleting Iran's resources and limiting its ability to threaten U.S. interests. However, such action would need to be part of a broader strategy to ensure regional stability and prevent further escalation. Measures to mitigate civilian casualties and unintended collateral damage would be critical in maintaining international legitimacy and minimizing backlash. The United States faces a complex and precarious dilemma regarding Iran's nuclear program. While the risks and costs of military action are substantial, the consequences of inaction could be equally dire. Diplomacy remains the most viable path forward, offering the potential for a sustainable resolution that addresses both nuclear and regional security concerns. Nevertheless, Washington must simultaneously prepare for the eventuality of military action, ensuring that it is both strategically sound and ethically justifiable. By balancing these approaches, the United States can navigate the intricate challenges posed by Iran's nuclear ambitions and contribute to broader regional and global stability.

Israel must be held to account in wake of Gaza ceasefire

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

The second point that should be enforced is not allowing Israel to steal any funds designated for the Palestinians. Israeli newspaper Israel Hayom last week reported that Tel Aviv had "repurposed" funds dedicated to the Palestinian Authority. The report claimed Israel used money from "the Norwegian fund" to settle a debt by the PA for the provision of electricity. This is just another way to cover up the theft of funds earmarked for Gaza. After the ceasefire, a huge amount of aid funding will flow into the afflicted...

A CEASEFIRE in Gaza is set to take effect on Sunday and everyone is happy this nightmare might finally be over. But as we approach the "day after," it is important to highlight what the responsibilities of Israel and the international community are to the people of Gaza. Everyone is skeptical about whether Israel will comply. The Israeli far right definitely does not want a deal and does not care about the hostages. The country's media (with the exception of Haaretz) has been taken over by the right and it keeps on spreading misinformation, claiming that Hamas has been blocking the deal. A deal has now been agreed, but there is no clarity on whether Israel will withdraw from Gaza, which is why Hamas asked for maps. Also, the phase two negotiations will begin on the 16th day of the ceasefire. Hence, the Palestinians are entering a process without knowing exactly where it will take them. Nevertheless, the Palestinians just want a ceasefire. They deem that anything is better than what they are going through. Regardless of the political and military details of the deal, the people of Gaza need urgent attention. Society in Gaza is decimated. Though the reported number killed is about 47,000, the real number is likely much higher. A study by British medical journal The Lancet estimates that the final death toll will probably be 40 percent higher. Most surviving Gazans have lost family members during the 15-month war. The entire community suffers from malnutrition and trauma. The international community, which has been complicit in covering up for Israel, should put pressure on Tel Aviv to comply on several fronts. The first point is to allow humanitarian aid. Throughout the war, Isra-

el has been using hunger as a weapon. It should not be allowed to do that anymore. During the war, it has done everything it can to prevent aid from reaching Gaza, starting with allowing Israeli fanatics to confiscate aid and destroy it at the border. It is also allowing gangs to steal the aid as it enters Gaza. This is to exonerate itself from any responsibility for such thefts. All these crooked practices should be banned. Whether Israel fully withdraws or not, humanitarian aid should be allowed to be distributed freely and should be protected by an international force. The second point that should be enforced is not allowing Israel to steal any funds designated for the Palestinians. Israeli newspaper Israel Hayom last week reported that Tel Aviv had "repurposed" funds dedicated to the Palestinian Authority. The report claimed Israel used money from "the Norwegian fund" to settle a debt by the PA for the provision of electricity. This is just another way to cover up the theft of funds earmarked for Gaza. After the ceasefire, a huge amount of aid funding will flow into the afflicted Strip to cater for the urgent needs of Gazans. There should be a proper oversight of funds allocated to Gaza. Israel should not be allowed to take any cuts or divert any funds. Israel should also be coerced into allowing the free flow of information. The ceasefire should be an opportunity to reveal the truth of its Gaza war to the world. Israel should not be allowed to restrict the movement or operation of the media. The world needs to see what Israel has been doing. It has been targeting every source of life of the Palestinians. It has been targeting places of worship. It has even been targeting humanitarian safe zones that were designated as such by the Israeli army. Also, Israel

has been targeting everyone of importance in society: doctors, researchers, university professors, poets, athletes and journalists. It wants to destroy society. It tried to eradicate any qualified person, any talent, in Gaza. The media is just beginning to dig deeper into Israel's crimes. The BBC this week published a report in which it said Israel had struck a "humanitarian zone" almost 100 times since May. The media should be able to freely report the stories it has not been able to cover during the war. Israel should also be held responsible for handling the 2 million people who are without housing and live without any proper sanitation or care. The international community, especially Arab countries, which will be tasked with financing the rebuilding of Gaza, should be aware and vigilant. Israel will try to hide its crimes from the international community. This is an occasion to uncover the "shameful" situation in Gaza, as Pope Francis described it last week. Israel has so far claimed that all the accusations against it are not true. It claims that the number of casualties is being hyped up by Hamas. It claims that it has not been blocking aid, but rather Hamas is stealing it. All these lies should be dispelled. Even Tel Aviv's allies should push for this, because it will pressure Israel into walking the line. If Israel feels there is no accountability for what it has done, it will repeat the same criminal act again in a few years' time.

– Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib is a specialist in US-Arab relations with a focus on lobbying. She is co-founder of the Research Center for Cooperation and Peace Building, a Lebanese nongovernmental organization focused on Track II.

Briefs

Imran, Bushra get jail terms in £190mln...

FROM PAGE 01 including Barrister Shahzad Akbar, Zulfi Bokhari, FarhatShehzadi (Gogi) as proclaimed offender. The 190 million pounds case involves a reference filed by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) against former prime minister Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi, and others in December 2023. The case centres around an alleged settlement between the PTI government and a property tycoon, which reportedly caused a loss of 190 million pounds to Pakistan's national exchequer. Khan and the other accused are alleged to have misused 190 million pounds sent by the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) as part of the settlement. Bushra Bibi was named an accused for her role as a trustee of the Al-Qadir Trust. Additionally, the couple is accused of receiving undue benefits, including over 458 kanal in MauzaBakralla, Sohawa, for the establishment of Al-Qadir University.

PTI to challenge Khan's...

FROM PAGE 01 He expressed confidence in the legal process, announcing that an appeal against the case verdict would be filed in the high court within a few days. "The PTI founder will be released soon," Gohar declared, highlighting that Khan has spent 27 years "striving for justice" in Pakistan. "It is unfortunate that someone who made such great sacrifices for justice is now being denied the same," Gohar also shared that the PTI founder has urged for negotiations to continue, saying that these talks will proceed for seven days. He further noted that Khan's morale remains high, and the imposed sentence will be overturned soon. Calling it a 'Black Day', Opposition Leader in the Senate ShibliFaraz said that superior courts would dismiss the "baseless" case against the PTI founder. "In this country, thieves roam freely, while the innocent and honest individuals who walk the path of righteousness are being targeted," said Faraz.

Opposition alliance vows to...

FROM PAGE 01 the supremacy of the constitution, should come on one platform. He also invited the opposition parties to be a part of this movement. PTI MNA AsadQaiser said that the time has come to fight for the supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law in the country. He further said that the punishment given to the PTI founder is a blow to the entire judiciary as the executive organs of the government were using the judiciary, which is not acceptable. Leader of the opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub demanded of the government to arrange their meeting with Imran Khan, if the government wants, this meeting can be arranged immediately. He also emphasized that all political parties should come together and demanded of the government to establish judicial commission to probe May 9 and November 26, 2024 incidents.

No clean chit for May 9 events: SC

FROM PAGE 01 Justice Jamal Mandokhail emphasised that crimes committed during the May 9 incidents cannot be denied, but the critical issue remains the jurisdiction of the trials. "The question is not whether a crime occurred, but where the trial should be conducted," Justice Mandokhail remarked. The discussion centred on the 21st Amendment, which established the framework for military courts. Justice Mandokhail pointed out that the amendment specifically prohibits political parties' cases from being tried in military courts, raising concerns about the application of the Army Act to civilians.

Abubakar lifts U-18 singles title at Millat Junior Tennis

In the boys U-18 doubles final, Abubakar Talha, teamed up with Amir Mazari of Aitchison College, delivered another stellar performance, defeating M Salar and Asad Zaman



AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Wapda's Abubakar Talha lifted the boys U-18 singles title at the Millat Tractors Junior National Tennis Championship

2025 that concluded at Punjab Tennis Academy. Abubakar Talha, a student of FGEI, defeated M Salar in a thrilling final with a commanding scoreline of 6-3, 6-4. Abubakar, sponsored by SA Gardens and Euro Petroleum, showcased remarkable

skill and determination throughout the tournament. Following his title-winning performance, he expressed heartfelt gratitude to his supporters. "I am incredibly grateful to my sponsors, SA Gardens and Euro Petroleum, for their all-out support and belief in

my abilities. This victory is a special blessing from Allah," Abubakar said. "I also owe a great deal to my coach and mentor, Mehboob Waheed Jan, and my school, FGEI, for their guidance and encouragement. With Allah's help, I aim to keep improving and making my supporters proud." In the boys U-18 doubles final, Abubakar Talha, teamed up with Amir Mazari of Aitchison College, delivered another stellar performance, defeating M Salar and Asad Zaman with an emphatic score of 6-1, 6-1 to complete the brace of titles. In the boys U-14 final, AbdurRehman of SICAS overcame M Junaid 1-4, 4-1, 4-0. In the boys U-14 doubles final, Muhammad Junaid Khan and Rayan Khan Khalil edged out Ohad-e-Mustafa and M Ayan Khan 5-4, 4-1. In the girls U-14 final, Khadija Khalil thrashed Shahnoor Umer 4-0, 4-0. In the boys/girls U-10 final, AshtarAlam Khan dominated Mustafa Zia 6-0. In the boys/girls U-8, M Mannoos Bari gold, Shahreen Umer silver, Ibrahim Faizan bronze. In the boys/girls U-6 medals, Wali Abdullah gold, M Zayyan Amir silver, M Azlan Amir bronze. The chief guests for the day were Col (R) Mukhtar Ahmad, Deputy General Manager (Admin & Purchase) at Millat Tractors Limited and Imran Ayub, Senior Manager Admin at Millat Tractors Limited, distributed medals and trophies among the winners, appreciating their dedication and talent.

Novak Djokovic, Alcaraz reach Australian Open fourth round

Third seed Carlos Alcaraz dropped his first set of the tournament but still safely secured his passage into the fourth round of the Australian Open

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic stepped up a level in his Australian Open third round match against Tomas Machac on Friday, brushing the Czech aside 6-1 6-4 6-4 with a vintage performance to reach the second week at Melbourne Park for the 17th time. The 37-year-old seventh seed conceded sets to younger opponents in the first two rounds but the best world number 25 Muchac could muster up was a single break of serve at the start of the second set. Djokovic broke straight back, called out the doctor then rattled off the next three games, which included a brilliant point which

the Serbian won with a backhand crosscourt winner. Machac beat the former world number one on clay in Geneva last year but struggled to get his game



going on a cool evening on the Rod Laver Arena court where Djokovic has won 10 of his 24 Grand Slam titles. The Czech had another look at Djokovic's serve at the end of the second set only for his opponent to quickly shut the door and by the third Machac was getting sympathetic applause from the crowd merely for

winning a point. "I think I played really well, I'm very happy with my game," said Djokovic after bringing an end to the uneven contest with a rasping backhand winner. Meanwhile, Third seed Carlos Alcaraz dropped his first set of the tournament but still safely secured his passage into the fourth round of the Australian Open with a 6-2 6-4 6-7(3) 6-3 victory over Nuno Borges on Friday. The 21-year-old Spaniard has quietly but authoritatively gone about his business in the first week at Melbourne as teenagers ousted seeds, Jannik Sinner progressed in his title defence and Novak Djokovic in his quest for a 25th major crown. Two consecutive breaks from four break points were enough for him to take the first set, one from one handed him the second, before the experienced Portuguese number one snatched the momentum back at the end of the third.

SA stare at another potential injury setback

The 24-year-old pacer is in doubt for the next few weeks

WEB DESK

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa have endured another setback to their fast-bowling stocks as right-arm pacer Gerald Coetzee has suffered a hamstring ahead of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, scheduled to be hosted by Pakistan from February 19 to March 9. According to a report, Coetzee, who was expected to replace Anrich Nortje in South Africa's squad for the eight-team tournament, was left out of the Joburg Super King's playing XI for their SA20 match against Pretoria Capitals due to a hamstring issue. As a result, the 24-year-old is in doubt for the next few weeks, while his fitness is being closely monitored. Notably, Coetzee is the eighth South African pacer to be injured this summer, joining Lungi Ngidi, Daryn Dupavillon, Wiaan Mulder, Nortje, Lizaad Williams, Otneil Baartman and Nandre Burger in the unwanted list. For the unversed, if Gerald Coetzee fails to recover in time for the eight-team tournament, South Africa's white-ball coach Rob Walter, who is also the sole selector, may opt for 18-year-old Kwenamaphaka or fast-bowling all-rounder Corbin Bosch. South Africa Squad for ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 Temba Bavuma (c), Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen.

Haaland to stay at Manchester City

'I am really happy to have signed my new contract,' says Haaland

LONDON: Erling Haaland has signed a 10-year contract with Manchester City which will keep him at the club until 2034, the Premier League club announced on Friday. Haaland's contract was set to expire in June 2027 but the 24-year-old, winner of the league's Golden Boot for most goals scored in the last two seasons, could be set to stay at the club until the age of 34. The Norwegian, who was signed from Borussia Dortmund in 2022, has netted 111 goals in 126 matches for City, winning the treble of the Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League in his debut season under manager Pep Guardiola. "I am really happy to have signed my new contract and to be able to look forward to spending even more time at this great Club," said Haaland in a statement. "Manchester City is a special Club, full of fantastic people with amazing supporters and it's the type of environment that helps bring the best out of everybody. "I also want to thank Pep, his coaching staff, my teammates and everyone at the Club as they have all helped me so much in the past couple of years. They have made this such a special place to be and now I am City no matter what. "I want to keep developing, keep working to get better and look to do my best to try and help us achieve more success going forward." - Agencies

Saud, Rizwan lift Pakistan after WI rampant start

The duo recovers Pak from 46/4 with an unbeaten 97-run partnership

MULTAN: Saud Shakeel and Mohammad Rizwan extended their fourth-wicket partnership to put Pakistan in a comfortable position against West Indies on the first day of the opening day here at the Multan Cricket Stadium on Friday. At the conclusion of the opening day, majorly affected by the weather, with the first session getting abandoned due to dense fog here, before bad light forcing an early closure, Pakistan were 143/4 in 41.3 overs. Saud and Rizwan, who put together an unbeaten 97-run partnership for the fourth wicket, will resume Pakistan's first innings on the second day. Saud had scored an unbeaten 56 off 100 deliveries, laced with four boundaries, while Rizwan was not out on 51, featuring seven boundaries. Earlier in the day,

Pakistan captain Shan Masood won the toss and elected to bat first. The southpaw's decision, however, did not turn out beneficial for his side as Seales ripped through their top order with three wickets, including that of their star batter Babar Azam, who only managed eight. As a result, the home side had slipped to 46/4 in 13.3 overs until Saud and Rizwan launched recovery. The duo batted sensibly against a momentum-filled West Indian bowling attack to add an unbeaten 40-run partnership for the fourth wicket. When the on-field Rod Tucker called for Tea, Saud was unbeaten on 33, while Rizwan had scored 18 not out. **Playing XI's Pakistan:** Shan Masood (c), Muhammad Hurraina, Babar Azam, Kamran Ghulam, Saud Shakeel, Mohammad



Rizwan, Salman Ali Agha, Sajid Khan, Noman Ali, Abrar Ahmed, Khuram Shahzad. West Indies: Kraigg Brathwaite (c), Mikyle Louis, Keacy Carty, Kevon Hodge, Alick Athanaze, Justin Greaves, Tevin Imlach (wk), Gudakesh Motie, Kevin Sinclair, Jomel Warrican, Jayden Seales. - DNA

Badosa, Sabalenka and Gauff reach last 16

Swiss Belinda Bencic advanced to the last 16 of the Australian Open after two-time champion Naomi Osaka retired during Friday's third-round match with an abdominal strain

WEB DESK

MELBOURNE: Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka shrugged off a shaky display to fight her way into the fourth round of the Australian Open with a 7-6(5) 6-4 victory over Clara Tauson on Friday. Novak Djokovic resumes his quest for a record 25th Grand Slam title and 11th at Melbourne Park later in the day and Carlos Alcaraz, Alexander Zverev and Coco Gauff will also be in action on the main showcourts. The day's first match on the Rod Laver Arena at the start of the sixth day of the championships was hardly vintage tennis, but Sabalenka was pleased to come away unscathed after a little over two hours in bright sunshine and challenging conditions. "She played some unbelievable tennis," Sabalenka said. "I'm super happy that I was able to close out this match and be in the fourth round." Last year's semi-finalist Coco Gauff barely put a foot wrong as she continued her rollicking start to the Australian Open with a 6-4 6-2 win over Canadian 30th seed Leylah Fernandez to reach the fourth round on Friday.

Third seed Gauff had taken apart 2021 U.S. Open runner-up Fernandez in their only previous meeting at the United Cup mixed team tournament in late December and fans hoping for a tighter clash at Margaret Court Arena were left disappointed.



"I think it's harder (to face Fernandez again), because she knows what to expect. She played differently than she did at the United Cup," Gauff said. "It's also harder because you're trying to change up from the last time. She's a great competitor and a great person, so I knew it would be a tough match regardless." Having squandered three opportunities to break in a tough third game, Gauff pounced for a 4-3 advantage as Fernandez sent a shot long, before the 20-year-old American dictated play to close out the opening set. Spaniard Paula Badosa, the No 11 seed,



advanced to the last 16 of the Australian Open by winning against Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk, the No 17 seed, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 at Melbourne Park on Friday. Badosa, ranked No 12, will face the winner of the match between Serb Olga Danilovic and American Jessica Pegula, the No 7 seed, next. The Spaniard was supported by her boyfriend, Greek star Stefanos Tsitsipas, who watched from court side. "He was giving me good advice, go for it, be aggressive," Badosa said. "I think he was more nervous than me." Swiss Belinda Bencic advanced to the last 16



of the Australian Open after two-time champion Naomi Osaka retired during Friday's third-round match with an abdominal strain that has affected her since the start of the season. Bencic took the first set in a tiebreak 7-6(3) before Japan's Osaka, who had also pulled out of the Auckland final earlier this month due to an abdominal injury, withdrew from the contest. Osaka had said the result from an MRI scan before the tournament "wasn't fantastic" but came through two rounds, beating Caroline Garcia and Karolina Muchova in three-set matches.

Pakistan launches first...

FROM PAGE 01 resources, disaster response, urban planning and agricultural development," the commission added. The satellite reportedly delivers timely updates on floods, landslides, and earthquakes for effective response. On this significant occasion, Suparco Chairman Muhammad Yousaf Khan expressed gratitude for the government's unwavering support. He commended the hard work and dedication of Suparco's engineers, highlighting that the launch reflects the country's commitment to harnessing space technology for national progress and sustainable development.

Azerbaijani cargo...

FROM PAGE 01 cargo will be carried out through designated ports using the computerized customs system. Based on mutual cooperation, Azerbaijani-registered vehicles will be allowed entry into Pakistan without the need for financial guarantees for duties and taxes. Additionally, all transport operators and customs clearing agents will be required to open and maintain a "rotating insurance guarantee PD account" with customs authorities. Under the new rules, the Directorate General of Reforms and Automation in Karachi will create user IDs for traders, government organizations, the United Nations, or diplomatic missions.

Imran Khan 'vows to...

FROM PAGE 01 emerge victorious." An accountability court in Islamabad — after delaying the verdict three times — convicted the PTI founder and his wife, Bushra Bibi, in the £190 million case. Accountability Court Judge Nasir Javed Rana handed down a 14-year sentence to the PTI founder and a seven-year sentence to his wife, while also slapping heavy fines on them. The PTI founder will have to pay a fine of Rs1 million and his wife has been slapped with a fine of Rs0.5 million. In case they fail to pay the fine, the ex-prime minister will serve six months more and Bushra three months.

Imran's 'bribery,...

FROM PAGE 01 Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, he said that 190 million pounds scam was the mega corruption case in Pakistan's history. The minister said the judge in the verdict stated that the defense counsel could not present evidence to prove innocence of the accused. He said that the defense team could not even respond to the evidence of bribery, corruption and misuse of power and authority provided by the prosecution.

JCP approves Addl judges...

FROM PAGE 01 While the decision for the Islamabad High Court appointments was made by majority vote, the approval of judges for the Balochistan High Court was reached unanimously. For the Balochistan High Court, the Judicial Commission nominated Muhammad Asif, Najamuddin Mengal, and Muhammad Ayub as additional judges. Sources confirm that the nominations were finalised after careful consideration of their professional credentials and judicial expertise.

Security forces...

FROM PAGE 01 Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from them, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area against the security forces as well as killing of innocent civilians. The ISPR added that sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

Briefs

Gold prices
up by Rs 400
per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.400 and was sold at Rs 282,600 on Friday against its sale at Rs 282,200 on previous trading day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24gold also increased by Rs.342 to Rs.242,283 from Rs 241,941 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat also went up to Rs.222,100 from Rs 221,787. The prices of per tola silver decreased by Rs.27 to Rs.3,406 whereas that of ten gram silver went down by Rs.23 to Rs.2,920. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$2 to \$2,705 from \$2,707, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee gains
14 paise
against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Friday appreciated by 14 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.71 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.85. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.50 and Rs 281, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 16 paise to close at Rs286.97 against the last day's closing of Rs287.13, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.79, whereas a decline of 9 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs339.84 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs340.74. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 and 04 paise to close at Rs75.88 and Rs74.28, respectively.—APP

'Enough death
and destruction', Gazans
hope for
ceasefire and
a better future

UNITED NATIONS: In the wake of Wednesday's announcement of a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas due to come into effect on Sunday, displaced Gazans — ground down by 15 months devastating Israeli attacks — have told UN News, the world body's news service, that they hope an end to their suffering is in sight. Around 90 per cent of the population across the Gaza Strip have been displaced from their homes, forced to move to avoid Israeli military operations. Many have been displaced repeatedly, some 10 times or more. Much of Gaza is rubble, while Israeli airstrikes and military operations have damaged or destroyed around 60 per cent of buildings, including homes, schools and hospitals. The relentless bombing campaign has pushed healthcare to the brink, the solid waste system has collapsed, causing serious environmental and health risks, and the water system has been drastically cut. UN News's correspondent in Gaza spoke to displaced civilians sheltering in Nuseirat, central Gaza, who are hoping to return to what is left of their homes and rebuild their lives. Even if a halt in the hostilities allows Gazans to return home, and for the Strip to be rebuilt, the mental suffering will continue, according to Mohammed al-Quqa, who was displaced from al-Shati refugee camp west of Gaza City. "The greatest suffering will be the psychological situation. The war has been long, and our families, our children, have witnessed things they should never have seen." If the ceasefire agreement comes into effect on Sunday, there is widespread anticipation that aid coming into the Strip will significantly increase — in line with the reported terms of the deal. Throughout the conflict, humanitarian convoys containing desperately needed supplies have repeatedly been delayed or denied entry at Israeli military checkpoints (in December, 70 per cent of coordinated aid missions were denied).—APP

Iran, Russia steadfast in
'sensitive, strategic' ties

Pointing to Iran's efforts to remove the obstacles in the way of "full and faster" implementation of all previous agreements with Russia, Pezeshkian noted that the two countries' experts and officials have held negotiations in this regard which would be finalized during the talks in Moscow

MOSCOW: President Masoud Pezeshkian says Iran and Russia stand steadfast in mutual "sensitive, pivotal and strategic" relations. Pezeshkian made the remark in a meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Friday ahead of a ceremony to sign a long-awaited comprehensive strategic partnership agreement. "Iran and Russia are strengthening relations on a daily basis in bilateral, regional and international aspects as well as in the economic and trade sectors," he said. The president added that the comprehensive agreement can help the two countries improve relations in all economic, cultural, trade, security and communications areas. Pointing to Iran's efforts to remove the obstacles in the way of "full and faster" implementation of all previous agreements with Russia, Pezeshkian noted that the two countries' experts and officials have held negotiations in this regard which would be finalized during the talks in Moscow. He said that Tehran and Moscow signed new agree-



ments on the construction of a new power plant in Iran. Pezeshkian said that Iran believes that regional issues should be resolved by the countries in the region. "There is no need for others from the other side of the world to come here and disrupt

the region and implement their own policies," the Iranian president emphasized. He said that the development of Tehran-Moscow relations will thwart their plans. The new 20-year agreement on a comprehensive strategic partnership between Iran

and Russia covers economic, transportation, energy, health, and agricultural areas, in addition to Tehran-Moscow cooperation to deal with common challenges, reduce the consequences of natural disasters, combat organized crimes, fight

terrorism, and make joint investments. Iran and Russia are both subject to illegal Western sanctions. They have over the past years deepened their cooperation in various sectors. During the meeting, Putin said the current visit by the Iranian president and his accompanying delegation to Moscow is of special significance as the two sides are determined to discuss bilateral cooperation in various fields and sign the strategic partnership deal. He hailed growing relations between the two countries, explaining that they succeeded in increasing the volume of trade exchanges by more than 15 percent over the past 10 months. The Russian president said the strategic deal will certainly help the two countries accelerate the development of relations in all aspects. Based on the treaty, the two countries will cooperate in important and large-scale joint projects, including the development of nuclear power plants and the energy sector, he added. He said both sides would also enhance cooperation in the areas of tourism, transportation and culture.—Agencies

Pak urges end to fighting in Ukraine
as 3rd anniversary of war approaches

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called for an early end to the hostilities in Ukraine, after a top United Nations official told the Security Council that the fighting was escalating — as the third anniversary of the Russian military intervention in that Eastern European country approaches. "We are holding this meeting at a critical juncture," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member Council on Thursday. Next month, he said, would mark three years since the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine, with the situation continuing to be a cause for "grave concern", in particular the disproportionate toll that this conflict has had on the lives of civilians. "Equally disturbing and deplorable is the considerable material damage and loss of civilian infrastructure," Ambassador Jadoon said. In a briefing to the Security Council, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, said that the recent holiday and New Year season brought no respite in Ukraine, but rather an escalation and even expansion of the fighting, consistent with developments in 2024. "Most disturbingly, in 2024 we witnessed an alarming rise in the toll of civilian casualties," Ms. DiCarlo said. She said the total number of civilians killed and injured last year was 30 per cent higher than in 2023, citing figures from the UN human rights office, OHCHR. In his remarks, Ambassador Jadoon, the Pakistani envoy, warned that further escalation would only exacerbate the current crisis. "We need an early cessation of hostilities and a solution that brings sustainable and lasting peace," he said. "My delegation would like to underscore the need for giving primacy to dialogue and diplomacy rather than further fueling and escalating the conflict," the Pakistani envoy said, adding that the solution lay in dialogue and negotiations — not on the battlefield. "Pakistan stands ready to play a constructive role to promote diplomatic endeavours aimed at bringing an end to this conflict, in accordance with international law and the UN Charter," Ambassador Jadoon added. Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo also said, "Hostilities in the last two weeks have forced new displacements, with more than 1,600 people, including children, fleeing frontline areas, primarily in the Donetsk and Kharkiv regions, according to local authorities," she said. Civilian casualties were also recorded in Russian-occupied territories, she said. An alleged Ukrainian strike on a supermarket in Donetsk city on 10 January reportedly left two people dead, and two others injured. Ms. DiCarlo reiterated the UN's unequivocal condemnation of all attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, adding that they must cease. The daily attacks have also made things increasingly difficult for the diplomatic community and international organizations operating in Ukraine, it was pointed out. A 20 December strike on the capital, Kyiv, damaged six foreign embassies. Days before, a drone attack struck a vehicle belonging to the UN nuclear energy agency, IAEA, near the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, located in the south. "For humanitarian workers, too, this was another difficult year. Ten aid workers were killed and 41 injured in the line of duty," she said. Ms. DiCarlo reported that as fierce fighting continues in the east and south of Ukraine, deadly clashes persist in Russia's Kursk region, and the UN remains concerned over the impact on both sides of the border. Furthermore, she said, there are reports that military personnel from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), commonly known as North Korea, were captured in the Kursk region.—DNA

Iranian president
arrives in Moscow for
treaty signing with
Putin, TASS says

MOSCOW: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian arrived in Moscow on Friday for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and the signing of a strategic partnership treaty between the two countries, Russia's TASS state news agency reported. Pezeshkian, on his first Kremlin visit since winning the presidency last July after the death in a helicopter crash of his predecessor, is due to hold talks with Putin focusing on bilateral ties and international issues before signing the treaty. Russia has cultivated closer ties with Iran and other countries hostile toward the US, such as North Korea, since the start of the Ukraine war, and has strategic pacts with Pyongyang and close ally Belarus, as well as a strategic partnership agreement with China. The 20-year Russia-Iran agreement, which will include provisions for closer defense cooperation, is likely to worry the West which sees both countries as malign influences on the world stage. Moscow and Tehran say their increasingly close ties are not directed against other countries. Russia has made extensive use of Iranian drones during the war in Ukraine and the United States accused Tehran in September of delivering close-range ballistic missiles to Russia for use against Ukraine.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Jamat-e-Islami holds rally outside National Press Club to mark "Youm-e-Tashakur" about the ceasefire of Ghaza and Isreal war.

Macron urges 'acceleration' of Israel-
Hezbollah truce implementation

Macron's visit aims to "help" Aoun and Salam "to consolidate Lebanon's sovereignty, ensure its prosperity and maintain its unity", the French presidency said prior to his arrival

BEIRUT: France's President Emmanuel Macron was in Lebanon on Friday for a visit to meet his newly-elected counterpart and offer support to leaders seeking to open a new chapter in their country's turbulent history. After more than two years of a political vacuum at the top, Joseph Aoun was elected president on January 9 and chose Nawaf Salam as prime minister-designate. They now face the daunting task of leading Lebanon after a devastating Israel-Hezbollah war, years of economic crisis and decades of Syrian domination. Macron is also expected to meet UN chief Antonio Guterres in the Lebanese capital as a January 26 deadline to fully implement a ceasefire deal between Israel and the Iran-backed militant

group approaches. Macron's visit aims to "help" Aoun and Salam "to consolidate Lebanon's sovereignty, ensure its prosperity and maintain its unity", the French presidency said prior to his arrival. Analysts say Hezbollah's weakening in the war with Israel last year allowed Lebanon's deeply divided political class to elect Aoun and to back his naming of Salam as premier. Islamist-led rebels overthrowing key Hezbollah ally Bashar al-Assad on December 8 has also contributed to the ushering in of a new era for tiny Lebanon. France has special ties with Lebanon, which it administered for two decades after World War I, and the two countries have maintained close relations even since Lebanon's independence in 1943. "In Leb-

anon, we have gone in a matter of months from a situation of dramatic escalation to a situation of hope for possible redress," a French diplomatic source said on condition of anonymity. "It's a dynamic to which France has greatly contributed." Salam, a former presiding judge at the International Court of Justice, is "a true reformist", though he now faces the challenge of turning the hope around his election into action, the source said. The new premier has launched delicate consultations to pick a government, with Hezbollah continuing to play an important role in Lebanon's political scene despite its weakening on the battlefield. Macron and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have given "their full

support" to the formation of a "strong government" in Lebanon, the French presidency said on Thursday. The new government must "bring together Lebanon's diverse people, ensure the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon is respected and carry out the reforms necessary for the prosperity, stability and sovereignty of the country", the presidency said. The UN Security Council called Thursday for Lebanese leaders to rapidly form a new government, describing it as a "critical" step for stability in the war-battered country and region. In Beirut, Macron met with UN peacekeeping mission chief Aroldo Lazaro and the heads of a committee tasked with monitoring any violation of a ceasefire that took ef-

fect on November 27 after more than a year of war. "Things are moving forward, the dynamic is positive" on the implementation of the ceasefire, he told journalists after the talks. He was also due to meet the powerful speaker of parliament Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally. Hezbollah is the only group in Lebanon that refused to surrender its weapons to the state following the 1975-1990 civil war. Backed by Syria under Assad, it played a central role in politics for decades, flexing its power in government institutions while engaging in fighting with the Israeli military. The latest war with Israel has left it shattered but not crushed, while the ouster in Syria of Assad has deprived it of its weapons lifeline from Iran.—DNA

Kyiv says
Ukraine
missiles hit
army radars
in Russia

KYIV: Ukraine said Friday it had launched a missile strike one day earlier on the western Belgorod region targeting air defense systems and damaging military radars. Kyiv has stepped up its cross border drone and missile attacks on Russian territory and said this week it had launched its largest barrage of the war on military sites and energy installations over the border. The Ukrainian General Staff wrote on social media that missile units had carried out "precision strikes" on Russian military targets in Belgorod, which borders Ukraine. It said it had attacked air defense systems under the 568th anti-aircraft missile regiment and claimed that an S-400 radar had been damaged alongside equipment linked to another brigade. There was no immediate response from Moscow to the claims, which could not be verified by AFP. Moscow in turn has been targeting Ukrainian energy facilities and this week launched dozens of missiles and drones at sites mainly in western Ukraine near the border with Poland. Kyiv said Friday that its air defense systems had shot down 33 Russian drones over 11 Ukrainian region at night.—APP

South Korea
plane crash
investigators
find feathers
in engines

SEOUL: Investigators probing the Jeju Air crash that killed 179 people last month have found feathers in both engines, according to South Korean media reports, with a bird strike being examined as one possible cause. The Boeing 737-800 was flying from Thailand to Muan, South Korea, on December 29 carrying 181 passengers and crew when it belly-landed at Muan airport and exploded in a fireball after slamming into a concrete barrier. It was the worst aviation disaster on South Korean soil. "Feathers were found in both engines," the government-linked National Institute of Biological Resources told South Korean broadcaster MBN, without specifying who gave them the information. "We have completed the analysis of a total of 17 samples, including feathers and blood," it said. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport declined to confirm the report when asked by AFP. South Korean and US investigators are still probing the cause of the crash, which prompted a national outpouring of mourning with memorials set up across the country. Investigators have pointed to a bird strike, faulty landing gear and the runway barrier as possible issues.—APP

Charities
urge UK
authorities to
'hold Israel
accountable'
after Gaza
ceasefire

LONDON: UK charities and other organizations have called on the British government to ensure the ceasefire in Gaza marks the start of a process that ends Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories and ensures "justice and accountability." An alliance of 18 groups, including the Council for Arab-British Understanding, Oxfam and Amnesty International, on Thursday signed a letter welcoming the Gaza ceasefire agreement, upon which the Israeli parliament was due to vote on Thursday evening. But the groups said the temporary truce, expected to take effect on Sunday, must become permanent and represent a "starting point for justice and accountability." The letter stated: "This deal alone will not end Palestinian suffering in Gaza, and therefore must be the beginning, and not the end, of a process that will rapidly bring a comprehensive ceasefire, with a lifting of the 17-year long blockade, and end of Israel's occupation of Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem.—APP

Briefs

Aleema Khan laments over 190m case verdict

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Aleema Khan on Friday lamented over the accountability court's decision convicting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in 190 million pound case. Talking to media outside the Adiala Jail, the former prime minister's sister said she was already expecting such verdict from court. She recalled that Imran Khan was awarded such sentence thrice in the past but all were suspended by the high court. "I feel sorry for the judge who has announced the verdict as he might have done this for promotion or due to pressure," she said. Aleema said Al-Qadir University was a dream of the PTI founder but he had been punished for that. "We will challenge this verdict in high court," she announced while revealing that Khan had told them to stay strong in this phase. "Imran Khan has said that punishment and reward are not in the hands of these people," Aleema added.

PIA apologises for Eiffel Tower advert

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) apologised on Friday for an advert of a plane flying at the Eiffel Tower, published to mark the first flight to Paris after a safety ban was lifted. The image posted by PIA to social media showed a plane aimed at the French landmark with the caption "Paris, we're coming today". In thousands of comments online, users drew comparisons with the 2001 Al-Qaeda attacks on New York's Twin Towers, when two planes were hijacked and flown into the skyscrapers, killing nearly 3,000. Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was killed in Abbottabad by US special forces in 2011, while a Pakistani militant currently held in Guantanamo Bay is considered the chief mastermind of the attack. "Unfortunately, this was blown out of proportion with connations and perceptions that were not intended," PIA spokesman Abdullah Khan.

ECC approves summary for rebasing of electricity tariffs

ECC replaces bank guarantees with insurance for Afghan transit trade via Gwadar



MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chaired a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet today. The meeting was attended by Mr. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry, Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives; Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Industries and Production; Mr. Ahmad Khan Cheema, Minister for Economic Affairs; Mr. Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Commerce; Sardar Awaish Khan Leghari, Minister for Power; Chairman FBR; ED SECP; Federal Secretaries; and senior officers from relevant ministries and divisions. The ECC considered and approved the proposal of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research for

the allocation of additional funds as a Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) of Rs. 910 million for the establishment of the National Food Safety, Animal, and Plant Health Regulatory Authority (NFSAPHRA).

The ECC also deliberated upon the proposal of the Ministry of Industries and Production regarding the disbursement of salaries to Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) employees for the financial year 2024-25 (projected). The Committee authorized the Finance Division to approve the payment of the projected net salary of Rs. 935.78 million for FY 2024-25, to be disbursed monthly according to the salary demand of PSM. These funds will be provided from the already approved budgetary allocation of Rs. 3.5 billion. The ECC further discussed and approved the proposal from the Power Division regarding the revision in the annual rebasing determination timeline. Policy guidelines were ap-

proved to be issued to NEPRA for revising the annual tariff determination process timeline by amending the legal and regulatory framework. The ECC directed that rebasing should be notified with effect from January 1, 2025, onward each year, following the completion of regulatory proceedings. The Power Division was authorized to approach NEPRA for the implementation of these policy guidelines. The Ministry of Commerce presented a proposal seeking an extension of regulatory duties on finished flat steel products. The ECC approved the extension of duties on relevant iron and steel flat products until March 31, 2025, as recommended by the Tariff Policy Board during its 61st meeting held on December 26, 2024. However, the ECC emphasized that no further extensions will be entertained, referencing the Federal Government's authority under Sub-section 3 of Section 18 of the Customs Act, 1968. The ECC approved a request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) of Rs. 90.275 million during the current financial year 2024-25. These funds will be utilized to disburse payments to PAF and PIA, ensuring operational efficiency. The ECC also approved the proposal of the Ministry of Interior for the provision of funds for operational requirements of the Frontier Corps (FC) North during the current financial year 2024-25. A Technical Supplementary Grant of Rs. 941.400 million was sanctioned to meet the operational needs of the Frontier Corps. The proposal from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs regarding the withdrawal of bank guarantees for Afghan Transit Trade facilitation through Gwadar Port was also considered. The ECC approved replacing the bank guarantees, imposed on October 7, 2023, for the import of Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) under APTTA, with insurance guarantees. Lastly, the ECC considered the proposal of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development for budget proposals for FY 2024-25 and revised estimates for FY 2023-24 regarding Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI).

US Scissors ruling upholding ban on TikTok

WASHINGTON: The Supreme Court ruled Friday that a controversial ban on TikTok may take effect this weekend, rejecting an appeal from the popular app's owners that claimed the ban violated the First Amendment. The court handed down an unsigned opinion and there were no noted dissents. The decision, which followed warnings from the Biden administration that the app posed a "grave" national security threat because of its ties to China, will allow the ban to start Sunday. But there are a lot of lingering questions about how the ban would work in practice because there's no precedent for the US government blocking a major social media platform. And how exactly the government would enforce it remains unclear. In its opinion, the Supreme Court acknowledged that for 170 million Americans TikTok offers "a distinctive and expansive outlet for expression, means of engagement, and source of community." - Agencies

EU 'ready' to restart Rafah border mission

BRUSSELS: The European Union is in talks to revive a civilian mission to monitor the border crossing between Gaza and Egypt at Rafah following the announcement of the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. A civilian EU mission to help monitor the Rafah crossing was set up under agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in 2005, part of international help with peace efforts at a time when Israel had pulled troops and settlers from Gaza. - Agencies

Imran Khan founded Al-Qadir varsity 'now under my control'

Punjab CM also announces awarding scholarships to students regardless of their political affiliation

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: After the conviction of ex-premier Imran Khan and former first lady Bushra Bibi in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust University case, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said on Friday that the varsity "is now under my control" and scholarships would also be given to its students. "[Accountability] court has handed over control of the varsity to the government following the verdict of the £190 million case," said CM Maryam addressing an event of Honhaar Scholarship Programme at the University of Okara today. An accountability court handed down a 14-year sentence to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Khan and a seven-year sentence to his wife besides slapping heavy fines on them earlier today. As per the verdict, the former prime minister has been convicted for "corrupt practices" and "misuse of authority", while the first lady has

been convicted for "involvement in illegal activities". The judge directed the authorities to hand over the custody of Al-Qadir Trust University to the federal government led by CM Maryam's uncle Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The Al-Qadir Trust case, commonly known as the £190m case involved allegations that Khan and other accused in 2019 adjusted Rs50 billion - amounting to £190 million at the time - sent by Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) to the Pakistani government during his tenure as the country's prime minister. She said that "theft has been proven in the Al-Qadir Trust case as its verdict came in today. "Imran Khan is the first [former] prime minister who has been caught red-handed while committing corruption," added CM Maryam. The chief minister said that she saw a video of some students who had invited her to visit them. "Students will get religious and conventional education at the varsity and I will also award scholarships and laptops to them," she added.

IMF warns Trump economic policy threatens global disruption

LONDON: The International Monetary Fund has warned that US economic policies under incoming president Donald Trump could hit the rest of the world and ultimately backfire on the US. The IMF says a threatened wave of tariffs could make trade tensions worse, lower investment, hit market pricing, distort trade flows and disrupt supply chains. Although tariffs, tax cuts and deregulation could boost the US economy in the short term, it could set the scene for an inflationary boom followed by a bust, it said. This could weaken US Treasury bonds as a safe bet, it added. The imminent arrival of Donald Trump in the White House dominates the section on risks in the IMF's twice yearly forecast for the world economy. When he was last in power, Trump launched into a trade war with China, and US policy led to tit-for-tat tariffs with the EU. This time around, Trump has threatened tariffs on countries including China, Mexico and Canada, and has said he would impose 100% tariffs on the BRICS bloc of nine nations if they were to create a rival currency to the US dollar. While the IMF estimates these measures, along with tax cuts and deregulation, could boost the US economy in the short-term, there are some unusually grave warnings about it could hit the rest of the world and ultimately the US. It warns that an inflationary US boom could be followed by a possible bust that would potentially "weaken the role of US Treasuries as the global safe asset". - Agencies

Israeli security cabinet approves ceasefire deal before govt vote

Gaza's civil defence says that at least 116 people have been killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza since the announcement

NEWS DESK

JERUSALEM: Israel's security Cabinet recommended approval on Friday of a ceasefire deal after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed an agreement had been reached that would pause the 15-month war with Hamas in Gaza and release dozens of hostages held by militants there. Mediators Qatar and the US announced the ceasefire on Wednesday, but the deal hung in limbo for more than a day as Netanyahu insisted there were last-minute snags he blamed on Hamas. The militants maintained they were "committed" to the deal, while residents of Gaza and families of the hostages anxiously waited to see if it would materialize. The deal now goes to the full Cabinet of ministers for final sign-off. It is expected to OK the ceasefire, which could start as soon as Sunday, even though it has drawn fierce resistance from Netanyahu's far-right coalition partners. Their objections could destabilize his government, however. Hamas triggered the war with its Oct. 7, 2023, cross-border attack into Israel that killed some 1,200 people and left some 250 others captive. Israel responded

with a devastating offensive that has killed over 46,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and militants but say women and children make up more than half of those killed. Beyond the death and destruction in Gaza, the conflict has also destabilized the Middle East and sparked worldwide protests. On Thursday, Israeli strikes killing at least 72 people in Gaza. In previous conflicts, both sides have stepped up military operations in the final hours before ceasefires as a way to project strength. Netanyahu instructed a special task force to prepare to receive the hostages returning from Gaza, and said that their families were informed a deal had been reached. The prime minister's office said that if the deal passes, the ceasefire could start Sunday and the first hostages could be freed then too. Under the deal, 33 of some 100 hostages who remain in Gaza are set to be released over six weeks in exchange for hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Israeli forces will pull back from many areas, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians would be able to return to what's left of their homes, and there would be a surge of humanitarian assistance.

Pakistan, Bangladesh discusses maritime security cooperation

Principal Staff Officer (PSO) of the armed forces division of Bangladesh visits Naval Headquarters and calls on Naval Chief



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Principal Staff Officer (PSO) of the Armed Forces Division of Bangladesh, Lieutenant General SM Kamrul Hassan, visited Naval Head-

quarters, Islamabad, and called on the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, the regional maritime security environment, and prospects for enhanced bilateral naval

collaboration between the two countries were discussed. Various avenues of cooperation, including training, exchange of visits, and conduct of bilateral naval exercises between the navies of Pakistan and Bangladesh, were also highlighted. The Naval Chief emphasized Pakistan Navy's initiatives to ensure maritime security and peace in the region through Regional Maritime Security Patrols. The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan Navy's role and contributions in promoting collaborative maritime security in the region. The visit of Lieutenant General SM Kamrul Hassan, Principal Staff Officer, is expected to further strengthen and expand defence ties between the two brotherly countries, fostering collaboration and robust relations between their defence forces.

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